

Story no.1.

Hava Suljic

Work with the twelve-year old girl Hava Suljic started in 2001. The Mobile Team from the Telex Centre found her at the Tuzla town centre. She did not have any shoes, her clothing was very poor and mostly in pieces, and her look was full of fear and non-confidence. When she was just three Hava took the role of family stand over. Hava was begging around, at the streets and cross-roads, at the coffee-shops. The Centre staff did not know anything about her: if she had parents or not, where she lives, where she sleeps overnight.

The Centre Team members were trying to reach her every day, to start any contact with her. As they were giving her neither money nor food, she did not want to talk to the Centre people at all. It was a period of investing full effort by all the Team members, in order to help this child. Surprise was great when a small „fighter“ appeared at the Centre door after three months of constant tries to bring her to the Telex space. She looked hygienically neglected and very cold, walking without shoes at the autumn time. Hava entered the centre and asked for a cup of hot tea. At that moment work with her eventually started. It was not simple. Nine-year old child did not know very basic things. Toys, books, colours...it was unknown to Hava.

Her family situation was pretty hard: parents were forcing her to beg, her clothing was supposed to look miserable in order to attract attention of the passing-by people. The parents considered Hava's coming to the Centre totally useless because she is female and she is supposed to get married soon. In spite the parental restrictions, Hava continued coming to the Centre. In the first time, the reason for her coming was just to get a hot meal, provided for her and for her street friends at the Centre. She was not staying for long as her parents would notice lack of money collected at the street. However, as the time was passing, Hava was staying at the Centre for longer. Her neglected hair and not very clean face were hiding the two bright eyes that strived to better life. Adoption of hygienic and cultural habits started at the early beginning: she has learnt how to wash her face and teeth, and how to brush and dress her hair. Full confidence was raised at this child after six months of hard work. Patience was crucially important. Thanks to the efforts of the teacher and counsellor at the Centre there were quickly noticed changes in her behaviour. Often talks to her parents and the field visits to her home resulted with the parental allowance for Hava's regular coming to the Centre. Her progress at the literacy course was obvious. As Hava was ten years already and quite late to enter first grade of the elementary school on regular basis, the Centre staff decided to support her in taking school exams on grade basis (integrally) without every-day

going to school, what is alternative possibility for children out of the regular school-system. At the beginning she was giving-up, avoiding preparation lessons at the Centre and the exams, as she did not have sufficient self-confidence. The learning process required a lot of work and her parents could not have helped her because they are illiterate. In spite to all the problems faced, the work with Hava was fruitful, as she eventually passed the exams for the first four grades of elementary school. She is the only at her family with some grades of primary school. One of the most important results is changed awareness at her parents in regard with education of their child. She is twelve now and, upon the standards of her environment, she is ready to marry. It means that the Centre will have to keep fighting with the prejudices and tradition at the Roma community, in order to assist this girl in her further life and to keep raising awareness of children's rights at her family.



Hava in 2001, found at the street.



Hava today.