

Annual Report 1993

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of extensive informal consultations over a couple of years, Childwatch International was formally established in January 1993. This was possible particularly due to the leadership role played by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB) and a generous pledge of financial support from the Norwegian Government (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs). A group of distinguished personalities working within the field of child welfare and child research was invited to serve as the preliminary board for the network. (Please see attachment for names and affiliations.)

In the first year of its existence, the activities of Childwatch have mainly consisted in defining further its objectives and their achievements, to establish a functioning secretariat, establish contacts with potential members and partners of the network. Furthermore, efforts have been made to seek all possible opportunities to promote the network. Summed up very briefly, the response has been very positive and expectations seem to be high for the future development of the network and its activities.

2. ORGANISATIONAL MATTERS

The Norwegian Government has pledged support to the basic functions of Childwatch in the establishing phase. The Childwatch secretariat is located to Oslo, Norway. The University of Oslo has offered to host Childwatch as a cooperating institution, and the Secretariat has been given office space and access to the infrastructure of the University without charge. The University is also responsible for the accounting and personnel handling on behalf of Childwatch, which ensures that these important functions are covered in a professional and safe way.

3. FUNDING

A grant from the Norwegian Ministry for Children and Family Affairs covered the expenses for the Secretariat, including salaries, travels for the Secretariat, one meeting of the Executive Board and the initiation of new projects. In addition, the Norwegian Centre for Child Research has absorbed some Secretariat costs, and the Centro de Estudios del Menor absorbed the costs of a second meeting of the Board.

4. MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Board, which serves as a preliminary board through the establishing phase, formally met for the first time at the founding meeting in Oslo 29-31 January 1993. The Board had its second meeting in Madrid 17-18 June - thanks to the generous hospitality of the Centro de Estudios del Menor and the Spanish Ministry of Social Affairs.

Through these two meetings, the terms of reference and framework for Childwatch' activities have been laid, and a preliminary constitution adopted. In addition, a number of specific activities have been planned (see below), as well as a strategy for further development of the network.

5 RESEARCH AND ACTIVITY TEAMS (REACTS)

The Board has decided that the main bulk of activities of the network, should be organised as independent projects. Funding for such projects should be sought from sources outside of the Childwatch budget, which will cover only the initial planning or preparation of the activities. Such projects are labeled Childwatch Research and Activity Teams (ReAcTs). By the end of 1993, the following ReAcTs were working:

a. Child rights indicators

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has requested assistance to develop some practical tools for use in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In response to this, a small working group consisting of Judith Ennew and Per Miljeteig has developed a proposal for a country case study to identify and develop child rights indicators. The project will be based at the Children's Rights Centre at the University of Gent, Belgium and carried out in cooperation with professor Eugeen Verhellen, director of the Centre. The project plans were presented at a consultative meeting on the information needs of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in October, where both Judith Ennew and Per Miljeteig were invited to participate. The process of raising sufficient funds for the project started in December.

b. Childwatch TV Global Report

An important task for Childwatch is to disseminate information on the outcomes of relevant child research. A working group consisting of Lisbet Palme, Magne Raundalen and Trond Waage has worked to develop the concept and project plan for Childwatch TV - an annual TV programme to be offered to the world's broadcast institutions containing an updated status report on the situation of the children of the world, based on research undertaken by Childwatch International and others. The Norwegian Broadcasting Cooperation, as a member of the European Broadcasting Union has accepted to become a partner in Childwatch TV and take responsibility for the technical production. By the end of 1993 focus was on developing the budget for the first five year period and a strategy for funding.

c. Children and Environment

Childwatch cosponsored with NOSEB two workshops on "Children and Environment" and "Children and Radiation". The outcome of the two workshops, which gathered specialists in various disciplines from the whole world to define future research needs will be integrated in a national research programme that NOSEB intends to establish. This programme will have a strong international component, and cooperation with Childwatch is established for that purpose. Per Miljeteig joined the organising team for the two workshops, and Per Egil Mjaavtn will serve as the Childwatch focal point for further development of this ReAcT.

d. Capacity Building

One of the main objectives of Childwatch is to support capacity building in developing countries, to strengthen their ability to conduct research on children's issues and to the benefit of children. Based on a proposal from Philista Onyango, the Executive Board has decided to establish a ReAcT that focusses particularly on the need for support to capacity building in Africa, drawing upon the experience from other regions. For instance, there is an interest to see how experience from the Inter-American Children's Institute in Uruguay, could be applied in the African context. Philista Onyango serves as the focal point for further development of the plans, in cooperation with the Inter-American Institute and the Secretariat.

e. Children, Media and the New Screens

The effects on children by various electronic media, and in particular the new generation of interactive media, is a concern of parents and others who are working with children world-wide. However, there is no comprehensive research on this theme that looks at possible negative as well as positive effects. A working group consisting of Ferran Casas, Noburu Kobayashi, Ivar Frønes and Trond Waage is preparing a project proposal with a time schedule on "Children, Media and the New Screens".

f. Raising the Child in an Environment of Violence

In order to develop a comprehensive overview of already undertaken research and future research needs concerning children in all situations of violence -- ranging from situations of war to violence in the home -- the Board has appointed a working group with Lisbet Palme, James Garbarino and Magne Raundalen to suggest further action within this field, particularly with a view to contributing to a conference on children and violence that the Norwegian and Swedish National Committees for UNICEF are planning for early 1994.

g. Key Institutions Meeting

Preparations started for a meeting of institutions that play or have the potential to play a leading role within child research. This initiative is seen by the Executive board as important first step in an active membership drive. The Norwegian Centre for Child Research has decided to cosponsor the meeting, and the meeting will take place in June. This meeting will be combined with an international hearing on child research, open to a broader audience at the University either of Oslo or of Trondheim as well as the media. Per Egil Mjaavatn, Helmut Wintersberger and Trond Waage constitute the ReAcT team.

6. CONFERENCES

As mentioned above, Childwatch cosponsored the two workshops on "Children and Environment" and "Children and Radiation" with the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, 13-16 May and 10-14 June, respectively. Both workshops are parts of the same strategy to develop a new multi disciplinary research programme on children and environment. Sharon Stephens of the Norwegian Centre for Child Research coordinated the two workshops, which gathered researchers with top competence within their respective disciplines and who are interested in new research on children and the environment. The papers presented at the workshops will be published for wide distribution, and the conclusions drawn with regard to new research needs will be integrated in NOSEB's programme which will take place in close cooperation with research institutions abroad.

7. PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS

Childwatch International has been represented at the following conferences, in many cases with presentations of the network and/or presentations on the substance of the conferences:

- Children in development assistance, Norwegian Save the Children, Sandefjord, Norway, 5 August. Per Miljeteig gave a keynote address on "The situation of children, globally and challenges for the future".

- Consultative Meeting on Information Systems for Children's Rights, Geneva, 9 October: Judith Ennew and Per Miljeteig presented Childwatch proposal on child rights indicators.
- Childhood in the Nordic Countries, (Presentation of final reports from Nordic branch of the European Childhood Project), Billund, Denmark, 11-12 October.
- Nordic Course on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Danish Centre for Human Rights, Copenhagen, Denmark, 14 October; Per Miljeteig spoke on "The Role of UNICEF and other International Organisations in the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child."
- A Voice for Children's Rights and Responsibilities, Center for Peace and Conflict Studies, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, 22 October; Per Miljeteig spoke on "The Convention on the Rights of the Child: Commitments of the International Community".

8. VISITS

In order to establish contacts and working relations with participants of the network and potential partners, we have visited the following institutions during the course of 1993: The Inter-American Children's Institute in Montevideo, Centro de Estudios del Menor in Madrid; UNICEF offices in Geneva, New York and Florence; ILO Headquarters in Geneva; WHO Headquarters in Geneva; the Swedish Foreign Ministry, the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the Swedish Agency for Research Cooperation with Developing Countries (SAREC), Rädda Barnen, and the Swedish Committee for UNICEF in Stockholm; Plan International in Amsterdam.

In addition, we have also visited the following Norwegian institutions: Barneombudet (the Commissioner for Children); Redd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children), the Institute for Applied Social Science (FAFO), Bistandsdepartementet (Ministry for Development Assistance), NORAD (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation), Barne- og familiedepartementet (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs). These institutions use Childwatch extensively as a source of information and references.

9. VISITORS

Ferran Casas, President of the Childwatch International Executive Board visited Oslo in December for informal consultations with the Secretariat, and also met the Rector of the University of Oslo, Professor Lucy Smith, a child researcher herself, and representatives of the Faculty of Social Sciences.

During the year, representatives from the following institutions or organisations have visited the Secretariat for consultations: Bernard van Leer Foundation, Defence for Children International (DCI); International Catholic Child Bureau (ICCB); Plan International, Proyecto Alternativas/ University of Tulane.

10. ARTICLES AND MEDIA COVERAGE

The founding meeting in January was subject to extensive media coverage: The President and the Vice-President of the Board as well as the Director were interviewed in newsbroadcasts on national (public) TV and radio, and several of the major newspapers in Oslo gave coverage.

Newsletters of various organisations, such as Asianet, UNICEF, the Sociology of Children Section of the American Sociological Association, DCI, the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, and ANPPCAN have brought notices on the establishment of Childwatch. Childhood, the international journal on child research has also brought an introduction about Childwatch.