

Psychological and psychiatric problems of children during the war in Croatia

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The reflection of trauma on mental functioning depends on the type of trauma and its meaning in relation to chronological age, family relationships, environmental attitudes and social relationships

War trauma, given the specific changes in the environment and lack of social support and security, affects mental health as well as the therapeutic process

The Convention of the Rights of the Child in Article 38 paragraphs 1 and 4 obligates the respect of rules of international law relating to the child to ensure protection and care for children affected by armed conflicts

Despite the United Nations acts, Serbia and its army violated all the provisions of these documents, especially the provisions on children's rights

Genocide was committed against both adults and children in the war.

Children in that war were exposed to various forms of suffering, leading to serious consequences for physical and mental health.

According to data from the War Victims Office – Commission for the Violation of Children’s Rights since 1995, in Croatia:

- 265 children were killed
- 987 were wounded
- 187 became 100% disabled
- 320 children went missing
- 5497 children lost one parent
- 74 lost both parents
- 45 448 children were displaced/in exile

Psychological problems are a consequence of the war's effects because children are simultaneously faced with 2 very demanding processes:

- the process of growing up
- the process of coping with numerous losses and traumas related to early suffering

Research has shown a high percentage of depression, somatic disorder, different kind of behavior problems and PTSP, especially in refugee children

During the war, we had many programs of which I present only two:

- Psychosocial support to traumatized children and their families, especially wounded children
- Help for children and families through the interdisciplinary mobile team – with the support of UNICEF we organized 15 mobile teams throughout the whole country

We can see that we had professionals, organizations and programmes on how to help the children but we couldn't stop the war.

Many traumatized children who were traumatized during the war have psychological problems during their whole life.