Children and Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina

First Report Capacity Building Research: Unaccompanied Children and Children at Risk of Being Institutionalised in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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All photographs used were taken by research team members. Permission to use all photographs and all children’s drawings in this report was obtained through the informed consent of the relevant adults and children.

Cover illustration: Dom Poradica children aged 3-6 in their bedroom

Inside institutions for children without parental care: Recreation space, Belaje; Communal rooms Egipat and Most, Dining room Mostar (photographs)

Comparison: SOS houses inside Sarajevo SOS Children’s Village, Side view of Porodika home (photographs)

Professionals who work directly with children in institutions: Psychologist in Porodika, teacher in Bjelave (photographs)

Children in the control group and children in the foster group pictured during focus group discussions on children’s rights (photographs)

Children’s drawings of where they live and where they would like to live:

- Boy, five years old, children’s home
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- Girl, 12 years old, children’s home
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Children in institutions eat less fast food than children in families (graph)

Children with special needs in institutions: brother and sister Pazaric; Cirkin Polje, children in the playground after lunch (photographs)
FOREWORD

This report is the result of eight months Research on Children Without Parental Care and Children at Risk of Being Institutionalised in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The idea for the research came from discussions between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Sarajevo, and UNICEF BiH staff concerning the lack of information and understanding about the number and treatment of Bosnian children without parental care. The United Nations Foundation subsequently expressed interest in co-funding the research with USAID. Thus, the work was organized and implemented through UNICEF BiH during the period of April – December 2002. The research was conducted by nine research team members – two international and seven Bosnian - in cooperation with BiH State and Entity authorities and institutions from the field of child protection, academics from Universities in Banja Luka and Sarajevo, and with international and local NGOs interested in this issue. The research was financed jointly by UN Foundation, USAID, and UNICEF funds.

Bosnia and Herzegovina not only suffered from war atrocities, but also went straight from the war into the process of economic, political, and social transition. Having to deal with the war consequences together with the transition process at all these levels had a negative impact on the psychological and emotional profile of its citizens. This, inevitably, influenced the priorities and capabilities of Bosnians in meeting the basic needs its citizens, particularly those of the most vulnerable groups. This research shows that children without parental care are not only some of the most vulnerable members of Bosnian society, but also the most invisible.

Through the Dayton Peace Accord, BiH became a state with two largely self-governing Entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS), as well as an additional autonomous District of Brcko. The FBiH has ten cantons, and both Entities are further subdivided into municipalities. Thus, the capacity to respond, provide service delivery, and make policy in fields of social welfare and protection takes place at Entity level or levels below (cantonal or municipality). This fragmentation of the responsibility for protection of the most vulnerable children has led to a confusing, inefficient, and ineffective situation. Roles and responsibilities at the different levels are not clear, financial flows are often obstructed, and children and their families get caught in the middle or simply drop through the patchy network of services.

This research not only gives face and place to these children and families, but also is unique in its attention to the active participation of children in the research itself. Both adults working with or caring for children were interviewed as well as the children themselves. The work was guided by two senior social researchers specializing in children’s rights and in research with children: Dr. Judith Ennew and Dr. Heather Montgomery. Throughout the research, Dr. Suada Buljubasic from the University of Sarajevo provided guidance and inputs to the team.

The research team learned how to interview and discuss difficult issues and concerns with children, while ensuring their informed consent to participate in the research and protecting them from hurtful questions. A whole variety of research methods were used to ensure thorough triangulation of the findings. The research team faced everyday problems these children faced – witnessing the gaps in the law and weaknesses of Bosnian authorities that formed the obstacles to solving the children’s problems. The researchers also met the most devoted teachers and educators working in institutions who were prevented from spending adequate time and providing individual attention to the children because of the lack of staff, finances, and poor facility conditions. The researchers heard foster parents’ stories and their desire to give the greatest help to children; but this desire was frustrated by their economic situation and by the social and political situation in BiH.

But it was the “mature personalities, strong spirits, and various views and interests of the institutionalised children that astounded us most”, said one of the researchers. “Each child without
parental care goes through life carrying a heavy burden of her/his past, and is faced daily with stigmatisation and limitations of her/his potential in every aspect of life.” This research gave children an opportunity to talk about themselves and their world. The researchers believe that there is no ‘our’ and ‘their’ world – we adults make and create ‘their world’ as separate. It is up to us to enable them to be seen and heard; to join us and have the life they deserve in BiH.

Hopefully this research will bring us closer to creating that one world here. It provides guidance on what is needed within a State policy framework on children without parental care; it highlights critical changes required to improve the institutional care of children immediately; and it outlines areas requiring further study in order to provide these children with alternatives to institutional care. UNICEF BiH will work with stakeholders within government and civil society to put the research recommendations into action for and with children.

Helena Eversole  
Representative, UNICEF  
Sarajevo  
March 2003
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Research Team wishes to thank children in institutions, foster families and schools, who shared their opinions and told us about their experiences, as well as staff of Centres for Social Work, institutions and schools visited, and staff and children of the SOS Children’s Villages in Sarajevo and Gracanica, and adult foster carers who made time to answer our questions.

Thanks are also due to members of the Steering Committee (Annex 1) and technical advisors Suada Buljubasic, Judith Ennew, and Heather Montgomery for supporting the research process, as well as to Mary Guttman for facilitating access to results of the Living Standards Measurement Survey and making some calculations especially for this report.

A special debt of gratitude is due to staff of UNICEF BiH offices in Sarajevo and Banja Luka for logistical support and for welcoming us into their space. We should particularly like to mention Elma Softic-Kaunic, who was the support officer throughout the process, as well as Berina Arslanagic, Slavenka Grahovac, Moidrag (Chris) Jungic, Jens Matthes, Selma Turkic, and of course Helena Eversole the Head of Mission.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the researchers and do not necessarily represent the views of UNICEF BiH.

This report is dedicated to children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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December 31 2002,
Sarajevo and Banja Luka
‘If I could just have a father who loves me’
Adolescent boy from an institution.
‘If I could just have a mother’
Girl from institution, (15 years old).

BACKGROUND
This report describes research about children in institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), sponsored by UNICEF BiH, with funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UN Foundation. The research was also a capacity-building exercise for the six Bosnian members of the research team. Fieldwork took place between July and November 2002, and the research was supported throughout by a Steering Committee with members from government and civil society throughout BiH.

The aim of the research was to improve knowledge and understanding about children in institutions, or at risk of being institutionalised, in BiH. Further objectives of the research were to map all residential institutions for children in BiH, describe the context of childhood in BiH, examine institutional care and compare this with alternatives, study the effects of institutional care, and examine the paths in and out of institutional care. UNICEF’s purpose is to use the research results to design effective interventions that will improve the situation of children placed in institutions and provide support and alternatives for those at risk. The research methodology entailed not only interviewing adults who work with children, but asking children for their views on their own lives, their needs and wishes, how they perceive themselves, and their ideas about home and family. According to Article 12 of the CRC, children’s perspectives and opinions must be taken into account in decisions taken on their behalf. Thus the data collected with children are of prime importance for UNICEF BiH and country counterparts when planning services and interventions for children without parents. A variety of methods were used with both adults and children. As far as children were concerned, a control group of children living with their biological families was compared to a sample of children from facilities providing care for children without parents as well as a sample of fostered children. All 16 institutions for children without parental care in BiH were visited and mapped, as well as two SOS Children’s Villages and three institutions caring for children with special needs. In addition to visiting 36 Centres for Social Work, researchers collected data from 97 Centres by means of a questionnaire.

CONCLUSIONS
The overall conclusions from this research on children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina acknowledge that the recent war changed many things in the country; causing considerable disruptions in where and how people live, and leaving in its wake both economic and social problems that directly affect the care and development of children. Around 3,000 children, who for one reason or another are outside parental care, are living in institutions and foster families. Most children without parental care live in foster families, overwhelmingly with kin and often with grandparents, in economically precarious conditions.

Social protection budgets are generally not sufficient to provide adequate financial support to either institutions or foster families. In some cases no payments are made. Yet a main message from the
research is that money does not fix everything and lack of economic resources does not excuse everything.

Centres for Social Work are at the core of social protection in BiH, being responsible for supporting and placing children without parental care. The lack of resources in these Centres is acute, reflected in a crisis in staffing, which means that workers cannot carry out their duties adequately, particularly with respect to monitoring placement. On average Centres are operating at 50 percent below legally established staffing levels, although there are wide variations between different parts of BiH. Centres for Social Work also lack financial resources. Many staff are not paid regularly, and child support payments to both institutions and foster families are often not paid, or paid irregularly. Nevertheless, the research found no direct relationship between lack of resources and poor levels of care for children, in Centres for Social Work, institutions or foster families; but it did find cases in which support is badly needed. One aspect of visits to institutions that raises anxiety is that two institutions, and the children for whom they care, seem to fall outside the proper regulation of state authorities.

Aside from noting disparities as well as the compensating commitment of individuals, the research came to conclusions that raise concern about provision for children without parental care. Despite a rhetoric of kindness for ‘orphaned’ children, institutions function as caretakers providing services rather than meeting children’s needs, let alone their rights. Children from ‘Homes’ seem to be discriminated against in the wider society. Professionals working with children without parental care do not use children-centred methods and are under qualified, under supported, under paid, and under supervised.

With respect to alternatives to institutional care professionals consider foster homes a better option and children prefer to live in families. Institutions limit children’s potential particularly with respect to the development of life skills for adulthood. Adolescents become aware of the need to support themselves economically once they become too old for institutional care at the age of 18 years, and opt for trade schools rather than academic secondary schools. In general children in institutions for children without parental care do not have their developmental or emotional needs met. Although they seem to be better fed than children in both foster and own-family children, their emotional hunger is not satisfied.

Although approximately twice as many children without parental care in BiH are placed in foster homes rather than institutions, there is no developed culture of fostering in BiH. Almost all children are placed with kin, the placement being inadequately selected, prepared for, monitored or supported. The international consensus that fostering is more cost effective than institutional care is ironically underlined by the lack of financial provision for many children in foster care. Some data appear to indicate worrying trends among foster children, with respect to their lack of access to recreation, as well as in the discovery that they have a lower appreciation of fulfillment of rights to family and alternative care than their contemporaries in institutions. Given high unemployment in the country as a whole, the failure to pay foster families child allowances, and the fact that many children are fostered with grandparents, data such as these raise questions about the conditions in foster homes. Foster care may be more cost effective, but it may also be that, in BiH, it is ‘on the cheap’. However, in the absence of adequate monitoring of foster placements by Centres for Social Work these questions remain unanswered.

The research did not focus specifically on children with special needs but visits to the three institutions in BiH in which they are cared for alongside adults showed that facilities in these institutions are generally poor, because financial resources are lacking, and that little or no provision made for the special needs of these children, despite some excellent examples of work by professional staff.

Adults have a more positive view than children of the extent to which rights are fulfilled in BiH. In general, children do not feel that protection rights are fulfilled and in all areas children complain
about lack of opportunities to participate in decisions made on their behalf. Children in institutions are significantly different from other children in their views of children’s rights; less informed about rights and less able to articulate their views in this area.

Finally, the most important point of all is that children without parental care are effectively invisible second class citizens. The social protection system does not plan adequately to prepare them for adult life. Some live in institutions that are not known to the responsible authorities. Partly because fostered children live with kin, standards of supervision and economic payment for their upkeep are not met. There is little or no monitoring or supervision of institutions, foster care or professional services. Children’s views are not sought with respect to either the choice of placement, or its outcome.
INTRODUCTION

UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has identified children in institutions, or at risk of institutionalisation, as a major and increasing problem. The solution requires a multi-disciplinary approach to tackle the root causes, the outdated legislative framework, the poor training for (and monitoring of) institutions, as well as lack of accountability for protection of children’s rights. Harmonisation of legislation, policies and regulations across the two Entities (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska) and the District of Brcko is long overdue. It is also necessary to develop greater understanding of the varied situations of children without parental care, of children at particularly high risk of being institutionalised, and of children who lack any kind of care. In addition, alternative care options must be explored.

This report describes research about children in institutions in BiH. This began with recruitment of a research team in April 2002, during a workshop lasting one week, which took place in the Sarajevo office of UNICEF BiH and was facilitated by a Technical Advisor. Workshop participants had been chosen on the basis of recommendations from UNICEF’s local partners, governmental, non-governmental and academic, and included individuals from various parts of BiH. By the end of the workshop, six researchers had been selected, one of whom was given the additional task of overall research coordination. Fieldwork took place between July and November 2002, and the research was supported throughout by a Steering Committee (Annex 1), most members of which had participated in the recruitment workshop.

The aim of the research was to improve knowledge and understanding of children in institutions, or at risk of being institutionalised, in BiH. Further objectives of the research were to map all residential institutions for children in BiH, describe the context of childhood in BiH, examine institutional care and compare this with alternatives, study the effects of institutional care, and examine the paths in and out of institutional care. The purpose is to use the research results to design effective interventions that will improve the situation of children placed in institutions and provide support and alternatives for those at risk. ‘Child’ was defined according to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as a human being less than 18 years of age. The research methodology included asking children for their views on their own lives, their needs and wishes, how they perceive themselves and their ideas about home and family. Children are more vulnerable than adults and are often less able to use words to express themselves but, according to Article 12 of the CRC, their perspectives and opinions must be taken into account in decisions taken on their behalf. Thus the data collected with children are of prime importance for UNICEF BiH and country counterparts when planning services and interventions for children without parents.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research provides a comprehensive review of children’s homes, residential facilities and foster care throughout BiH. It includes information from urban and rural areas, public and private facilities, civil society organizations and foster families. The methods used in the research are based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which treats children as competent social actors with valid perspectives, who are subjects rather than objects of research. Children have a right to express their opinions and to use any means of expression that they find appropriate (Article 13 CRC). The consequent adult duty to facilitate fulfilment of these rights has led to the development of new methods of social research. Moreover, because of their vulnerability, research with children raises ethical concerns over and above those that apply to all human research subjects. Thus, in addition to designing appropriate scientific research instruments for data collection with vulnerable children, their families and communities, the researchers
designed novel ways of obtaining voluntary consent from children who participated in the research. (See Annex 3 for a fuller description of methods and ethical strategy).

Following from the aim and purpose, the research included:

- **Analysis of children and childhood in BiH**;
- **Mapping all residential institutions for children in BiH including orphanages and children’s homes and residential care for children with disabilities**;
- **Comparing and contrasting the institutions provided for children by government (at all levels), intergovernmental organizations and organizations of civil society (including non-governmental organisations - NGOs)**;
- **Examining the reasons why children are placed in institutional care; the processes for placing children in institutional care; the reasons why some children remain trapped in institutions; and the effects of institutional care**;
- **Exploring alternatives to institutional care**.

The research was carried out with both children and adults. The adult participants were divided into three groups (Table 1):

- **Professional staff from Centres for Social Work, institutions and other residential facilities**;
- **Non-professional staff from institutions**;
- **Foster parents**.

Research concentrated on three groups of children in three age groupings (3-6, 7-12, 13-18 years) (Table 2):

- **Children without parental care in institutions, SOS Children’s Villages and foster families**;
- **Children with special needs in institutions**;
- **A control group of children living with both their parents, who took part in the research in their normal schools**.

Data were collected systematically according to a research protocol designed by the researchers under the guidance of technical advisors. The methods used included secondary data analysis, research diaries, observation, recall schedules, ranking, sentence completion, interviews, drawings, focus group discussions and questionnaires as well as a Gestalt method called ‘Protection Shield’, which was primarily used as part of the ethical strategy. Three methods were used with adults and seven with children. For the purpose of cross-checking (triangulation) more than one method was used with each child, although not all methods were used with all children (see Annex 3). After the first stage of fieldwork, children’s apparent confusion about national identity was further explored using an extra question ‘What country do you live in’ in some cases with a drawing of the national flag. In addition, during the analysis phase, a comparison of graphic skills in the Protection Shield and other instruments was attempted, because researchers hypothesised that there were differences between children in institutions and those living in families (whether foster or natal homes). However, the results of this were inconclusive.

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Sampling methods were opportunistic, depending on adults available and the numbers of children in different age groups within institutions and other facilities. Thus the sample was not controlled for gender, with the result that there is a predominance of females among both adult and child participants. With respect to adults this also reflects the overrepresentation of women in ‘the helping professions’, although senior staff, such as directors, tend to be male. As far as children who participated in the research are concerned, both in the overall sample of children without parental care and in the control group, there were more boys than girls, the ratios being 1.3/1 and 1.7/1 respectively, which is not a reflection of the ratios in the population aged three to 18 years. Gender was explored in statistical analysis of data collected, but was not generally found to be a significant factor. However, gender analysis will be given more prominence in the second version of this report.

**SCOPE OF RESEARCH**

During the research 99 Centres for Social Work in BiH were surveyed using a postal questionnaire. Data from this method are based on the 97 questionnaires returned (an unusually high response rate). In addition, 36 Centres for Social Work were visited (over a third of the total; Annex 4). Researchers also visited all 16 institutions for children without parental care in BiH, together with three institutions caring for children with special needs and both SOS Children’s Villages, so that 21 residential facilities were visited in all.

**Table 1 Numbers and categories of adults taking part in the research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionals</th>
<th>Non-professional staff in institutions</th>
<th>Foster Parents</th>
<th>Total adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centres for Social Work</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2 Numbers, age groupings and categories of children taking part in the research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age in years</th>
<th>Children without parental care</th>
<th>Children with special needs</th>
<th>Children from Control group</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From institutions and SOS Children’s Villages</td>
<td>From foster families</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-12</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13-18</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total 2,625 items of data were collected (some of which were records of a group instrument, such as focus group discussion). These were gathered from institutions and other residential facilities (1,497), from fostered children and their parents (292) and from a control group of children (836), together with structured observations of facilities in 19 institutions and two SOS children’s villages. Data were gathered from children according to age groups 3-6 years (194), 7-12 years (1,033), 13-
18 years (1,096). Data from adults totalled 140 pieces; 127 staff interviewed in 36 Centres for Social Work, 22 institutions and other facilities for children, as well as 13 focus group discussions with a total of 81 foster parents, in addition to the 97 questionnaires. The research process was documented in a Workplan, a Protocol and a Data Analysis Manual (for details see Annex 3).

This is the first report from analysis of the data collected. Each chapter begins with a list of the main messages of the research that apply in that chapter. The final chapter describes a specific concern of the researchers about the violation of Article 25 of the CRC, on the periodic review of placement of children without parental care. Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 8 end with examples of good practice, selected according to principles laid down in the research Protocol. In order to preserve confidentiality, according to the guarantees given to participants in the ethical strategy of the Protocol, Centres for Social Work and institutions are not generally referred to by name in this report, and care has been taken to preserve the anonymity of individuals and institutions, except in the case of descriptions of good practice.
CHAPTER 1 CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Main Messages

The war changed many things about childhood in BiH:

Almost all households with children have experienced, or are still experiencing, disruption, as refugees or displaced persons, due to the war.

Around a quarter of households with children fall below the poverty line;

Most children without parental care live in foster families, largely with kin and often with grandparents, in economically precarious conditions.

There is no greater indicator of the level of social welfare in a country than the care provided by the state to its most vulnerable citizens. Children without parental care are perhaps the most vulnerable of all, even though their rights are set out in international legislation, the most important of which is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). UNICEF guidelines on rights based programming, identify four key considerations:

- Combating discrimination;
- Taking a holistic, cross-sectoral approach to programming;
- Ensuring the participation of all stakeholders, especially children, women and communities;

UNICEF associates integrated, holistic programme planning with a life-cycle approach, which deals with human development from conception through infancy, childhood and adolescence to early adult sexuality.

A unique feature of the CRC is that the 'best interests of the child', rather than of adults, must be the primary consideration in policy and planning for children. Article 3(3) also establishes that standards for the qualifications of people working with children must be set and maintained. Although it is fundamental to human rights, the extension of the participatory principle to children is a novel feature of the CRC. This establishes, especially in Article 12, that children are legal subjects of rights and not simply objects of concern - as they might be if Article 3(a) were to stand alone. Thus the extent to which children without parental care participate in decisions made about their welfare was a key consideration for the research.

The state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) consists of two entities - the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and the Republika Srpska (RS) – together with the Independent District of Brcko. Bosnia and Herzegovina succeeded to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on 1st September, 1993, signed the Optional Protocols on children in armed conflict and child prostitution and pornography on 7th September 2000, and ratified the latter on 4th September 2002. Initial and second periodic reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (due in 1994 and 1999 respectively) have not yet been submitted. The single reservation of BiH with respect to these treaties is of particular relevance to children without parental care as it refers to Article 9 (1) of the CRC, which states that:
States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents or one where the parents are living separately and a decision must be made as to the child’s place of residence.

The reservation reads that:

The Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina reserves the right not to apply paragraph 1 of article 9 of the Convention since the internal legislation of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina provides for the right of competent authorities (guardianship authorities) to determine on separation of a child from his/her parents without a previous judicial review.

This report will describe the challenges faced by adults in BiH, the staff in Centres for Social Work, institutions and other facilities, as well as foster parents in providing for the rights and needs of children without parental care. It also, and more importantly, focuses on the voices of children who are the users of services and other provisions, but whose opinions are seldom sought. This chapter sets the scene by describing the situation of children and childhood in BiH in 2002, when the research took place, as well as the often complex legal and administrative background to social protection.

1.1 IDEAS ABOUT CHILDREN AND CHILDHOOD

‘A child is a blank sheet of paper that needs to be written on.’

Social worker, Centre for Social Work.

No human being is as dependent on the support and help of others for survival as a child (Buljubasic, 2002). Without help from adults, children would die soon after birth, being unable to provide their own food or to protect themselves. Adult care is essential in order to satisfy basic physical needs. Yet this is not all, for children also have psychological, intellectual, spiritual and emotional needs. They need attention and tenderness, care filled with love, physical contact and stimulating surroundings. Unfortunately, not all children are lucky enough to grow up with their parents, some because their parents die, others because parents are unwilling or unable to provide appropriate or adequate care. Many psychologists have warned of consequences for children who lack proper adult care in the earliest periods of life. According to Rene Spitz, children without adequate care, who fail to develop a sense of attachment to carers, gradually lose their interest in their surroundings, lose weight, and develop stereotypical movements, a condition he called ‘anaclitic depression’ and which he treated as the first phase in clinical depression. Spitz also warned that, for some children, this condition led to reduced resistance to disease and even, on occasion, to death. (Spitz, 1946). Researchers such as John Bowlby, have warned of the harmful consequences for young children who are separated from their parents or guardians, and placed in institutions (Bowlby, 1953). Bowlby developed the concept of ‘attachment’, which has served as the basis for understanding normal relationships between children and their carers as well as the consequences of lack of care (Buljubasic, 2002).

Interviews with professionals and other adults during this research showed that their views concurred with those of mainstream psychology. They consider children to be little human beings, people in need of support and attention. They also perceive children to be the future hope and wealth of the world. One female social worker from a Centre for Social Work, defined a child using the words of the novelist Ivo Andric, who was born and lived in BiH: ‘Those little people that we
call children’. Another social worker stated that: ‘Childhood is the starting point in life, on which is built the foundation for the future.’

Adults taking part in this research also articulated good memories of childhood - as the best time of their lives, which they remember spending with their families. Perhaps because of this, they emphasised that family is the most important factor in ensuring a happy childhood. If the family is complete, supportive and caring, all will be well. If the family is dysfunctional, if parents quarrel or divorce, or are alcoholics or substance abusers, then children are at risk.

The ideal of the family in BiH is traditional, patriarchal and characterised by close-knit relationships. Family members try to solve all problems themselves, trying to keep them out of public sight. During the past decade, most probably in response to the stress and displacement of war, people have seemed to return to traditional ideas and customs, resulting in even stronger reliance on the family. As will be seen later in this report, most fostering of children without parents takes place within the extended family.

Parents are the main source of family authority and extremely protective of children, with the result that children in BiH have a elevated degree of reliance and dependence. Children continue to live with their families well into adult life and may remain at home to care for elderly or infirm parents. The roles and functions of family members are clearly defined, especially by gender. According to the ideal, the father has the role of breadwinner, while the mother stays with children and cares for their safety, upbringing and education. Gender is a consistent discriminatory feature of life in BiH. In rural areas, the birth of a boy is more welcome than the birth of a girl. Many employers prefer to employ male workers, because they will not need to go on maternity leave.

**COMPARISONS WITH THE PAST**

‘Children are amazingly emotional beings’

Lawyer, institution for children without parental care.

During the research, many professionals said that they had experienced better and happier childhoods than children do now. They had fewer material belongings, but children were more creative and knew how to organise various activities without financial support. Professionals claimed in interviews that today’s children are limited in many ways. In the first place, the poor economic situation means that only some children can have their material wishes fulfilled, while parents of other children can barely afford to feed them. During the socialist era, children’s basic needs were satisfied. Child allowances were introduced in former Yugoslavia in the late 1940s, among the first family policy measures implemented after World War II. Originally, the child allowance was designed to compensate for the costs of children and intended to decrease the impact of inequalities. In the early years, when the allowance was relatively high in relation to wages and salaries, it may be that it had some positive effects for children and for their standard of living (Boh and Cernigoj Sadar, 1992). Since then this has changed significantly, especially in the last decade, so that by 2002 child allowances did not even cover basic social support for children.

Professionals acknowledged that BiH is currently in a depressed situation, both politically and financially. This directly influences the quality of social care for children, because funding for social protection is a good deal lower than it used to be before the war so that standards of care, both in institutions and in foster families, do not reach former levels. It is now considerably more difficult to provide adequately for the nation’s children.

In addition, professionals pointed out that children in BiH have gone through the terror, and/or aftermath of war, like so many previous generations. Yet for the current generation of children there is a further conflict-related aspect. The BiH Mine Action Centre estimates that almost one million
mines remain throughout the country. This limits children’s freedom to explore their
neighbourhoods and surroundings, in contrast to previous generations.

### 1.2 CHILDREN OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN 2002

Different legislations (national, entity and district), different levels and modes of governance and
different statistical records, combine to present barriers to building a coherent picture of childhood
(or childhoods) in BiH in general, and of the lives of children without parents in particular. The last
Census in BiH was carried out over 11 years before this research took place, which is why the
actual number of children in the country is not known. The total population estimated from sample
surveys in FBiH and RS (UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey of 2000 and the Living
Standards Measurement Survey of 2002) is around 3.5 million, of which 867,632 are children
(roughly one third in RS and two thirds in FBiH) (MICS, 2000; LSMS, 2002).

According to these sample surveys, less than half of all households are households with children
(43-44 percent). The overall mean number of household members is 3.2, while the mean for
households with children is 4.4 members. This is higher in rural areas, where 47 percent of children
live. There is a slight dip in numbers in the age group eight-to-nine years of age, which corresponds

The dependency ratio (0-18 years + over 64 years) was calculated in the LSMS to be 38.2, which
means that the economically active population (aged 16 to 64) is twice as large as the dependent
population, who cannot provide for their own needs. This might appear to be good for children’s
welfare, but has to be seen in the context of high unemployment. According to LSMS, 24 percent of
children live in households where the household head is unemployed. Households with children
spent up to a quarter less of the national per capita income than households without children. About
19.1 percent of the population (nearly one fifth) falls below a General Poverty Line of 1,843 KM a
year (approximately two KM – convertible marks - to one US$). In addition, it must be remembered
that many children without parents live with grandparents, in a household in which there may be no
economically active members. Despite this children do not seem to be working in BiH in large
numbers. Sixteen percent of children aged five to 14 years in FBiH, and 21 percent in RS, are
currently working, about one percent of children aged five to 14 years in FBiH and half of one
percent in RS are in paid employment. Seven percent of children in this age group in FBiH, and
four percent in RS participate in unpaid work for someone other than a household member. Slightly
more than half the children in both Entities engage in domestic tasks, such as cooking, fetching
water, and caring for other children, for less than four hours a day.

Ninety-four percent of children aged 0-14 in FBiH and 90 percent in RS, are living with both
parents. Children with one or both parents deceased amount to four percent of all children aged 0-
14 years in FBiH and six percent in RS. LSMS calculations of the relationship of children (aged 0-
18 years) to the head of household show that 85 percent of children are offspring of the household
head, while 15.7 percent are grandchildren of heads of household. Children who are related in
another way, or unrelated, or married to the head of household constitute less than one percent, the
highest number being among 13 to 18 year olds in urban areas. Households in RS have higher
proportion of grandchild members than FBiH households (23 percent and 12 percent respectively)
as well as higher percentages of ‘other related’ and ‘non-related’ (1.0 percent and 0.6 percent). In
general, urban households also have higher percentages of ‘other related’ and ‘non-related’ than
semi-urban and rural households (1.2 percent, 0.8 percent, 0.4 percent respectively). The highest
percentages of ‘other related’ and ‘non-related’ children are in the 13 to 18 age group (mostly 17
to 18 years of age).

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2 The dependency ratio calculates the number of dependents (young and old) in the population who are not
economically active as a proportion of the economically active (16 to 64 years of age).
HOUSING: WHERE DO CHILDREN LIVE?

The disruptions and displacements of war significantly affected the housing and living arrangements of children and their families. According to LSMS, 24 percent of households with children live in multifamily dwellings, such as apartment buildings, more in FBiH and urban areas. A relatively high proportion (66.9 percent) of households with children live in owner-occupied properties. On the other hand 34,593 (7.2 percent) of households with children, especially in urban areas, live in free-of-charge, illegal or emergency dwellings. The conditions in households are generally good: 82.5 percent of households with children have good or adequate housing, with the worst conditions in RS, where 24.2 percent are in bad or devastated condition. Overall 11 percent of households with children have no running water and 19.3 percent either have no sewage or use latrines.

There is no statistical information on the displacement and migration patterns of children less than 15 years of age. LSMS shows that 61.4 percent of 15 to 18 year olds had lived continuously in the same settlement from birth. Those who had moved gave ‘war’ (48.4 percent) and ‘family changes’ (33 percent) as the main reasons for relocation. Not surprisingly the largest number of those who had moved (67.4 percent) are now located in urban areas. Only just over half of the 15 to 18 year olds surveyed in 2002 by LSMS were living in a permanent place of residence. Of the remainder, 43.3 percent were housed in temporary accommodation as refugees or displaced persons. Even many of those in permanent housing (15.9 percent) are refugees or displaced returnees. What this means is that around one third of 15 to 18 year olds were, and are, affected by the dislocation of war. Data on heads of households with children indicate that more children than adults were displaced because of the conflict.

Nearly half the late adolescents (15 to 18 years) and heads of household with children who were surveyed by LSMS moved to their present location because of war related problems. This, in combinations with 43 percent of 15-18 year olds and 35.7 percent of heads of households with children living in temporary quarters either as a refugee or displaced person, speaks to the magnitude of the disruption in living conditions still in existence six years after the Dayton Agreement was signed in 1995 (LSMS, 2002).

EDUCATION

According to the 2000 MICS statistics for FBiH and RS, 92.3 percent of children between birth and six years old and 88.2 percent of those aged three to six years were neither in pre-school or kindergarten, with a higher ratio not having, or not using, early childhood provision in rural areas.

The official age of entry to primary school is seven years. According to MICS, 94 percent of children of primary school age (7 to 14 years) in FBiH, and 95 percent in RS, are attending primary school. The LSMS figures from a different sample in 2002, are 91.6 percent in FBiH and 89.2 percent in RS. This may indicate a decline in school attendance or simply be a reflection of differences in sampling frame and survey design. There is no difference between male and female primary school attendance or between urban and rural areas in BiH as a whole.

Ninety-nine percent of children in FBiH who enter the first grade of primary school eventually reach grade five (MICS, 2000), here being no gender and urban-rural differences in BiH as a whole. There is a significant drop in the percentage of children who remain in school after the age of 13 years. The reasons given for dropping out are that they have ‘finished’ school, that it is too costly or that it is irrelevant. More girls than boys attend secondary school (LSMS, 2002).

The vast majority (95 percent) of the population of BiH over the age of 15 years is literate. The literacy rate ranges from almost 100 percent among those aged 15-25 to 74 percent among the population aged 65 and above.
CHILD HEALTH

Despite scarce national economic resources, health indicators are relatively good. Most children (79.2 percent) are covered by some kind of health insurance (LSMS). According to MICS, only two percent of children under the age of five years in BiH are underweight and just under one percent is severely underweight. Almost two percent of infants born in RS and four percent in FBIH are estimated to be of low birth weight. Twelve percent of children under the age of five in FBIH and eleven percent in RS are stunted (or too short for their age) while eight percent of children under the age of five years are wasted (or too thin for their height) in BiH overall. Approximately one fifth of children under the age of five in RS are overweight (21 percent), and five percent of them suffer from obesity. Children whose mothers have secondary or higher education are less likely to be underweight and stunted compared to children of mothers with less education.

Ninety-five percent of children aged 12-23 months in FBiH and 96 percent in RS receive BBG vaccine by the age of 12 months. The first dose of DPT is received by the age of 12 months by 92 percent of children in FBiH and 90 percent in RS. This level decreases to 89 percent in both Entities for the second dose and for the third dose to 86 percent in FBiH and 81 percent in RS. Ninety-four percent of children in FBiH and 90 percent in RS, received a first polio inoculation by the age of 12 months, and this declines in both entities for the second and third dose. There are slight differences in the vaccination rate between boys and girls in both Entities. In FBiH, more girls are vaccinated (69 percent) compared to boys (63 percent). In RS more boys are vaccinated compared to girls. Vaccination coverage for all recommended vaccines is higher among children whose mothers have secondary or higher school education, the differential being greatest for measles vaccination.

1.3 CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE

‘Only strong, harmonious, happy family, with a lot of care, love and nurture can provide a child with a happy childhood.’

Educator, Centre for Social Work.

BiH Law on Social Protection defines a child (‘minor’) without parental care as one that has no parents, has unknown parents, has been abandoned by parents or whose parents are not able to provide complete care because they have limited ability to perform their parental duties or have been deprived of parental rights. Children without parental care constitute a particularly vulnerable, sensitive and at risk group. The engagement of all sectors of society is necessary in order to ensure their proper development and preparation for independent life. Their protection and socialisation has traditionally been the subject of customary, legal, regulative and religious interest as well as leading to the development of social institutions that provide indirect or direct help (Buljubasic, 2002).

The available data indicate that there are between 2,000 and 3,000 children without parental care in BiH. From the data collected by researchers between July and November 2002, there are 992 of these children lived in institutions for children without parental care (772 in the FBiH and 129 in RS). This is an increase on the figures provided by the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs FBiH and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of RS in 2001, according to which there were a total of 914 (803 in FBiH and 111 in RS).

According to data collected in 2001 by the Federal Office for Statistics in FBiH, 23,016 minors were beneficiaries of social protection, of which 2,481 were children without parental care. These

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3 Weighing less than 2,500 grams at birth.
were further divided into categories: children with both parents dead (1,204), children whose parents are unknown (179), children abandoned by parents (609), children of parents who are prevented from performing their parental duties (427) and children whose parents have been deprived of their parental rights (62). The largest single category of minors who were beneficiaries of social protection (20,535) in FBiH consisted of those who are endangered by their family situation and at risk of being removed from parental care, children whose parents lack an adequate income (15,487), children whose parents neglect or abuse them (568), children whose development is being retarded by the family situation (2,366), and children who are socially neglected and maladjusted.

The Statistical Bureau in RS does not have such detailed data. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection RS was only able to provide information on 821 children without parental care, 111 placed in institutions, 659 in biologically related foster families and 51 in non-kin foster families.

### 1.4 LEGISLATION FOR CHILD PROTECTION

‘All the happiness of this world lies behind the single smile of one child’

Psychologist, Centre For Social Work

The unprecedented atrocities committed during the war undoubtedly contributed to awareness in BiH that it is necessary to support international legislation on human rights, especially the protection of children’s rights (Habul, 1998). Thus, one of the most important sets of standards guiding child protection in BiH is the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child (CRC) in which ‘the best interests of the child’ is a fundamental principle. Later in this report children’s own views about their rights, and the extent to which they are fulfilled or violated in and out of institutions will be examined. Certain Articles in the CRC establish standards for the care of children without parents:

- **Article 9**: On the conditions under which children should be separated from their parents and the right to continued contact with parents when in the care of the state;
- **Article 10**: On family reunification if children and parents become separated by national borders;
- **Article 20**: State responsibilities and alternative forms of care for children separated from their parents;
- **Article 21**: On adoption;
- **Article 25**: On the need for periodic review of placement for children without parents placed in institutional or alternative care.

One of the most important rights for any child, but particularly for a child without family ties, is the right to a name and an identity (Articles 7 and 8, CRC). During fieldwork and visits to institutions for placement of children without parental care, researchers came across cases in which children up to two years old did not have official names. They were told that this happens when a baby is abandoned by parents and placed by authorities in an institution, when there is no available information about the parent’s identity. According to legislation, a child cannot be named until a certain period of time passes, because the authorities are obliged to seek information about the child’s identity. The research team encountered an 18 month old girl in a home for children without parental care, who waved happily at everyone who passed her cot. The staff had named her ‘SFOR

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4 A list of the relevant laws is in Annex 2.
baby’ because she waves and laughs particularly enthusiastically at Stabilization Force (SFOR) personnel in uniform when they visit the home.

When nations become states parties to the CRC they are obliged to harmonize their domestic legislation to meet at least the minimum standards it establishes for children. There are currently many laws and regulations about child protection in BiH, regulating relationships between parents and children, special care for children without parents and for children whose parents do not take care of them, as well as school attendance (legislation referred to in this report is listed in Annex 2). The 1995 Dayton Agreement brought about significant changes in the area of social policy, including in child protection. Social policy and legislation have been devolved to Entity level. Yet, neither FBiH nor the District of Brcko had enacted regulations on jobs and norms for the employment of professional staff and conditions of facilities in institutions by 2002. In FBiH decentralisation goes even further, and social policy is devolved to cantonal level. Each canton has duties with respect to social protection, and is obliged to introduce its own laws, which must be in harmony with FBiH legislation. Realisation of rights depends on the economic strength of a canton and not all cantons have yet established their own legislation, or are able to implement laws that have been adopted Canton Srednjebosanski, for example, had still not passed these laws by the time of the research. The situation is less complicated in RS, where there is a single law for the Entity and all municipalities, which are responsible for managing social welfare services covered by this legislation.

1.5 FINANCING SOCIAL WELFARE

‘Why is a child in Sarajevo more valuable than a child in Gorazde?’

Social worker, Gorazde.

The basic opinion of the staff interviewed in Centres for Social Work is that BiH has good laws on social protection but it is very difficult to implement them because the quality of social protection depends on funding. There are considerable differences in provision for children without parents in BiH, according to where they live. The main difference between the law and the system of social protection in two entities is that RS has two main levels of budgeting its social protection programs, municipality and Republic, while the situation in FBiH is more complex. Funds for realisation of the rights established by the Law on Social Protection of RS are provided by municipal budgets, together with the budget of the Republic. Municipalities are responsible for providing the social protection budget. If they are not able to realise planned income for this budget line from their own resources, they are entitled to additional funds for social protection from the budget of the Republic.

The Federation is divided into ten cantons, each of which should have its own law on social protection. However, all cantons have not yet introduced this law. These cantonal laws have to be harmonised with FBiH law on social protection, which was introduced in 1999. Rights to social protection include material provision, allowance for caring for another person, assistance in enabling children and youth with developmental difficulties to be employed, accommodation in institutions of social protection or placement in a foster family and other social work services. The responsibility for providing these benefits falls throughout BiH on 100 Centres for Social Work. In FBiH there is no overall legislation that determines whether Centres for Social Work should receive the necessary funding. The situation differs from canton to canton, some Centres for Social Work in FBiH being funded by a cantonal ministry and others by a municipality.

The Law on Social Protection of FBiH provides funds for social protection, protection of civil victims of the war and protection of family and children in relation to the regulation of the Federation and cantons from: municipal budgets, cantonal budgets, investment of institution founders, social service users’ personal participation, legacy, gifts and wills and other resources.
Actual financing of social protection in FBiH goes through two ministries, the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Politics, and cantonal budgets. Because each cantonal ministry is responsible for regulating the amounts paid to various social services through its own cantonal law on social protection, there is considerable inequality between users of social protection in different cantons. For example, the amounts paid for the fostering vary, and regularity of payments depends on the economic strength of the canton. Thus one social worker in Centre for Social Work in Gorazde, asked researchers ‘Why is a child in Sarajevo more valuable than a child in Gorazde?’

The Law on Social Protection provides social welfare budgets in District of Brcko through budgets of the Government of the District of Brcko and the budget of BiH. Funds for providing financial maintenance, support for home care, placement in institutions, placement in other families, home assistance, and the services of social work and financing of institutions of social protection come from the budget of Government of District of Brcko. The budget of BiH provides funding for building, adapting, rebuilding and equipping institutions of social protection. Financial support is paid to service users monthly, directly from the Government of the District of Brcko. Institutions for social protection acquire financial resources for functioning through fulfilling social, health and educational duties and professional training, according to the size and quality of services and established costs. The rates of payment for placement for children in institutions and foster families, are established through decisions made by the Department for Social Protection of the Government of District of Brcko.

1.6 CONCLUSIONS

The disruptions and dislocations of war have affected all children living in BiH, yet the statistical record does not provide sufficient information for analysis of the precise situation of the population aged 0 to 18 years as a whole, much less children without parental care. Differences in legal and budgetary provision between the two Entities and the District of Brcko further complicate the picture. The exact number of children who do not live with their biological parents is not known. Around one third of those known, live in institutions or other facilities for children without parental care and many more are in foster families. As will be seen in later chapters, there is no culture of state-sponsored fostering in BiH and the vast majority of fostered children live with blood relatives. Although the statistical record is not sufficiently detailed to be certain, it seems likely that many live with grandparents, who may have insufficient income to provide adequately for their needs. It is also possible that some children are being informally fostered with kin, without the knowledge of social protection authorities. In any case, it is clear that financial support for children in general in BiH, whether from family resources or from the state, is often inadequate and that large numbers of children live in substandard housing.
CHAPTER 2  CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

Messages

Centres for Social Work lack financial resources;
There is a staffing crisis in Centres for Social Work;
There are wide variations in service provision between different parts of BiH;
These variations do not necessarily correlate with financial resources, but can be related to the commitment of individual workers in Centres for Social Work;
Money does not fix everything;
Lack of economic resources does not excuse everything.

‘Social protection should be organised at the federal level,’
Social worker in a Centre for Social Work.

The Law on Social Protection in BiH regulates services for children, which are provided through a variety of institutions: Centres for Social Work, homes for children and youth, institutions for children with special needs, institutions for children with physical disability, and shelters for children and youth. At the heart of social protection in BiH are Centres for Social Work, which have the duties to:

Discover and monitor social needs and problems of citizens and undertake necessary measures for dealing with these needs and problems;
Suggest and undertake measures in dealing with social problems, needs and pathological behaviour;
Organise and carry out appropriate types of social protection, child protection, family protection, protection of juvenile offenders and provide direct services;
Develop and promote preventative activities that contribute to combating social problems and pathologies;
Provide diagnostic services, adequate treatment, counselling therapeutic services and professional help to users;
Support, organise and coordinate professional and voluntary humanitarian work in the fields of social protection, child protection, family protection, protection of juvenile offenders, as well as protection of the elderly and minors;
Carry out corrective measures;
Cooperate with non-government organizations and religious communities;
Keep documentary records of administration, jobs and services;
Conduct other tasks according to the laws and regulations of the Council of Assembly.
The research surveyed 97 Centres for Social Work in BiH, 57 in FBiH, 39 in RS and one in the District of Brcko. In addition to Centres for Social Work, there are also 36 services of social provision, which are somewhat smaller than Centre for Social Work - 26 in FBiH and ten in RS. The researchers visited 36 Centres for Social Work in BiH and interviewed 70 professional staff (Table 3). One of the most noticeable features of Table 3 is that the majority of professionals in Centres for Social Work are female. In the sample interviewed, 58 were female and only 12 male.

**Table 3: Professionals in Centres for Social Work interviewed during the research, by specialism and gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professionals in Centres for Social Work</th>
<th>Social Workers</th>
<th>Lawyers</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Psychologists</th>
<th>Social Educator</th>
<th>Special Needs Specialist</th>
<th>Totals</th>
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<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
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<td>None</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 **SCARCE FUNDS MEAN DECREASED SERVICES**

‘For the whole year only one payment for children placed in institutions has been made,’

Social worker, Centre for Social Work.

As already seen, Centres for Social Work in BiH are mostly financed by municipality (RS) or cantonal and municipality (FBiH) budgets. This means that if the municipality or canton is wealthy the Centres are usually in good condition, with staff paid well and regularly, but if there is no finance available in a poorer area the reverse is the case. The sources of finance in the Centres for Social Work in FBiH (cantons or municipalities in cantons) are not clearly defined, particularly in municipalities located in cantons that do not yet have their own social protection laws.

Staff in Centres for Social Work told researchers during interviews that they sometimes have to inform clients that there are no funds available to pay the benefits that are due to them. They stated that it is hard to refuse clients when they ask for the benefits to which they are entitled: ‘In our canton we have the worst situation in relation to social protection - for the whole year only one payment for children placed in institutions has been made,’ commented one social worker.

Most of the Centres that researchers visited claimed to be in a difficult financial situation. In some, workers had not received their wages for months, much less financial support for their clients. For example, a staff member in the Centre has told researchers ‘Last year we did not receive six [monthly] salaries altogether, and we felt like going on strike’. Researchers interviewed social workers who had not been paid for four months and who had eventually been paid less than the amount owing to them. Some said that they would not mind receiving smaller salaries if they were paid regularly. At one Centre for Social Work, the Director said that staff could not carry out home visits, as they do not have sufficient money for petrol. Some Centres for Social Work do not make payments for placements of children in their catchment area either to institutions or to foster families. In addition, the workers in some Centres for Social Work said that the financial situation does not allow employment of more professionals, so that one worker is has to do the job of more than one person.
Nevertheless, this was not the case with all Centres visited. Some are well funded and workers receive good salaries regularly. In fact, researchers came to the conclusion that money is not the major issue in social service provision. Some Centres that were not operating with optimal funds clearly had dedicated staff who work to the best of their ability and maintain contact with their clients despite lack of resources, while other, well funded, Centres do not maintain regular contacts with their clients. Money does not fix everything and lack of resources does not excuse everything.

### 2.2 THE ROLE OF CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK IN CHILD PROTECTION

The laws on child protection organise the child protection system and the administration of financial payments. Child protection consists of defending the rights of parents and children and organising the provision of:

- Basic conditions for satisfying developmental needs of children;
- Assistance to the family in realisation of its reproductive, protective, educational and economical functions;
- Preschool education and schools;
- Day care, socialisation, education, preventative medical protection, diet, rest, recreation, cultural, sports and creative activities of children;
- Work with children without parental care, children with developmental difficulties, children on longer medical treatment and children from at risk families;
- Special protection of the third child in families with more than two children.

### 2.3 PROTECTION OF CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE

According to family law, guardianship is a special type of social protection, protecting the rights and interests of minors without parental care, and of adults who are unable to take care of themselves. The following groups of minors are placed under guardianship:

- Children whose parents are deceased, lost, or unknown or whose residence has been unknown for over a year;
- Children whose parents have been deprived of their parental rights;
- Children whose parents have been deprived of, or not achieved, the capacity to work, or who have limited ability to work;
- Children whose parents have, over time, neglected to care for their offspring;
- Children whose parents are absent and are not able to regularly take care of them, who have not handed over a child to be looked after by someone who has been appointed a guardian or is accepted as a guardian by the relevant authorities.

Centres for Social Work are the main bodies for appointing a guardian. Guardianship can be direct or indirect. Indirect guardianship is mostly applied to children without parental care who are placed outside institutional care, while direct guardianship is applied to children who are placed in institutions, in which case a social worker from a Centre for Social Work takes on the role of guardian (Buljubasic, 2002). A Centre for Social Work is obliged to appoint a guardian for a child without parental care, regardless of whether the placement is in a family or in an institution.

A guardian is responsible for child protection, for ensuring adequate development of a child’s personality, and for protecting his or her rights and property. Guardians must have the personal
characteristics and abilities for adequately performing these duties and to have consented to become a guardian. During the process of appointing a guardian, a Centre for Social Work should take into account the wishes of a child who is able to express them, as well as the wishes of close relatives of the child. A close blood relation, who fulfils all necessary conditions for being a guardian, may be appointed.

The placements available for children without parental care are adoption, foster family placement and institutional care. A child allowance should be paid to satisfy children’s basic developmental needs, regardless of whether they are in foster families or institutions. Workers at one Centre for Social Work said during interviews that the child allowance is at a minimal level, irregularly paid and much lower than it used to be before the war. One worker went further and said that ‘Social protection in our country does not meet the needs of a child, and due to current economical politics and large-scale unemployment, children live in poor social conditions.’

2.4 CONDITIONS IN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

The premises of a Centre of Social Work are required to be located in an urban area, to be easily accessible to everyone and well connected to public transport, both within the town itself and inter-city. Most of the centres visited by researchers had been established in accordance with these regulations. Nevertheless, wheel chair access and lifts in the buildings are notable by their absence, which must cause problems for some service users and also tends to limit professional staff to the able bodied.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Most of the 36 centres visited in BiH are situated in older facilities and buildings, have worn furniture and can rarely count on computers among the office equipment. The largest Centre in RS for example, has only four computers for use among 25 professional staff. In addition, many workers have not been trained to work on computers. One worker in a Centre for Social Work commented, ‘Professionals should be assisted to have additional education and training’.

Staff in Centres for Social Work have limited work space. Apart from psychologists, staff interviewed during the research shared an office with another staff member, in which both workers performed direct case work and counselling with their clients. Thus confidentiality is at stake. A solution to this problem, which researchers did not encounter during fieldwork, would be to allocate a separate room for counselling and casework, which staff could book for confidential work with clients.

A STAFFING CRISIS

There is an acute shortage of staff in Centres for Social Work. According to existing BiH law on employment and norms for qualified staff and working conditions in Centres for Social Work, there should be one social worker for every 6000 to 8000 people living in a catchment area. This was not the case in any of the Centres for Social Work visited, all of which had less staff than required. The number of professionals needed in a Centre for Social Work is calculated according to the number of inhabitants living in the area it covers:

One social worker to 6,000 to 8,000 inhabitants;
One lawyer to 25,000 inhabitants;
One psychologist to 30,000 inhabitants;
One educator to 40,000 inhabitants;
One special needs professional to 40,000 inhabitants;
One sociologist to 100,000 inhabitants, and two over 100,000 inhabitants.

As an exemption from these requirements, municipalities with a lack of qualified staff can register as Centres for Social work if they have employed (on a full time basis) one social worker and one lawyer. Centres can also employ professionals with other skills (psychologist, educator, special needs teacher, and sociologist) on a full time or part time basis. The Director of a Centre with less than ten employees is supposed to work half time on professional duties.

There is no legislation setting out the required numbers of professionals in Centres for Social Work in FBiH or District Brcko. RS uses an old law from the Socialistic Republic of BiH as the basis for developing decisions on the number of professionals in Centres for Social Work, so these regulations can be considered to be relevant also for FBiH and District Brcko.

Professionals in Centres for Social Work consist of social workers, lawyers, educators, psychologists, educator-psychologists, special needs teachers and sociologists. One of the objectives of the questionnaire sent to Centres for Social Work in BiH was to find out about the specialisms of employed professionals and the relationship of staffing levels to the legal requirement according to the number of inhabitants in the catchments area (Table 4). The total number of inhabitants in the areas covered by the 74 Centres for Social Work that responded to these questions was 2,401,743.

Table 4 reveals an extraordinarily large shortfall the numbers of professionals required by law to be employed in each Centre for Social Work; overall, the 74 Centres who returned questionnaires are working at around half the legally established staffing level. The situation is particularly critical with respect to sociologists, with only one tenth of the required staff in place, and psychologists, with only a fifth of the obligatory number available in these Centres. The availability of special needs teachers and educators (pedagogues) is scarcely any better and a third more social workers are required. Even lawyers, who appear to be more available to respond to the needs of clients and potential clients, would need to be increased by 16 percent to bring staffing up to the required level. What this also means is that, instead of having roughly equal numbers of lawyers, psychologists, educators, special needs teachers and sociologists available to work with clients, the pool of professional skills with the exception of social workers, is dominated by the legal profession.

Table 4 Number of professionals in 74 of the Centres for Social Work answering the research questionnaire in 2002, compared to legal requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional specialism</th>
<th>Required no. of professionals in Centre for Social Work by the law according to number of inhabitants</th>
<th>Actual No. of professionals in Centres for Social Work</th>
<th>Shortfall (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social worker</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>121 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawyer</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>16 (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologist</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41 (68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special needs teacher</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociologist</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73 (90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>363 (47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examination of questionnaires from individual Centres for Social Work, together with data gathered during visits, reveal that the situation on the ground can be even more serious, particularly with respect to the lack of psychologists. Sixty out of 74 Centres for Social Work do not have even one psychologist on the staff. For example, the Centre for Social Work in one city with over 100,000 inhabitants does not have a single psychologist. Centres for Social Work in Sarajevo and Banja Luka have the highest number of workers, but even they do not satisfy legal requirements. For example, Cantonal Centres for Social Work Sarajevo, in accordance with the number of inhabitants, should have 122 professionals (social workers, psychologists, lawyers, educators, special needs teachers and sociologists), not including administrative staff. The Centre for Social Work in Sarajevo has employed 78 (63.94 percent) of the required number. An even worse situation exists in the Centre for Social Work in Banja Luka, which employs only 24 professionals (40 percent) out of 60 that should work there according to the legal regulations. One result of under-staffing is that workers have to perform tasks that are not within the range of skills in which they have professional training. In one Centre for Social Work researchers found only one social worker, performing multiple tasks, which demands high performance and risks burn out. During interview, this particular female worker told us that she is performing five jobs at once. She is unable to cover all the geographical areas in terms of field visits, as she has neither the time nor the energy: ‘There are not enough professional staff in this centre, there are not enough of us to carry this amount of work, this size of workload.’

One reason for such a large deficit in the number of professionals in Centres for Social Work is lack of financial resources to pay for additional staff. As already seen, current staff often do not get paid, or are paid irregularly. A further reason is that there are insufficient numbers of professionals with relevant qualifications in BiH. Many professionals emigrated during the war and post-war period, reducing the number of professionals in the country. The age range of professionals working with children in Centres for Social Work shows that there are a very small number of younger professionals (aged 25 to 35 years). The shortfall can also be explained by the fact that institutions of higher education in BiH do not produce enough professionals and that many young people, who might have been trained, left the country during the 1990s. A School of Social Work was opened in RS in 1999, which is now teaching a fourth class of social workers. In FBiH, a Social Welfare Department has existed within the School of Political Sciences in Sarajevo since 1985 and a School of Psychology since 1989. There has also been a School of Psychology in Tuzla since 2000. These educational facilities will increase numbers of trained professionals over time, but funds are required to support students and also for increased employment budgets within Centres for Social Work, so that their skills can be utilised once they have been trained.

Until such time, the proportion of young professionals working in the Centre for Social Work will remain very small. The majority of workers in Centres for Social Work are females over 40 years of age. One of the workers from a Centre for Social Work in RS reckoned that the average age of professional staff in Centres for Social Work is 50 years, and suggested that centres need younger professionals and additional education and training for older workers. The Director of another Centre for Social Work, who is a lawyer by profession, said, ‘We need more social workers, and not those old ones, but new and young qualified staff’.

Even though legislation on Centres for Social Work mentions voluntary humanitarian work in the field of social protection, during field visits did not encounter any volunteers. In every centre visited there were only paid professionals.

Out of 12 male professionals researchers interviewed, five were directors of the Centres for Social Work, compared to only eight out of 58 female professionals. Fieldwork evidence appears to show that some directors of Centres for Social Work were appointed to the position according to party political membership. Some told researchers this themselves. In addition researchers found
examples of directors whose qualifications and experience were from a field unrelated to social protection. This was particularly true for male directors of Centres for Social Work.

**CRISIS MEASURES**

The inevitable result of scarce human and financial resources is that services are responsive rather than preventive or proactive. According to legal provisions, the services provided by Centre for Social Work should be preventative. Centres for Social Work are also supposed to provide help in organizing local communities to prevent social problems and to minimize their effects. According to the same law, everybody has the right to free social work services. Yet in reality, this is not always the case. For example, due to lack of staff and financial difficulties, most centres are working on cases with people already known to the social services and often in crisis. Researchers did not come across a single example of Centre for Social Work practice in which preventative and/or educational measures had been applied. A worker in one of the larger Centres for Social Work admitted that the quality of services provided could be improved. Crisis orientation is the inevitable result of shrinking or limited financial resources (Shanti and Van Oudenhoven, 2002).

### 2.5 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Despite the scarcity of resources, researchers met many committed staff. They also identified two examples of good practice within the sphere of operations of Centres for Social Work. The first is a project called CUKA, which is part of the Centre for Social Work in Banja Luka. There are no special institutions in RS that work with juvenile offenders, which means that this Centre for Social Work is the only agency dealing with this issue. In 1998, it began working in partnership with Save the Children (UK) on a joint project called Justice for Juveniles, which has had noteworthy results. Project CUKA is part of the Centre for Social Work structure and works in partnership with the Faculties of Psychology and Social Work, as well as with local non-government organizations that deal with young, male offenders. CUKA is located in a small house where there is an office for the permanent workers (social worker and educator) together with other rooms that young people use on a daily basis for recreation and education. Apart from the basketball court, which is located just outside the Centre, there are also other amenities, including three television sets, two video recorders, two Sony play-stations, a CD player, table tennis equipment and a gym. There also is a workshop and computer room. CUKA is physically separate from the premises of Centre for Social Work. This is beneficial for service users, as they are not stigmatized as users of any other services of Centre for Social Work and can work undisturbed with social workers on a daily basis.

The project team consists of a social educator and seven students of psychology or recently graduated psychology students, who are also members of local humanitarian organizations. The project has around 20 service users at any one time, and a total of 40 a year. The youth are involved in activities on a voluntary basis, rather than being required to attend, which proves to be very successful. Some activities are performed in cooperation with non-government organizations that have various programmes for youth, offering education and life skills training.

One of the indicators of good practice of this project is that, up to now, not one of the young offenders involved has re-offended. Active involvement in decision-making process provides a positive atmosphere that is surely related to these good results. This project has been identified as one of the best projects of Save the Children UK in South-Eastern Europe. Until now, CUKA has only had young male offenders as users of this service, but it is proposed that future work should include socio-educational projects and preventative work with girls at risk.

The second example of good practice associated with a Centre for Social Work is the shelter in Travnik for children and youth, which provides short-term placement for children, homeless youth, and mothers and children escaping domestic violence in BiH. It is the only facility of this kind in
the country. The staff members try to discover a solution to their clients’ difficulties by seeking longer-term placement, or by trying to solve their family problem so that they can return home. The shelter, within the Centre for Social Work in Travnik, covers the area of the whole Canton. It started to operate in February 2000, supported by the Finnish government. By the end of 2002, however, external funding had come to an end and the Canton did not take over financial responsibility for the project; with the result that it came to an abrupt halt. Nevertheless, workers told researchers that the work continues on a voluntary basis.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS

BiH enjoys well-established laws on social welfare protection, child protection and family law, but implementation suffers from a lack of national coherence in provision and, in many cases, from insufficient financial resources. The staffing of Centres for Social Work, which are at the core of the social protection system, is in crisis. Centres urgently require new, qualified, younger staff, without whom they cannot achieve legal levels of provision. This means that preventative work is not carried out, and staff are in a permanent crisis response mode, rather than being able to work proactively within communities. Lack of funds for paying existing staff contributes to burn out caused by a single worker carrying out (or attempting to carry out) the work of many. Centres appear to be relatively over-supplied with legally qualified staff, and to be in dire need of qualified psychologists, social workers and sociologists.

There are wide differences between the staffing of, and services provided by, Centres for Social Work throughout BiH. At one level this depends on the financial resources, which come from local rather than national sources and, in FBiH at least, are not clearly defined. This means if the local authority is rich and developed the Centres are usually in good condition and workers are paid well and regularly, if not the reverse is the case. Yet researchers came to the overall conclusion, from observation and interviews, that money is not the main issue in the social services provision. Some centres appear to operating in substandard conditions, in terms of funding, but still have dedicated workers who work to the best of their ability and keep in contact with their clients. On the other hand, researchers found some centres that are well funded but are not functioning to the best of their ability in terms of accommodating their clients’ needs and do not keep regular contacts with their clients. Money does not fix everything and lack of economic resources does not excuse poor service provision.
CHAPTER 3 INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE

Main messages

- Institutions function as caretakers, providing services;
- Children in institutions do not have their developmental and emotional needs met;
- Institutions limit children’s potential;
- There is almost no provision for the time when children become ‘too old’ for institutional care.

‘If I could, I would make all children happy. I would never let any child live in an institution,’
Eight year old girl, in institutional care.

Centres for Social Work are responsible for providing placements for children without parental care. Even though 102 professionals out of the 127 interviewed said that they give priority to foster family placement, relatively small numbers of children are placed in non-kin foster families. Researchers doubt if social workers talk to children to find out if they have specific wishes as to where they would like to live. Two children who participated in the research mentioned that nobody asked them with whom, or where, they would like to live. One 16 year old boy, who is fostered by his aunt, mentioned during the focus group discussion on children’s rights that nobody asked him. A 17 year old girl, living in an institution said that the social worker involved did not want to listen to her plea to remain living with her father, who still lives in the family home. She said she still does not understand why the social worker thought it was not appropriate for her to live with her father, as she was happier living with him than in the institution.

3.1 INSTITUTIONAL CARE FOR CHILDREN

Institutional homes for children and youth are obliged by law to provide placement for children without parental care and children whose development has been damaged by an adverse family situation, until the conditions improve at the child's home, the child is adopted or placed in foster family, or ready for independent life. Institutions should provide care and health protection, upbringing and support in education and qualifications for work. All these services are provided, but the quality is questionable. Children in institutional homes have a place to live but, in other aspects, the research conclusion is that the standards of care in many institutions are not satisfactory. Children are entitled to basic health care, and most of them are registered and have medical insurance. But there are some cases of children in homes who are not registered and do not have medical insurance. This occurs when a home is not granted full custody by a Centre for Social Work. Homes try to cope with this by making arrangements with a foundation for health protection, which helps them to treat children in hospitals if they are ill and do not have medical insurance. In one institution, situated about 30 km from the nearest urban area, where there is no medical worker and a doctor visits twice a week, the director commented that ‘We can only pray for our children to get ill only on those days when doctor visits us.’
INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Institutions for children with special needs will be discussed in detail in Chapter 9. The role of the Centre for Social Work as the guardianship body, is to place any child with special needs who does not have parental care in an appropriate institution. The deciding factor during this process is the opinion of a doctor. In addition, if the child has parents, the decision is made according to their ability to pay the required amount to the institution where child is placed.

According to the law, physically disabled children with good mental abilities should be placed in an institution that will provide health protection, nurture, recreation and cultural facilities if their parents cannot care for them. Yet, in BiH there are no such homes. Such children tend to be placed in hospitals for short- or long-term care and to go home for weekends or holidays.

INSTITUTIONS FOR NEGLECTED CHILDREN

The single institution for ‘neglected’ children in BiH is where young, male delinquents are placed. There used to be an institution for placement of female children in Ljubuski, but it was closed down during the war. The ‘Hum’ institution in Sarajevo is ‘open’, which means that residents can leave the institution when necessary, for example to attend school.

Children are placed in ‘Hum’ through the decision either of a Centre for Social Work or of the Juvenile Court. It has a capacity of 24, and in November 2002 there were 22 children placed there. The boys are divided into three groups, with no apparent criteria for division other than their own wishes. Five qualified professionals work in this institution: three special needs specialists, a psychologist/educator and one social worker. These staff members work with children from 07.00 to 22.00 and a night guard is responsible for them overnight.

The monthly cost of placement for one boy in ‘Hum’ is 420 KM. Centres for Social Work are obliged to pay for the expenses of placement of a child originating from their catchment area, but payments are said to be irregular. The Ministry of Education of Sarajevo Canton provides financial support for the staff, while the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs monitors the institution.

SHORT TERM SHELTERS

Shelters for children and youth give refuge and short-term placement to children and homeless youth who have been found wandering or begging, when there is a need for emergency placement, food, health or hygiene measures. These shelters investigate the child’s identity and address, and write social reports on their behaviour, with the aim of returning a child to its parents or rapid placement in an institution, or to return to the care of social services in the responsible municipality. The only shelter providing this service in BiH was the one within the Centre for Social Work in Travnik, which has already been described, and which now works on a voluntary basis only.

INSTITUTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE

According to BiH law, social protection institutions can be established if they have guaranteed premises, equipment and the requisite number of professional and other staff, depending on the type of institution and the work performed. More detailed decisions with respect to space, equipment, professional and other staff of social protection institutions are made by the Ministry responsible for social protection.
There are 16 institutions for children without parental care in BiH. These were all visited and mapped by the researchers and are described in detail in a separate report. A variety of research methods were used with both children and adults (Annex 3). There are two types of home for children without parental care in BiH; for short and long-term placement. Institutions for short-term placement provide children with care until the conditions in the child’s biological family enable the child to return. In cases where these conditions are not established, the Centre for Social Work tries to find a family that is willing to give shelter to the child. If such a family is not found, children are placed in an institution for long-term placement, which provides care until children reach the legal age of majority at 18 years. No other type of placement is sought. Children are effectively trapped.

Institutions vary in size from small institutions with capacity for ten children, to large institutions with a capacity for up to 200 children. Currently there are 11 homes for children without parental care in BiH with capacity for less than 100 children and five homes with capacity for 100 and over. The total capacity of all 16 homes is 1,125 children, with between 914 and 922 resident children in the period 2001 to 2002 (around 82 per cent capacity).

Before the war there were five homes for children without parental care in BiH (Children’s centre ‘Mostar’, Children’s home ‘Bjelave’, Children’s home ‘Porodica’, Children’s home ‘Rada Vranjesevic’, and Home for children without parental care ‘Tuzla’). During and after the war, the number of homes increased and 11 more were opened, sometimes supported by foreign donors. These newly-opened homes differ in several respects from the original five. They have better equipment and resources, matching the higher standards of donor countries. They tend to be organised in smaller family units; seven to eight children compared with 12 to 25 children in the old institutions. They employ greater numbers of staff with higher qualifications, and are furnished with playgrounds and other recreational facilities. Family groups have the same care-givers all the time, which gives children a sense of permanence and belonging. One of the care-givers is always present during the day. The management does not provide a strict and authoritative regime. Some institutions enable children to stay even after they reach 18 years of age, and provide them with care until they are ready to become independent. All of this results in an increasing emphasis on the individual child. However, BiH now seems to have more capacity than is required, as a result of new homes being built rather than changing programmes and improving standards of care in existing institutions. Out of 16 institutions for children without parental care operating in BiH, five were built by foreign organisations, to which should be added the two externally funded SOS Children’s villages, in Sarajevo and Gracanica.

Significant differences exist regarding equipment and resources. The furniture and equipment in some institutions are worn-out or damaged, while others are equipped with new, comfortable and functional furniture and posses all other necessary equipment. Especially well equipped are those institutions built and financed by the international humanitarian organisations as well as by non-governmental organisations.

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5 Cahajic, S., Cvjetic V., Darmati, L, Dupanovich, A., Haziosmaovich, M., and Smic Vukoviv, S., 2003, Mapping of institutions and other facilities for children without parental care in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, UNICEF BiH.
According to data collected in this research, children living in institutions for children without parental care in BiH include:

- **Children without both parents**;
- **Children whose parent or parents are unknown**;
- **Children abandoned by one or both parents** (children who were abandoned by their mothers are children born from teenage pregnancies, children born outside marriage, children of single mothers from broken homes, and abandoned children born with special needs);
- **Children from families with troubled or unstable family relations**;
- **Children whose parents have been deprived of their parental rights because of inappropriate lifestyle, neglect of children or mental health problems**;
- **Children whose parents are unable to take care of them because of illness, physical or mental impairment, unresolved housing problems or financial difficulty**.

Some children living in institutions for children without parental care in BiH are literally ‘stuck’ in those institutions. They are mainly children who are older than five years, who are too old to be adopted and for whom it is harder to find a family placement; children with special needs who do not get fostered or accepted by SOS Children’s villages; abandoned children who do not have close relatives; children whose relatives do not want to take care of them; children who have changed foster families several different times and whose placements ended in failure.
One seven year old boy related the reason why he lives in an institution for children without parental care: ‘My dad is in jail for no reason. A man killed my mother and blamed my dad for it. So [my dad] is now in jail. My brother lives in our family house. He is also in jail now because he killed a guy with his knife.’ Asked about his drawing of a place where he would like to live, the boy said: ‘This is my real home, far away from here. When I finish primary, secondary and all the schools there are, I will be able to go back there.’

3.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK AND INSTITUTIONS

This relationship between Centres for Social Work and institutions is governed by the overall control that Centres for Social Work have over the destiny of children without parental care. If a child has parents but has been removed from their care, the Centre for Social Work makes efforts to rebuild the family so that the child can go back home. In cases where a child does not have living biological parents, Centres for Social Work make efforts to find a solution that is in the best interest of the child. When no family placement can be found, the child is placed in the institution for children without parental care with a guardian appointed from among the professional staff of the Centre. While the child is living in an institution, especially a short-term institution, staff of both the Centre for Social Work and the institution continue efforts to find a family placement.

While a child is living in an institution, the management is obliged to inform the relevant Centre for Social Work about any decisions made concerning the child. Centres for Social Work are expected to review the placement regularly, if necessary making a decision to transfer the child to another institution. The Centre for Social Work makes the decision about whether the child is allowed to establish contact with his or her parents and/or any other family members, as well as about on the intensity and frequency of these contacts.

In practice, researchers found that relationships between the Centres and the institutions seem to depend on regularity of payment for the monthly costs of placement in the institution. With the exception of the Sarajevo Canton, Centres for Social Work in BiH do not pay for these expenses regularly. Some of them never pay. Institutions have a problem in charging and collecting payment for their services. Some have even gone so far as to file lawsuits against Centres for Social Work that fail to fulfil their financial obligations.

3.4 LEVELS OF CARE IN INSTITUTIONS

The level of care provided in institutions for children without parental care in BiH differs from one institution to another, depending on the type of internal organisation (family based or conventional dormitories); size of the family or other internal unit; internal equipment; number of qualified staff; working hours of care-givers and the type of relationship they have with children; management style; overall atmosphere within the institution; and financial resources. As Suada Buljubasic found in her recent research on children in institutional care it is not possible to achieve a clear theoretical framework for classifying these institutions (Buljubasic, 2002).

Homes for short-term placement of children are relatively similar, because younger children are placed there, and they are organised according to children’s age, which is roughly the same as their developmental level. By contrast, most institutions for long-term placement of children are organised internally into family units, but there are considerable differences between them with respect to the size of the family unit, its structure, the age at which children have to leave the institution, the number of professional staff, their qualifications and the style of management. There are also wide differences in the amount of time that care-givers spend with children during any one day. Age stratification may still feature, so that even ‘family groups’ may be based on children in the same age group, and might be more accurately referred to as ‘peer groups’.
Age and gender divisions characterise older institutions, so that children of the same age and/or gender are placed together. Another characteristic of this kind of care is insufficient individual work with children. This problem can be diminished by simple management devices, such as older children being given the responsibility of helping younger children to cope with homework, taking them for a walk or to a playground. In this way, older children not only help staff but also learn about responsibility and solidarity.

In other homes, children of different ages and gender are placed in family units, together with their siblings. This type of internal organisation provides a similar arrangement to that which exists in biological families. The size of the family unit is particularly important in determining the overall character of an institutional home. If a family unit is too big and lacks living and working space, it cannot offer children the optimal conditions for growth and development. This situation is typical of institutions financed by the local authorities. Large family groups, with an inadequate number of professionals, give fewer guarantees that a child will feel a sense of belonging and well-being. As already stated, special attention is paid to the size of a family unit in recently established homes, which have family units or groups that are significantly smaller than those in the older institutions.

Senior management of an institution clearly influence the level of care provided and the overall atmosphere in the institution. During fieldwork researchers met both directors and managers, encountering people of different professional qualifications and backgrounds, as well as different attitudes towards children, institutions, and their positions. The overall atmosphere in the institution is created at the ‘top’. As in the case of Centres for Social Work, some institutional directors have been appointed with little regard to their professional qualification or experience, but thanks to their political allegiances. In one case, a director was appointed by the donor foundation rather than local authorities, who are powerless to influence the work carried out in the institution. Thus BiH is unable to implement the right of children in that institution to periodic review of placement under CRC Article 25. This is not an isolated case, two institutions for children without parental care in FBiH are managed by the Catholic Church and have no cooperation with the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs.

By contrast, it appears that neither the Zenicko-Dobojski Canton, nor the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs wish to take responsibility for the existence of the Porodica children’s home in Zenica. This causes problems for the institution in question, particularly with respect to administration and finance. The institution does not receive financial support from either the Municipality of the town of Zenica nor the Zenicko-Dobojski Canton, nor does the local government cover staff salaries as is the case in other cantons. Similar lack of financial support is experienced by the Children’s home ‘Mostar’ in Mostar. Since the Law on Social Welfare has not been adopted in the canton in which it is located (Hercegovacko-Neretvanski), the upkeep of the home is not included in any of the Cantonal budgets. What happens is that the Canton accounts for the expenses of the Home as a budget subsidy and provides the home with discretionary financial support, which is given neither regularly nor at a level sufficient to cover need.

**FAMILY CONTACTS**

‘We support [family] visits, because contacts are important. Visits are bright moments for children. Though, unfortunately, many children have no relatives,’

Director, Children’s Home.

Contacts with family members, their type, quality and intensity, are matters of great importance for children in institutional care (Buljubasic, 2002). Children’s age is linked to their overall expressed interest in parents. Staff say that younger children often ask ‘When will my mother come?’ whereas
older children have stopped enquiring. Few children whose parents are unable to take care of them continue to be in regular contact. Children who lost their parents during the war tend to have regular contact with other relatives, although these are mainly through telephone calls rather than direct visits. The reason for the small number of visits may be institutional rules about visiting days and hours. Parents and other relatives say they dislike this regime. They want unregulated visiting hours, so they can come to visit children whenever they wish. They would also like to take the child home for the weekend, without having to seek permission in advance from the Centre for Social Work. Professionals working in institutions, however, see things somewhat differently. They state that, after home visits, children often become aggressive and start to misbehave. They feel that, while parental visits are in theory a good thing, in practice, parents who have been deprived of their parental rights, or who may have mental health or alcohol abuse problems, may be too disturbing for children to spend time with. The professionals working in institutions for children without parental care are afraid of the effects such parents may have on children, which can cause changes in children’s behaviour that undermine long term work by institutional staff (Buljubasic, 2002).

Professionals working in one of the homes for children without parental care mentioned the case of a 13 year old girl, who was put in contact with her biological mother for the first time in her life, after long preparation by the Centre for Social Work, which had placed the girl in the institution as soon as she was born. Reunion with the mother was not voluntary on the girl’s part. Her mother wanted to take her permanently from the institution and the Centre for Social Work had checked that the living conditions she could offer were appropriate. Yet, after just two days spent with her mother, the girl returned to the Home. When the staff asked her why she did not stay with her mother, the girl replied, without trying to hide her disappointment, ‘My mother is so old-fashioned! Can you imagine, she has a black and white TV, she lives in the country and has cows!’ This was two years ago. The mother has continued to be adamant that her daughter should live with her and the girl continues to refuse. This illustrates a point made by several staff members in institutions that the main problem for children who have had little or no contact with their parents is that they tend to fantasise about perfect, wealthy parents. They idealise wealthy people who drive expensive cars and own big houses, and are often disappointed by the realities of their parents’ lives.

Contacts with parents and relatives that produce positive changes are supported in all long-term placement institutions. Professionals working in one of the homes for children mentioned the example of three brothers, whose father had been killed in the war, after which their mother committed suicide. Because of lack of financial means, none of their relatives could take over guardianship, so the boys had to be placed in an institution, but remained in contact with their relatives. They spend a part of their summer holidays with their relatives, during which time they have a chance to visit their parents’ estate and work the land. These visits have a positive impact on the boys, who themselves emphasise that they see they have their own house, and that they know their stay in the institution is only temporary. Through this kind of positive contact, existing family bonds are preserved and strengthened, children can see that they are not left alone and that they are still loved.

The professionals working with children in institutions state that they have noticed that children who are growing up without having any relatives visit them, or a place to go during summer holidays, have difficulties in accepting these realities. Some children have a hard time if their friends are visited and may begin to misbehave, withdraw and stop communicating with others. Thus institutions make efforts to find relatives who are willing and able to have children to stay during summer holidays. Children who had spent summer holidays with relatives, told researchers that these visits had made them happy; ‘It was fantastic!’ When they were asked if it was better than spending a summer in the institutions, they replied ‘Well, of course!’ These visits are important because they enable children to establish a variety of contacts and enjoy different experiences.
EDUCATION

‘If only I could have an opportunity for higher education’.

A 17-year-old girl, living in an institution

All school-aged children living in institutions attend school. Nevertheless, many are unable to attend the type of school they would prefer, because there is not one close by. Through interviews with professionals and focus group discussions with children, researchers found that children choose not to finish four years of secondary school, which could offer them possibility for further education, but opt instead to enrol in a three year course in a technical school. Children living in institutions for long-term placement are limited by the fact that they have to leave the institution at the age of 18 and become independent. Becoming independent means sustaining themselves and in order to achieve this, they must have a job. In order to find employment after high school, they need a trade diploma, in order to become house painters, hair dressers, brick layers, carpenters, car mechanics, electricians and so forth. All this makes it impossible for children living in institutions to gain higher education. During fieldwork, researchers met children who dreamed of becoming doctors, engineers, artists but for even the most exceptional students, these aspirations are likely to remain dreams.

Observations made in institutions, together with the recall method for children’s daily activities, revealed that the daily routine in institutions has more or less fixed hours during which children are obliged to study and do homework. Studying usually takes place in specially designed rooms, which look like classrooms, or in children’s bedrooms, or in dining rooms or living rooms where all children sit around and do their homework. In some institutions, the care-givers are qualified teachers and are able to provide children with adequate help, whereas in other institutions the care-givers are only around to make sure children are studying and check if the have done all their homework – much like real parents. In Children’s Home ‘Porodica’ in Zenica, researchers observed one of the teachers individually tutoring secondary school students doing their mathematics homework. The children pointed out the advantages of this. In Children’s home ‘Bjelave’ the care-giver of school-aged children is a schoolteacher by profession and provides children with tutoring in various school subjects. In Children’s home ‘Rada Vranjesevic’ in Banja Luka, students from various departments within the University come to tutor children in various school subjects. Nevertheless, researchers found little evidence of individual work with children with respect to educational achievement and suspect that this means many talents remain undiscovered.

LIMITING CHILDREN’S POTENTIAL

‘Occasionally she forgets to clean up the table after she eats, because she isn’t used to doing it,’

Foster mother of girl who was previously in an institution.

Institutions limit the potentials of children living in them, contrary to the standards set out in international and local legislation. There are several reasons why this is so. In the first place, the internal organisation of institutions tends to be strict and inflexible, taking no account of individual differences. Children have to adapting to a daily schedule that sets out the exact times when they have to get up, eat, study, play, go to sleep and so forth. There are insufficient care-givers, which makes it impossible to pay enough attention and take an individual approach towards each child.

Education does not take place in schools alone. Informal education, which is a large part of preparing children for adult life, normally takes place in the home and family, in the community and within the peer group. For children living in institutions, all informal education takes place in the one setting with the same groups of people and may be limited in scope. Children may not have a role model to identify with, as would be more likely if they lived with their families within a
community. According to focus group discussions with foster parents and children, as well as through interviews with professionals, it seems that children in institutions do not learn basic life skills. One case in point is an 18 year old girl now living in a foster family, who had previously lived in an institution. Her foster mother said that, when she arrived, she did not know how to hold a knife and peel potatoes because she had never had the chance to see how a meal is prepared, because everything was prepared in and served from a communal kitchen. Children living in institutions tend not to be included in activities that are usually family-based, such as cooking, ironing, laundry, shopping and taking out the rubbish, so they do not develop basic life skills. When they turn 18, and are supposed to begin their independent lives, they are not even able to make themselves a proper meal.

The first reason for this is that children who are placed in institutions have all meals and other wants supplied without having the opportunity to learn how to cook, mend clothes, wash dishes and clean the house. They do not even have the chance to make mistakes. The Director of one centre for social work commented in interview that, ‘Children emerge from our Homes incapable of normal living. The early policy was based entirely on the idea of a child having something to eat and a place to sleep. Such a child never gets a chance to experience normal family life. I have seen in other countries, where children are placed in [foster] families that they have duties to wash the dishes, to take out the garbage, to use the vacuum cleaner. In institutions, children have someone to do that, so they don’t know who collects the eggs or where milk comes from. When Homes care for children for 18 years they have an opportunity to do something for children who will have no one when they get out of the institution - and then, they don’t do anything!’

Children, who are living in Homes with the more traditional type of organisation do not have access to the kitchen. They have meals prepared and served, so when they reach 18 years of age they don’t know how to boil an egg. The foster mother whose daughter could not peel potatoes, added in a focus group discussion that ‘Children who leave the Home don’t have knowledge about basic life skills and preparation for independent life…… Often she forgets to turn off the range and I’m so scared when I leave her at home alone. Occasionally she forgets to clean up the table after she eats, because she isn’t used to doing it.’ In contrast, girls who are placed in the Children’s Home in Tuzla have basic training and they learn how to prepare food and drinks, how to sew and do some other handcraft, even though this is limited to girls it is still an example of good practice.

Children who have spent their whole life in an institution seem to begin to worry about their future once they reach the age of 14 or 15 years. That period in adolescence is difficult enough, but for these children is made more problematic. As already seen they tend to react by taking decisions about their education that will limit their future options, simply in order to secure an income once they leave the Home.

A further limitation in traditional institutions occurs because children are divided into groups according to their age. Sometimes a large group of children shares a room, a bathroom, a desk, toys and other equipment. Although they enjoy the company of peers, they all receive the same treatment and their individual differences are not taken into account.

Another issue is the stigmatisation of children who live in institutions. They all react to this in different ways, but data from various instruments revealed that they tend to lack self-confidence in everything they do, compare to children living in families. Wherever they go, they are followed by the label of being a child without parents, living in institution - being ‘bad’. Researchers learned from the children and staff in homes that people in the neighbourhood and teachers in schools refer to them as ‘home inmates’. Whenever something goes wrong, either in the school or in the neighbourhood, people say: ‘It is those children from the Home again!’ One mother of a child who attends school with a boy living in an institution reportedly said to a social worker: ‘I always tell my daughter that he wouldn’t have been placed here if he had been a good child’.
The potential of children living in institutions is further limited in many cases by the professionals working in institutions - their insufficient qualifications, their attitudes, the way they discipline children, and their failure to provide adequate stimulation. Yet they represent authority and possible role models. ‘Look at our director. He hasn’t even completed primary school and still he became a director. This is the proof that there is no need to go to school,’ commented a boy living in one of the institutions.

3.5 CONCLUSIONS

During and after the war the number of homes in BiH for children without parental care more than doubled and capacity is now nearly 20 percent higher than the nearly 1,000 children who live in them. Foreign donations were responsible for much of this growth in provision and also seem to account for better equipment and staffing as well as for smaller, more heterogeneous family groups in which children live in the more recently built institutions. As in the case of Centres for Social Work, financial provision from local authorities is not always sufficient; in some cases because of uncertainties about which authority is responsible. In two cases, statutory officials seem to be unaware of the existence of institutions and monitoring of placements, or the level of services provided seem to be generally absent, in violation of Articles 25 and 3(3).

Contact between children in institutional care and their kin is governed by decisions made by Centres for Social Work as well as by the rules for visits. Children seem not always to be consulted about this, or about placements. Where visits do take place, and children are able to spend time with relatives, the results vary according to institutional staff, depending to a large extent on family dynamics. While there is a general acceptance that, in principle, children should maintain contact with parents, in practice it may be disruptive.

Some children living in institutions for children without parental care are literally ‘stuck’ in those institutions; they are condemned to institutionalised childhood. Those are children who are more than five years old, who cannot get adopted anymore and for whom it is harder to find a family placement; children with special who do not get fostered, nor accepted by the SOS Children’s villages; abandoned children who do not have close relatives; children whose relatives do not want to take care of them; children who changed several different placements which were a failure.

Children living in institutions may sometimes have their access to health care limited and, although they all attend school, their choice of secondary school is often determined by their realisation that, once they have reached the age of 18 years, they will have to leave the institution and become financially independent. Thus they opt for trade schools providing three year skills-based courses, rather than attending academic classes in secondary school. While children seem to be aware of the importance of livelihood skills, institutional provision for life skills seems to be lacking. Thus children leave institutions with skills for earning a living, but not for successfully negotiating the tasks of every day life. The rule-bound life of institutions, together with failure to work with children as individuals combine with these factors to limit children’s potential. It seems that institutional care is largely a matter of caretaking. Children have their basic needs for food and shelter provided until the state no longer has responsibility for their welfare because they have become adults. What children think of this will be further explored in the next chapter, as well as in Chapter 7 on rights and Chapter 8 on needs.
CHAPTER 4 ALTERNATIVES TO INSTITUTIONAL CARE

Main messages

Professionals consider foster care a better option than institutional care;
Children would rather live in families.

If it was not for the institutions, what would we do?
Social worker, Centre for Social Work

Three alternatives to institutional care exist in BiH: foster care, adoption and SOS Children’s Villages. Foster care will be discussed in the next chapter. A study of adoption was not part of the research aim, although researchers feel obliged to comment that, because adoption is limited to children less than five years of age, many children without parental care are robbed of the chance to resettle with another family.

SOS Children’s Villages is an international organisation, with independent funding from charitable donations. There are two SOS Children’s Villages in BiH, one in Sarajevo and the other in Gracanica, each consisting of a number of houses in which a group of children live with an SOS mother, who is supported by another non-professional woman. Finance for each family is provided through a monthly budget for which the SOS mother is responsible.

Children of different ages and both genders live in the same family, and siblings are not separated. Through participating in the daily life of an SOS family, children learn the life skills necessary for adult life. Placement in an SOS village is long term, and mothers are committed to staying in the village, in principle for life. When children reach the age of 14 years they begin to live in a separate SOS Youth House, until they reach the age of 18 years. After this they are expected to be employed and independent, but SOS Children’s Villages International provides lifelong support.

SOS Children’s Villages accept physically and psychologically healthy children between birth and ten years of age. Older children are informed that their SOS mother is not their biological mother, younger children are given this information when it is believed they are old enough to understand. Any contact between SOS children and their biological kin are established through cooperation between the SOS Village and the relevant Centre for Social Work.

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Comparison: SOS houses inside Sarajevo SOS Children’s Village (left), Side view of Porodica home (right)

For most children, however, the choice is between institutional or foster family placement. Table 5 shows how professionals and non-professionals working with children view the two alternatives. Professional staff in Centres for Social Work, who are responsible for placements of children without parental care and expressed an opinion in interviews, clearly prefer family placement (74.3 percent). Probing questions revealed that they think children placed in foster families have a similar environment to their biological family and receive far more love and attention than children in institutional homes. Children living in families have an opportunity to develop working habits and life skills, are much better prepared for future independent lives and also have stronger emotional connections and models for identification. Professionals in institutions have a slightly different opinion on this question, with a far higher proportion giving no answer, and a larger percentage (15.6 percent) saying that an institution is the best option. Their replies to further questions showed they have had some bad experiences, largely with foster families who returned children to institutions as soon as they experienced problems. They are also concerned that families take children for fostering mainly for financial reasons.

Table 5 Comparison between institutional and foster family placement, views of professionals in Centres for Social Work and professionals and non-professionals in institutions, expressed in interviews N=115

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family is the best option</th>
<th>Institution is best option</th>
<th>No opinion/no answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professionals in Centre for Social Work (N=70)</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals in institutions (N=45)</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=115)</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be that the relatively large numbers of professionals who did not have, or did not state, an opinion on this issue reflects the lack of a tradition of non-kin fostering in BiH. This is linked to the fact that the number of available foster families is small, so the fostering option (especially outside the extended family) may simply not be available. A comment on the need for institutions by social worker from a Centre for Social Work is typical, ‘If it was not for the institutions, what would we do with the urgent cases when a child who needs immediate accommodation to be found for him is
brought to our office, and there are no families willing to accept a child at that moment. There would be nothing we could do except for one of us to take the child home.’

Homes for children without parental care play an important role for groups of siblings because they can live together, whereas foster parents may not be willing or able to take on responsibility for more than one child. Although the research revealed that siblings are sometimes separated for administrative reasons, when a child without parents is able to live with siblings some form of family continuity is maintained. Institutions are not necessarily a ‘bad model of placement’ for children without parental care. They have a long tradition as a model of placement for children without parental care, offer shelter to many children in need, and are required for emergency, temporary accommodation.

4.1 CHILDREN’S VIEWS OF THE ALTERNATIVES

‘I am thankful that there was somebody to take care of me. I could have stayed in the street all alone.’

Boy in institutional care.

Children without parental care are the main stakeholders in decisions about their placement, although it seems that they are seldom asked for their opinion when these decisions are made. The research asked children in institutions, foster families and the control group for their views. The method used was drawings of where they live, and where they would like to live, made by children aged three to 18 years, followed by individual discussions with researchers about what they had drawn. The results of this method were coded and tabulated in various ways and other aspects will be discussed later in the report. The focus in this section is comparisons between children in the three groups with respect to their feelings about where they live now, and where they would like to live.

One eight year old girl, while making a drawing of the place where she would like to live, said: ‘If I could, I would make all children happy, I would never let any child live in an institution.’ This girl had had experience of life with her own family, but there are other children who have never experienced anything other than institutional life, as well as children whose experience of family was abusive. For the latter in particular, institutions have provided shelter, love and security. Thus it was not surprising to find some children who were simply happy to have a warm place to stay and enough food to eat: ‘I am thankful that there was somebody to take care of me. I could have stayed in the street all alone’, said one boy.

The children’s drawings were coded according to what they said about where they live, whether they said they like the place they live and finally where they said they would like to live. The results from the first question revealed one statistically significant surprise difference between children in institutions, in foster homes and the control group. Researchers labelled the main categories in answer to this question ‘reality’ and ‘wish’. A response was coded as ‘reality’ if it corresponded to the actual dwelling place of the child. Thus if children who were living in an institution, drew an institution and stated that they lived there, this was coded as reality’. But many children did not draw the place they were living in, preferring in many cases to draw the place they had lived in formerly, with their parents, and emphatically stating that this was where they lived now. Such cases of denial were coded as ‘wish’. The answers from most children could be coded as ‘reality’ and none of the children in either foster families or the control group denied the place they currently lived in. But 12 percent of children in institutions rejected the place they lived in and gave answers in the ‘wish’ category. This is not a particularly large percentage, but chi-square analysis showed it was significant. Discussions with the children seemed to indicate that this was not an example of
seeking to deceive researchers, but rather of lying to themselves – classic cases of ‘denial’ in the way this term is used in psychology.

After being asked where they live, children were asked if they like the place they live in. Once again the answers were statistically significant. Children from both foster families and the control group mainly answered ‘yes’, in contrast to children placed in institutions, only 41 percent of whom answered in the affirmative. After eliminating ambiguous replies, non-responses and cases in which the question was not asked, eight percent of children in institutions definitely said that they do not like living there.

The third question referred to discussion of the drawing children made about where they would like to live. Answers were grouped by researchers into:

- Nature (countryside, rural environment);  
- Past (includes places where children lived before);  
- Abroad (includes place where children had been for a visit)  
- Fantasy (includes places never visited, and imaginary places);  
- Specific geographic place (includes places in former Yugoslavia)  
- Staying where they are;  
- Type of dwelling (including answers like a house, an apartment building).

The significant responses occurred in the categories of ‘past’ and ‘abroad’. Of all children who answered to this item with a wish to live where they used to live, 85 percent were children placed in institutions. They perceive their past as a period of their life when they were happier than now. They would like to be ‘back again’ with their parents. In addition, of all children who answered with a wish to live somewhere abroad, in a place they have been already visited, most were again children placed in institutions.

Children often included people in their drawings or mentioned people during discussions with researchers. When these items were coded and tables calculated, these showed some significant differences. All children from the control group drew or mentioned their parents, in contrast to children placed in institutions and foster families, who mostly drew or mentioned relatives such as grandparents, or uncles and aunts. Children placed in SOS Children’s Villages tended to draw, or talk about, other members of their SOS-family.

### 4.2 CONCLUSIONS

It is sad to note that a significant number of children living in institutions have not adjusted to the change in their lives, to the extent that they deny the reality of their loss of family life. Clearly the emotional needs of these children have not been met. Although staff of Centres for Social Work respond to this by viewing foster family placement as the preferred option there is a shortage of non-kin-based families available. Some professionals also raised doubts about the motives of non-kin foster families. Foster care is a valuable alternative to institutional care, but institutions have a role to play in short-term, emergency placements; for sibling groups; and for children who may be too traumatised to be able to fit easily into a substitute family. Adoption of older children is not possible, which limits the alternatives available for providing more children with family care. SOS Children’s Villages provide substitute, family-like care for children, but only to the age of 14 years and only for fit and healthy children.
This chapter concentrates on foster parents, how they are chosen and prepared for their responsibilities, as well as their reasons for, and experiences of, fostering. Foster family placement for children without parental care is provided by legislation in both FBiH and RS and is one of the most important forms of social protection. According to experts, family placement is more than a convenient way of ensuring shelter for children, it should also answer their need for affection and preparation for active adult life (Mitic 1998; Mladenovic 1973). Those responsible for family placement have a duty to enable children without parental care to integrate well into family and community life. The aim of family placement is for foster parents to give children an adequate replacement for their biological family, as well as to provide them with all the necessary conditions for successful growth and development. Foster families should not only have the capacity to satisfy material and social needs, they should also provide security and psychological support. Ideally, children need to retain contacts with biological kin as well as feeling that they belong in their foster family (Hessle M., 1998). This is a delicate balance to maintain.

Centres for Social Work that entrust a developing, and possibly traumatised, child without parental care to a new family have to pay special attention to the choice of family, which may be the most onerous responsibility of all the tasks they perform. In accordance with legal regulations, this undertaking includes:

- Finding and choosing a family that will offer optimum conditions for development of a child;
- Preparing a child for family placement;
- Preparing a child’s biological parents (if they are alive and known);
- Helping a child to adapt to a new family,
- Assisting guardians to fulfil their role (Buljubasic, 2002).

5.1 PATHS IN TO FOSTER CARE

In any type of care, and particularly in relation to family placement, Centres for Social Work play a crucial role. They take the decisions about placement of children in foster families and providing all
the information to ensure their correct protection, upbringing and education. Potential fosterers have to submit a request to a Centre for Social Work. In the first instance, Centres try to find a foster home among a child’s relatives. Sometimes, when child loses the care and support of its parents, close relatives (grandparents in many cases) may take them under their roof and subsequently inform a Centre for Social Work, which then grants them guardianship. Interviews with foster parents show that fostered children who are not related to their foster parents are usually younger children with unknown parents. Foster parents said that they are afraid of fostering a child with living parents because of the possibility that one day their mother or father would come and reassert their parental rights, according to the law.

Children with special needs are not usually taken into foster homes. In the 81 foster families that took part in the research there was only one case of a child with a known physical disability at the time of fostering. The foster mother, who had a long history of being a foster parent, had taken into her home a five-year-old boy with attention and hyperactivity disorder as well as a physical disability due to burns that were the result of being left alone with an electric fire. The researchers encountered cases of fostered children with mild mental impairments, but these children had been placed in families when they were babies, before the impairment had been diagnosed. Nevertheless, one woman with has long history of being foster parent, stated that she has always taken on children with speech and hearing impairments.

**KIN OR NON-KIN**

Children without parental care in BiH are mainly placed with their biologically related families. This is related to the strong family ties in the local culture, which emphasises tradition and continuity. Children learn that every individual needs to help and be helped by their family as part of the moral principles of the family and its religion. The extended family is a close network, which in some cases implies living together in the same household. Despite the fact that, as already seen, the mean number of members in households with children is 4.4 (MICS, 2000; LSMS, 2002), there is still a widespread ideal that extended families in BiH consist of a husband and wife and their children, parents of one spouse or both, perhaps with their brothers and sisters. These families were traditionally typical of rural and semi-urban areas, but urban migration and employment, as well as the disruptions of war, have meant that extended families living together are now rare in urban areas.

Nevertheless, ties between family members are still strong. As already seen, one result of the war is that a considerable proportion of the population had to leave their homes and find temporary refuge, often with members of their extended families. Family solidarity and support almost certainly reduced the incidence of long-term emotional damage resulting from traumatising war experiences. Thus it is not surprising that most children without parental care in BiH are placed with biologically related families. According to Buljubasic’s research in 2000, 86.18 percent of fostered children were placed with biologically related guardians. Two years later, the current research found 89.7 percent of children were placed with kin (Buljubasic, 2002; Table 6).

**Table 6 Children fostered with kin and with non-kin in BiH 2002, information from Centres for Social Work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of non-kin families</th>
<th>Number of kin families</th>
<th>Number of children in non kin families</th>
<th>Number of children in kin families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>1334</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.23%</td>
<td>89.77%</td>
<td>10.36%</td>
<td>89.64%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

43
Table 6 confirms Buljubasic’s theory that there is almost no tradition of non-kin fostering in BiH. Although many of the foster parents in the research were not related to their foster children, most of those with whom researchers worked in focus group discussions had a kinship link with their foster children. Most stated that, if this had not been the case, they would never have taken a child into their care. One predicament is that foster parents are often grandparents, whose economic and physical strength may not be equal to the task of raising another generation. A 75-year-old grandmother from Teslic asked ‘What will happen to my child when I die?’ Even though researchers did not analyse the age of the foster parents, team members had opportunity to meet 81 guardians personally, and concluded that most of the foster parents are older people. This certainly raises questions that should be explored in future research; the financial security of grandparent-grandchild families, the possibility that children may have a higher burden of household chores and even nursing tasks, and the question mark over whether or not foster parent(s) will survive until children are emotionally and financially independent.

5.2 SELECTING FOSTER PARENTS

The selection of foster parents is a responsible and difficult task, which demands a skilled team of professionals, especially psychologists, to carry out the assessment of a prospective foster family. Yet as already seen, only 14 psychologists were employed in the 74 Centres for Social Work that provided information in questionnaires. Placing a child in a family can have a successful outcome only if that family has been chosen carefully. It is not enough to find a family that wants to take a child. The family needs to offer guarantees for the child’s correct, all-round development, and for the child to be loved by all the members of the family. A well-chosen family can ensure complete social integration of child, not only into the family but also in the wider society, as a full and equal member.

The process of choosing a family for a child is, of course, influenced by other factors such as a child’s age and physical and psychological development. Centres for Social Work should take these factors into account when choosing a family, regardless of the family’s wish to accept the child.

Finding a family should start with seeking appropriate families who wish to take a child under their care, and which fulfil legal conditions for doing so, although in BiH it seems that families sometimes ‘find’ children to whom they already have a kinship link, and then seek guardianship from a Centre for Social Work. It is important to consider practical details, such as whether the family is conveniently located for the child to have easy access to services, such as schools and health care. The accommodation that can be offered in the foster home needs to be adequate, although in the current conditions in BiH it is not possible to apply the criteria used in countries with high living standards. For example, it is not realistic to ask that a child has a separate bedroom. When choosing a family special attention should be paid to health of family members so the child’s health is not jeopardized. The selection of families involves considering factors such family continuity, closeness and support (Hessle, 1998). Particular attention needs to be paid to the motivation of potential foster parents, especially in view of the concern raised by institutional staff that some may have a financial motive. Ideally, Centres for Social Work and other social protection services should keep a record of potential families that want to take a child, in case there is an emergency need to place a child in a family on a temporary basis.

Given the key role played by Centres for Social Work in placing children in foster families, a question asking about the criteria used for selecting families was included as an open-ended item in the questionnaire sent to Centres. Table 7 shows the list of criteria mentioned when this was answered in questionnaires. It is clear from these results that the criteria are not always either the same or universally applied.
Table 7 Criteria for selecting foster families (kin and non-kin) mentioned in questionnaires by professional staff in Centres for Social Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Mentioned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic situation</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families’ wishes</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful parent</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental right</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biologically related families</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child's wishes</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete family (two parents)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of foster parents</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with environment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education of foster parents</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partiality to children</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of family members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best interests of child</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural background</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first thing to notice about Table 7 is that all categories, with the exception of accommodation and economic status, were more often not mentioned than mentioned. The checks classified under these rubrics include estimating the area, lighting and damp level of a dwelling, as well as of the rate, sources and stability of a prospective foster family’s income. No single category was mentioned by every Centre for Social Work, which indicates that universal, systematic checks are not made. It is also clear, from the very few references to children’s wishes, that their rights in this respect are in general not being fulfilled. The low priority given to their wishes and their interests, and higher priority given to the wishes of guardians, seem to indicate that children are being made to fit families rather than families to accommodate to children, although this may be a reflection of the way the question was phrased.

During analysis of the criteria for selecting foster families, researchers came to the conclusion that Centres for Social Work do not follow the standards required by the law. They do not check health of future guardians (in 60.82 percent of cases), or their mental health (in 72.16 percent of cases), even though the law requires them to do so. This could potentially result in a child who has been moved from his/her biological family because one or both parents have problems with mental health, only to be placed in a family also containing members with mental health problems. The
children are usually placed with relatives (grandparents, aunts and uncles) whose health and mental health might not be satisfactory, but are not checked. It is also more than possible that some foster parents may abuse children in their care, but this is not considered because the topic is culturally unmentionable.

It is worth considering some of the separate criteria classified under broader headings in Table 7. ‘Family relationships’ include an estimate of relationships between foster parents and their children, between foster parents and between existing children in the foster family. The category of ‘successful parent’ includes not only proven success in the parental role, but also that potential fosterers have healthy children and are not in a conflict with law. ‘Place of living’ is a category indicating that some social workers are concerned to place a child in a family who live near a child’s most recent place of residence, so that child does not need to change the school. ‘Number of members’ applies to the fact that some Centres do not place children in families with more than six members. As this category was only mentioned used in 3.09 percent of cases it may mean that a child might be placed in a large family containing more than three children under 15 years of age, which was forbidden in pre-war legislation. According to the criterion ‘age of guardians’, some Centres do not place the children in the families where the parents are older, but the upper age limit is not precisely defined.

Some of the data in Table 7 contradict the situation on the ground. Only 10.3 percent of Centres for Social Work gave ‘biological relationships’ as a major criterion for selecting a family, yet as has been shown, nearly 90 percent of fostered children in BiH are placed in biologically related families. Professionals in Centres for Social Work often confirmed in interviews that most of the children without parental care are placed in biologically related families and, as seen above, the first action taken when a child comes into the care of a Centre is to attempt to find a biologically related family and only if that family does not want to accept the child is an alternative family sought, or the child placed in an institution. The conclusion might be that the priority of finding a relative over-rides all others considerations, entailing that children may be placed in substandard accommodation, supported by inadequate resources, and perhaps in some danger to their health. The question is whether the importance of family connections in a close-knit society such as BiH does in fact out-weigh all other considerations. One answer would be to as children and monitor the conditions of their placement, as the state is obliged to do by the CRC (Article 25). Yet the alternatives in current situations may not be viable, even if preferable. There is almost no culture of fostering in BiH and so little in the way of financial support that prospective non-kin families are reluctant to come forward. In the absence of alternatives to possibly imperfect kin-based foster care, the only other option is institutional care – which is not the first choice of professionals in the field, or of children, as was seen in Chapter 3. In addition, if children in imperfect kin-based foster placements were all removed into institutions, the national institutional capacity would have to be significantly increased, with consequent deterioration of services, given that many institutions are already under-resourced. Centres for Social Work are clearly choosing the ‘lesser evil’.

### 5.3 BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

‘We are all family, even though we are not related by blood’

Foster mother, Canton Sarajevo

Who are the people who take on the responsibility for the care of a child who is not their own? What are their motives and how good are they at meeting the challenges? The law lists families in which children must not be placed: in which parents have lost the right to work or parental rights, with unstable family relations, in which a member exhibits socially unacceptable behaviour, or in which someone has an illness that might threaten a foster child’s health. In general, foster families
should have two parents but, in the aftermath of war, this regulation cannot be applied in all cases. The following 5 stories, taken from focus group discussions with foster parents in Canton Sarajevo, illustrate both the relationship of fostering to personal experiences in the war and two cases of single-parent fostering:

"My husband went to war in 1994 and told me to take one child without parental care, so we would not be by ourselves if our son was killed in war. We took one boy who used to live with a woman who took the boy from the institution. As the woman wanted to go to Germany she could not take the child with her. My husband died in 1995, my daughter and son got married, and [the boy] and I live alone. When he came to our family he was seven.

As God saved my life in war, and I went through a great deal, I promised myself that I would help at least one child and make his or her life better. Four months ago a friend of mine who works in the Centre for Social Work called me up and told me that she had a boy who is 16 years of age and asked me if I could take him. Straight away I said that I would, and that is how he came to live with us.

When I was married I could not have children. Then my husband died and left me well situated. I had an apartment, but I was alone and I wanted to devote myself to someone, an orphan, as I was an orphan myself. When my mother died, my father remarried, and I was raised by my aunts. When I wanted to take a child, the director of an institution told me something that offended me. He said that these days everyone wants to have kids, having a child is alluring. I told him that I was not sure about that, as I was not sure that having a child in war was an attraction, when you don’t have access to water. I have a cousin who is an SOS mother, she has seven children, and I often go there. That desire of mine to have a child never ceased. As I do not have a husband, the Centre for Social Work told me that I could not adopt a child, but that there is a way to become a guardian of a child who will live with me.

In 1994 our daughter was killed, we had a son who was nine at the time. Immediately we decided to take a child, regardless of the fact that war was all around us and the economic situation was hard. We went to the Home, and there was one girl who was almost two years old. I only wanted my little girl, and was hoping to find one, among many children, with a round face and blond hair, and this girl was the opposite. I selected this girl, as did not have a choice. We asked our son about it and he agreed. My husband and I went to visit her. We talked to her and decided to take that step. We could not take her straight away, we waited for some time. She is now ten years old, she is attending fourth year of primary school, and she gets along well with her brother.

I became foster parent in 1993. I used to visit the institution, and I wanted to take a small child, as I could not have children of my own. They offered me one boy whose parents were alive, but I refused this offer, as I was thinking that boy’s parents could ask for him back later. Then they called me up from the Home again, because they had a girl three months old. I signed the papers, took the child in my car and crossed the barricades. When I arrived with her everyone was asking how could I take a small child in the middle of the war. For me, the war stopped then. I could never bear to be separated from her. She is now nine years old and she is the best student of her age group. Now I am ready to take one more child. What can be so hard in bringing up a child?

Actually, the task of bringing up a child, especially if there is no blood relationship, is not always easy, even though it may have its compensations, which two foster parents shared with researchers:
I became a foster parent in 1986. My daughter went with her school to the Home in [name of city]. Some kind of bond developed between her and one baby. When they were leaving, the baby boy reacted emotionally and this touched her. She suggested to me that we should take that child. I had never thought of that before, considering that I was working and my children were at school. One weekend she brought him home and everything in me collapsed when I saw the condition he was in. He slept over at our place and strong emotional bond developed between us and the child. We were desperate when the time came to return him to the institution. The next day in the newspaper I read an article about opening a place for lost dogs and then I understood that people think more of animals than they do of people. I went to the institution, and then to Centre for Social Work, and after 25 days this child was living with us. The boy’s mother had died giving birth to him, and his father and his family would not take him as they live far from the city, and he had poor health. He was taken straight from the hospital [where he was born] to the Home in [name of city]. He grew up with major physical and mental health problems. When he was two he could not say a word. If he found a piece of glass or something he would just chew. Because we made a big effort, with visits to psychologists and special needs teachers, when the boy was four he started to speak. During the war he stopped talking again. We have managed to change many things about him, but many things were congenital. As far as his behaviour is concerned, he is one normal child, but he is still emotionally hungry.

In 1993 I found a child in garbage bin. When I found him, I decided to keep him so he would not go to an institution. When he went to second grade of primary school I told him the truth. He is an abandoned child, and those children can never be the same as children whose parents have died. Abandoned children carry with them some kind of hatred, resistance and revolt.

As in the last four cases quoted, the stories told by foster parents sometimes reveal the use of apparently informal means of choosing a foster family, in which institutional staff may be involved. A widow, who had no previous experience of parenting, said:

Seven months ago a worker [in a Centre for Social Work] suggested that I should take on a five year old boy. He had been in a Home since he was born, nobody had ever come looking for him and that is what touched me most. Even though I was not looking for a boy (I wanted a girl) when I saw him he sat in my lap and straight away some kind of bond developed. The Director asked the boy if he loved him or me more, and the boy answer that he loves me more and hugged me. After that I took him home twice for the weekend. The third time when I took him home he told me that he did not want to go back to the Home. I love him very much. Only if his biological mother came for him would I give him up. But I could never get over him. Still, a mother is a mother. I told him that I did not give birth to him. He asked me once why I left him at the institution and did not take him earlier. I explained to him how it happened when he asked me why I took him. I told him that, from the moment I met him, I was fond of him, so I decided to take him home (Widowed foster mother, Canton Sarajevo).

Focus group discussions included non-kin foster parents, who had a long history of being a foster parent.

I have four children of my own, and since 1962 I have been raising other children who lost their parents. I never went to school, nor have I worked. I decided to look after children. I was always taking babies under my care. First, I
used to take children with hearing and speech impairments. I am currently raising two brothers - since January 2000. Their parents got divorced in 1996. They used to be with their father, who soon died. They lived with their aunt where they did not like it. They left her and went to live with their friend in Ilidza. The Centre called me up to take these children to live with me (Foster mother).

I have been a guardian since 1970. I have always had around six, seven children without parental care. It started when my husband and I could not have children of our own. We built a big house and I decided to take children from [name of institution]. I went there and inquired. It has been like that ever since and I appeal to everyone to help children this way (Foster parent).

One woman spoke about what amounts to a tradition of fostering in her family. First her grandmother became a foster parent in 1987, because she was lonely after her own children got married. When this grandmother died in 1995, her daughter, the mother of the woman who told this story, continued to take care of the fostered children. Currently the same family has two further fostered children, and three others had recently left. One of the girls who lives with them now is 19 years old. The family does not receive any payment from the government for this girl, as she is over 18. ‘We are all family, even though we are not related by blood’, was this woman’s final remark (Foster parent).

When preparing foster families for taking responsibility for a child various factors need to be taken into account, such as whether the placement is expected to be a temporary or permanent arrangement. Depending on the length of placement, professionals apply various methods in work with guardians as well as in work with children. If the placement of a child is temporary, all activities need to concentrate on preparing the ground and making arrangements for returning a child to the biological family. This requires careful work, both with children and with foster parents, so that returning a child to its biological family does not cause unnecessary emotional trauma. If a child is being placed in the foster family permanently, it is necessary to prepare both child and family, including any children already in the family. Yet this is not always the case in practice. One of the foster parents from Tuzla said that she gives more attention to her foster child than she does to her own children. She said that she needed more instruction on fostering and also that her own child should have been prepared for it, as well as the foster child.

Further questions about choosing and preparing foster families were included in the questionnaires for staff of Centres for Social Work. Table 8 shows that, in 69.1 percent of cases, Centres for Social Work select the families where they would like to place the children and that the team of professionals in the Centre is usually responsible for selection. Yet only 47.4 percent of guardians are given orientation before fostering. This could be justified by the fact that most of the children fostered in BiH are in biologically related families, whom they already know, but still indicates a worrying trend.

During fieldwork, researchers spoke with one long-term foster parent who complained that, at the time she was becoming a foster parent, none of the professional staff from the Centre talked to her about preparing for her future role. She said that for some time she felt very insecure in relation to
her foster child. Nevertheless, she stated that matters have improved and that her current relationship the Centre for Social Work is ‘good’ and ‘supportive’.

Table 8 Choosing and preparing foster families (kin and non-kin): responses to questionnaire from Centres for Social Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Do Centres for Social Work choose foster families?</th>
<th>Who chooses foster families?</th>
<th>Do Centres for Social Work provide orientation for future foster families?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Team of professionals in the Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>64.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Departmen of social work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Social worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sometimes the transfer to a new family can be traumatic. In one of the institutions for children without parental care, a staff member related the following story in an interview:

*We had two brothers here, who had spent six years in this institution. One day we received a fax from the Centre for Social Work in [city], that they are going to be placed in a family on the other side of the country. That transfer was planned for next day. They stabbed us in the back! That was completely inhuman for those children. Someone should prepare children for at least a month. We didn’t have anything against that family and we thought that the children could be perfectly happy, but the problem is in the way this was done. How can they do that to children? This is a new trauma for them, they are being pulled out of their ‘mother’s arms’. The children said themselves that they were fine living here. Why didn't they think about that [earlier], to give enough time to prepare the children for the move? This is violation of children’s rights, they were not asked anything! We were very upset and other children also, but most of all those two boys.*

The director of one institution, claimed in interview that everyone considers family placement the only beneficial solution for child without parental care. She added ‘This institution has a concept of developing fostering. We work on lobbying and working with foster families. The aim is not to put a child into just any family, we must go gradually. We have to work very slowly and extremely carefully. We have to harmonise foster parents and child. Children are able to sense who is close to them. We had a child who was ‘choosy’. He did not feel a connection with any potential foster parents. The one day a woman started to visit him, and we saw his emotional development. In this kind of situation we cannot afford mistakes’.
5.4 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK AND FOSTER FAMILIES

‘Maybe my boy is not satisfied with me, but nobody asked him that,’
Foster parent, Canton Sarajevo.

Centres for Social Work make decisions about children’s placement in foster families, but their responsibilities do not end there. Any placement of children without parental care must be monitored through regular meetings with foster parents and children according to both local legislation and Article 25 of the CRC. These meetings should be used to prevent and solve any problems in the fostering relationship. Focus group discussions with foster parents showed that their contact with Centres for Social Work varies from centre to centre. Questionnaires for Centres for Social Work included a question asking if foster families are visited regularly (Table 9).

Table 9 Do staff of Centres for Social Work visit children who are placed in foster families? Answers from questionnaire to Centres for Social Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FBiH</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>83.3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82.5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 shows that eight out of ten Centres for Social Work in both FBiH and RS claim to visit foster families regularly. This was not confirmed by foster parents in focus group discussions and interviews. Given the comments of staff interviewed in Centres of Social Work about the lack of financial resources – even to pay for petrol for visits - staff shortages and the fact that many foster families live in rural areas, this is not surprising. In one of the biggest Centres for Social Work, the research team did not manage to establish contact with foster families in order to hold a focus group discussion. During their first visit to this Centre, they were told that there would be no problems in organising a meeting with foster families. Later, when researchers inquired about this again, they were told by the Centre that it might be a problem after all. Despite several attempts to organise this meeting, researchers came to conclusion that it would not be arranged because the worker who was responsible for foster families was overloaded with other tasks. In addition, limited access to the Centre’s car contributed to the infrequency of her contacts with foster families.

Parents reported both negative and positive relationships with staff of Centres for Social Work. On the positive side, researchers also encountered many examples of good relationships between Centres for Social Work and foster families:

I am very happy. They often call me up and ask me if I have any problems. If I needed anything, God forbid, they would come straight away. I am obliged to inform them when children are travelling somewhere. We always get permission for that. People from centres are in contact with teachers of the children, so they know all of their educational achievements;

I have really good assistance from the Centre. They help me every time I need any help for the boy.
During one focus group discussion, all foster parents said they were impressed by the sacrifices made by the people that work in their Centre for Social Work. They particularly mentioned two female staff members on whom they could rely in difficult times, when they experienced problems in communicating with children. They stated that these professionals talked to both foster parents and children. They said that they give verbal reports to the workers of Centres for Social Work about changes in relation to the child and ‘In case of something serious, we need to write a report.’

We write yearly reports. These contacts with social workers are almost unofficial. Foster parents get close to social workers. They have some ways of monitoring us and they work under very difficult conditions.

Foster parents are obliged to write yearly reports to Centres for Social Work. But they feel that they need further regular advice and support. Foster parents said during another focus group discussion that this had been the first time they had had an opportunity to meet and they considered that this was a limitation of the Centre. Other foster parents mentioned similar experiences:

I want to emphasise that we need assistance from Centres for Social Work, their advice and counselling. They should be working more with children. They are in actual fact the guardians, not me. I cannot raise my voice to them.

[Centre staff] are very bad in terms of home visits. They should visit children, regardless of where they live, with their biological family or not. Before the war, it used to be much better. Our boy was seriously ill for three years, and people from Centre for Social Work did not know this. This was supposed to be known to the people in the Centre, as those children are actually theirs. At least once a month a team should visit children, regardless of the conditions those children live in.

We have been poorly informed about our rights, and their responsibilities. Our contacts simply come down to a few words: [such as] ‘There is a donation [some money available], call this number’, and this is not enough. These Centres perform a relatively bad job for which they are being [properly] paid. In the Centre their focus is not these children. We have no need to ask for advice, when we do not know our rights. Once I was forced to make a copy of the Law on Social Protection [for myself].

They don’t plan anything for us. We come only for some payment or when we see a need for it. In 1997 I used to go to the Centre every 15 days to meetings of guardians, but never again. Today guardians do not meet any more, nor do children, except sometimes on picnics.

They could visit more often. Last year I had a problem when my girl failed in school. Children were supposed to go on a picnic, and I told her that she could not go because of her bad grades in school. Later, nobody from the Centre enquired if she has managed to get better grades in school. They should pay a visit more often to schools and be more interested.

The Centre for Social Work has professional staff. A Social Worker visits me and I talk to him, and he should be talking with the child in order to find out what it is like for a child to live in my house, how does the child feel, what sort of problems child has, how is school going. …..A woman who is an educator from the Centre comes and talks to me, instead of talking with my child. She asks me what I spent my money on and what have I done. They actually monitor guardians instead of working with children. Personally, I have no problems with Centre for Social Work. But they have professional staff who just sit in the Centre, instead of
visiting and talking with children. Maybe my boy is not satisfied with me, but nobody asked him that.

Even if they do not know that, under the CRC, children have the right to express their opinions about decisions taken on their behalf, foster parents still said that workers from Centres for Social Work should be talking to children as well as to them:

*People from the Centre are often very untactful with children. When one of the children misbehaved in school, they told him: ‘We will place you in another family!’ This frequently plays with their emotions. This has upset the boy greatly. He told them that he will become a problem if they do that.*

### 5.5 CONTACTS WITH CHILDREN’S OWN FAMILIES

The question of contact with kin relates almost entirely to children placed with non-kin, with whom researchers worked in Sarajevo Canton and in Tuzla. Children who do not have known relatives are usually placed in non-biological families. For some foster parents this is important. They would rather foster a child whose parents are not alive, because this gives them assurance that the child would not be taken from them and returned to the natal family. In practice, biological parents always have more rights over children than foster parents, even though returning them may not always be the best solution. Decisions may not always be taken in the best interests of the child, but rather with respect to parental rights – and children’s views may not be taken into account.

> When I was young, one of my friends who was the guardian of a little girl, went to Germany and left me the little girl to look after. She was then one and a half years old. This child lived with me until she was eight, and then her father turned up – he didn’t want anything to do with her until then. He admitted to being her father and through the court process he gained guardianship of the girl. I did not have any legal right to keep her. I warned the court that they were making a big mistake, but the court decided to give the child to her father. After a while the child committed suicide, leaving a letter behind. In that letter she wrote how unhappy she was to be living with her father, and being separated from the woman who had looked after her since she was a baby and provided her with love and security. She also stated she was living without love and that she did not want to live the kind of life the court had decided for her (Ex-foster mother).

Another woman said that she and her husband had fostered a boy for more than ten years, before trying to get guardianship of him from his father; ‘We needed his permission, so that we could get guardianship of the boy. He was really unpleasant and we had problems with him, but in the end he agreed.’

### 5.6 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN CHILDREN IN FOSTER FAMILIES BECOME ADULTS?

> And what now? Should I kick the child out on the street?

Foster father, Tuzla.

When children reach 18 years of age, their foster care ceases, which puts them in a similar position to children who have to leave institutional care at the same age. This proved to be a very sensitive area for the foster parents and foster children who participated in the research. Most foster parents emphasised that, when children reach the age of 18, it does not mean the end of fostering for them, as they consider these children to be their own and they want to continue to take care of them. Yet financial support ceases, even if the child keeps on living with foster family. Foster children are also concerned about these changes, even though they are not as drastic as they are for most children in
Homes, who face an uncertain fate in an unknown world for which they know they are not prepared.

A 16-year-old fostered boy spontaneously told researchers his life story and his concern about the future. Although he seemed to researchers to be a perceptive and sensible boy, he said that he had experienced a very difficult and problematic childhood. Initially he lived with his mother in very bad living conditions. Social workers subsequently told researchers that he had been physically abused by his mother. The boy had run away from home on more than one occasion. ‘This is when I would get in trouble’, he said, ‘I went to other countries, and didn’t come back home for months.’ When he returned home, he would be beaten. On one occasion he went to live with his father. He liked it there, and his stepmother took good care of him. Unfortunately, his father suddenly got sick and died, so the boy was returned to his mother. His difficulties began again. Four months before he spoke to researchers, his mother had taken him to the Centre for Social Work and publicly disowned him; she said that she could not deal with him any more and that staff could do whatever they liked with him. She refused to have any kind of contact with him, and went away without leaving her new address or phone number. The Centre for Social Work placed the boy with a woman who was a former foster parent, known to the Centre, and the placement appears to be a great success. Later, while talking to his foster mother, researchers found that the boy has apparently adapted perfectly to her family. He has started working, he helps them with the farm. He said that he prayed for one month and that God heard his supplication for a foster mother. His foster mother (Mrs ‘B’), pulled out a message from her wallet to show researchers. It was a note from her foster son, which she had found one morning on the kitchen table. It read ‘Morning knocks on my door. I said Good morning! Good morning B.! Thank you for taking me into your warm home and life.’

The boy began to tell us this story by asking researchers if he could ask a question. He wanted to know what will happen to him when he turns 18. Even though it is clear that he has found peace and a family he is afraid that, once he is 18 years old, his foster mother will leave him. He said that he has nobody and that it is so hard for him when he thinks about this, that he does not know what to do. His only release in all these years had been writing poetry, and he said that, if did not have this form of self-expression, he would ‘go mad’.

Foster parents also feel these emotional pressures. One foster father from Tuzlahad tears in his eyes when he told researchers about his foster son, who is now 18, and who has been part of his family for 11 years: ‘When he turned 18, I received a notice from the Centre [for Social Work] that I am no longer the guardian of this child. Legally I am nothing to this boy. Legally I do not exist for him any longer. And what now?. Should I kick the child out on the street? We received this legal notice without further explanation. Nobody talked to us, they just signed a letter and that’s it. Nobody visited us; no social worker, no foster association.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5.7</th>
<th>FINANCING FOSTER CARE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I cannot take a child under my care if I can not afford to give that child everything he or she needs.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Foster parent, Gradiska.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social protection law in RS provides criteria for the financial compensation for foster families. In FBiH the financial compensation for foster families is established by each canton. From questionnaires researchers discovered that the problem is less the level of payment than its regularity in all places except Canton Sarajevo and District Brcko. One of the members of the steering committee of the Association of Foster Parents ‘Familija’ said that maybe it would be better to have lower but regular financial support. This is also what foster parents in one focus group discussion said; they would rather have smaller, but regular, payments to support their foster children.
There are considerable variations in the amounts paid to foster families in each canton of FBiH (Table 10). Although the cost of keeping a child may vary according to the cost of living in different places, the fact that Sarajevo Canton payments to foster parents are more than four times the amount allotted in Zenicko-Dobojski and Hercegovacko-Neretvanski Cantons is also a reflection of available financial resources. Yet in Canton Sarajevo, closely related kin are obliged to participate financially in child support. If grandparents foster a child and have a pension, financial support for the child is reduced accordingly. Although the amounts of support provided in each canton are determined by law, in practice it is not unusual that foster families receive only 35 KM (approx. &17.5) monthly, sometimes several months late.

### Table 10 Monthly payments to foster parents in the cantons of FBiH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Canton</th>
<th>Payment (KM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unsko-Sanski</td>
<td>179.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosansko-Posavski:</td>
<td>In this canton there are no children under official foster care, and the amount of financial support has not yet been defined by law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuzlanski</td>
<td>399.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zenicko-Dobojski</td>
<td>102.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosansko-Podrinjski</td>
<td>143.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Srednje-Bosanski</td>
<td>200.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hercegovacko-Neretvanski</td>
<td>102.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zapadno-Hercegovacki</td>
<td>In this canton there are no children under official foster care. The level of financial support is regulated through cantonal law, amounting to 70% to 90% of the cost of placement in an institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarajevski (Sarajevo)</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herceg-Bosanski</td>
<td>No information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In RS, only five out of 30 Centres for Social Work responding to this part of the questionnaire said that they regularly pay foster families, in amounts ranging from 100 to 200 KM. In other Centres, financial support to foster families is dependent on charitable donations from various humanitarian organisations and is usually in kind rather than cash: soup packets, soap and other toiletries, school materials, shoes, clothing or food.

From questionnaires it was possible to analyse the extent to which foster parents were assisted in bearing the cost of child rearing. The difference between Centres for Social Work in FBiH and RS are notable in this respect. Whereas nearly two thirds of Centres in FBiH pay foster carers, the position is almost completely reversed in RS (Table 11).
Table 11 Number and percentages of payments for foster families; from information provided by Centres for Social Work in questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation BiH</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republika Srpska</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>56.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.8 PROMOTION OF FOSTER CARE IN BIH

`'I can’t understand people who don’t want to take a child if they have conditions for it. I do not want my life to pass and be so empty and sad. I want to do something, if I am capable of it,’`  
Foster parent, Mostar.

Even though the general opinion is that family placement is a better option than institutional care, fostering in BiH is not well developed, and there is no effective work done on its promotion. A Social Worker in a Centre for Social Work provided the following example:

*In the whole town,... I only have two or three families who would take a child under their care at any time. For a municipality of 70,000 people this is very small number. There is no tradition that people take somebody else’s child. This goes so far that we had a case that after divorce a mother refused to take child with her, as she is not allowed to bring someone with another surname under her father’s roof. Traditionally, in this case, they leave a child (especially a son) with his father. It is rare for a mother to take her child with her. In the end we concluded that we should suggest right away that the solution is for a child to stay with the father.*

When the topic came up in focus group discussion with foster parents in Sarajevo, they had positive suggestions to make about promoting fostering as a solution for children without parental care:

*In our country nothing is organised, it is all up to an individual. When we took a girl under our care, then our acquaintances took a child also. Promotion can be done through motivation. A financial incentive is one way of promoting foster care, but first of all education, as people do not know and are not informed about it. People should be informed, and then they will become interested to help. For now this is only done individually, there is no system in place;*  
* [Awareness raising] could be done through the mass media, they should explain to people the criteria and obligations for taking a child under foster care. People in BiH do not know that. It should be explained to people who they can turn to for advice;*  
*The Ministry should provide some kind of system in which fostering should be counted as an employment contract, because it is similar to SOS mothers. We aren’t just mothers, our foster children have also male figure in their lives, and they have brothers, sisters, and complete families. That should be changed in the law and that could be the way to motivate people to become foster parents.*
5.9 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

Researchers wish to highlight five examples of good practice in the field of foster care in BiH. The first is the Association of Foster Parents ‘Familija’ in Tuzla, which was established on 17th May 1999, at the initiative of foster parents and with support from Save the Children UK, an organisation that carries out considerable work to promote and support foster care in BiH. ‘Familija’ is a voluntary, not for profit, non governmental and non party organisation, which brings together foster parents, care givers, children in foster placement and all citizens willing to contribute to better family-based care of children without parental care in the region of Tuzla Canton and the District Brcko. The mission of the Association is to ensure that the rights of fostered children and of foster parents are respected. Its vision is to increase the number of foster parents trained adequately to protect children placed with their families, as well as to advocate for the respect of these children’s rights and their own rights - at all levels. The objective involves promotion and development of fostering, support for foster parents and children placed with foster families, in self-advocacy, self-support and self-assistance. The main activities of this Association are:

- Promotion of fostering;
- Establishing a network of foster families, biological families and other relatives;
- Holding regular meetings with foster families;
- Training future foster families;
- Establishing a network with the similar organisations;
- Providing material assistance to the children without parental care.

The second example of good practice is the way professionals in the Children’s Centre ‘Most’ conduct a fostering project with the aim of ensuring better conditions for upbringing, development and education of children. The project involves children without parental care up to 15 years of age and families prepared to give shelter to these children, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, financial status or educational level. The activities within this project include:

- Keeping foster families informed;
- Maintaining files and records on foster families;
- Maintaining files and records of children placed in foster families;
- Providing foster families and children with health, educational or psychosocial help and support;
- Assessing foster families;
- Matching and harmonising the foster family and the child;
- Training and preparation of the foster family and the child;
- Following up for the child’s development within the foster family;
- Analysis.

The professionals working in the Children’s Centre ‘Most’ have faced several difficulties during the realisation of this project. Among other problems, they found little understanding of the concept of fostering and they have also had to surmount financial obstacles.

The Centre for Social Work in Trebinje has two major projects on fostering. The first is a project to provide psychological and social support to foster families, both parents and children and has been supported by UNICEF. It involves professionals from centres together with other experts from the social welfare and child protection area, as well as foster parents and foster children. The aim was to help foster families in their functioning and to educate professionals who work in this area.
The second project in Trebinje Centre for Social Work, was supported by the Department for International Development of the Government of the United Kingdom. This project to promote fostering was carried out in partnership with one local community, in order to attract new foster families. Researchers came to the conclusion that the positive comments they received from foster parents in the catchment area of the Centre for Social Work in Trebinje are the outcome of a planned fostering process, which could be replicated elsewhere in BiH.

The final example of good practice in fostering comes from the Cantonal Centre for Social Work in Sarajevo, where efforts are made to motivate both foster parents and fostered. Additional sources of finance are sought in order to be able to reward the parents and the children by organising field trips and picnics, as well as excursions for children who successfully finish the school year. Each year ‘Best Foster Parents’ prizes are awarded by the team of professionals working in the Centre for Social Work. In addition, the Centre strives to provide children who show specific talents and efforts in cultural, sports and other extracurricular activities with the financial support needed for instruments, equipment, materials, trips and so forth. This range of activities is conducted voluntarily by the professionals working in this Centre for Social Work and shows that professionals working in Centres for Social Work can achieve much more than what they are obliged by the law as well as that money does not solve every problem.

### 5.10 CONCLUSIONS

The role of a foster family is to replace the biological family and to provide all conditions for child’s healthy growth and development. This can have a positive outcome when the foster family is chosen properly, the child’s opinion is taken into account, adequate financial and orientation support is received and the situation is properly monitored. Some foster families report that they are satisfied with the support they receive from Centres for Social Work, but this appears to be less than reported by Centres for Social Work and not to be children-centred.

Placement with biologically-related families is the dominant form, and there appears to be little consistency in the way placement and family support are organised. Financial payments vary considerably, being largely left to chance and charity in RS. There are no attempts, and few incentives, for promoting fostering in BiH. There is only one Association of foster families in BiH, and this is not on the state level. Cooperation between foster families and Centres for Social Work in BiH is not satisfactory overall. Social workers do not perform regular monitoring of foster families, nor do they all keep a regular contact with the foster families and children without parental care who live with foster parents.

Payments to foster parents in BiH appear to vary wildly and almost arbitrarily, with the situation in RS being to a very large extent dependent on charitable donations in kind. Although money is not the whole story of fostering, this situation cannot motivate new foster families to come forward, especially in view of current harsh economic realities. Recalling that one fifth of the population falls below the official poverty line, fostered children in households that do not receive adequate payments for their support must surely be at risk.
Main messages

Professionals tend not to work with children in children-centred ways;

Professionals tend to be under-qualified and under-supported;

Adults may think they have children’s best interests at heart, but they don’t always act that way.

‘We need more social workers, and not those old ones, but new and young qualified staff,’
Director, Centre for Social Work.

The professionals working with children whose activities are described in this chapter are employed in Centres for Social Work, institutions for children without parental care and for children with special needs as well as in SOS Children’s Villages. A total of 74 Centres for Social Work, all institutions for placement of children without parental care and three institutions caring for children with special needs, and two SOS Children’s Villages, provided information on how many professionals they employ, their qualifications, the number of children without parental care placed in their care, and the way the facility functions. Thirty six Centres for Social Work, both SOS Children’s Villages in BiH, and all but one of the institutions allowed the research team to visit and conduct semi-structured interviews with professionals and use a variety of other methods with children (Annex 3).

6.1 PROFESSIONALS IN CENTRES FOR SOCIAL WORK

The staffing crisis in Centres for Social Work has already been discussed. Within the centres, professionals either specialise in a particular area of social welfare service provision, such as children without parental care or delinquent youth, or they take responsibility for all work in a geographical area, such as a municipality or community. The latter method is resorted to when the number of qualified staff is insufficient to allow for issue-based work.

Given the shortfall in staff numbers, it is not surprising that interviews revealed that many professionals are not satisfied with their work, stating that they often felt poorly motivated. Yet a significant number of professionals seemed not to care that conditions in the centres do not allow them to perform their duties efficiently. They give the impression that they do not like to work and that everything is a problem, providing excuses for not fulfilling their duties.

Nevertheless, this is not the whole picture. Underlining the message of this report that money does not fix or explain everything, many professionals in Centres for Social Work clearly enjoy their jobs and do the best they can under the circumstances. The poor financial situation does not make it any easier, and they often cannot offer anything more to their clients than a kind word and encouragement. Indeed, their personal financial situation may not be much better than that of their clients. As already seen, professionals are sometimes not paid for months; yet they come regularly to work and perform their duties, without benefiting from professional supervision and support. A
frequent complaint was that they need someone with whom they could share their professional and personal problems and frustrations. In many cases, during fieldwork, this role was given to researchers, with whom professionals spontaneously shared personal issues. Sometimes interviewees became very emotional, reacting to a single word, such as ‘childhood’, and sharing memories of their own childhoods as well as current difficulties raising their own children.

6.2 PROFESSIONALS WORKING DIRECTLY WITH CHILDREN

Professionals who work directly with children in institutions: Psychologist in Porođica (left), teacher in Bjelave (right)

Out of the total of 21 non-foster placements for children without parental care in BiH covered by this research, 16 institutions and both SOS Children’s Villages provided information on the numbers and qualifications of staff employed. The data show that these facilities between them employ 686 full-time employees, out of whom 304 are professionals or specialist carers (social workers, educators, psychologists, lawyers, special needs teachers, medical workers, doctors, sociologists, teachers, SOS mothers, SOS female support staff, and educator’s assistants). The remaining 382 full-time employees are mostly administrative staff and non-professionals such as cooks, cleaners, handymen, drivers and security guards. The number of volunteers is very small; during fieldwork the research team came across only three institutions that consistently make use of volunteers.

According to the ratio of children to staff, it seems that additional professional staff members are required. In all these facilities there were a total of 1,646 residents at the time of fieldwork, of whom 1,151 were children. The ratio of residents to staff overall was 5.4:1, and child residents to staff, 3.8:1, although these figures are only approximate because of the mixture of children and adults with disabilities in the special care institutions. In addition, the situation of the 27 SOS mothers and 16 SOS female support staff, who live and work with children on a 24-hour basis, is somewhat different. Of all professionals in institutions, those who spend most time with children are teachers, of whom there is a total of 103 in all institution for children without parental care and for children with special needs, which means that there are situations in which one teacher takes care of up to 25 children. During interviews, professionals in institutions raised the question of the quality of time spent with children, given these staffing ratios. One shared with a researcher that she has a problem communicating with her own family when she returns home after work, because she has used up all her energy on the children she takes care of in the institution. As in the case of professionals in Centres for Social Work, many professionals in institutions appear to suffer from ‘burn out’. They said that they have lost motivation for a job they had previously loved and wanted to do. This influences their creativity and the quality of care they can provide. The facts that they are not paid regularly and that working conditions are not always satisfactory make the work they do even more difficult.
In some institutions, although professional staff are educated to degree level, they are not qualified for working directly with children but rather in another specialism such as economics or technical science. In addition, some staff have only basic education or training in child care. There are always exceptions. Some excellent childcare workers are not professionally qualified for this work, while other highly educated professionals may not be good with children in practice. For example, researchers came across one educator-psychologist employed in institution who neither advises children nor consults them about their needs, education and health protection. She seemed very dissatisfied with her working conditions, even though this home is one of the largest in BiH and is functioning with far better human and financial resources than many other institutions. On the other hand, research team met a number of teachers who, although not trained for this work, nevertheless fulfil their duties - and do so with enthusiasm. Without a system of supervision, monitoring and in-service training, it is not possible to either check on or improve skills within institutions.

Table 12 Comments on working conditions during unstructured interviews with professional staff in Centres for Social Work, institutions for children without parental care, and institutions caring for children with special needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Professional staffing levels</th>
<th>Financial resources</th>
<th>Cooperation from outside bodies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Insufficient staff</td>
<td>Sufficient staff</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals in Centres for Social Work</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals in institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total valid answers</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12, using data from semi-structured interviews, shows the degree of satisfaction of professional staff in different facilities on questions concerning staffing levels, finance and their experience of cooperation with other stakeholders in the child protection sphere. Staff in Centres for Social Work identified more professional staff as the most pressing need, which is not surprising considering the statistical evidence presented in Chapter 2. They were clearly aware that the financial situation in the Centre does not allow them to employ more. What is surprising is that nearly half of those answering this question in Centres for Social Work said that they were satisfied with professional staffing levels. One conclusion might be that, with no experience of operating at the legally required staffing levels, these professionals have no idea what their working lives might be like if they had sufficient colleagues to support maximum service provision. The same consideration could apply to the 13 professionals who said that they were satisfied with financial resources, although more analysis would be required to see if they (and those who are satisfied with
staffing) are employed at one of the better-resourced Centres. Alternatively, they may have meant that the financial situation is satisfactory in comparison to other Centres for Social Work.

Professionals in institutions appear to be more satisfied with staffing levels, but less satisfied with financial resources than their colleagues in Centres for Social Work. The numbers answering in the latter category are too small to be significant, yet this problem must be constantly before them. Centres for Social Work have not made payments since before the war for placements of children from their jurisdiction to either institutions or foster families. Institutions make use of other forms of income (particularly those funded from abroad) and, until now, no institution has ever returned a child to Centre for Social Work because of non-payment.

When asked about the level of co-operation with other stakeholders in child protection (between Centres and institutions, and with Ministries) more than half of all professionals answering this question felt that this is satisfactory. On the other hand, two Centres that are just 30 km away from each other do not co-operate or share knowledge and problem-solving strategies.

**STAFF IN SOS CHILDREN’S VILLAGES**

Each SOS village consists of several houses containing an SOS family of children, of different ages and gender, headed by a mother, who takes care of the children with the support of one other woman. Researchers visited both SOS villages in BiH and two mothers and four support staff participated in the research. Professional qualifications do not apply. Mothers have to be single women with no children of their own, who commit themselves to the village on a permanent basis. Their role is to be a substitute mother to the children in their care, and the atmosphere and routines of an SOS family are modelled on those of a ‘real’ family. The basis on which SOS Children’s Villages provide for children without parental care is not professional qualifications, but rather human qualities, particularly continuity of care by resident mothers.

A specific issue that arises from the way SOS Children’s Villages are organised is the absence of a father figure in the family house, or at least a close male role model for boys living in the village. The answer given by SOS is that the manager of the village is male, as well as educational advisors and the caretaker. In addition, children may have contact with male members of their SOS mother’s own family of origin.

6.3 **EDUCATING PROFESSIONALS**

Researchers concluded that additional education and training is necessary for professionals working directly with children without parental care, both to correct the deficit in staffing levels and to improve skills of existing staff. Many professionals said they would like to attend professional seminars, in order to be introduced to new methods of work. This would increase their knowledge and demonstrate that their work is respected and for personal development acknowledged. This would also increase their motivation. In the absence of supervisory mechanisms, however, it is not possible to identify skills required and staff who are not performing to the optimal level.

Article 3(3) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child makes it obligatory for ‘institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care of children [to] conform with the standards established by competent authorities …in the number and suitability of their staff, as well as in their competent supervision.’ Staffing levels for Centres for Social Work have been established in BiH, but these standards are not met. Nor are staff in Centres and institutions who work directly with children supervised by the competent national authorities. Even if some degree of supervision may be maintained by foreign donors it is still the duty of the state to ensure that standards are achieved. A comprehensive nationwide audit of staffing levels, in terms of numbers, qualifications, experience, performance and training needs would be a minimum requirement for improving the situation and linking education and training needs with the opportunities offered by institutes of
higher education. The argument that this, like increasing the numbers of employed professionals, is beyond current financial resources may be incontrovertible at the practical level but is still subject to the provisions of Article 4 of the CRC that states have the obligation to fulfil children’s rights ‘to the maximum of available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation.’ As formulated by a former member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, this means that the maximum available resources should first be made available to children, and not after all other social groups have been catered for. With respect to international cooperation perhaps it would be interesting to compare the budget for maintaining the personnel of SFOR with that for professionals working with children without parental care.

6.4 CONCLUSIONS

Especially in Centres for Social Work professionals seem to have lost the motivation for the work. The fact that they are not paid regularly is a factor in this respect and some openly expressed their discontent. A further problem is the workload they carry, because the number of professionals that work with children is insufficient. There is an overall need for more, better qualified and younger staff, but no financial resources to pay for them. Professionals in Centres for Social Work and in institutions rarely have opportunities for additional education or training. They also appear to need better supervision as well as support from their peers. One way to meet immediate needs would be to establish a network of social workers throughout BiH so that professional staff working with children they would be continuously updated on examples of good practice and together try to influence higher authorities to do something to solve a difficult situation, which affects the whole social protection system.

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CHAPTER 7  CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Main messages

Adults are more positive than children about the extent to which children’s rights are fulfilled in BiH;

There are significant differences in views about children’s rights between children in institutions, in foster care and living with their own families;

In general, children feel unprotected in BiH.

‘When someone says “Child”, we should all stand up!’

Teacher from a Children’s Home

During the past few years, the topic of children’s rights has come into focus in BiH. Children learn about rights in schools and in workshops, and are now quite knowledgeable. However, children’s rights are not just a theoretical item in the school curriculum, they also need to be implemented and respected. The research sought information from children and adults on the extent to which the rights set out in the CRC are respected in BiH, through direct questions, interviews and focus group discussions.

7.1 WHAT ADULTS SAY ABOUT CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Both adults and children answered questions about the extent to which children’s rights are respected in BiH. The 111 adults who participated in this part of the research were:

Professionals, who work in Centres for Social Work (social workers, lawyers, educators, psychologists, special needs specialists, special educators) N= 47;

Professionals, who work in institutions (teachers, social workers, lawyers, educators, psychologists) N= 35;

Non-professionals, who work in institutions (cleaners, handy-men, cooks) N= 29.

They were asked during interviews how far children’s rights in general are respected in BiH; their answers were divided into three groups: respected, partly respected and not respected (Table 13).

Among adults in general very few (5.4 percent) thought that children rights were not respected. The remainder said that they are either fully (68.5 percent) or partially (26.1 percent) fulfilled. However, there were differences between the groups, particularly between professionals and non-professionals. Most of the former tended to feel that children’s rights are respected, while only a third of the latter were of that opinion, half of them taking the middle of the road position that rights are partially respected. Differences between professionals from Centres for Social Work and institutions are not significant. It may be that differences can be explained by professionals trying to paint a better picture while non professionals, with more daily experience of direct contact with children, take a more pessimistic view. On the other hand, the two groups may have different perspectives on the meaning of ‘children’s rights’.
Table 13 Children’s rights from adult perspectives, interviews with staff from Centres for Social Work and institutions for children without parental care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of Adults</th>
<th>Number of Adults</th>
<th>Rights are respected</th>
<th>Rights are partially respected</th>
<th>Rights that are partly respected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals from Centres for Social Work</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals from institutions</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-professionals from institutions</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37.9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>68.5</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2 CHILDREN’S VIEWS OF THEIR RIGHTS

The research method used with adults sought individual opinions, so that adults did not have the opportunity to discuss rights among themselves or with researchers. The method used with children, on the other hand, sought consensus opinions of 210 children who actively worked through the articles of the CRC in group discussions. The children were all aged between 13 and 18 years, 124 from institutions, 37 from foster families and 49 from the control group. Children worked in groups by reading and commenting on all articles, before grouping them into one of the three different categories (respected, non-respected and partially respected rights).

Table 14 Children’s rights from children’s perspectives, answers obtained from discussions of all CRC articles with 13 to 18 year olds from three different groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of children</th>
<th>Number of children</th>
<th>Rights are respected (%)</th>
<th>Rights are partially respected (%)</th>
<th>Rights are not respected (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children from institutions</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>28.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children from foster families</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>64.6</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children from control group</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data provide a measure of how far these children think children’s rights are respected in BiH (Table 14). Comparing children’s views as a whole with those of adults it seems that, even though there is not a large difference between the proportions of those who think children’s rights are respected in BiH, when the much larger difference between those who think they are not respected
(5.4% of adults compared to 30.4% of children) the general impression is that children have a more negative view than adults of the fulfilment of their rights, although this may be a reflection of the fact that data were collected in different ways. Among the three groups of children the main difference is that children in the control group are more pessimistic about their rights.

Children in the control group (left) and foster group (right) pictured during focus group discussions on children’s right

Table 15 Clusters of articles from the CRC used in this research, showing the views of different groups of children about the extent to which they are respected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster of articles</th>
<th>Percentage of children who think rights in this group are respected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children from Institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General principles</td>
<td>66.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights and freedom</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic health and welfare</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, leisure and culture</td>
<td>88.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special protection measures</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family environment and alternative care</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During discussions with the children, the articles in the CRC were clustered into six different categories:

General principles;
Civil rights and freedoms;
Basic health and welfare;
Education, rest and culture activities;
Some of the differences between the three groups of children are notable (Table 15), with the control group having a less positive view than the other two groups with respect to all clusters except civil rights and freedoms and, not altogether surprisingly, family environment and alternative care. In the latter case, they are unlikely to have any experience of alternative care, while children in both institutions and foster families not only have this experience, but also probably have negative memories about family life. What is interesting in this respect is that children in foster families – the preferred option according to most opinions, as seen in earlier chapters – have a more negative view of this cluster than children in institutional care. Whereas 70 percent of children in the control group consider rights in this cluster are respected in BiH, only 65.5 percent of institutionalised children agree, and only just over half (58.5 percent) of children in foster care are of the same opinion.

The other notable difference concerns health and welfare rights, about which children in the control group are far more negative than the other two groups, while all children seem to have a poor view of the extent to which protection rights are respected. The following discussion examines children’s reasons for saying whether or not the rights in each cluster are fulfilled in BiH, on the basis of what they said in focus group discussions. One factor noted by researchers during focus groups discussions was that children living in institutions do not have as full a picture of the society in which they live as children living in families. By contrast, children in the control group were more assertive and critical of society, as is clearly reflected in Table 15.

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

‘No nationality is less valued, but discrimination in our country is widespread,’

16 year old boy, Banja Luka;

‘The BiH state does not work in the best interest of the children in it, because if it did, then most children would be with their parents;’

Boy, 17 years, Tuzla.

The general principles of the CRC, which govern all other rights for children were identified by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and are the fundamental basis of UNICEF’s rights-based programming (UNICEF, 1998). These general principles include the following rights:

- Non-discrimination, on any grounds;
- Every measure that is taken needs to be in the best interests of the child;
- All children have right to survival and development (the ‘right to life’);
- Children have the right to express their opinions, and to have this opinion taken into consideration in all decisions taken on their behalf.

Children from institutions considered that around 67 percent of children’s rights from this cluster are respected, while the other two groups had different opinions. Most objections were in relation to the right to non-discrimination. Children from the control group and foster families thought that there is considerable discrimination in BiH, with respect to the way children of ethnic minorities in both Entities experience discrimination. One of the boys in the control group stated that: ‘No nationality is less valued, but discrimination in our country is widespread, starting from national discrimination to discrimination of children who do not have “important parents”. Here, due to the war it is always noticed what religion you are’ (Boy, 16, Banja Luka). Children gave examples of this in school, where children of ethnic minorities do not have the right to study their language and to write in their script (Serbian children do not have the opportunity to study Cyrillic in FBiH). In some municipalities there are no religious buildings where the members of minorities can worship.
In the focus group discussions, children even used insulting words to describe children of ethnic minorities, such as ‘balija’, ‘cetnik’, and ‘ustasa’. This indicates adult influence on children's opinions, and there will clearly be no change in children’s opinions until adults change their views. It was particularly disappointing to observe during visits that professionals and non-professionals who work in institutions for children without parental care use abusive names, which children can hear and copy. It has already been seen in Chapter 3 that children from institutions are discriminated against within the wider society.

The extent to which children’s right to have their opinion taken into account is particularly vital for children in state care, for whom where they live, and with whom, is dependent on decisions taken by professionals. The prevailing culture of childhood in BiH, as explained in Chapter 1, is that children are family dependents, and parental authority extends into adult life. When children in the control group were discussing education they were clear that human rights are not respected in their schools. They gave many examples of discrimination, in which a child’s culture was not respected, or of lack of tolerance and understanding from their teachers. One 16-year-old girl in the control group said: ‘They do not teach us anything. Actually, they teach us how to swear, how to shout when something is not our way, because this is what they do. They never taught us how to behave towards older people. That we learned from our families. Teachers are not doing anything about retraining in cases where it is needed’ (16 year old girl, control group, Celinac).

In relation to freedom to express their views, children emphasised that this is not possible in school, as almost no one listens to them; ‘Our teachers think that we are not capable of thinking’ (Girl, 16, Mostar). One girl from an institution commented: ‘We have no right to our own opinion, because if we had we would enrol into the schools we wanted to attend. Similarly, they would listen when we say something’ (Girl, 18, Gradacac).

Communication between teacher and student was described as one-way; a student should listen to the teacher, and never the other way around. The culture of schooling is likewise based on adults being in authority as well as being the source of knowledge and information, so that children are passive learners and the teacher is always right. In relation to communication in institutions, children said that there is not enough communication; for every staff member in an institution there are around six, and sometimes more, children. Therefore, staff in institutions are not able to respond to the needs of each child individually. ‘Not every child has the right to express their opinion. Some have, but often when they express their opinion nobody listens to them’ (Girl, 17, Zenica).

**CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS**

*‘We have no right to privacy, because anyone can come into our room and go through our things, without our permission,’*

Girl, 16 years, institution.

The second cluster of rights has to do with civil rights and freedoms:

*Every child has the right to a name, nationality and identity,*

*Children have the right to express their views freely, to receive and give information, to freely practice their own religion, and the right to free association to protect their own interests;*  

*Children have a right to privacy,*  

*Children should be protected from harmful information,*  

*Children should not be exposed to torture, or cruel and inhumane punishment, nor placed in prisons with adults, regardless of the degree of their criminal offence.*
Children from all three groups have approximately similar opinions in relation to this cluster of rights. They all commented that their identity in BiH is protected and that nobody has forced them, to change their name, in institutions or in foster families. Yet the case of the ‘SFOR baby’ described in Chapter 1 must not be forgotten in this respect.

Children said they are happy with the amount of information they receive and most of them consider this right to be respected in BiH. Yet they also considered one of the consequences of war to be poor library provision, meaning that they do not have the opportunity to read literature appropriate to their age. In their opinion, the quality of information from television, newspapers and magazines is low. Censorship exists in relation to television shows, but this is not completely followed through. For example, in peak time, when children are usually watching television, they said that there are movies and shows with content that might be damaging to children’s psychological development. One group of children from foster families had a very interesting comment in relation to the quality of information accessible to children. They thought that children in BiH are exposed to damaging information, from the quality of the programmes on television (action movies, with violence, documentaries which show pictures of mass murders and war all around the world) to newspapers and magazines. These opinions clearly show how objective children can be in critical analysis.

Children from institutions expressed criticism with respect to the right to privacy: ‘We have no right to privacy, because anyone can come into our room and go through our things, without our permission’ (Girl, 16, institution). ‘We do not have the right to privacy in the sense that in the house where we live we cannot sleep with who we want to, as somebody already has decided that. We go to sleep by ourselves in our rooms, alone, and we do not want that’ (Girl, 14, institution). On the other hand, another perspective on the right to privacy came from a 16-year-old boy in the control group, who said that sometimes it is necessary that parents intrude on their children’s privacy; ‘We have enough privacy, but sometimes it is good when parents interfere with our privacy, because we might be hiding something that we should actually share with them’ (Boy, 16, control group Celinac).

Criminal laws in both Entities state that criminal sanctions cannot be applied to a child who has not yet reached the age of 14 years. Between 14 and 16 years of age, sanctions can be used, but children cannot be sentenced to a term of imprisonment (in a prison for minors) until the age of 16 years. Correction measures for minors who have committed criminal offence are:

*Disciplinary measures such as an official warning or referral to correctional services for juveniles;*

*Probation order;*

*Institutional measures: referral to correction institution or home.*

There are questions about the way these measures are, or can be, implemented in BiH. In RS there is not a single specialised institution for juvenile offenders, and in FBiH there is only one – the Institution for Disciplining Male Children and Youth, Hum, which deals only with boys, as was seen in Chapter 3. Since 1998, the Centre for Social Work in Banja Luka has cooperated with Save the Children UK on the joint project called ‘Cuka’, which was described in Chapter 2. Statistics show that 90 percent of juvenile offenders have been convicted for less dangerous criminal offences. However, children aged 17 and 18 years who have committed more serious criminal offences are placed in the prison in Tunjice (near Banja Luka) with adult prisoners, which violates Article 37 of the CRC.
Nationality

The rights to name, identity and nationality (Articles 7 and 8 of the CRC) are of particular importance in this composite state. One way of ensuring identity, and thus access to rights is through birth registration. The UNICEF MICS survey of 2000 found that the births of 98 percent of children under the age of five in the FBiH, and 99 percent in RS, have been registered. There are no significant variations in birth registration according to sex, age or education. During initial analysis of results at the midpoint of fieldwork researchers decided to add additional questions to existing instruments, in order to test the hypothesis that there are differences between children living in the two Entities of BiH with respect to their sense of national identity. A total of 241 children (191 in FBiH and 50 in RS) were asked the questions ‘What is the name of the country you live in?’ and ‘What is the capital city of the country you live in?’ In addition 30 children from FBiH were asked ‘What colour is the state flag of the country you live in?’ and some drew coloured pictures. Of these children, 46 lived in institutions or SOS Children’s Villages, eight were in foster care and 187 from the control group (Table 16). Overall, 79 percent of children correctly identified the state they live in as BiH. Almost two thirds of children living in RS considered that Entity to be a state, with just over half thinking that Banja Luka, the largest city and administrative centre of RS, is the capital, and eight naming Serb Sarajevo (the Constitutional capital). Only a third of children in RS said that the state they live in is BiH. This contrasts with answers from children in FBiH, only two out of 191 naming FBiH as a state rather than an Entity. Three named the state they live in as Croatia – all from a home in FBiH in Sarajevo, but originally from a region with a Croat majority. All but six children living in FBiH identified Sarajevo as the capital city, the six who named Mostar all lived in that town.

Table 16 Answers to the questions ‘What is the name of the country you live in?’ and ‘What is the capital city of the country you live in?’ from 241 children currently living in BiH (FBiH 191, RS 50).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Children from FBiH</th>
<th>Total BiH</th>
<th>Answers</th>
<th>Children from FBiH</th>
<th>Total BiH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBiH</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/don’t know/no answer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Other/don’t know/no answer</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Uncertainties about nationality are not surprising given the degree of disruption over the past decade. It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions and, in any case, most of the children in this sample were living within parental care. Nevertheless, the three education programmes currently in use in BiH (Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian) may be causing confusion. Children in Croat and Serb majority areas of BiH use text books from neighbouring countries, in which they are informed that the name of the country they live in is Croatia or Serbia, respectively, accompanied by a picture of the corresponding flag. When children in FBiH were asked for the colour of the flag or drew a flag...
for researchers 20 out of 30 correctly identified the colours of the BiH flag as blue and yellow. Of
the remaining 10, five gave very varied colours, one mentioned the red, white and blue of the
Croatian flag, and two drew the green flag of Islam with its star and crescent moon.

Rules and punishment

Articles 28 and 37 of the CRC make it clear that discipline must take children’s dignity into account
and not include cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. Through the sentence completion method,
with 13 to 18 year olds, as well as in discussions with children aged seven to 12 years about their
drawings of home, researchers explored the rules and forms of punishment that exist in institutions
as well as in families. The objective was to find out if there are a significant differences in this
respect between children who live in institutions and children who live in families, whether these
are biological families or foster families.

The sentences for completion on the topic of punishment were: The last time I was punished…..;
The reason was…….; The punishment was….; The person who punished me was….; and What I
thought about it was….. Among 13 to 18 years olds completing this method, there were no
differences between the groups of children with respect to reasons for punishment. Children usually
get punished because they come home late or because they do not perform their chores.
Nevertheless, there were significant differences between groups in the forms punishment takes. In
institutions, adults usually shout at children, or order them to complete a task within a set period of
time, or else they will be punished in another way. During a focus group discussion on children’s
rights in an institution, researchers found that another form of punishment is to prevent children
from visiting relatives. One boy said that he had been forbidden to visit his relatives because he
previously broke a window (Boy, 16, institution).

Sentence completion provided information about the rules in institutions, which fall into three broad
classes:

Rules about the time for waking up and time for going to bed, so that all children
get up and go to bed at the same time. Older adolescents can stay up until ten
o’clock in the evening;

Children in institutions have particular eating system, so that everyone eats at
the same time, food cannot be taken at any another time. This is not the case with
SOS children’s villages, where children eat in their houses and at a time that
suits them;

In religious institutions children have to behave according to religious customs,
so that school and religious rituals are something that is primary in their life,
and play is something for which there is not enough time.

Children in families are punished in different ways. They may be confined to the house for a while,
or some privilege may be suspended for few days. Some parents talk to them, pointing out their
mistakes and advise them to behave better in future. These data are very interesting, because they
show that both natural and foster parents show patience and use education rather than retribution to
correct mistakes. In institutions, on the other hand, non-educational types of punishment are used,
such as shouting and giving new orders, with an escalating scale of punishments.

Children did not mention corporal punishment. On the other hand it is interesting that some children
in institutions did not complete the sentences on punishment at all. It is possible that they were
afraid that their teachers might find out, or read the answers, and that this might lead to punishment.
Another factor might have been distrust of unknown researchers. Regardless of the fact that the
researchers emphasised more than once that data would not be used for purposes other than
research, these children may not have felt secure and, indeed might have felt obliged to give their
‘voluntary consent’ but subsequently opted out of the research in the only way available to them by
not completing the instrument. However, it is still interesting to note these none-answers occurring with respect to the sentences on punishment.

**HEALTH AND WELFARE**

‘The health system does not have enough money, the standard is poor and everything has to be paid for.’

Boy in control group;

‘Appropriate care does not exist, because if it did then children would have free medical treatment, and they do not, even if they have medical insurance,’

Boy, 13 years, control group.

Health and welfare rights form the third cluster:

- *Every child has the right to adequate health protection;*
- *Every child has the right to a living standard that is suitable to his/her development;*
- *Disabled children have the right to education, normal life and the opportunity for involvement in the community.*

As already seen, health indicators in BiH are relatively good. In 2001 UNICEF placed the country 50 places down from the highest ranked of 187 nations with respect to Under-5-years Mortality Rate, which is a proxy indicator of development. The answers from foster children and children in institutions in the research seemed to show that they would agree with this position. Nearly three quarters of foster children in the research thought that the rights in this cluster are respected, but children from control group were far more critical, with under one third thinking these rights are fulfilled. They said that they are not satisfied with health and social protection because most of the children in BiH do not have adequate health protection. Children whose parents can pay for the services of private doctors have better health protection than others, who have to rely on public services. Conditions in hospitals are poor, and it is not unusual for some children to die from curable diseases. One boy from control group said, ‘The health system does not have enough money, the standard is poor and everything has to be paid for. This is not fair, because those who have no money to pay for an operation for example, will not be operated on until they pay, regardless of how badly needed and urgent this operation might be. In our health system only money matters, nobody cares for patients. Children have no right to free health insurance’ (Boy, 16, control group, Celinac). In fact children’s opinions on this seem to run counter to the already cited LSMS results that 79.2 percent of children are covered by some kind of health insurance (LSMS, 2002). It seems likely that many children are reacting to hearing their parents’ concern that obtaining appropriate health care is a continuous source of stress.

Children from institutions can enjoy good health protection, depending on the institution. In the SOS Children’s Villages in Sarajevo and Gracanica, all health care is provided for the children. What brought this cluster down in the eyes of children from institutions is that they are not satisfied with their standard of living, and they think that it is low. They said that institutions satisfy their basic needs and nothing else. During the discussions researchers heard once again about the labelling of children without parental care, who are looked down on or pitied, because they do not have enough money to buy fashionable clothes. Excursions and other trips with school friends are only a dream for them, although some children in institutions do have the possibility to go abroad in groups (Greece, Italy, Germany) but others have no such opportunities. Rather than taking part in organised group excursions, children said that they would like to go on trips with friends from school.
The methods used for investigating attitudes to children’s rights were not used with children with disabilities, but there is a major problem in integrating them into mainstream education. They cannot go to primary, secondary school with other children, and higher education is ‘mission impossible’. A considerable number of schools do not have doors that allow wheel-chair entry, so children with mobility problems are forced to attend special institutions, even if they do not have any other impairment. RS does not have any secondary school for children with disabilities, who are forced to travel to Yugoslavia, which is inconvenient and means that they become isolated from their social environment. Many children with disabilities are placed in hospitals and forgotten. In general, children with disabilities have severely limited opportunities to develop their potential.

**EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURE**

‘Actually, they teach us how to swear, how to shout when something is not our way, because this is what they do,’

16 year old girl, control group, Celinac.

Education, leisure and culture were the rights discussed under the fourth cluster:

*Children have a right to free primary school education, free choice of high school and higher education;*

*The goals of education should be to develop children's personality, talent, mental and physical abilities, it should teach them to respect human rights, tolerance, and equality.*

*Children have a right to free time, recreation and cultural activities.*

Responses in focus group discussions showed that this cluster of rights is agreed by most children to be the most generally respected. The next chapter contains further discussion of recreation and leisure, on the basis of data from other instruments. In the focus group discussions children said that education rights are the least respected in this cluster. The greatest criticism came from children in the control group, as might be expected. These children are interested in furthering their education, while the children in institutions and in foster families are more inclined towards technical and trade schools, so they are less interested in improvements in education. However, the fact that children are not interested in improving their education is probably due also to lack of motivation and opportunity. Children without parental care often commented that the choice of school is usually made by their foster parents or by institutional staff, ‘We cannot enrol into the school where we live. For all the other schools in cities nearby they would have to pay for the tickets for our travel’ (Girl, 14, institution). In such situations, talents and potentials are undermined, and children are usually advised to enrol in trade schools because, as already seen, when they leave the institution, it is important for them to have some kind of trade certificate. Thus the result from children in institutions that 88 percent think these rights are fulfilled does not necessarily correlate with the right to fulfilment of their potential. There is a wide gap between schooling and education.
SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

‘Child refugees are not adequately housed, they live in difficult conditions, and the state should do more for them,’

Boy, 16 years, institution.

Special protection measures, in the fifth cluster, include:

Children have to be protected from work and economic exploitation, sexual exploitation, drug use and sale, kidnapping and trafficking, and all other types of exploitation;

Children under 15 years of age (18 in the Optional Protocol to the CRC) should not be members of armed forces;

Children have the right to due process of law, with special measures because of their age;

Child refugees should have adequate support;

Abused and exploited children have a right to rehabilitation measures.

This cluster of rights was seen as problematic by children, and the statistical results show a major difference between this cluster and others across all three groups of children, with an average rate of satisfaction with the implementation of rights in this area at only 50 percent. Researchers came to the conclusion that these adolescents felt insecure and under threat. They made claims such as ‘Centres of Social Work have a poor record on physical abuse of children, and nobody denounces it. The country is reluctant to bring criminal charges against people who abuse child’ (Boy, 16, Celinac, control group), and ‘Sexual abuse is common in Bosnia and Herzegovina and there are some brothels where young girls are working as prostitutes’ (Girl, 14, institution). Even though they might declare that ‘Kidnapping is largely unknown in our culture’, adolescents still expressed their fear of being kidnapped and taken abroad. Nevertheless, their concern about the non-fulfillment of children’s rights in this cluster related not so much to themselves but to other groups of children who are not protected from abuse and exploitation.

Many comments related to child refugees: ‘Child refugees are not adequately accommodated, they live in difficult conditions, and the state should do more for them’ (Boy, 16, institution). ‘There is no special protection of refugee children and humanitarian assistance goes to others, not them’ (Boy, 16 years, control group Celinac). Children's opinion in focus group discussions was that BiH does not provide for refugee children and that they are marginalised.

All three groups of children thought that the number of children who take drugs increases every day; ‘Around every corner there are children who are injecting themselves. Apart from the fact that more and more children are taking drugs, they are used in selling drugs also. Children are not protected from drugs. Police let the drugs into the country, profit from them, and then pretend to search for dealers. Today children can easily gain access to drugs. There is no one to prevent that’ (Boy, 16, control group Celinac); ‘There are not enough lectures and workshops about drugs’ (Girl, 16, institution).

Several children commented on children’s work and economic exploitation, expressing the opinion that BiH has many children who work as beggars: ‘Children are begging in the streets. One boy from the Home was chopping wood for money. There are children who help their parents to earn a living’ (Boy, 17, institution). They seem to see begging as the most frequent type of exploitation of children in BiH, and blame the government for this situation.
From the point of view of this report, the sixth cluster of rights, which focuses on family and alternative care, is the most important. It includes:

- That the state should help parents in raising a child, and help them meet their needs whenever necessary;
- That children without parents have a right be given full care;
- That the state should facilitate the reunion of the family, if the family has been temporarily separated for whatever reason;
- That the state should prevent the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad;
- That a review of placement of any kind of children’s institution or alternative care should be carried out regularly;
- That the child should be protected from any form of abuse and neglect;
- That the adoption of children should be performed in accordance with domestic family law, and in the best interest of a child.

As might be expected, children from the control group thought that most of these rights are respected in BiH, as these are children who live in complete families, with both biological parents. Children from the control group think that the children without parental care are taken good care of, but they often did not comment on periodical review of placement, as they have no knowledge of this. Children from foster families have the lowest estimate of respect for these rights. They feel that they have been forgotten by their social workers. This group of children considers that nobody cares for them, that they have been abandoned in their foster families, and that nobody from Centres for Social Work is concerned about the conditions in which they live. Some of these children do not even know their social workers. A number of them think that they live in very difficult conditions and their foster parents need assistance but that, as nobody visits them, this goes unnoticed. Children in institutions are in the similar position. They also feel that they have been forgotten. One boy said: ‘Our social workers very rarely visit our Home. Periodical review of placement does not exist’ (Boy, 13, institution). The same problem was mentioned in another institution, ‘Those two [psychologist and social worker] come to this house only when we are visited by donors or TV people’ (Girl, 18, institution).

7.3 CONCLUSIONS

According to a comparison between results of focus group discussions with children with what child care professionals and non-professionals in institutions said in interviews, children’s views of the extent to which their rights are respected are more pessimistic. There were also differences between the views of children from institutions, foster homes and the control group. Children who live with their own parents appear to be better informed and more articulate about rights than children in institutions and to express more negative opinions about the extent to which rights are respected in BiH, particularly with reference to health and welfare. A surprising result is that foster children in this sample had a more negative view of family life and alternative care than either children in institutions or the control group. The extent to which this corroborates evidence from other methods that indicate reason for concern about fostering in BiH will be explored in the final discussion and conclusions.
All children seem to think that civil rights and freedoms, as well as education and cultural rights are well respected. On the other hand, evidence from this method shows that children in BiH feel that they, and particularly their peers, are not well protected from abuse and exploitation. Despite the overall high rating given to education rights children made many negative comments about the extent to which their views are listened to – much less taken into account. This includes comments from children in state care about lack of fulfilment to the right to periodic review of placement.
Main messages

Despite a rhetoric of kindness, children without parents do not have their developmental and emotional needs met;

Institutions function as caretakers providing services;

Institutions are more interested in providing services than in meeting children’s needs – let alone in fulfilling their rights;

Children leaving institutions lack skills for dealing with everyday life;

Children in institutions are children with special needs.

‘What I need the most are meat and soup,’
Adolescent boy;

What I need the most is clothes,’
Adolescent boy;

What I need the most is education,’
Girl (18 years old).

‘What I need the most is love, support and understanding,’
Girl, (15 years old);

‘If I could just have the courage to forget the past’
Adolescent boy

‘The thing I need the most is strength for the future,’
Adolescent boy;

‘What I need the most is luck,’
Boy (15 years old);

‘What I need the most is someone to help me’
Adolescent girl;

‘If I could just be more self – confident, I would be much more content,’
Adolescent girl;

‘What I need the most is strength and will for survival’
Adolescent girl;

‘If I could just have the courage to face myself’
Boy (18 years old).
Researchers explored the needs of children in BiH and the extent to which they are met, using a variety of different methods. The quotations from children with which this chapter begins are taken from two methods used in research: sentence completion and Protection Shield. They contrast children’s basic, practical needs for food, clothing and education, with deeper needs for love, support, understanding and self-esteem. (Buljibasic, 2000).

8.1 ADULTS VIEWS OF CHILDREN’S NEEDS

When adult interviewees were asked to specify the needs of children in BiH, they provided sparse responses, which may reflect the level of their knowledge in this area. They were first asked what they thought children need, and then if they thought needs were fulfilled. The types of needs they described were classified by researchers as primary, secondary and luxury. Primary needs included basic necessities such as food and shelter; secondary needs included family, love, care, clothes, shoes, education, health and social protection, play and their own space. Needs such as summer holidays on the coast or winter holidays in the mountains, travelling abroad or having computers were classified as luxuries (Table [17]). Across the board there was general agreement among professionals that children’s needs are not adequately satisfied, particularly in the secondary category, but also with respect to food and a home. Non-professionals in institutions were the only group of participants who mostly thought children’s primary and secondary needs are adequately met, which may be a reflection of lower expectations, or of the small number of participants interviewed.

Table 17 Answers of professional and non-professionals in interviews about the extent of fulfilment of children’s needs (N=127)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of interviewees</th>
<th>Classification of children’s needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Met</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professionals in Centres for Social Work (70)</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionals in institutions (45)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non professionals in institutions (12)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotals</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total valid answers (N=127)</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 A HOME AND SOMETHING TO EAT

Children’s views of their needs, expressed in several research instruments, tended to cover only primary and secondary needs. In the first place, it seems that children in institutions make a distinction between shelter and home.
CHILDREN’S PERCEPTION OF HOME

‘All children in the world should have a home,’
Boy, 13, SOS Children’s Village.

Children need shelter, or more specifically a home in which other needs are met. Children’s drawings of where they live and where they would like to live have already been discussed in Chapter 4. It was seen that children in foster families and in the control group living with their own families never denied their actual place of residence, unlike 12 percent of children living in institutions. There was a significant difference between the three groups of children with respect to their wishes about where they would like to live. Significantly more children placed in institutions either desired to return to a past dwelling place, with their lost families, or in another country.

Drawings can be powerful statements of the way children feel. One five year old boy in a children’s home drew a house, even though he lived in an institution. He told us that he lived in a house with his parents, brothers and sisters. He said that he loved living there and especially liked the flowers around the house (Drawing 1).

Drawing 1. Boy, 5 years old, Children’s home

In contrast to children in families, five percent of children in institutions said that they do not like the place in which they lived. One 11 year old institutionalised girl drew the place she lived in as a building with no colour, just a black outline (Drawing 2). When researchers asked where she would like to live she replied, ‘I would like to live somewhere in the heart’.
Drawing 2. Girl, 11 years old, Children’s home.
Another girl, just one year older, drew the children’s home in which she lived in one colour (red) with no details. When researchers asked her where she would like to live she replied ‘In a house, with a cook and relatives’, meanwhile drawing a large flower with a bright yellow centre and multicoloured petals (Drawing 3).

*Drawing 3 Girl, 12 years old, Children’s home*

A seven year old girl drew two very similar houses with the same background, but the picture representing the children’s home in which she lived lacks colours, while the house where she would like to live is fully coloured. (Drawing 4)

*Drawing 4. Girl, 7 years, Children’s Home.*
Another girl aged 10 was quite clear that she lived in an institutional home, and drew it as a nice house surrounded by flowers. She said she wanted to live in her own house, which was far away, with her family. To represent this drew an identical picture, with the exception of one telling detail – a heart on the door (Drawing 5).

Drawing 5 Girl, 10 years old, Children’s Home

**NUTRITION**

‘What I need the most are meat and soup,’

Adolescent boy.

Every child has a primary, biological need to eat, and the right to eat regular, quality food. This research provided an opportunity to find out the extent to which that need is satisfied in BiH, and if there are any differences between children placed in institutions or foster families, and children from complete families. The method used was a nutrition recall schedule, in which children recorded all the meals they had eaten the previous day, as well as food and drink between meals. Analysis of the results showed that, on average, children have a daily consumption of 6.06 out of the 11 different types of food researchers classified from the schedules. This shows a relatively varied diet. Some children missed one (7.8 percent) or more (16.2 percent) of the three daily main meals. There was very little difference between girls (23 percent) and boys (26 percent) in this respect.

One of the surprising results was the quantity of carbohydrates children eat in one day. Carbohydrates represented the highest percentage of food intake in all three main meals of the day, and the intake of carbohydrates during snacks was also high, often in the form of bread, which is a cultural practice as bread is served with almost every meal in BiH. Another reason why the quantity
of carbohydrates in the diet is so high is that a large number of children living in institutions had
eaten pasta for lunch, dinner or both, on the the day before completing the schedule.

A surprising number of children in all three samples drink milk during dinner and coffee during
snacks. However, the actual number who actually do drink coffee between meals is not that large.
Assuming that only school-aged children drink coffee, and also that they have their snacks between
classes, the notion of drinking coffee can be misunderstood, since in BiH it is common to say ‘we
went for a coffee’, meaning having any drink socially with friends.

Children in institutions eat less fast food

Fast food consumption, for both main meals and snacks is another notable feature of the data.
Researchers defined ‘fast food’ to include æevapi (traditional mincemeat rolls), hamburgers, pizza,
hot dogs, sandwiches and roasted mincemeat. One hundred and forty six out of the 525 children in
this sample (27.8 percent) ate fast food for one of their three main meals of the day. The intake of
fast food is most frequent at breakfast and lunch; two meals children most often have while they
are in school. School starts at 08.00 in the morning and, depending on the time they get up, children
may not have time to have breakfast, nor to prepare a snack or lunch to take to school. Many
children are not in the habit of having breakfast at all. The data from our research show that 38
percent of children have only a glass of milk or a cup of tea for breakfast.

The midday school break is 25 minutes long and does not enable children to have a proper lunch
while in school. However, schools in BiH tend to be surrounded by fast food outlets and bakeries,
so the easiest thing for children to do is to buy a hamburger or a doughnut. There is no other
alternative in such a brief break. Some schools actually have a fast food/buffet/bar/snack bar on the
premises, where children can buy items such as sandwiches, french-fries or soft drinks, although the
research did not investigate who is responsible for giving permission to open such a facility inside
the school and on what grounds. Some schools provide children with snacks, including sandwiches
(bread with spread, bread with cheese, bread with salami, doughnuts, pies or a slice of pizza) for
which parents pay, on average, 15KM monthly (assuming 20 school days). The daily snack is good
value at the price of 0.75KM, since all these snacks cost between 0.5 KM and 1KM elsewhere.
Snacks are usually not prepared in school but delivered by a local fast food outlet or a bakery, with
which the school has a contract. This means that children are offered fast food and bakery products
in school. It would be interesting to know whether parents are aware of what their children eat while
in school, and indeed if they know that they may not eat at all.

One of the general problems regarding the nutrition of school children in BiH probably comes down
to the fact that not many parents in BiH can provide their children with money to have a snack in
school, not to mention a midday meal. Another problem is that children in BiH are not in the habit
of taking lunch to school, since it is not considered to be ‘cool’. Parents can persuade children take
an apple, banana, orange or chocolate to school, but not a home-made sandwich or lemonade. The data show that the largest percentage of children eat fruit for between-meal snacks.

Comparisons of results between children in institutions, in foster care and the control group are interesting. Children in institutions on average eat 6.78 out of the 11 different types of food researchers defined in this research, whereas children in the control group eat 5.50 and children in foster care 4.8. This difference is statistically significant, which means that children who live in homes for children without parental care have a significantly more varied diet than other children in the sample. Out of all the children in the sample who missed meal on the previous day (124), 38.7 percent were children from institutions, 45.2 percent were children from control group and 16.1 percent were children in foster care.

It is important to note that one of the characteristics of life in institution is that nutrition is structured and organised. Also children in institutions do not have money of their own to go and buy a meal they have missed. A child in an institution is aware that missing a meal means having nothing to eat until the next organised meal. Children living in institutions miss one of their meals because they are either in school or involved in their extracurricular activities, thus not being in the institution for meal time and, in many cases, not being allowed to enter the kitchen to look for replacement food. Children placed in institutions eat significantly more vegetables and significantly less fast food than children in the control group and in foster care. Children living in institution are daily provided with meals including vegetables and fruit and some are given a sandwich or fruit to take to school, but some of them still miss meals. These results indicate that the qualitative aspect of nutritional needs is being met in institutional care even though, during visits to institutions, researchers did not always get the feeling that children had a high level of satisfaction with the food provided.

The nutritional intake of children living in families is not under the same degree of control as in institutions. Although foster care may provide a family for a child, these results do not show a satisfactory situation with respect to nutrition, which may be related to failure of Centres for Social Work to provide monthly financial support. Children in foster care eat on average 4.8 of the 11 different types of food, which means that they have a significantly less varied diet than children living in institutions and children from control group. Of all 124 children in the sample who missed one main meal on the previous day, 16.1 percent were children in foster care. But this does not necessarily indicate that all is well, because the foster children sample was smaller than the other two, so the proportion of foster children who missed meals was higher. Twenty eight percent of children in foster care missed one of their meals and eight percent missed more than one meal, usually either breakfast or dinner.

Children in the control group eat 5.50 out of 11 different foods, which means that they have a significantly more varied diet than children in foster care, but significantly less than children living in institutions. They also missed more meals than children in either of the other two groups. The nutrition of children living in their biological families is not under strict control. Those who go to school early in the morning may be too lazy to get up early in order to have breakfast. On the other hand, those who go to school in the afternoon have their lunch late in the afternoon, so they feel no need to have dinner. A number of children living in families are also engaged in extracurricular activities, but unlike children in institutions the more flexible family atmosphere enables them to have all their meals at home at the same time as being able to enjoy a more varied set of life experiences outside their homes.
8.3 CHILDREN’S NEED FOR FAMILY AND AFFECTION

‘Every child wants to live with his or her family.’

Girl, 18, Children’s Home.

The data on nutrition show that institutionalised children are better fed than children in either foster families or their own family home. Their need for food is satisfied. But this may not be a sufficient trade off for the lack of fulfilment of emotional needs, as is clearly shown in data from a number of other research instruments. In the sentence completion method children aged seven to 18 years, from both institutions and foster families, tended to connect their ‘most beautiful life event’ with family members. This included meeting and spending time with family members (especially mothers), simply being at home or the birth of a sibling. Connections with family members are important in all children’s lives, but particularly for children outside the care of biological parents. Yet, as already seen, institutions tend to limit visits from children’s kin.

Similar results were obtained through working with children aged from 13 to 18 years using the sentence completion method. The research hypothesis that children placed in institutions would define their happiest moment when having a visit from their relatives (including perhaps living parents) more often than children in foster care families and in the control group, proved to be correct. Children in institutions wish for contact with a family member, whereas children placed in families are more interested in play and friendship. Researchers also hypothesised that children placed in institutions would declare their happiest moment to have been an achievement, for example in school or at sport, which would prove their individual worth. The data showed this to be the case. In contrast, children in the control group described their happiest moments as taking place when playing with their friends or bringing happiness to people they love, opportunities that perhaps do not arise for children in institutions, or do not have the same value. The results from the second sentence to be completed in this instrument (‘If I could, I would ...’) also show differences between the three groups of children. Of all who completed this sentence with answers categorised as family’ (which included answers such as ‘being with’ my mother, father, brother or sister; ‘having a family’) 75 percent were children in institutions, 18.8 percent were children in foster care families and only 6.3 percent in the control group.

The persistent feeling of loss of family, which is evident from the sentence completion instrument was confirmed in the responses to the Protection Shield category of ‘Two people I love the most’. ‘Mother’ and ‘father’ were the most frequent answers among children from complete families in the control group, while, for children from institutions, the most loved people were staff members from institutions. Children in foster families tended to mention their friends. Children’s need for close person and role-model person is evident from their answers about persons whom they love the most. Teachers/care-givers was the category chosen by children from institutions in 97.8 percent of cases as a first person chosen, and in 96.9 percent of the cases as a second person chosen, in the sample of 443 children. This information indicates that children without parents are able to find a substitute for their natural parents in their care-givers. A percentage this high shows how important teachers and educators are for those children as well as the need for both professional skills and professional supervision of institutional staff. On the other hand, it is surprising to note that children from foster families seldom mentioned people they loved in the ‘family’ category, given that most of them are biologically related to their foster parents. They apparently do not feel sufficiently attached to their fosterers, which raises many questions about the suitability of foster placements in BiH.

Even when describing what would they do if they have power, in the Protection Shield, there were statistically significant differences between the groups. If they had power, 81.3 percent of children from institutions said that they would ‘have a mother or father’, or ‘make my parent(s). In contrast, children from foster families gave this kind of response in only 18.8 percent of cases, and children from the control group not even once. This shows the felt need for close family relations among children without parental care in institutions. The results from this part of the Protection Shield also
reveal a different attitude towards the use of power among children from complete families who tended to provide answers to this that were similar to the way they completed the sentence ‘If I could I would…’ with ‘other directed’ and altruistic wishes, such as changing the world, making it the better place or helping other people. These results correspond to Maslow’s theory of the hierarchy of needs, which states that basic needs have to be satisfied before seeking to gratify higher needs (Maslow, 1954).

**FRIENDSHIPS**

Children from institutions and foster families chose their friends as most important people in their lives more frequently than children from the control group. The compensation for their lack of close personal relationship with parents seems to be close friendships. One part of the drawing method included asking children to draw where they would most like to live, and with whom. One nine-year-old boy said about his drawing ‘I would like to live in a house with my friend. We would not need anyone. We would live there alone. We could do everything on our own. We don’t need adults. I would cook and he would clean.’ This could have implications for the way institutional life is organised. One 14 year old girl placed in a Children’s Home said ‘In the evening we have to be in beds on time. That’s a rule, and that is OK. But we are not allowed to go to each other’s rooms. My best friend is in the other family unit, and sometime I feel a need to go to her and talk, but I can’t.’ It may be important is to raise the awareness of professional staff about importance of a network of friends to the children in their care.

**PLAYTIME IN FAMILIES AND INSTITUTIONS**

Article 31 of the CRC recognises children’s right ‘to rest and leisure, to engage in play’ and ‘to participate freely in cultural life and the arts’. This right is an acknowledgment of children’s need to learn about themselves, their culture, society and environment through play and recreation. Indeed the relationship between playful activities and human creativity has been noted by both psychologists and philosophers (See Koestler, 1965, and Huizinga, 1970, for example). Thus it is important to know if children who are placed in institutions have the same opportunities for recreation as other children in BiH.

When children completed the sentence ‘The most beautiful event in my life…’, one category of response included personal achievements in sport, music, school, and meetings with friends. There were significant differences between the three groups of children. Just over a third (34.2 percent) of children in institutions provided responses within this category, compared to nearly a half (49.5 percent) of children in the control group and only 16.1 percent of fostered children. It might thus appear that children living with their parents have greater opportunities to develop their abilities, talents and self-confidence. The low proportion of children in foster families who provided this kind of response is a surprising, and possibly worrying, indication of lack of recreational and cultural opportunities for children in this kind of placement and underlines the need for increased monitoring of their lives, perhaps even suggesting that children in grandparent-headed, or uncle/aunt-headed families spend a large proportion of time on household chores, or that financial resources in their foster family may not be sufficient for them to take part in social and cultural activities with their peers.

This conclusion tends to be confirmed by the responses to that part of the Protection Shield in which children were asked to name two things they are ‘best at’ doing. Children from the control group provided most answers in the category culture activities in both the first (53.2 percent) and second (49.1 percent) response, naming activities such as playing a musical instrument, singing, dancing, writing stories and poems or acting. The conclusion could be that children living in complete families have more opportunities to develop their talents and interests then children living in the institutions. This appears to indicate that there is a shortage of cultural education and
stimulation for children from institutions. The concept of ‘good placement’, as seen in the views of adults discussed earlier, is that it provides food and a clean bed to sleep in. There certainly seemed to be little awareness that children might need to explore cultural and social life outside the institution. Indeed there is an acute lack of financial resources to support such activities. The lack of opportunities for staff to work with children as individuals is also likely to limit the development of creative talents. Once again, however, the lowest number of answers in this category was given by children from foster families (9.7 percent for the first choice and 8.8 percent for the second). This again poses the question about the quality of foster family placement.

8.4 CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTS ARE CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

‘You can’t imagine how it is
to feel that your own mother does not want to see you
ever again in her life,’

16 year old boy; father deceased, abandoned by his mother;

‘The emotional hunger of children without parental care is so huge
that we can never give them enough love and attention.’

Foster parent from Trebinje

During fieldwork the main task was to work with children without parental care who are placed in institutions. In institutions for children without parental care researchers found two major groups of children: first are the children without living parents and the second are children who have one or both parents alive, but for various reasons not able to care for them. Children from the second group have mostly experienced intense traumas and neglect in their homes (dysfunctional families, alcohol abuse, mental health problems, and bad economic situation). Both groups of children need special professional care, but this was not what researchers found in practice.

In interviews with employees in the institutions for children without parental care, especially with non-professional staff, researchers encountered some misunderstandings about children’s needs. Interviewees said that children’s needs are fulfilled, because ‘here they have meal and shelter’. But a child needs more than these basic necessities; especially a child to whom parental love and care have been denied at early stage of its development. Yet this is not always recognised. One cook from an institution said: ‘Children’s needs are fulfilled, but children always want more. They want to have money, to go out, to have brand name clothes. It is hard to give them that.’

The conclusion from children’s descriptions of their lives is that children without parental care are children with special needs – they are socially disabled. Even if they are provided with perfect surroundings, top-quality meals and clothes, there appears to be little provision to fill their emotional emptiness. Thus it can be argued that, even though they are well fed (indeed better fed than their peers), children who are growing up in children’s homes are ‘emotionally hungry’. They need more care, kindness and attention. One of the employees in children’s home interviewed during the course of the research stated that her mother, who was raised in institution, told her: ‘They taught me discipline and how to make my bed. No one ever taught me how to love’.

During fieldwork in institutions, researchers noticed how rapidly, and with what intensity, children responded to their presence. Almost as soon as they met children would hold researchers’ hands, or make drawings with the researchers’ names, decorated with flowers and hearts. In some cases children drew the ‘place they would like to live’ as a house with the researcher in it. They were hungry for attention and affection. At the end of each institutional visit, some children always asked ‘And when are you coming again? This never occurred in data collection with foster children or children from complete families.
Children’s responses to lack or loss of emotional support varies. As already noted, some children react by denying reality. While using the drawing method with children in an institution aged seven to 12 years, researchers met a nine year old boy who refused to draw the place where he lived. He had arrived in the institution only one-week before the research visit. On first appearance he seemed to be ‘tough’ and self-confident and showed an interest of drawing. After researchers asked him to draw a place where he lived, his mood suddenly changed. He bent his head and hunched his shoulders, trying to hide what he was drawing. Researchers could see that he was drawing a house, rather than the institution, together with some kind of a statue. When asked what he was drawing, he answered that it was his house in Tuzla, where he came from. ‘I actually do not live here, you know. I live in Tuzla, in this house with my father. He is not such a bad guy. Well, he is…but I still want to go back. I do not want to be here.’ Then researchers asked him what the statue meant and he said that it represented a strong man that nobody can hurt. And this boy was hurt. He began to cry, and it was clear that he no longer wanted to draw. The researchers told him to stop and suggested that he might like to go outside and talk, undisturbed by others. He accepted this offer and went out with researchers to the playground. There was no need to ask questions, he just started talking: ‘You know, my father is a bad guy. He taught me bad things. He taught me how to steal so I can survive. He likes to drink too. When he is drunk, he is beating me. He beats me hard all over my body. Sometimes he beats me with chains and that hurts. When my father is in a bad mood, I do not go home at all. I learned how to sleep on streets. Well, I got some friends. Sometimes I can stay over at their place. I know that my father is bad and that he treats me bad but I still do not want to be here, in the institution. I am not supposed to be here. I was always free and now some people are telling me what to eat, when to eat, when to go out and shit like that. I am not used to this. I like my freedom in Tuzla. I do not have anybody there but that is still my hometown. I once had a mother, you know. But she died…a long time ago. She was the only one I have ever loved. Sometime when I get into fights with other boys, we swear a lot. That is what we do. But when somebody swears about my mother, I feel like I want to kill him. I really do. And I could do it. I feel like I could kill somebody who talks bad about my mum.’ Researchers listened to him carefully, and he was holding one researcher’s hand all the time he was speaking. After a while he seemed to feel better and stopped crying. Then he announced that the institution was not the place where he is supposed to be. ‘I need to be home’, he said.

8.5 CONCLUSIONS

Although the results of the nutrition recall instrument lack any kind of analysis of quality and nutritional provision, they seem to indicate that children in institutions have their physical hunger more appropriately provided for than children living in either foster homes or with their known parents. This raises some questions about the extent to which parents in BiH adequately supervise their children’s diet. Foster children appear to have better nutritional intake than children in complete families, but some questions can be raised about their access to recreational and cultural activities, which also appear to be lacking for children in institutions.

Children without parental care have specific needs in addition to those of other children. These can be summed up in one phrase - compensation for missing parental care. Yet data from more than one research instrument show that whereas their physical hunger is met, their emotional hunger remains unsatisfied. A pre-requisite for successful and complete socialisation is satisfaction of a child’s need for warm and genuine contact that is both steady and reliable. If a child is deprived of this, that then the process of its socialisation is endangered. Frequent changes in parental figures almost always have negative consequences (Hessle, 1998). For both children in institutions and foster children, friendship appears to fill the void left by loss of parental care, yet this is not taken into account in provision for their needs.
Main messages

Children with special needs have little special provision made for these needs;
Children with special needs are dumped into a single category;
Children with special needs who do not enjoy parental care suffer a double violation of their rights.

Although the research was not focusing on children with special needs, many do live in institutions and have little or no contact with their parents. The information in this chapter is based on observation during visits and interviews with staff. It has been included as a special chapter in this report because of researchers’ concern, based on the data gathered, that these children are not having their rights fulfilled or needs met. By the law of the SR BiH (Sluzbeni list 33/86, Article 6), children with special needs are categorised as follows:

- Children with sight impairments;
- Children with hearing impairments;
- Children with speech and voice impairments;
- Children with physical impairments and permanent interruptions in physical development;
- Children with disturbances in mental health (mild, moderate, severe);
- Children with combined disabilities.

Two groups of children with special needs are found in institutions. The first group consists of children who have been abandoned as babies because of their disabilities, and who have spent their whole life in institutions. They do not have visits or contacts with the world outside. This group includes children without parental care, who were sent to children’s homes in the first instance and then transferred to special care when their disabilities were diagnosed. The second group of children has been placed in institutions for children with special needs by their parents, because the level of
their disability requires full-time professional care. According to the staff, these children do have more regular visits than others, but the frequency of the visits falls away as their stay in the institution gets longer.

According to the law on social protection, Homes for children and youth with special needs should provide suitable upbringing, education, professional training and working activities, in accordance with the psychological and physical abilities of residents. They should also try to alleviate and eliminate the consequences of developmental problems, and provide employment under special circumstances. Those homes also provide complete and long-term care (home, food, health care, cultural and recreational activities) in accordance with residents’ needs and capacities. Institutions can establish workshops in which residents can work under professional supervision.

There are no separate homes for children and youth with special needs in BiH. Children with special needs are placed in institutions together with adults with special needs. Children do not have their own facilities; there are no separations by age range as professionals treat all residents as if they are children. All three homes that research team visited during the fieldwork have not been kept in good condition during the past decade. One in particular, Cirkin Polje, Prijedor, gives the impression that nobody is maintaining it: bedrooms and community rooms are furnished with old, iron furniture, walls are damp, and there is no proper ventilation, so the air is stale. In addition, the number of professionals working there is small; 16 teachers, five special needs specialists, one lawyer, one social worker and six medical workers care for 20 children and 180 adults, all of whom require considerable time and attention; a staff: resident ratio of 1: 6.9 (see Table 190). In addition, staff have to work with people from six to 66 years old who have very different needs and abilities. One contradiction is that the institution in Fojnica (‘Drin’), which is for mentally disabled adults, has nearly twice as many child residents as the institution in Pazaric, which is (at least in name) an institution for the protection of children and youth. Apart from this, there are problems caused by the difference in types of disabilities, which present difficulties for organising work and planning activities with the children. Although these children have special needs they are lumped into a single category in which the individual needs of their particular disabilities are not catered for.

Although there appear to be a variety of ways of entering, every child in an institution for children with special needs has been placed there by a Centre for Social Work, the main expert opinion determining the placement being that of a doctor or medical team. Even if the child has parents who wish for institutional care, the responsibility for placement rests with the Centre for Social Work. Whether or not there is coherence in the paths in to institutions, the stay is usually lifelong, as one of the employees pointed out in interview. Once a child or adult is placed in an institution of this kind, it is rare for them to leave.

### 9.1 FINANCIAL ISSUES

Centres for Social Work are responsible for covering the expenses for placement of children from their municipalities. Those homes are based on medical care but, as in Homes for children without parental care, some children do not have medical insurance.

Cirkin Polj runs three farms, which helps with finance because products that are not used in the institution are sold. This institution also receives funding through donations. Costs for persons from FBIH are 469.20 KM 492.66 KM a month. In the case of RS, the monthly cost of placement of disabled persons who are mobile is 310.00 KM and, for persons who are not mobile and cannot control their biological needs, is 330.00 KM.. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection of RS makes up the difference.

Centres for Social Work are responsible for covering expenses for placement in Drin of residents from their respective municipalities, sometimes with help from the Ministry of Social Welfare of the Canton, depending on the contract of placement. This institution has various financial problems.
The question of institutional status is not solved, which causes considerable administrative problems. They have problems because of irregular payments from Centres for Social Work. Monthly cost for placement of disabled persons is 480.20 KM, plus medicine consumption 89.10 KM.

Pazaric institution does not have official establishment, because neither local authorities nor the Federal Ministry is willing to take over responsibility. This results in considerable financial problems. Centres for Social work do not pay the monthly cost of 488.00 KM for each resident, which means that substantial sums are outstanding. Without donations in the form of food and clothes from foreign organisations as well as private individuals, the 38 children and 322 adults resident in Pazaric would be hungry, barefoot and naked. In October 2002, when researchers visited, there were no funds to pay for heating oil during the forthcoming winter.

Pazaric receives has regular payments for only 91 residents (25 percent). Some Centres for Social Work have not paid the monthly costs for residents for ten years and more. Pressure put on Centres to settle accounts includes threatening to return residents to their home towns. This causes stress for the residents, who may have spent their whole lives in the institution and do not have contacts with relatives. Staff reported that residents frequently ask ‘Did my Centre pay for me yet?’ One teacher related the story of one resident, around 40 years old, who heard that his Centre had not paid for him and that he was being returned to his birthplace where he knew no one and of which he had no memories. He told the teacher: ‘If they put me in that bus back home, I will stab myself with a knife.’ A further complication is that some residents placed in are from Croatia, Monte Negro and Slovenia, placed there in the time of Former Yugoslavia. They have not received any visits since the war began, almost 11 years ago and yet they are being returned to their home towns, which are now in another country.

9.2 EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

In the context of financial and material deprivation in which these three institutions operate one might not expect to be able to note any examples of good practice. The fact that the research team found some such examples is a further indication of the overall observation that motivation and creativity are as important, or maybe more so, than money.

Within Cirkin Polje there is a workshop for carpentry and a basket weaving workshop where children learn some skills. In addition, as already stated, this institution runs a farm with pigs and chickens and has plans to expand become self-financing through sale of produce. The process of renovation the damp, poorly-ventilated buildings has begun and residents are getting new toilets and bathrooms.

Although there are more residents than the capacity of the institution ‘Drin’ can allow, the work with residents is well organised with considerable effort on the part of the employees. Musical and physical therapy are offered. There is also a ‘stimulus room’ with different kinds of visual, hearing and aromatic stimuli, which are intended to calm down aggressive and hyperactive residents as well as to stimulate the apathetic.

Researchers were given a warm welcome to this institution and staff members were very cooperative in showing them around. In a front hall of the institution there is a gallery where wood ceramic and tapestry products made by residents are for sale. A notice board in the main hall displayed photographs of their sport steam, which took part on the Special Olympic Games, under a banner reading ‘Allow me to win, but if I can’t win, allow me to be brave in attempt.’ This slogan seems to represent the institutional philosophy, manifested in the way staff members were observed relating to residents, praising their achievements and promoting self-confidence.

In our interview with the social workers in Drin, researchers discovered activities intended to promote visits from family and friends. In the first half of 2002 (to the 31.06, 154 of 375 residents
(41 percent) received no visits and 81 percent did not make visits to their families. The institution is especially interested in promoting stronger connections between parents and institution through parents meetings. Although residents’ needs may entail that they should be cared for in an institution, staff pointed out that there is much more work to do in including parents in programmes for their children, in parent education and in strengthening the relationship between institution and parents.

In spite of the very bad conditions observed in Pazaric employees are making an incredible effort for their residents, including basket weaving, pottery, carpentry, metal and textile workshops, as part of occupation therapy, with an education unit, which is the first and only unit of that type in BiH. All these activities have been taking place since 1980 in the Centre for Training, which is complex of buildings with plenty of classrooms. The education unit used to be supervised by an adviser from the special education unit within the state-level Institute of Education. After the war, with help from donations, most of the rooms were reconstructed and necessary equipment and audio–visual devices were installed. The three year implementation of this plan has been reported to show tangible results for the residents taking part in the programme, such as socialisation, improvement of their hygiene habits, developing their attention span and the ability to protect themselves, developing the body movement, including mobility, as well as developing work habits. Residents receive payments relative to their efforts in the form of coupons, which they can exchange for products in their shop, like sweets, juices or chocolates.

Nevertheless, as Pazaric is not officially established, there is no financial provision for the activities of educational unit and the research team encountered negative views, such as ‘those children cannot learn anything anyway’. One staff member suggested that the money invested in the educational unit could be used is to build a chicken farm use residents as ‘working force’ rather than having them ‘sitting in the classroom whole day, trying to understand something they would never understand’. Within the last two years many professional educators resigned from the education unit in response to such negative attitudes, their jobs being taken over by staff with less or no experience of working with people with special needs. This situation remains unresolved, despite and appeal to the Ministry of Education and Science.

### 9.3 CONCLUSIONS

There are no institutions in BiH that cater exclusively for children with special needs. The fact that they are housed with for adults with special needs increases the workload for professionals, who are already too few in number and makes it impossible to provide specialist services to meet the needs of individual complexes of disabilities.

These institutions are intended to be permanent placements, and visits from families and friends gradually drop off over time, so that even if they have living parents children with special needs become effectively children without parental care, thus suffering from a double violation of their rights. Parent education, and inclusion in planning for the care of children with disabilities would obviate this. But the main problem of all three institutions for people with disabilities in BiH is lack of finance, equipment and staff. Centres for Social Work are responsible for covering expenses for placement of residents from their municipalities and Cantons, but make irregular payments, if they make them at all. Despite the acute lack of support and often in the face of little or no encouragement, the motivation of staff in these institutions results in examples of good practice against the odds.
Children without parental care are effectively invisible second class citizens;

The institutions in which they live are sometimes not known to the responsible authorities.

There is little or no monitoring or supervision of institutions, foster care or professional services;

Children’s views are not sought with respect either to the choice of placement, or to its outcome.

‘Our social workers very rarely visit our Home.
Periodical review of placement does not exist,’

Boy, 13 years, Children’s Home.

Throughout this report one consistent feature of work with children who lack parental care has been clear at every level of the system. What happens to children without parental care is not monitored, a fact that is starkly revealed in the fact that there are no adequate statistics even to show how many children fall into this category in BiH. Staff of Centres for Social Work are neither supported nor provided with professional supervision, as is equally the case with staff in institutions and other facilities. Foster carers are not chosen according to adequate systematic criteria. Children’s placements are not monitored and children’s own views are rarely taken into account. Taken together, these statements show violation of Article 25 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which provides for the right of ‘a child who has been placed by the competent authorities for the purposes of care, protection and treatment of his or her physical or mental health, to a periodic review of the treatment provided to the child and all other circumstances relevant to his or her placement’. This is not because such supervision and monitoring is not provided for in national legislation. Social protection laws in both Entities and the District of Brcko contain considerations of monitoring and periodic review of professional conduct as well as of institutional placement of children, although the position with respect to foster care is less clear. According to social protection law, monitoring of professional work should be carried out regularly and systematically, including direct supervision, control and other ways of checking if the tasks have been accomplished. Staff mentioned in the interviews that they are accountable to the municipality in RS, the Cantonal Ministry in FBiH, as well as to the responsible Ministry or a body for social protection in both entities and District of Brcko. Yet, during fieldwork, researchers did not come across a single case that shows implementation of the relevant legislation. One social worker in a Centre for Social Work stated during an interview, that a major problem for her was the lack of professional supervision and monitoring of her work and that of her colleagues. It is important to note that what professional staff in BiH conceive of as monitoring is professional regulation by a superior authority whereas, in Western countries, the term refers more to peer counselling to discuss, locate and solve professional problems. Both forms of monitoring are important components of efficient, accountable social protection.

In addition, researchers noticed that workers from different centres do not cooperate or network as much as they could. For example, one centre is implementing a foreign-financed programme about which workers in the centre in a neighbouring town had no knowledge. There is clearly a need for better networking, but there appears to be only one association of professional workers in the social
sector in RS, and an association of Social Workers in FBiH, but no association or a network of social workers in BiH as a whole.

At central levels of authority, it appears that some institutions for children without parental care are not regulated, because funding support comes from abroad. There are two institutions for children without parental care in BiH that do not cooperate with the Federal Ministry of Social Affairs; Family Centre ‘Papa Ivan Pavao II’ in Citluk and ‘Mother’s village’ in Bijakovici near Medjugorje. Both institutions refused to participate in this research project or provide the Research team with data using research instruments, although both were visited briefly.

The Federal Ministry of Social Affairs knows of the existence of the ‘Mother’s village’ in Bijakovici, but Ministry officials stated to the research team that they had no knowledge of the existence of Family Centre ‘Papa Ivan Pavao II’ in Citluk. The Research team found out about the existence of this institution in a fax received from one of the Centres for Social Work, which had placed there a child from its municipality. Subsequently, researchers learned from other Centres for Social Work that children are placed there from various municipalities even though the institution is not legally registered in the court of FBiH. Both these institutions function with the help and financial support of the Catholic Church and Catholic communities. From information provided to us by the Centre for Social Work in Citluk, the number of children without parental care living in ‘Mother’s village’ in Bijakovici is 51. The number of children without parental care living in Family Centre ‘Papa Ivan Pavao II’ in Citluk was not provided, but the Mother Superior in the Family Centre told us that they come from 30 different municipalities around BiH.

During the second phase of the fieldwork, in September 2002, the Research team made a brief visit to the Family Centre ‘Papa Ivan Pavao II’ in Citluk. Two members of the Research team met with the Mother Superior who is the Director, from whom they learned that the Centre has never had any contact or co-operation with either UNICEF or the Ministry for Social Affairs of FBiH, commenting that: ‘Those who wanted to find out about us, did.’

During this visit to the Family Centre, as well as from Centres for Social Work in FBiH, researchers learned that this institution does not posses a written Resolution of placement for all the children in its care. This occurs because not all children are placed in this institution by Centres for Social Work, but rather by the Catholic community, sometimes in response to family poverty, with parents receiving monthly financial support from the social welfare. A Centre for Social Work cannot issue a Resolution for placement and guardianship over children to an institution in this case, because the financial support the parents receive would have to be used to pay for institutional placement. As the institutions are not legal guardians, children are not entitled to health insurance.

States parties to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are not necessarily expected to provide all the rights from their own resources, but they are expected to ensure that rights are provided to the maximum standards possible. In several places within the text of the CRC states parties are encouraged to seek support and technical advice from the international community (with special mention made of UNICEF in Article 45. But the responsibility for ensuring that standards are maintained and rights fulfilled rests with the state. Thus it should not be possible for institutions for children without parental care to exist within national territory without full cooperation with the appropriate state authorities, who have an obligation to monitor and supervise the way rights to provision, protection and participation are guaranteed. In BiH, as in most other countries, traditional care of orphans has often been a role undertaken by religious or other non-governmental organisations and there is no reasons why this should not continue, provided that the care is licensed, monitored and supervised by the state. Allowing organisations to operate without license, to have no part in the placement of children or monitoring of their conditions, amounts to abandonment of a group of citizens who are in no position to claim their rights.
Centres for Social Work place children in institutions or in foster families, which are almost always family related. Professionals in Centres for Social Work have a legal obligation to visit every child in an institution or foster family within their catchment area on regular basis. However, as seen in many examples throughout this report, these visits tend not to take place. The usual practice is to visit these children in the first period of their placement, after which visits tail off and may finally stop altogether. This is particularly evident with respect to the children placed in foster families. In focus group discussions foster parents said that, when social workers finally do make a visit, they sometimes do not recognise the child they have placed who has grown considerably since the last visit.

Professionals in Centres for Social Work claim that they review placements of children through yearly reports, which foster parents are obliged to write, containing information on the child’s development, any significant events in the child’s life and how any money received as financial support has been spent. However, this places responsibility for monitoring on the very people whose activities should be supervised, and leaves no space for listening to the views of children.

Children in institutions and in foster families told members of the research team categorically that professionals do not do their job properly. In one Children’s Home, during the focus group discussion on children’s rights, children commented on Article 25 in CRC and told researchers that social workers and psychologists from their Centre for Social Work visit them only when a television crew wants to make a documentary on their institution, or when somebody wants to visit the Home for the purpose of research or making a donation. During one research visit researchers observed the same social worker and psychologist shouting at children and criticising them, even forcing one girl to change her clothes, which they considered inappropriate for school. Children often appeared to be puzzled about the reasons for their placement, including the decision to remove them from the care of living parents. Their views seem not to be taken into consideration in these decisions, in violation of Article 12 of the CRC.

The issue of periodic review of placement was raised in each focus group discussion with foster parents. More than once, foster parents expressed their dissatisfaction with the visits of social worker, when these do take place. They stated that social workers should talk more to foster children and pay greater attention to what children feel, say and wish. It may be that a social worker spends and hour in the foster home talking to the parents, asking them about the child and about how they have spent money from the monthly allowance. Foster parents emphasised that social workers should spend time alone with children, finding out about feelings, problems and queries. If a child expresses discomfort with placement in a family or an institution, professionals may arrange for a new placement.

There appear to be serious deficiencies in the way provision for children without parental care is supervised and monitored in BiH. In the first place, institutions are not systematically registered, nor are their operations monitored. Professional staff in both Centres for Social Work and institutions do not benefit from the support of monitoring by social protection authorities, peer supervision or professional networking. Children’s views are not sought about decisions made for their placement in either institutions or foster homes, and the placement is only sporadically reviewed – often in ways that are not child-friendly. Selection of foster families is not adequately regulated or monitored. This is clearly an area that raises many concerns.
UNICEF guidelines on rights based programming, identify four key considerations for any work with children:

- **Combating discrimination**;
- **Taking a holistic, cross-sectoral approach to programming**;
- **Ensuring the participation of all stakeholders, especially children, women and communities**;
- **Maintaining the principle of 'best interests' of the child (UNICEF, 1998)**.

With respect to provision for children without parental care (whether they are physical or social orphans) specific rights include the right to continued contact with parents when in the care of the state and the need for periodic review of placement for children placed in institutional or alternative care.

The research on which this report is based can draw certain conclusions on some background issues on the care provided for children without parents in BiH. The data also enable some conclusions to be reached with respect to all four key rights considerations (non-discrimination, holistic programming, participation and best interests) as well as on the right of children to continued contact with their parents, on forms of care for children separated from their parents and on periodic review of placement.

### 11.1 CARE FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTS IN BIH

The statistical record does not provide sufficient information for analysis of the precise situation of the population aged 0 to 18 years as a whole, much less children without parental care. Differences in legal and budgetary provision between the two Entities and the District of Brcko further complicate the picture. The exact number of children who do not live with their biological parents is not known. Around one third of them live in institutions or other facilities for children without parental care and about twice that many are in foster families.

**AFTER THE WAR**

Some of the major challenges in caring for children without parents in BiH are those caused by the recent war, by political changes and by economic depression. The disruptions and dislocations of war have affected all children living in BiH, including strengthening traditional family values even in the face of demographic changes, some of which are the result of conflict-related population dislocations. Children in all three groups studied – institutionalised, fostered and living with their own parents – seem to feel that their rights to protection are not fulfilled. It is probably not fanciful to relate this to the dangers and uncertainties of armed conflict, either in their own experiences or through listening to the stories told by adults and sensing their continuing feelings of trauma.

Although the dependency-ratio is healthy, this is offset by widespread unemployment. The main economic factor affecting children without parental care is that the state itself is an impoverished parent, unable to support an adequate social protection system. In addition, one fifth of the population lives below the General Poverty Line. Although the statistical record is not sufficiently detailed to be certain, it seems likely that many children live with grandparents, who may have insufficient income to provide adequately for their needs. It is also possible that some children are being informally fostered with kin, without the knowledge of social protection authorities. In any case, it is clear that financial support for children in general in BiH, whether from family resources
or from the state, is often inadequate and that large numbers of children live in substandard housing. These may be factors influencing the research finding that the foster children do not list cultural activities among their personal achievements. Either funds may not be available for them to take part in such activities, or they may not have the time or energy to pursue them because they have a heavy load of household chores as the result of living with elderly or poor relatives. Either way this is a factor worth investigating further, because grandparent-headed families have been shown elsewhere to be particularly vulnerable to economic pressures.

**THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM**

In general BiH enjoys well-established laws on social welfare protection, child protection and family law, although there is a clear need for harmonization as well as for coherence in state subsidised social protection. The research revealed numerous cases of disparities in provision, uncertainties about which authority is responsible, and cases in which institutions, foster families and children fall completely outside existing safety nets.

Implementation of the law suffers from a lack of national coherence in provision and, in many cases, from insufficient financial resources. Both foster care and institutional care payments are routinely not made – sometimes for many years. The staffing of Centres for Social Work, which are at the core of the social protection system, is in crisis. Centres urgently require new, qualified, younger staff, without whom they cannot possibly achieve legal levels of provision. This means that preventative work is not carried out, and staff are in a permanent crisis response mode, rather than being able to work proactively within communities. Lack of funds for paying existing staff contributes to burn out caused by a single worker carrying out (or attempting to carry out) the work of many. Centres appear to be relatively over-supplied with legally qualified staff, and to be in dire need of qualified psychologists, social workers and sociologists.

There are wide differences between the staffing of, and services provided by, Centres for Social Work throughout BiH. At one level this depends on the financial resources, which come from local rather than national sources and, in FBiH at least, are not clearly defined. This means if the local authority is rich and developed the Centres are usually in good condition and workers are paid well and regularly, if not the reverse is the case. Yet researchers came to the overall conclusion, from observation and interviews, that money is not the main issue in the social services provision. Some centres appear to operate in substandard conditions, in terms of funding, but still have dedicated workers who work to the best of their ability and keep in contact with their clients. On the other hand, researchers found some centres that are well funded but are not functioning to the best of their ability in terms of accommodating their clients’ needs and do not keep regular contacts with their clients. Money does not fix everything and lack of economic resources does not excuse poor service provision.

As Centres for Social Work are currently overcrowded, with staff often having to share offices to the detriment of client confidentiality, forward planning will be needed to accommodate as well as to pay for newly-trained staff, if staffing levels are to be raised to meet legal standards. In the interim, practical means must urgently be found to support current staff so that they are able to carry out their work loads to a more satisfactory standard. This particularly refers to monitoring children’s placements and to the mechanisms for selecting and supporting foster families.

Professionals in child care in general seem to have lost the motivation for the work. The fact that they are not paid regularly is a factor in this respect and some openly expressed their discontent. A further problem is the workload they carry, because the number of professionals that work with children is insufficient. There is an overall need for more, better qualified and younger staff, but no financial resources to pay for them. Professionals in Centres for Social Work and in institutions rarely have opportunities for additional education or training. They also appear to need better supervision as well as support from their peers.
INSTITUTIONAL CARE

During and after the war the number of homes for children without parental care in BiH more than doubled and capacity is now nearly 20 percent higher than the nearly 1,000 children who live in them. Foreign donations were responsible for much of this growth in provision and also seem to account for better equipment and staffing as well as for smaller, more heterogeneous family groups in which children live in the more recently built institutions. As in the case of Centres for Social Work, financial provision from local authorities is not always sufficient; in some cases because of uncertainties about which authority is responsible. In two cases, statutory officials seem to be unaware of the existence of institutions and monitoring of placements, or the level of services provided seem to be generally absent, in violation of Articles 25 and 3(3).

Some children living in institutions for children without parental care are literally ‘stuck’ in those institutions; they are condemned to institutionalised childhood. Those are children who are more than five years old, who cannot get adopted anymore and for whom it is harder to find a family placement; children with special needs who do not get fostered or accepted by the SOS Children’s villages; abandoned children who do not have close relatives; children whose relatives do not want to take care of them; children who have been through several failed placements.

Children living in institutions may sometimes have their access to health care limited and, although they all attend school, their choice of secondary school is often determined by their realisation that, once they have reached the age of 18 years, they will have to leave the institution and become financially independent. Thus they opt for trade schools providing three year skills-based courses, rather than attending academic classes in secondary school. While children seem to be aware of the importance of livelihood skills, institutional provision for life skills seems to be lacking. Thus children leave institutions with skills for earning a living, but not for successfully negotiating the tasks of every day life. The rule-bound life of institutions, together with failure to work with children as individuals combine with these factors to limit children’s potential. It seems that institutional care is largely a matter of caretaking. Children have their basic needs for food and shelter provided until the state no longer has responsibility for their welfare because they have become adults.

It is sad to note that a significant number of children living in institutions have not adjusted to the change in their lives, to the extent that they deny the reality of their loss of family life. Clearly the emotional needs of these children have not been met.

SOS Children’s Villages provide substitute, family-like care for children, but only to the age of 14 years and only for fit and healthy children.

There are no institutions in BiH that cater exclusively for children with special needs. The fact that they are housed with for adults with special needs increases the workload for professionals, who are already too few in number and makes it impossible to provide specialist services to meet the needs of individual complexes of disabilities. These institutions are intended to be permanent placements, and visits from families and friends gradually drop off over time, so that even if they have living parents children with special needs become effectively children without parental care, thus suffering from a double violation of their rights. Parent education, and parental inclusion in planning for the care of children with disabilities, would obviate this. But the main problem of all three institutions for people with disabilities in BiH is lack of finance, equipment and staff. Centres for Social Work are responsible for covering expenses for placement of residents from their municipalities and cantons, but make irregular payments, if they make them at all. Despite the acute lack of support and often in the face of little or no encouragement, the motivation of staff in these institutions results in examples of good practice against the odds.
FOSTER CARE

Although staff of Centres for Social Work view foster family placement as the preferred option, there is a shortage of non-kin-based families available. Some professionals also raised doubts about the motives of non-kin foster families. Foster care is a valuable alternative to institutional care, but institutions have a role to play in short-term, emergency placements; for sibling groups; and for children who may be too traumatised to be able to fit easily into a substitute family. Adoption of older children is not possible, which limits the alternatives available for providing more children with family care. Evidence from this research shows that potential foster parents are wary of providing a home for children whose parents are still living, but might be more willing to adopt older children if this option were available.

Although foster care is widely stated to be the preferred alternative, there is no hard evidence that this is so. Indeed some data from this research appear to indicate cause for anxiety about fostered children. As payments for both institutions and foster parents are low, irregular and often not made at all, there is no evidence that fostering is more cost effective in BiH. The available information simply seems to show that it is cheaper, because foster parents who are related to their foster children may be more willing to continue to care for them in the absence of payment. If the foster system broke down, however, the institutional capacity would be completely over-stretched, given that approximately two out of three children without parental care in BiH are currently living in mostly kin-based foster homes.

The role of a foster family is to replace the biological family and to provide all conditions for child’s healthy growth and development. This can have a positive outcome when the foster family is chosen properly, the child’s opinion is taken into account, adequate financial and orientation support is received and the situation is properly monitored. Some foster families report that they are satisfied with the support they receive from Centres for Social Work, but this appears to be less than reported by Centres for Social Work and not to be children-centred.

Placement with biologically-related families is the dominant form of placement, applying to almost 90 percent of children without parental care. There appears to be little consistency in the way placement and family support are organised and no coherent policy on the ground. Kin-based fostering seems to be related to a relative absence of checks on potential foster families, and it seems likely that many children in BiH are fostered by family members without the knowledge of the social services.

Financial payments vary considerably, being largely left to chance and charity in RS. There are no attempts, and few incentives, for promoting fostering in BiH. There is only one association of foster families in BiH, and this is not on the state level. Cooperation between foster families and Centres for Social Work in BiH is not satisfactory overall. Social workers do not perform regular monitoring of foster families, nor do they all keep in regular contact with the foster families and children without parental care who live with foster parents. Although money is not the whole story of fostering, this situation cannot motivate new foster families to come forward, especially in view of current harsh economic realities. Recalling that one fifth of the population falls below the official poverty line, fostered children in households that do not receive adequate payments for their support must surely be at risk.

11.2 RIGHTS BASED PROGRAMMING

Children’s views of the extent to which their rights are respected are more pessimistic, compared to adults who took part in the research. There were also differences between the views of children from institutions, foster homes and the control group. Children who live with their own parents appear to be better informed and more articulate about rights than children in institutions and to express more negative opinions about the extent to which rights are respected in BiH, particularly
with reference to health and welfare. A surprising result is that foster children in this sample had a more negative view of family life and alternative care than either children in institutions or in the control group.

All children seem to think that civil rights and freedoms, as well as education and cultural rights are well respected. On the other hand, evidence shows that children in BiH feel that they, and particularly their peers, are not well protected from abuse and exploitation. Despite the overall high rating given to education rights children made many negative comments about the extent to which their views are listened to – much less taken into account. This includes comments from children in state care about lack of fulfilment to the right to periodic review of placement.

**DISCRIMINATION**

It is clear that several discriminatory factors affect children without parental care. The first is that budgetary provision for their care is, in general, insufficient for employing sufficient, quality professionals to supervise children’s welfare or financial support in both institutional and foster placements. The second is that the level of resources differs widely according to the part of BiH in which they live. In the third place, as little no planning is made for their future after they leave state care, many children opt for trade schools rather than academic education through which many might achieve professional status. This is a loss not only for the children but for the nation as a whole.

**HOLISTIC PROGRAMMING**

A persistent element of concern in this report is the concentration of much institutional care on satisfying only the basic physical needs of children for shelter and food. The results of the nutrition recall instrument seem to indicate that children in institutions have their physical hunger more appropriately provided for than children living in either foster homes or with their known parents. This raises some questions about the extent to which parents in BiH adequately supervise their children’s diet. Foster children appear to have better nutritional intake than children in complete families, but some questions can be raised about their access to recreational and cultural activities, which also appear to be lacking for children in institutions.

Children without parental care have specific needs in addition to those of other children. These can be summed up in one phrase - compensation for missing parental care. Yet data from more than one research instrument show that, whereas their physical hunger is met, their emotional hunger remains unsatisfied. For both children in institutions and foster children, friendship appears to fill the void left by loss of parental care, yet this is not taken into account in provision for their needs.

**PARTICIPATION**

The research found no instances of children without parental care being involved in decisions made about their placement, nor of their views being listened to and respected.

**BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD**

In the face of widespread lack of financial and human resources, and also in view of traditional views of childhood, decisions made about children and provision for their care seems to be based implicitly on maintaining systems of institutional care and fostering that provide basic care for children until they are adults. What is needed is a system that fits children, rather than the present situation in which children have to fit into the system.
CONTACT WITH FAMILIES

Contact between children in institutional care and their kin is governed by decisions made by Centres for Social Work as well as by the rules for visits. Children seem not always to be consulted about this, or about placements. Where visits do take place, and children are able to spend time with relatives, the results vary according to institutional staff, depending to a large extent on family dynamics. While there is a general acceptance that, in principle, children should maintain contact with parents, in practice it may be disruptive.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF PLACEMENT

There appear to be serious deficiencies in the way provision for children without parental care is supervised and monitored in BiH. In the first place, institutions are not systematically registered, nor are their operations monitored. Professional staff in both Centres for Social Work and institutions do not benefit from the support of monitoring by social protection authorities, peer supervision or professional networking. Children’s views are not sought about decisions made for their placement in either institutions or foster homes, and the placement is only sporadically reviewed – often in ways that are not child-friendly. Selection of foster families is not adequately regulated or monitored. This is clearly an area that raises many concerns.

11.3 FINAL COMMENTS

The most important point of all is that children without parental care are effectively invisible second class citizens. The social protection system does not plan adequately to prepare them for adult life. Some live in institutions that are not known to the responsible authorities. Partly because fostered children live with kin, standards of supervision and economic payment for their upkeep are not met. There is little or no monitoring or supervision of institutions, foster care or professional services. Children’s views are not sought with respect to either the choice of placement, or its outcome.
CHAPTER 12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The research on which this report is based provides a general overview of the situation of children without parental care in BiH. Key recommendations can be made based on analysis of the data collected.

12.1 NATIONAL POLICY AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK

A national policy framework needs to be developed to formulate a consistent policy towards children without parental care and to develop an agenda for change;

A consistent, regularly updated statistical record of children’s lives in both Entities and the District of Brcko needs to be established and maintained at a central level. Such data should be based on children as the unit of analysis;

Legal provision for children deprived of parental care should be updated and harmonized;

Budgets provided for Centres for Social Work, particularly with respect to children without parental care, should be harmonized, so that levels of provision do not differ widely between municipalities and cantons.

12.2 PREVENTION, REFERRAL AND MONITORING CAPACITY

All institutions for children without parental care in BiH should be supervised by state authorities, regardless of the source of finance;

Supervisory systems for professionals in Centres for Social Work should be established, based initially on promoting professional networks throughout BiH. In the first place these could be based on co-counselling practice while in-service training builds capacity. This would have the added benefit of mitigating ‘burn out’ through dealing alone with the frustrations of working alone or with insufficient colleagues to meet the workload;

An urgent necessity is systematic, regular monitoring of placements, in the first instance through setting standards for criteria for placement. Thereafter, through a combination of reports from institutions and foster parents and visits by staff of Centres for Social Work, placement should be reviewed regularly;

A vital component of this must be the active involvement of children;

For younger children especially, their best interests should be promoted through mechanisms in which independent adults (possibly related to ombudswork) can defend the interests of children.

12.3 ALTERNATIVES TO RESIDENTIAL CARE

Development of a coherent policy and legal framework on fostering and adoption in BiH;

Development of awareness of fostering in BiH in general, which might be encouraged in the first instance through families taking an interest in a particular child in an institution, through visits and summer placements;
A national-level campaign about fostering and adoption among non-kin; Countering the stigmatisation of children in Homes, not with a rhetoric of pity, but rather in promotion of awareness of their rights;

12.4 TRANSFORMATION OF RESIDENTIAL CARE INSTITUTIONS:

HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Underpinning all problems for children without parental care in BiH is the inadequacy of available financial resources. While national resources cannot be substantially increased in the short term, children’s share of budgets could be increased;

Staff in management positions of centres for social work and residential care institutions should receive proper training in management and financial planning;

Short and long term plans for increasing staffing, wage provision, office space, equipment and skills throughout the child welfare system must be made. These could include:

1. An audit of skills, qualifications, experience and capacity-building needs of staff in Centres for Social Work and institutions;
2. Financial planning;
3. Short-term, in-service courses for existing staff;
4. Formal links between Centres for Social Work/institutions and relevant institutions and departments of higher education, to include systematic student placements;
5. Pre-placement capacity-building and continuous updating of skills and understanding for prospective foster parents in seminars, workshops and user-friendly publications. This could be promoted through supporting a network of foster care associations;
6. Child rights training for all professionals and non-professionals working with children.

ACTIONS WITH CHILDREN

Immediate attention to provision of life skills training for all institutionalised children – not limiting household skills to girls and including decision-making skills for all children;

Establish schemes for promoting and encouraging friendship links between children in institutional care, and between them and other children, in order to strengthen their post-care resources;

Additional psychological support for children who have not adapted to parental loss (which could also be based on developing life skills among children);

Immediate attention, through planning at national level, to the needs of young people leaving care, particularly those leaving institutions – development of life plans, support networks, half-way houses, drop in centres (including within existing institutions) and follow-up mechanisms.
The current research has revealed a number of areas in which further information is necessary:

- Characteristics of foster families – with particular reference to age, kinship link (if any) with children and economic circumstances;
- Contacts between children in care (whether institutional or in foster families) with kin;
- Children’s own support networks, with particular reference to friendships;
- Academic achievements of children in institutions compared to foster care and own-parent families;
- Examination of children’s history of care since losing parents, including life histories of young people who have left care (which latter should be action research linked to programming for leaving care at the age of 18 years);
- Children's budget analyses at national, entity, cantonal and municipal levels, with particular reference to the hypothesis that fostering is more ‘cost effective’ than institutional care in BiH;
REFERENCES


Buljubasic, S., 2002, *‘Savremena teorija i praksa socijalne integracije djece bez roditeljskog staranja’* (Contemporary theory and practice of social integration of children without parental care), PhD dissertation, Department of Political Sciences, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo.


STATISTICAL SOURCES


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BiH</td>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>A human below the age of eighteen years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control group</td>
<td>Children in complete families (living with both biological parents) to whom the research instruments are applied for reasons of comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRC</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBiH</td>
<td>Entity of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Purposeful social organisation for the care of children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSMS</td>
<td>Living standards measurement survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping</td>
<td>Systematic account of all residential institutions or facilities for children outside parental care in BiH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MICS</td>
<td>Multiple indicator cluster survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary data</td>
<td>Data collected by the research team, according to the protocol and research instruments designed by the team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protocol</td>
<td>Manual or handbook for data collection, including all research instruments, ethical procedures and other details of research design.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research instrument</td>
<td>Purpose designed method for systematic data collection. Research instruments are designed to gather data to answer the research questions, and are structured within a data gathering protocol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research question</td>
<td>Question that the research aims to answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Entity of the Republika Srpska</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary data</td>
<td>Already-existing information, which may include published or unpublished material, official statistics and reports, academic and other research reports, media products, film, video and photographs as well as material posted on the Internet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steering Committee</td>
<td>Steering Committee supporting the research, consisting of representatives of major stakeholders in children’s rights in BiH, including government, NGOs, IGOs, academics and donors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: MEMBERS OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AFFILIATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Governmental sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankica Kostic (Chair)</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees, Senior Official for Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavle Paunic (Co-Chair)</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of Republika Srpska, Senior Official Child Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sadmira Cajo</td>
<td>Federal Ministry of Social Welfare, Displaced Persons and Refugees, Senior Official for Legislation in the Field of Family Care and Child Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanka Todorovic</td>
<td>Centre for Social Work, Canton of Sarajevo, Associate Advisor for Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmina Dizdarevic</td>
<td>Cantonal Centre for Social Work, Sarajevo, Clinical Psychologist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mira Cuk</td>
<td>Centre for Social Work, Trebinje, Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jovana Vukovic</td>
<td>Children’s Public Fund of Republika Srpska, Independent Research Analysis Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natasa Stevnanovic</td>
<td>Centre for Social Work, District of Brcko, Deputy Chief Head of Department for Social Care in Government of Brcko District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snjezana Djekic</td>
<td>Centre for Social Work, Doboj, Social Worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suada Buljubasic</td>
<td>Faculty of Political Sciences, Social Work Department, University of Sarajevo, Assistant Professor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-governmental sector</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmina Selimovic</td>
<td>Save the Children UK in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Project Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senija Tahirovic</td>
<td>Save the Children Norway in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reima Ana Maglajalic</td>
<td>HealthNet International Bosnia and Herzegovina, Research and Evaluation Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAME</td>
<td>AFFILIATION</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Donor organisations</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ela Challenger</td>
<td>USAID Development Programme Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNICEF</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena Eversole</td>
<td>UNICEF Country Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jens Matthes</td>
<td>UNICEF Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berina Arslanagic-Ibesevic</td>
<td>UNICEF Assistant Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elma Softic-Kaunitz</td>
<td>UNICEF Project Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Permanent guest members</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ljiljana Zita</td>
<td>Federal Institution of Ombudsmen, Department for Children’s Rights, Ombudsman for Children’s Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zlatko Illic</td>
<td>Federal Institution of Ombudsmen, Department for Children’s Rights, Ombudsman for Children’s Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svetlana Cosic</td>
<td>Federal Institution of Ombudsmen, Department for Children’s Rights, Ombudsman for Children’s Rights</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STEERING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

In order to ensure local relevance, transparency and the timely incorporation of results into meaningful and effective action, the research is being carried out by a team from Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported by a Steering Committee consisting of major stakeholders in the field of children’s rights, including government, NGOs, IGOs and academics.

The Steering Committee will consist of major stakeholders in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the field of children’s rights and child research, both representatives nominated by organizations and recognized experts serving in individual capacity at the invitation of UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina;

At the invitation of UNICEF Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Steering Committee will be chaired by a recognized expert in the field, who attended the capacity-building workshop 15-19 April 2002;

Members of the Committee will support and promote the capacity-building research on ‘Unaccompanied children and children at risk of being institutionalized in Bosnia and Herzegovina’ by:

Attending monthly meetings during the duration of the research (April-December 2002); the timing of such meetings to be agreed by the Steering Committee at its first meeting on 26 April, 2002; the location to alternate between UNICEF offices in Sarajevo and Banja Luka; further meetings may be called by UNICEF at the request of researchers, the time and place to be decided between the Steering Committee Chair and UNICEF;
Giving feedback to researchers at protocol development, fieldwork, analysis and report writing phases, as well as at other times at the request of UNICEF on behalf of the researchers;

Promoting the aims and activities of the capacity-building research process;

Supporting researchers during data collection, particularly through assisting in issues of access to data and informants where necessary and appropriate;

Assisting in the dissemination of results and the development of action plans.
ANNEX 2: LAWS REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT

District of Brcko
The Law on Social Protection; o socijalnoj zastiti Brcko Distrikta, Working draft adopted on 13th December 2002;
Law on Health Protection Zakon o zdravstvenoj zastiti Distrikta Brcko
Law on Health Insurance Zakon o zdravstvenom osiguranju Distrikta Brcko;

Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Law on Basis of Social Protection, Protection of Civilian Victims of War and Protection of Families with Children, Zakon o osnovama socijalne zastite, zastite civilnih zrtava rata i zastite porodice sa djecom, Sluzbene novine Federacije BiH, Number 36, year 1999;
Law on Health Insurance: Zakon o zdravstvenom osiguranju FBIH, Sluzbene novine FBIH, Number 30, year 1997;
Law on Health protection: Zakon o zdravstvenoj zastiti, Sluzbene novine FBIH, Number 29, year 1997.

Republika Srpske
Child Protection Law, Zakon o djecijoj zastiti, Sluzbeni Glasnik Republike Srpske, Number 4, year 2002;
Social Protection Law, Zakon o socijalnoj zastiti Sluzbeni Glasnik Republike Srpske, Number 5, year 1993;
Regulation on jobs, norms, professional staff, space and conditions in Centres for Social Work, Pravilnik o poslovima i normativima, strucnim kadrovima i smjestajnim uslovima centra za socijalni rad, year 2002;
Law on Health Protection – Zakon o zdravstvenom osiguranju, Sluzbeni glasnik Republike Srpske, Number 18, year 1999;
Law on Primary Education – Zakon o osnovnom obrazovanju, Sluzbeni glasnik Republike Srpske, Number 4, year 1993;
Law on Secondary Education – Zakon o srednjem obrazovanju, Sluzbeni glasnik Republike Srpske, Number 4, year 1993;

Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Family Law – Porodicni zakon - Sluzbeni list SRBiH, Number 21, year 1979
ANNEX 3: METHODS AND ETHICAL PROCEDURES USED IN THE RESEARCH

A full account of the methods used in this research can be found in the Research Protocol and Data Coding Manual. The research instruments used were:

Protection shield;
Research diaries;
Observation (a) institutional buildings and (b) people;
Semi-structured interviews;
Secondary data questionnaires;
Drawings;
Recall of previous day’s activities;
Nutrition recall;
Sentence completion;
Focus group discussion on children’s rights;
Focus group discussion with foster parents;
Check list for good practice;
Handwriting and drawing skills;
National identity.

PROTECTION SHIELD

Children are particularly vulnerable human beings. They might feel it is an invasion of their privacy for researchers to come into their homes. Telling researchers their stories may trigger some bad memories. Therefore, it was decided to use the ‘protective shield’ exercise in order to leave children with something positive. This technique was originally developed for use with children traumatised by armed conflict. It gives them an opportunity to express themselves and they can be encouraged to use it the future if they feel weak and/or sad. Protection shield consists of five topics:

1. The most beautiful event in my life
2. Two persons whom I love most
3. Two things I am good at
4. If I had the power, I would ...
5. My life motto

---

Each child keeps the original of their protective shield and, with their permission, researchers use a copy as another source of data for the research.

**RESEARCH DIARIES**

All researchers kept daily diaries, for planning and reviewing day to day research activities. Information recorded includes: what happened today; impressions and feelings; what to do tomorrow – or further in the future; problems – and solutions; names and addresses of contacts; and brief unstructured observations. The information in the diaries was indexed in the same way as other qualitative data.

**OBSERVATION**

Observation was used to gather data on the living and working conditions in institutions for children without parental care, as well as institutional facilities and the use of those facilities. Researchers used a checklist for semi-structured observations of the institution, children’s activities, their conversation and the general atmosphere in the institution. Observation of the institution included basic conditions (types of rooms, their sizes, equipment, lightning, safety and surroundings). Observation of premises included a sketch map, health and safety issues, and facilities (children’s rooms, nursery facilities, bathrooms and toilets, living room, dining room, kitchen, offices/teacher’s rooms). Observation of the people in the institution included an estimate of the general atmosphere and of the relationships between staff and children. This observation has two parts: first, observation of children and second, observation of adults.

**SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

A semi-structured interview was used with staff in Centres for Social Work, SOS Children’s Villages and institutions, to explore adult perceptions of:

- Children and childhood;
- The current situation of children in BiH;
- The current situation of their place of work;
- Social protection of children without parental care in BiH;
- The national social welfare system;
- Children’s rights and the extent to which they are being respected/violated in institutions for children without parental care;
- Children’s needs.
- Fostering in BiH.

**SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE**

A comprehensive structured questionnaire was sent to all Centres for Social Work aiming to gather information about staffing, financing, working conditions and practices with respect to institutional and foster care.

**DRAWINGS**

Children’s drawings were used to identify children’s perceptions of their life in institution, their concepts of home and the way they see themselves. The main topics for drawing were: ‘Where I
live now’ and ‘Where I would like to live.’ While children were drawing, a researcher observed the drawing process and used the drawing as a visual stimulus for discussion on the topics below as appropriate:

- Rules and punishment that exist in the institution/home;
- Things children like/dislike about the institution/home;
- Contacts with families;
- Place where they would like to live (What is interesting there? Why? With whom would he/she like to live there?).

**RECALL**

The recall method was used for two purposes:

- To find out about children’s everyday life in an institution/family;
- To find out about children’s nutrition intake in an institution/family.

In the first case children were asked to remember what they had done on the previous day, and to provide the answers to the following questions on a table:

- What did you do when you woke up yesterday?
- What did you do until lunchtime?
- What did you do in the afternoon?
- What did you do in the evening?

The second recall was the nutrition recall, to find out what kind of food children eat every day. Children recorded in a table their answers to the following six questions:

- What did you eat for breakfast yesterday?
- Did you eat anything between breakfast and lunch?
- What did you eat for lunch yesterday?
- Did you eat anything between lunch and dinner?
- What did you eat for dinner yesterday?
- Did you have anything to eat before you went to bed yesterday?

Besides being asked to write what they had eaten, they were also asked to draw it.

**SENTENCE COMPLETION**

The sentence completion research instrument consisted of 25 uncompleted sentences (such as ‘I am happiest when…’), aiming to discover

- How children feel;
- What they like/dislike;
- What makes them happy/sad;
- Who are the persons dearest to them;
- Their wishes;
- How they perceive their abilities;
Their pasts and the futures;
Their needs;
Discipline and punishment in the institution/family.

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

There were two forms of focus group discussion; with children and with adults.

The focus group discussion with children was used to find out about children’s perceptions of their rights, punishment and abuse. A discussion followed children reading and grouping children’s rights from the articles of the CRC, written separately on cards. They were divided into small groups of 4-6 children. Every child had time to read each article and to comment on it. As the children read the articles, they grouped them into rights that are respected, not respected and partly respected, and glued them onto a sheet of flip-chart paper. Afterwards, all children were gathered together to discuss their opinions on children’s rights.

Focus group discussions with foster parents were used to find out about their views of children’s situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and their experiences as foster parents. Discussions were structured around prepared topics to cover two main areas:

- Perceptions of family, foster family and institutional care;
- Comparison of foster and institutional care.

**CHECKLIST FOR GOOD PRACTICE**

The checklist for good practice was used to note a number of components, based on UNICEF guidelines for rights-based programming. The aim of this method was to collect examples of good practice for a subsequent publication on this topic.

**OTHER METHODS**

National identity: Following questions developed during the first analysis phase, researchers added questions and drawings about national identity (for example ‘In which country do you live’) to various research instruments during data collection sessions with children.

Graphic skills: During the second analysis phase, researchers attempted to analyse drawings and written materials from various research instruments to test the hypothesis that children in institutions have poor graphic skills compared to contemporaries in foster and natal homes.

**ETHICS**

Ethical considerations were an essential part of this research and a comprehensive ethical strategy was developed. Voluntary consent was systematically sought from all participants. Adults signed ‘Informed consent’ forms and children gave their consent verbally, with a written record made by researchers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution/group</th>
<th>Instruments</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>Adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight selected institutions</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other institutions</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control groups in schools (four locations)</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster families</td>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following institutions for children without parental care exist in BiH:

- Children’s centre ‘Duga’, Kulen Vakuf
- Children’s centre ‘Most’, Zenica
- Children’s home ‘Duga’, Gradacac
- Children’s home ‘Bjelave’, Sarajevo
- Children’s home ‘Egipat’, Sarajevo
- Children’s centre ‘Mostar’, Mostar
- Children’s home ‘Porodica’, Zenica
- Children’s home ‘Rada Vranjesevic’, Banja Luka
- Family centre ‘Papa Ivan Pavao II’, Citluk
- ‘Friendly house’, Doboj
- Home for children and youth ‘Kiseljak’, Zvornik
- Home for children without parental care ‘Tuzla’, Tuzla
- ‘Mother’s village’, Bijakovici
- ‘Socio-educational living societies – boarding school’, Bihac
- ‘Socio-educational living societies – foster homes’, Bihac
- ‘Village of peace’, Turija