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# Childwatch International Research Network

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Activities Report  
2005 - 2009

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# Childwatch International Research Network 2005 - 2009

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## Introduction

The Childwatch International Research Network (<http://www.childwatch.uio.no>) is a network of institutions and associations involved in interdisciplinary research on issues relating to children's rights, development and well-being. Key Institutions (the member child research centres) carry out research on and with children and are committed to a common agenda for promotion of children's rights, development and well-being. The Key Institutions have individual profiles, differing history and background, scope, size and organizational structure. Representatives of the Key Institutions normally meet every three years at the Key Institutions Assembly to discuss issues connected to network activities and to develop strategies to pursue application of research to policy and practice and mutual capacity building through collaboration. In 2009 the Childwatch membership is 47 Key Institutions. (<http://www.childwatch.uio.no/key-institutions>)

In this report you will find a presentation of the main activities of the network between the Key Institutions Assemblies in 2005 and 2009. Many have been actively involved in networking around child research issues in this period; the report can only reflect some of this.

The report shows how the members of our network have engaged in collaborative research and different kinds of networking, globally as well as regionally. The collaboration and networking has reached far beyond those directly connected to Childwatch. A wide range of organizations have been invited to take part in activities initiated by Childwatch members. At the same time representatives from Childwatch have been invited to take part in projects and discussions initiated by a number of agencies and organizations central in the efforts to improve children's rights and well being. All this is a result of the academic activity and quality of the work done by the Childwatch Key Institutions.

Our present strategy, see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/about/strategy/strategies/>, our objectives and the funding agreement with the Norwegian Development Agency (Norad) means that we have to make sure that our capacity and initiatives are seen as important and relevant not only among academics, but also among policy makers as well as in the civil society.

During the first fifteen years we have built well functioning internal links as well as relationships to a large number of research centres, academics, UN agencies, NGOs, policy makers etc. In addition to the internal communication, we are regularly in contact with a big number of agencies with regional as well global mandates.

Allocation of resources to the regional networks has been prioritized during the last years. This has proven to increase the number of partners. Many of them co-organizing and co-funding activities core to the Childwatch mandate and strategy.

The report presents an overview of projects worked on in the different thematic study groups, and the publications as a result of this work. The activities in the regional networks are also presented.

The work we jointly have done to make our network visible and our mission recognized over the last four years has built new relationships and strengthened collaboration with a number of people, organizations and networks. To mention a few:

- The United Nation's Committee on the Rights of the Child through bringing them in as partners in the Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads conference.
- The African Child Policy Forum and The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child related to the same conference.
- The UN Study on Violence against Children on the discussions on follow up research based on the findings of the study.
- Bernhard van Leer Foundation through the tri-partite cooperation on the Child Friendly Communities project (UNICEF, Bernhard van Leer and Childwatch). A collaboration where Childwatch is handling the Bernhard van Leer grant to support this activity.
- The Comparative Research Programme on Child Poverty (CROP) co-organized a global workshop with Childwatch on Child Poverty in 2007 and is eager to continue the collaboration and to co-facilitate a thematic network on Child Poverty Research with the most recognized academics in this field. The collaboration with CROP is also a link to their partners in Latin America and other regions.
- Regular contact has been established with The Young Lives project, another link to help us to be a network relevant for the research on Child Poverty in all global regions.
- Governments with regional and global Child Rights activities are inviting Childwatch to present research and perspectives. (Examples: The Czech government in their responsibility as EU chair, the Dutch government when discussing follow up of the UN Study of violence against children.)
- Unicef is actively seeking our advice on how to organize discussions on research and policy related issues. This is an opportunity to provide advice as well as to bring in Childwatch supported activities to a wider audience. (Example: "Child Poverty and Disparities: Public Policies for Social Justice" where Rob Chaskin was invited to present work on the research – policy gap and the Childwatch supported MENA network was given an opportunity to present our regional networking to groups we had no links to.)
- We are working with School of Social Work, University of Stockholm to set up a network for child researchers that provides an opportunity for peer mentoring. The purpose is that well established academics will offer their support to child researchers who needs mentoring in order to get their academic work regionally and globally recognized. The Swedish government is committed to support this initiative.
- OECD has invited Childwatch to be a partner in their programme to establish a website on child well-being

Childwatch International is dependent on having a core group of Key Institutions that are committed to actively contribute to further develop the network according to its mandate. Our objectives can only be reached if we through mobilizing the resources of the Key Institutions manage to establish productive collaboration with a wide range of institutions and people who are not formally members of our network.

## Regional networks

### Asia Pacific

#### *Child Participation in decision making in the Asia Pacific Region*

The regional network in Asia and Pacific region have carried out a cross-cultural research project into children's participation, focusing on the understandings and implementation of such participation in five different countries in the Asia Pacific region; Australia, China, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

The researchers from the five countries met between 2004 and 2006, at workshops in Bangkok, Mumbai, Sydney and Beijing. At these workshops auspiced by Childwatch International in conjunction with the host countries, we planned and discussed parallel studies exploring the concept and practice of the participatory principle of the United Nations Children's Convention(UNC), as implemented in our own countries, at levels of family, community and society. In this project, data was sought from children, parents, teachers , policymakers, literature and policy documents in each country. Representative of at least four, sometimes all, of the five countries in the study group, attended each of the meetings in the following countries, to develop the parameters for the research, discuss its implementation, analyze the data and discuss the findings.

The regional network organized seminars at the Childhoods 2005 Oslo conference and in conjunction with the Childwatch International Board meeting in Beijing in 2007.

The research findings have been written up and will be published in a book edited by Jan Mason and Natalie Bolzan from the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. See: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/regional-networks/asia/>

### Central and Eastern Europe

The Central and Eastern Europe regional network have focused on child poverty during the period since the 2005 conference. A meeting was organized in Prague in 2007 to decide on priorities for the region. The Childwatch International Key Institution, The European Centre for Social Welfare Policy Research in Vienna, Austria, then organized two workshops on child poverty subsequently, in 2007 and 2008. The last one in collaboration with and hosted by the Childwatch International Key Institution in Bratislava, Slovakia, The Institute for Labour and Family Research.

For information on conference programmes, papers and participants, please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/regional-networks/east-central-europe/>

The 2008 workshop was held in Bratislava 8 – 9 September under the title Impact of Poverty and Social Exclusion on Children's Lives and their Well-being. The international workshop followed the workshop "Children's Experiences with Poverty and Social Exclusion - Challenges for Research and Policies", which was held in Vienna in June 2007. Its aim was to strengthen the established platform for theoretical-methodological discussions concerning child poverty and social exclusion of children. The workshop mainly focused on identifying the ways in which poverty and social exclusion affect

children's lives and their well-being, with particular reference to children's health. The lives of children and their well-being from different perspectives, including their own perceptions and feelings, will be the focus of discussion. The general framework of the workshop was rooted in child-centered research and part of the agenda of children's rights. Both the workshop in 2007 and in 2008 were followed by regional network meetings, planning future joint activities between the Key Institutions and other stake holders in the region.

The University of South Bohemia planned a regional seminar in the fall of 2009. This was postponed and will now take place in the spring of 2010.

### **Latin America and the Caribbean**

The Latin American and Caribbean regional network collaborate on issues concerning Children growing up in contexts of poverty, marginalization and violence. The study group is interested in developing theoretical and methodological frameworks for a participatory approach that may promote the development of agency in children and youth, who are living in conditions of continuous mobility and change and to discuss the necessary legal, social, educational and ethical changes so adults may mediate and facilitate those resilient competences in children. Particular emphasis is placed on developing media and continuous education programs that may open spaces of public debate and reflection to strengthen the capacity of social networks to monitor and follow up the effect of social policies directed to enable full citizenship to all children without exclusions.

The network consists of the Key Institutions in the Latin American and Caribbean region: Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, Jamaica, Mexico, Venezuela, Uruguay and Chile. Several researchers and institutions have been committed to network, without formal affiliation to the network, amongst others representing Argentina and Mexico.

Since the regional network meeting at the Childhoods 2005 Oslo conference, the Childwatch International Key Institutions in the region have been involved in workshops and common projects. The network has organized three regional conferences hosted by the Research Programme on Infancy and Childhood at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana in Mexico City in 2005 and 2006 and CINDE Colombia in 2008. In addition to the Key Institution representatives, the meetings have had participation from Universities, both national and international. Local and international NGOs have also had an active participation in the events, as well as regional policy makers. In connection with the 2006 conference in Mexico, a one day workshop for children and youth was organized.

The regional network organized network meetings as side events to these regional conferences. In October 2007 network members participated in the Caribbean Child Research Conference. The Caribbean Child Development Centre at the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, hosted a side meeting of the regional representatives.

In 2007 the regional network took on the task of organizing a training course for young researchers, which was successfully carried out over a period of a year, from 2007 – 2008. Read more about this: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/training/latam-training.html>

The network's fifth international conference was hosted by the Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The quality of life of children and young people is focus of the event. More information on conferences and other activities in the region, please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/regional-networks/latin-america-caribbean/>

## **Middle East and North Africa**

The Middle East and North Africa regional network works to strengthen child research in the region, through sharing of research, methodologies and institutional capacity building.

A workshop on the situation for children in the MENA region was hosted by the Information and Research Centre in Amman 26 – 27 April 2006, in conjunction with the Childwatch International Board meeting arranged in Amman. Presentations by researchers and NGO representatives gave an overview of challenges facing children in the region.

Through the Childwatch International partnership programme a formal contact was established between the Norwegian Centres Norwegian Social Research and the Norwegian Centre for Child Research and Al Quds University in Palestine. This collaboration was funded by the Norwegian Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU). A concluding seminar on the welfare and well-being of Palestinian Children was held in Ramallah November 2007, including researchers from Norway, Jordan and Palestine.

19 – 20 November 2008 the Information and Research Centre hosted a regional conference on Children and Violence with the title “Children have no Place in War”. Activists and researchers from non-governmental organizations and civil society, from Arab countries and elsewhere: Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, Syria and Norway, in addition to representatives of the International Organizations like Save the Children (SC), UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC and USAID, who also participated in the conference’s activities for two working days. Representatives of local ministries and governmental institutions were also present. The Conference addressed a number of issues linked to the domain of children living under difficult circumstances in the Arab region, such as child soldiers, child trafficking, child labour, imprisonment, displacement and migration, psychosocial trauma related both to short term displacement as a result of war or inter-generational trauma for long term refugees and human rights violations. The Conference succeeded in bringing together a healthy mix of researchers with representatives of donors and civil society organisations which could benefit from the research. Overall presentations and studies were based on focus groups, theoretical background, case studies, qualitative and quantitative methods.

More information on: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/regional-networks/middle-east-north-africa/>

The MENA regional network are organizing a training for young researchers in the region 22 – 25 November. See paragraph on training below.

## **Sub-Saharan Africa**

The regional network in Sub-Saharan African have focused on the following issues:

- Perspectives and approaches in African childhood research
- Mechanisms and priorities in child research funding in Sub-Saharan Africa
- Capacity building of institutions engaged in child research

At a meeting in Oslo during the Childhoods 2005 Conference, a proposal for a conference on the continent during 2006 was discussed. The meeting brought together researchers and non-governmental organisations working on Child Rights and children related issues. The first major result of this meeting was the creation of a steering Committee that was responsible for organizing an

International Conference. The steering Committee formed was composed by: Jomo Kenyatta University, Kenya; University of Western Cape and the University of Cape Town, South Africa; and CODESRIA, based in Senegal. The Committee met in Nairobi, Kenya late 2005 and early 2006, to establish a framework to guide a review of the laws, research and activities done over the past fifteen years with and for children.

An International Colloquium on Child Research in Africa took place in Dakar, 26 – 27 November 2006, hosted by CODESRIA. Forty participants from 13 different countries in Africa participated in the colloquium. In preparation for the talks, three discussion papers were commissioned to provide the context for the colloquium and to help shape the content and direction of discussions. The papers provided brief overviews on (i) Perspectives and approaches in African childhood's research; (ii) Mechanisms and priorities in child research funding in Sub-Saharan Africa; and (iii) an Analysis on existing institutions engaged in child research in a number of selected countries.

The colloquium resulted in the establishment of an African Child Research Network, whose aims are the following: Building research capacity; Dissemination and dialogue; Collaborative research; Establishing a Centre for keeping all Child Research work in Africa; Dialogue, commitment towards the key actors; Influencing the continent's decision-makers.

The papers from the 2006 colloquium and a report have been compiled and published as a CODESRIA monograph. The publication presents papers by Steven Arojjo and Rebecca Nyonyintomo, Makerere University, Kelvin Mwaba, University of the Western Cape, Maureen Mweru and John N'gasike, Kenyatta University. The report is edited by: Shung King, M., September, R., Okatcha, F.M. and Cardoso, C.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/regional-networks/africa/>

## **Thematic networks**

### **Rural Childhood**

The initiative for the Rural Childhood Group grew out of the 2005 Tri-annual Meeting of Childwatch International Key Institutions held in Oslo, Norway. At that meeting, an initial group of interested representatives met to discuss the nature of rural childhood and how such a topic could be conceptualized within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The primary goal of the Rural Childhoods Group is to organize a research project that allows a cross-national comparison of rural childhoods specifically related to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What we have learned to date is that in every country studied, children in rural areas fare worse than their urban counterparts. The UNCRC has the potential to either reduce or exacerbate the disparities of rights experienced by children in rural areas. By uniting efforts to combine the voices of children in rural areas, researchers have the potential to elevate the rights of children in all countries. Accomplishing such a task is the difficult though noble goal of this study group.



The thematic group consists of members from Childwatch Key Institutions in Australia, China, New Zealand, Norway, Scotland and USA. Researchers from the University of the Free State in South Africa are also involved in the work of the thematic group.

The members met in USA in 2006 and in Australia in 2007. In 2009 extensive discussions have taken place by e-mail and conference calls. The group is meeting in Addis Ababa in 2009 during the Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads conference, aiming at involving more research centres in the group.

The group has agreed to simply the empirical demands of participating in the study group. Consequently, paper presentations from the two meetings were reorganized to form the foundation of a book proposal. In an effort to broaden inclusion of diverse cultures, in Addis Ababa, the opportunity will be made available for other potential researchers to contribute to the book.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/rural-childhood/>

### Bridging the Gap

The Bridging Research, Policy and Practice thematic group is examining the problem of conducting, producing, and disseminating research in ways that maximize its ability to have an impact on policy and practice that affects the well-being of children and youth. Its purpose is to investigate and draw lessons from successful approaches to "bridging the gap" between research and policy, to understand the challenges and potential responses to these challenges in pursuing this goal, and to explore common and divergent experience in harnessing research to inform policy and practice affecting children cross-nationally. It explores such questions as: What is the best way to structure research and dissemination activities to foster effective knowledge utilization that informs policy and practice for children? What are the critical dimensions of activity that characterize successful practice? Who are the "players" that need to be engaged in this process, and in what ways? What are the central tensions, and how are they best negotiated? To what extent are the strategies, opportunities, and constraints for successfully bridging the gap between research and policy context specific, and in what ways?

The group consists of researchers from the Key Institutions in USA (Chapin Hall, University of Chicago), Ireland, South Africa (Children's Institute), India, Israel as well as researchers from other institutions (Dartington Social Research Unit (UK), Queen's University Belfast (UK) and Stirling University (UK).

Network meetings took place in Chicago, August 2006; Dublin, December 2006 and Belfast, March 2008. The group has also held meeting via conference calls in 2006 and several in 2007.

Seminars and workshops included presenting papers and findings from the research that culminated in the book *Research for Action*, and engaging with other researchers, policymakers, funders, and practitioners in international forums around these issues. They included:

- Panel presented at the Childhoods June 2005 conference in Oslo
- Paper presented at Tata Institute of the Social Science, India, March 2007
- A full-day seminar and workshop seminar in Beijing, April 2007, connected with the Childwatch board meeting and meeting of the Asian regional network

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- Paper presented at Closing the Loop: Connecting Child Care Research, Policy and Practice, Queens University Belfast, December 2007
- Keynote paper/panel at UNICEF Conference, Child Poverty and Disparities: Public Policies for Social Justice, Cairo, Egypt, January 2009
- Roundtable session at Child Rights at a Crossroads conference, Addis Ababa, November/December 2009

The group has also been in discussion with Latin American, African, and Asian regional network representatives. A request for abstracts for Addis conference and possible book has been sent out to the network Key Institutions (23 abstracts received), which contributed to the design and substance of the Addis roundtable. It is currently planning and making a research design for a prospective cross-national study (US, Ireland, UK, South Africa).

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/bridging-gap-between-research-policy-practice/>

### Children and the Law

The Childwatch International Thematic Group on Children and the Law has been established to explore how children's rights are respected in law across different countries. It was initiated as a Childwatch Thematic Group in 2006. In 2007 it undertook a project to investigate how children's rights are respected in laws across countries with Childwatch Key Institutions. In 2009 it is continuing this work on children's participation in family law by exploring the models of participation (formal and informal) related to family- and court-based decision-making processes over children's post-separation care arrangements.

The thematic group consists of members from Australia, the Czech Republic, India, Israel and New Zealand. Several Key Institutions have been involved in gathering of data for the two reports produced during the first two phases of the project.

In 2005, the Study Group identified children's participation rights in family law systems as an internationally relevant area of children's rights that requires further critical examination. In Phase One of the project, a questionnaire on children's participation in family law proceedings was distributed to all Childwatch Key Institutions which resulted in a research report being produced in 2007. A first meeting of the study group was then held in Prague in September 2008. At this meeting, it was agreed to focus Phase Two of the study on a comparative international study of the models of children's participation in family law processes related to post-separation care arrangements. In May 2009 a questionnaire was distributed throughout the Childwatch Network to invite participation from interested Key Institutions and collect information on the way children participate in private family law proceedings in their state/country. 13 Key Institutions returned completed surveys. The final draft of the report from this study was finalized November 2009. It explores how children's participation rights are respected in post-separation decision-making in international family law contexts, including a focus on the legislative mechanisms and on the factors that facilitated, or hindered, children's participation.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/children-law/>

## Children's Perspectives on Citizenship and Nation Building

The focus of this thematic study group (2003-2009) has been the undertaking of a qualitative research study on how children understood and experienced citizenship in six different countries, and how adults supported the enactment of children's citizenship and rights. The key research questions underpinning the study were:

- How do children and young people understand citizenship?
- For children and young people, what does it mean to be a 'good' citizen?
- How do parents and teachers encourage and support children and young people's understanding and enactment of citizenship?
- How and to what extent do children and young people participate in civic life? (What motivates them to participate? What factors contribute to meaningful participation?)
- How can we encourage meaningful participation and citizenship among children and young people?

584 children (aged 8-9 years) and young people (aged 14-15 years) in Australia, Brazil, New Zealand, Norway, Palestine and South Africa took part in focus groups to discuss their rights and responsibilities in the context of their home, school and community. Questionnaires were also administered to 180 parents and 132 teachers across the six countries.

2005: All members of the study group met in Oslo, Norway, at the Citizenship Symposia during the Childhoods 2005 Oslo Conference. The project was presented and discussed and the study group participants presented the national studies. Other meetings of the study group were held in Norway, late 2005, hosted by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research. Next meeting was hosted by the Children's Issues Centre at the University of Otago, New Zealand in 2007. These meetings were spent discussing how best to compile and / or compare results, resulting in a plan to publish a book synthesising the results and presenting chapters for each country study. The meeting completed the first phase of the Citizenship project.

Several group members met during the conference *Child and Youth Research in the 21st century: A Critical Appraisal* at the European University Cyprus in Nicosia in May 2008. The group presented the research project and results and discussed the chapters being prepared for the forthcoming book.

Later in 2008, Nicola Taylor co-ordinated the editing of the book chapter proofs provided by the Otago University Press. In January 2009 Nicola Taylor and Anne Smith checked the final set of book proofs and in April the Otago University Press published 500 copies of our book: *Children as citizens? International voices*. This includes chapters on the findings from each country involved, as well as methodological and theoretical discussions resulting from the cross-country collaboration. Childwatch International and the study group members took responsibility for helping the Press to publicize the book internationally. Contributors to the book: Havard Bjerke, Robyn Fitzgerald, Megan Gollop, Anne Graham, Line Hellem, Anne Trine Kjørholt, Udel Mandel Butler, Irene Rizzini, Hazel Roberts, Rose September, Mohammed Shaheen, Brad Shipway, Pernille Skotte, Anne Smith, Gjertrud Stordal, Nicola Taylor, Nisha Thapliyal.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/children%27s-perceptions-on-citizenship-and-nation-building/>

## **Child Friendly Cities**

The Child Friendly Cities research initiative is intended to support improvement of the conditions of children living in urban settings by enabling communities and cities to better assess the degree to which they are fulfilling children's rights, and assisting in the critical self-appraisal of governance structures and processes that are designed to support families and children. The process seeks to promote awareness among stakeholders, sensitize policy makers about children's rights and generate data on the situation of children in participating cities and communities. The project is carried out with support and participation from Childwatch, the Bernard Van Leer Foundation and the UNICEF Innocenti Research Center. It involves researchers and practitioners from several parts of the world and is intended to grow.

The research will yield a flexible set of participatory assessment tools that can contribute to expanding the breadth and quality of data on children's conditions and improve the cities' and communities' monitoring and assessment capacities. The assessment kit includes a set of community tools - measuring the degree of child friendliness in terms of fulfilment of rights - and a set of governance tools - assessing the relevance and quality of governance structures in support of children. The testing of the community tools has just been concluded in Brazil and the Philippines, two countries with extensive experience in CFC - Brazil and the Philippines. Findings show the assessment tools are easily adaptable to local settings, ensure a high level of participation, and may be utilized by facilitators with limited experience.

A meeting was hosted by the Bernard Van Leer Foundation in The Hague in November 2008 with participation from South Africa, Brazil, Canada, USA, Jordan, the Netherlands, Ireland, Australia, Spain and Norway. Another meeting is organized by the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre in Rome, Italy, November 2008.

In March 2009 a workshop took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, supported by Unicef Brazil to review the proposed instruments piloted in Brazil and The Philippines as part of the project and to discuss issues related to the pilot process.

Please see:

<http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/childfriendlycitiesandcommunities/> and [http://www.unicef-irc.org/article.php?id\\_article=136](http://www.unicef-irc.org/article.php?id_article=136)

## **Other network activities**

### **Follow-up Meetings after the Childhoods 2005 Oslo Conference**

The Childhoods 2005 Oslo Conference sparked off collaboration both within existing thematic groups as well as new initiatives between new partners. The conference was an important event for many of the ongoing thematic networks of Childwatch International. In addition to these long term collaborations, a few meetings were held to follow-up and finalize work in relation with the event. The thematic group on Separated Children organized a meeting, 11 - 12 November 2005. This was hosted by Norwegian Social Research (NOVA). In 2006 the organizers of the conference session on trafficking held a follow-up workshop, hosted by FAFO in Lillehammer, Norway. Please see:

<http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/other-studies/trafficking.html>

## **“Children’s rights at a cross roads”**

Addis Ababa, November 30 – December 2, 2009

*Children's Rights at a Cross-Roads* was an event where policy makers, development agencies, NGOs, academics and young people engaged in reflection and dialogue for a better and more relevant knowledge base for future child rights strategies.

The main objective of the conference was to explore and promote:

- Research relevant for the realization of the rights of the child.
- Collaboration between policy makers, practitioners and academics that promotes the relevance and use of child research.
- Cooperation between adults and young people in the design and development of research, including participatory research and child-led approaches.

The conference was organized by Childwatch International Research Network, The African Child Policy Forum and UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, in collaboration with The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, The Comparative Research Programme on Poverty and Department of Social Work Stockholm University.

In addition to the main organizers, the following agencies provided the necessary funds: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Unicef, Oak Foundation, GTZ, Overseas Development Institute and The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality.

The conference was organized as an arena for reflection and dialogue across professions and disciplines. Policy makers, civil servants, researchers, young people and practitioners were invited to present their experiences and ideas and to analyze and discuss the role of research in the development of policies and practices that safeguard children’s rights.

Through a combination of Key Note presentations and 14 roundtables, the following three questions were discussed:

- What is the current context facing child rights policies and child rights relevant research?
- How can research contribute to advancing child rights?
- Bridging the Gap: What are the necessary conditions for optimizing the contribution of research?

The conference gathered close to 300 participants from all over the world.

The discussions and recommendations from the conference will be summarised and presented in the conference proceedings. A call for action will present clear and specific recommendations to what policy makers, UN agencies, academic institutions, development agencies and NGOs should do to promote child rights strategies based on solid evidence. A draft outline of the call for action was prepared and presented for comments to the participants the last day of the conference. The final call will developed based on the comments from the plenary.

For more information: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/global-conferences/un-child-rights-convention-anniversary-conference-2009/index.html>

## Consultancies

During this period only one formal consultancy has taken place between network institutions. The China Youth and Children Research Centre invited Irene Rizzini to Beijing 20 – 23 June 2006. She delivered lectures and discussed issues related to research with children, particularly focusing on research with children living on the streets with the centre's researchers.

## Thematic collaborations

### Poverty

17 – 19 September 2007 Childwatch International and the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP) co-organized an international seminar on child poverty: Rethinking Poverty and Children in the New Millennium: Linking Research and Policy. Researchers from 16 countries presented research and experiences and discussed the road ahead to eliminate poverty for children.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/child-poverty/crop.html>

In collaboration with the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre and the Young Lives Project at the University of Oxford, UK, and New School in New York, USA, Childwatch International initiated the establishment of a network on child poverty research in 2008. A blog on child poverty was established. <http://children-and-poverty.blogspot.com/>

### ISCI

Childwatch International has supported the establishment and running of the International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) since it was initiated in 2005, as a continuation of the network's effort to support development of child indicators. Members of Childwatch International have participated in the two International Conferences organized by the network in Chicago 2007 and Sydney 2009. In 2009 a Memorandum of Understanding between the two networks was signed to affirm their mutual commitment of future collaboration.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/publications/journals-bulletins/indicators-journal2008.html> and <http://www.childindicators.org/>

### WIKICHILD

Through the network's collaboration with ISCI Childwatch International was invited to collaborate in the development of WIKICHILD, an interactive online source for child well-being research and data. WIKICHILD will serve as an information hub for the community engaged in analysis and research on child wellbeing in developed as well as developing countries.

[http://www.wikichild.org/index.php/Main\\_Page](http://www.wikichild.org/index.php/Main_Page)

### Violence and Early Childhood

Canadian International Development (CIDA) is funding a 3 year project to be implemented in Colombia by the two Childwatch Key Institutions, Insitute for Child Rights and Development at the University of Victoria in Canada and CINDE in Colombia, in collaboration with other partners. The project focuses on prevention of violence in the first years of life.

## **Training of Junior Researchers**

An initiative was taken by the Key Institutions Assembly in Hurdal in 2005 to initiate training for junior researchers to support the network's aim to build capacity of research institutions, and to ensure the recruitment of strong child researchers in all parts of the world. Such a program could fully take advantage of the network of expertise on training and research that Childwatch International represents. The regional networks have seized the opportunity and Latin America has completed a successful pilot project, followed by the Middle East, carrying through their course in November 2009.

### **Training Programme in Latin America**

15 junior researchers from nine research institutions participated in the one year training course programme organized within the framework of the regional network in Latin America and the Caribbean. The programme was developed by the network, and hosted by CINDE in Colombia with trainers from Mexico and Colombia. The programme consisted of several phases: preparation, face-to-face course in Manizales Colombia and follow-up, including the young researchers doing research work with long distance tutoring.

The training programme in Latin America aimed at promoting high quality research practices in the Childwatch Key Institutions in Latin America and at developing a pilot course for junior researchers that could serve as a model for Childwatch in other regions. The programme was evaluated by an independent consultant. A full report is available in Spanish and an extended summary has been written in English. This has been used by the MENA region in the development of their training course.

The young participants were particularly positive towards the workshop in Manizales. The projects they elaborated and worked on after the course in Manizales were presented at the regional conference in Argentina in October 2009.

The University of Xochimilco and Bernard Van Leer co-sponsored the training course in addition to the local resources made available by CINDE and the Key Institutions in the region. Please see:

<http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/training/latam-training.html>

### **Training Course in the Middle East**

The training course is hosted by the Information and Research Centre in Amman, Jordan. It gathers 22 young researchers from Lebanon, Oman, Syria, Yemen UAE/Dubai, Palestine and Jordan for a course on Child Research Methods. The course takes place 22 - 25 November 2009.

The primary objective of the training is to create a network of emerging researchers who are interested in contributing to research on children in the region by putting them through a four day intensive practical training on relevant methodologies and conceptual frameworks. It is expected that the researchers will also agree on a theme for research that they will conduct over the next 12 months with supervision of more experienced researchers from the Information and Research Center, Al Quds University and Childwatch Research Network in order to produce a regional paper on this theme.



## **Norwegian Network of Research, Policy and Practice**

To fulfil its commitments to the network's Norwegian funders the Secretariat has established a Norwegian network for child research, policy and practice in collaboration with the Norwegian Research Council. The Norwegian network gathers experts and key (government, bureaucracy, NGO, private sector, practitioners and researchers) for discussions on current child related policy and research issues. It has its own web site and a 250 member mailing list.

Meetings organized since 2006:

- 2 May 2007: Unaccompanied and Separated Children's Migration
- 9 November 2007: Towards a Knowledge Based Development Policy for Children
- 4 June 2008: Female Genital Cutting: Knowledge Status
- 26 May 2008: Child Policy: Rights or Investments?
- 17 October 2008: Child Poverty in Norway – organized in collaboration with CROP
- 9 March 2009: Rights and Development in Early Childhood – Presentation by Childwatch International Board member Julie Meeks Gardner

Please see: <http://www.global.no/barn>

## **On Benefits and Challenges of International Networking**

The coordinators of the above mentioned thematic and regional networks have contributed some thoughts on a few of the positive and challenging aspects of working within the framework of an international research network. The experiences depend on the nature and aim of the collaboration, whether the group mainly works for capacity building, theory development or the members are involved in comparative research. Across the different groups, all state that collaborating internationally gives unique learning experiences.

International networking challenges our understandings and concepts and expands understanding. The research carried out by the Asia Pacific Regional Network points to the complexities of global implementation of child participation as a concept with different meaning in different cultures. The same regional group mentions that the use of English as the common language in the networking process camouflages these different meanings. There are nuances that are not captured.

The thematic group Bridging the Gap between Research, Policy and Practice mentions how meetings between researchers with different backgrounds raises the profile of the issues at stake and informs thinking and action on the part of researchers. It also promotes critical thinking among researchers, practitioners and policymakers from different parts of the world.

Most of the groups have actively worked to promote building of capacity within the institutions involved, from the sharing of research methodologies to including young researchers as participants on the projects. The Latin American and Caribbean regional network and the regional network in the Middle East and North Africa have taken this one step further through their training program and course. The Sub-Saharan Africa regional network mentions similar training as a potential future



activity, to promote sharing and learning of new research methodologies to strengthen collaboration between the researchers that work with child centered research on the continent.

The usefulness of the contacts established is highlighted by several, particularly in the comments from the regional networks. Spanish is shared by most of the members of the regional network in Latin America and the Caribbean. This makes exchanges of teaching, research and training easier. Establishing contacts across these countries seem, for this reason, to be especially valuable. Other groups mention contacts as a way of disseminating research and theoretic discussions to a larger audience, and yet others list the benefits of international contacts in the work of academic institutions.

New technologies have made networking easier, but meeting face to face is still important to develop the relationships necessary to increase understanding and commitment.

Most groups mention difficulties in maintaining a working relationship over time across time zones and borders as a main challenge, as well as lack of resources, in particular for majority world countries. Often these two challenges are merged, and it seems more difficult to maintain a long-standing working relationship between institutions that have less availability to resources. These are mostly more than busy enough with their

It is a beneficial for collaboration over time if there is some continuity among the network members and particularly of coordinators. Some groups experienced difficulties in finalizing their work with changes in staffing and leadership. Institutional commitment could help avoid such situations.

## **Representation in International Meetings:**

2006: Participation in UN Committee on the Rights of the Child Day of General Discussion on Child Participation in Geneva (by Haavard Bjerke/Norwegian Centre for Child Research)

Participation in Annual meeting of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development in Paris (Pernille Skotte/Secretariat)

Launch of the UN Report on Violence Against Children: October 10 – 13, 2006, New York (Julie Meeks Gardner/Caribbean Child Development Centre)

Robbie Gilligan represented Childwatch International in the consultation on the recommendation 11 of the UN Secretary General's Report on Violence Against Children in Geneva in December.

2007: Poverty Workshop at University of Oslo, 17 – 19 September 2007 in collaboration with the Comparative Research Network on Poverty (CROP). Please see:

<http://www.childwatch.uio.no/projects/thematic-groups/child-poverty/crop.html>

Caribbean Child Research Conference, 23 – 24 October, organized by Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies (SALISES), UWI Mona, in association with the Planning Institute of Jamaica (PIOJ), Child Development Agency (CDA), Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA), Early Childhood Commission (ECC), Caribbean Child

Development Centre (CCDC), Jamaica Coalition on the Rights of the Child (JCRC), and the Office of the Children's Registry. Supported by UNICEF and the Environmental Foundation of Jamaica (EFJ).

2008: World Congress III against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, 25 – 28 November, Rio de Janeiro. Director Jon-Kristian Johnsen invited and participated in preparatory meeting in Florence in October. President Irene Rizzini participated in the main event. Milena Grillo of the Costa Rican Key Institution PANIAMOR reported and invited Childwatch to contribute and collaborate on the follow-up. See [http://www.unicef-irc.org/presscentre/article.php?id\\_article=101](http://www.unicef-irc.org/presscentre/article.php?id_article=101)

Third International Policy Conference on the African Child, organized by the African Child Policy Forum, 12-13 May 2008 at the United Nations Conference Centre in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Childwatch International represented by Jon-Kristian Johnsen. See: <http://www.africanchildforum.org/ipc08.asp>

Director Jon-Kristian Johnsen participated in Breaking the Cycle: Children and Persistent Poverty in Stockholm, 4 December. Young Lives Policy Seminar for Senior Scandinavian Specialists.

2009: Cairo conference on Indicators 19 - 20 January. Under the umbrella of the Egypt National Observatory for Child Rights, its partners the National Council of Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM), the Egypt Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) and the United Nations Children's Fund in Egypt (UNICEF) organized an international conference on ***“Child Poverty and Disparities: Public Policies for Social Justice”***. The conference served as a platform for innovative thinking on social policy and child rights. Academics, policy makers, practitioners as well as university students were brought together to exchange experiences and discuss proposals for inclusive and child-sensitive public social and economic policies which aim to reduce child poverty and are based on scientific evidence. Childwatch International was represented in the plenary programme by Rob Chaskin. Regional network side meeting organized by Nermeen Murad and Jon-Kristian Johnsen. Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/events/conferences/child-poverty-egypt2009.html> and [http://www.unicef.org/egypt/media\\_5013.html](http://www.unicef.org/egypt/media_5013.html)

The Dutch Government hosted a conference on Violence Against the Girl Child, 9 – 10 March. Tine Jensen of the National Resource Centre on Violence and Traumatic Stress, Norway, participated on behalf of Childwatch International. The aim of the conference was to be a practical follow-up to the report from the UN Study on Violence against Children by demonstrating how its recommendations can be effectively implemented. Please see: <http://www.unicef-irc.org/cgi-bin/unicef/Lunga.sql?ProductID=551> and <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/news/2009/Violence-conf-Netherlands.html>

25 – 27 May Ferran Casas represented Childwatch International in a consultation hosted by OECD. During 3 days 72 experts from 22 different countries and

international organizations met to discuss the topic of indicators to assess child well-being in international perspective. Altogether we were 17 OCDE experts, 4 from UNICEF, 2 from the EC, 9 from universities from 7 different countries, 23 representing ministries or national statistics institutions, and 17 from international NGOs and other organizations. Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/news/2009/oecd-indicators-workshop.html> and [http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_33933\\_42534358\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,3343,en_2649_33933_42534358_1_1_1_1,00.html)

The International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI) and the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney organised the conference “Counting Children In! Child Indicators: Research, Theory, Policy and Practice” 4th and 5th of November 2009 at the University of Western Sydney. Ferran Casas represented Childwatch in the conference and in meetings on continued networking on child indicators. <http://www.isci09.com/>

Review Of The Unicef Research Function, Unicef Innocenti 7 and 8 December 2009  
Partner Consultation: The Partner Consultation was convened as part of a review process on the UNICEF research function. The review had a very practical objective — to help put into action the decisions of the UNICEF Executive Board by making recommendations on how to make a new and strengthened UNICEF research function work in an efficient and cost effective manner. Jon-Kristian Johnsen represented Childwatch in these discussions.

## Management and Information

### Key Institutions Assembly

According to the by-laws of Childwatch an assembly with representatives from the Key Institutions (the membership) should:

- Elect the Board
- Approve general policies and the strategy of CWI
- Approve changes in statutes and by-laws
- Review and provide guidance on the work of the Board and the Secretariat
- Appoint a nomination committee

The 2005 Key Institutions Assembly was organised in conjunction with the Childhoods 2005 conference in Oslo in June 2005. See <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/events/key-institution-assembly/hurdal-2005/index.html>

Our 2009 Key Institutions Assembly was organised in Addis Ababa after the Children’s Rights at a Crossroads conference . See: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/events/key-institution-assembly/addis-2009/ki-assembly-2009.html>

### Board

The CWI Board is responsible for implementing the strategies, policies and priorities set by the Key Institutions Assembly.

The Childwatch International Board shall:

- Review and approve or disapprove applications for membership based on the statutes and on guidelines set by the Key Institutions Assembly;
- Ensure the execution of the actions decided upon by the Key Institutions Assembly;
- Identify suitable programmes and projects which shall be given priority;
- Advocate for and promote the Childwatch International policies and strategies and promote and encourage collaboration within the Child Research community and between this community and relevant decision-makers.

The board is also responsible for developing relations with third parties. It approves annual plans and budgets and secures good monitoring and evaluation of Childwatch activities. The board elects a President and two Vice-Presidents among its members. The three of them constitutes the Executive Committee.

The Board serving between 2005 and 2009 was appointed during the Key Institutions Assembly in 2005, a new board was appointed by the Key Institutions Assembly in December 2009. Presentation of the new Board: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/about/organisation/board/>

Board Meetings in the reporting period:

2005: Board constituted 30 June at Key Institutions Assembly in Hurdal, Norway.

2006: 24 – 25 April, Amman, Jordan. Hosted by the Information and Research Centre, King Hussain Foundation.

2007: April, Beijing, China. Hosted by the Child and Youth Research Centre.

2007: 26 – 27 October, Trelawney, Jamaica. Hosted by the Caribbean Child Development Centre at the University of the West Indies.

2008: 16 – 17 June, Florence, Italy. Hosted by the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

2009: 9 – 10 March, Oslo, Norway. Hosted by the Childwatch International Secretariat.

2009: 4 December, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. New Board elected at Key Institutions Assembly.

For minutes from the Board meetings please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/events/key-institution-assembly/addis-2009/ki-assembly-2009.html>

## Secretariat

The Secretariat, hosted by The University of Oslo, initiates and promotes new networking activities and assists in the organizing of study groups, regional networking, international meetings and conferences. Together with the Board and the Executive Committee it also reviews the issue of potential or emerging members, particularly in parts of the world where the child research capacity is weak or lacking. The University of Oslo has taken on the staff of the Secretariat as university staff, given that external funding is available. The Secretariat is based at the Blindern Campus.

### Information and web

The new web site of Childwatch International has been very successful in gathering and disseminating information about network activities, events and about international child research with a rights perspective. It has given our network and the network Key Institutions increased visibility and gained interest for the network among the network partners. The site was launched in October 2008. A great deal of time and effort was put into the process by the Secretariat, and a half time position was created to edit, move and add information for the new site.

Please see: <http://www.childwatch.uio.no/>

### Funding for network activities

Core funding for the network is contributed by the Norwegian Agency Development Cooperation (Norad) through the Norwegian Research Council. Through the hosting agreement with The University of Oslo Childwatch benefits from administrative, finance management and logistical support. These services are provided at an overhead far less than what we would have to pay if provided on a commercial basis.

The network activities mentioned above receive seed funding from this funding source. In addition to the funding made available by the annual Childwatch International budget, all the network activities generate funding from a long list of other sources. The Key Institutions involved contribute with staff time as well as additional research resources. Meetings are hosted with support from host institutions.

Co-organizers of meetings and projects also support the activities. The Child Friendly Cities Research Project is a joint initiative with Bernard Van Leer and Unicef Innocenti Research Centre and as such funded by the three agencies. The Bridging the Gap group receives support through a Chapin Hall grant by Atlantic Philanthropies. Groups that carry out research as a part of their activities, eg. the thematic group on citizenship or the regional network in the Asia Pacific region, seek funding for the actual research through other sources. The Otago University Press underwrote the cost of publishing the *Children as citizens? International voices* book and hope to recoup their financial outlay via book sales

## Publications

The publications listed below were published as a result of joint research or other collaboration between researchers in the Childwatch International network during the period 2005 – 2009.

Rizzini, I., Fletes, R., Zamora, M.H., Menezes, M.N. (2006) *Niños, adolescentes, pobreza, marginalidad y violencia en América Latina y el Caribe: ¿Relaciones indisociables?* Rio de Janeiro, CIESPI  
ISBN 85600790

Casas, F., I. Rizzini, R. September, P.E.Mjaavatn (eds.) (2007), *Adolescents and Audio-Visual Media in Five Countries*, Girona, Documenta Universitaria  
ISBN 9788496742055

Chaskin, R. and J.Rosenfeld (eds.) (2007) *Research for Action*, New York, Oxford University Press  
ISBN 9780195314083

Del Río, N. (ed.) (2007) *Niñez y Juventud: Dislocaciones y Mudanzas*, Mexico, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana  
ISBN 9789703107827

Wyller, T. and U. Nayar (eds.) (2007) *The Given Child: Religions' Contributions to Children's Citizenship*, Research in Contemporary Religion, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht  
ISBN 9783525604366

Mason, J. og Bolzan, N. (2009) Questioning understandings of children's participation (pgs 125 – 132) in Thomas, N. and Percy-Smith, B. (eds) *A Handbook of Children's Participation*, Routledge  
ISBN 9780415468527

Roldán, O. (ed.) *Niñez y Juventud Latinamericanas: Experiencias de Relacionamiento y Acción Colectivas*. Medellín, CINDE.

Taylor, N. and Smith, A.B. (2009) (eds.) *Children as Citizens? International Voices*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press. ISBN 978-1877372629

Shung King, M., September, R., Okatcha, F.M. and Cardoso, C. (2009) *Child Research in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA  
ISBN 9782869782624