

## ANNUAL REPORT 1996

### 1. Introduction

In 1996 Childwatch International formulated and published the experience from the initial phase, 1993-1995, and implemented recommendations from the interim Board towards establishing the network on a long-term basis. The main features of this process are the more prominent — or rather more visible — role of the Key Institutions and terms of reference that are tailor made for the activities of a world-wide research network. The group of Key Institutions has increased in size and now has a better distribution between various parts of the world. An important change also occurred in the staffing of the Secretariat in 1996. Negotiations were held with the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, the Norwegian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the University of Oslo concerning support for Childwatch for a second three-year period.

### 2. Working with the Key Institutions

The Childwatch network now consists of a core represented by approximately 30 institutions or organisations representing child research on a world-wide basis (see Annex 1 for a complete list). They are all central actors within child research and represent the major forces within their countries, regions or thematic networks. Working with the Key Institutions in developing ways to serve their information needs and to define research areas of common interest has become an increasingly important part of the Secretariat's work. Bringing together the experience and comparative advantage of the various institutions appears to be an effective way of facilitating synergy between their various areas of expertise and sharing of experience.

On 26-28 September, representatives from 22 Key Institutions met under the auspices of the Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina, Charleston, South Carolina. The objectives of the meeting were to review collaboration between the Key Institutions within the Childwatch framework and particularly to discuss more specific models for collaboration that capitalise on the capacities of the participating institutions. A process was started towards specifying the comparative advantage of such a network in initiating and undertaking research efforts with a global scope that could meet the research needs of the international community. This gathering also served as an important meeting place where the individual institutions made direct connections and discussed activities of joint interest. An Advisory Board was constituted, with eight members from among the directors of Key Institutions and two members elected in their personal capacity. (Please see Annex 2 for details about the Advisory Board.)

During the meeting, the following priorities for further collaboration were formulated:

- further development of effective information and resource exchange, particularly by taking advantage of electronic communication;

- further development of the network, particularly to achieve a richer variety of research approaches and geographical scopes;
- capacity strengthening and networking among institutions of the network;
- initiating and facilitating research that more specifically relates to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its implications; and
- developing strategies to meet research needs and to gain impact.

### 3. Activities

#### 3.1. Information exchange and communication

Since its inception, one of the main objectives of Childwatch has been to develop overviews of the activities of central research institutions within child research and to facilitate the flow of information between the institutions. Particularly, the flow of information between the North and the south has been an important issue since many institutions in the South do not have sufficient access to information from other parts of the world and few opportunities to publish and disseminate information about their own research activities. The information strategy of Childwatch has explicitly aimed at taking advantage of the opportunities represented by modern electronic communication technology. Other Childwatch publications provide a more detailed account on this.

The most important development in 1996 has been that a majority of the Key Institutions of the network and many of Childwatch's partners are now using e-mail as their main mode of communication within the network, both in individual communication and in communication within groups (m-lists). Another important and related, development is the increasing use of the Internet to present and seek information. Childwatch has taken an active role in this development, as described in further detail later.

A significant effect of the increased use of e-mail is that communication is now much more frequent and efficient both between the various institutions and the Secretariat and among the institutions of the network. In this way, most institutions in the network have become much more actively involved in Childwatch matters. This is particularly important for institutions in developing countries, which have been difficult to reach through regular mail, fax and telephone.

Once institutions begin to use e-mail, it seems to be a short step for most to become an active Internet users. Several Key Institutions now have their own home pages. The Childwatch Secretariat has assisted some of them with this. Based on discussions at the Key Institutions meeting in September, Childwatch is working to increase its assistance to Key Institutions in this field and has made a proposal for a WorldWide Web development process in collaboration with six of the Key Institutions:

- Instituto Interamericano del Niño, Montevideo, Uruguay;
- Center for Research on Childhood, Universidade Santa Ursula, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil;
- Institute for Child and Family Development, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa;
- Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), Dakar, Senegal;

- Unit for Child and Youth Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India; and
- National Institute for Child & Family Development, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand.

The main feature of the proposal is to link these institutions together in a support network and to offer a training workshop to increase their capacity for advanced and goal targeted use of the WorldWideWeb.

### 3.2. Children's House in Cyberspace

As a natural part of its work to make use of the opportunities that the Internet represents, Childwatch launched the idea of establishing Children's House in Cyberspace. The idea was to create an electronic meeting place for those working for and with children at the professional level, whether within research, programming, planning, advocacy, legislation or policy-making. This initiative has been met with overwhelming and positive responses from organisations and institutions who want to place their information in Children's House, or who want to establish links to their own databases.

Early in 1996 the first prototype was developed, and together with a group of Childwatch partners, Children's House in Cyberspace was established in March. The partners include the International Save the Children Alliance, UNESCO, the World Bank and the Child Rights Information Network (CRIN). They are represented in the House Committee together with Childwatch and some of the Key Institutions (Family Life Development Center, Cornell University; the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development; the Australian Institute of Family Studies; the Norwegian Centre for Child Research; Children's Rights Centre, University of Gent; Instituto Interamericano del Niño; and Centre International de l'Enfance et de la Famille). This group met for the first time in Paris, 14-17 March to develop the terms of reference for Children's House and to make a plan of work and distribute responsibilities for further development.

Children's House became the natural base for the campaign that Redd Barna (Norwegian Save the Children) started in order to remove child pornography from the Internet, for Rädde Barnen's (Swedish Save the Children) campaign against child soldiers and for CRIN's (Child Rights Information Network) extensive child rights database and information sources. Childwatch Key Institutions are also increasingly using Children's House to present information about their activities. The Childwatch Secretariat has given technical support when requested. Childwatch strongly emphasises sharing the expertise that the Secretariat has developed with Key Institutions that do not have such expertise. Such a support function might be an important function for Childwatch to provide also in the near future.

The House Committee is responsible for developing Children's House further in collaboration with contributing institutions and organisations, and Childwatch will in the future focus on those rooms in the House related to research, whereas other organisations will take responsibility for rooms related to their particular expertises and interests.

### 3.3. Indicators for children's rights

A project on indicators for children's rights was started in 1994 and is conducted under the auspices of the Centre for Family Research of the University of Cambridge. The main objective of the project is to contribute to the development of strategies for monitoring children's rights at the national and global levels through a series of country case studies. The project is moving ahead, with five out of eight country case studies concluded or well under way by the end of 1996. The project continues to draw attention and to create new opportunities for collaboration with academic institutions and relevant organisations. In Vietnam and Nicaragua, the experiences from the project have been used as the basis for establishing national monitoring mechanisms.

A meeting of the Global Advisory Committee for the project was held at the University of Cambridge, on 25-27 October and reviewed the progress of the project. The meeting recommended that the project should, provided that the necessary funding is made available, be expanded to include one follow-up visit to each of the eight case study countries to review the experience from setting up monitoring mechanisms and to make maximum use of the experience of the project to produce training and demonstration material. The need for a tailor-made presentation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child was also stressed. Another possible way of extending the project would be to take advantage of the project's experience to develop an integrated programme for training of specialists in monitoring children's rights. Consultations with UNICEF regarding such a project had reached an advanced stage at the end of 1996 and are expected to be concluded with a view to implementing the project from mid-1997 onwards.

For the Congress against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, in Stockholm on 26-31 August, the experience from the project was utilised in a special report produced by Childwatch, the Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge and UNICEF: Children and prostitution: How can we measure and monitor the commercial sexual exploitation of children? Literature review and annotated bibliography. This report has been distributed widely also after the Congress.

Yet another initiative that springs out of the Indicators for Children's Rights project is the idea to take up the challenge of identifying and evaluating appropriate theoretical bases of knowledge about and understanding of child development in different cultural contexts. The Indicators for Children's Rights project has demonstrated that the extent to which this process is differentially influenced by social, physical and psychological factors is little understood. International programmes to monitor the Convention on the Rights of the Child and academic research are now questioning the appropriateness of current theories for understanding child development, most particularly the dominance and 'globalisation' of western models. An initial planning meeting, held at the University of Cambridge in July 1996, established a scientific committee for this initiative, representing institutions that will serve as regional focal points for a series of workshops, culminating in a global consultation in the year 2000.

#### 3.4. Growing Up in Cities

The Growing Up in Cities project is a replication of the original study by urban planner Kevin Lynch in 1977. The goal of the project is to document some of the human costs and benefits of economic development by showing how the child's use and perception of the resulting microenvironment affect his or her life and personal development.

Louise Chawla, who was a Fulbright Scholar in 1995 at the Children and Environment programme at the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, developed the plans for replicating the study. As the coordinator of the global project, she has identified research contacts at the original sites and made contact with new sites, interested in participating in the project.

The Growing Up in Cities project comprise teams at sites in seven countries:

- Salta and Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Melbourne, Australia
- Bangalore, India
- Warsaw, Poland
  
- Trondheim, Norway
- Johannesburg, South Africa
- Oakland, California, USA

During 1996 the project was prepared, including the development of a manual. The manual will be put into use at the sites and will be a guide in documenting how the project's findings are assimilated into local, regional and planning initiatives. The main environmental observations and interviews will take place in 1997. Multiple methods and specific themes will be applied and explored in the process of carrying out the project. The project is supported by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Childwatch International, the MOST (Management of Social Transformations) programme of UNESCO and by UNICEF, in addition to the local support and funding of the sites.

### 3.5. Programme on Child Research in Africa

The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) has developed a Programme on Child Research in Africa with the assistance of Childwatch. A proposal was finalised in 1996 and a fund-raising strategy developed with the view to launch the programme in mid-1997. The programme includes elements of training, networking and publishing and will include researchers from all African countries over a three-year period.

### 3.6. Urban Childhood conference

Childwatch joined the Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB) in preparing the Urban Childhood conference to take place in Trondheim on 9-12 June 1997. The particular role of Childwatch is to coordinate the scientific programme for the conference's sections on child labour and the urban environment and healthy development of children. The conference represents an opportunity to present and assess the contributions from child research in a dialogue with the users of such

research. Furthermore, the conference is seen as a major opportunity to promote the Childwatch network and its members, to build on the scientific resources of the Childwatch Key Institutions and to identify possible new Key Institutions and relevant partners.

### 3.7. International Conference on Child Labour

Childwatch has been invited to participate in the planning committee for the International Conference on Child Labour, to be organised by the Government of Norway in October 1997. In addition, Childwatch has been asked to assist in identifying resource persons from the research community and to produce some of the background material for the Conference in collaboration with relevant Key Institutions.

## 4. Capitalising on the experience from the initial phase

As noted in the introductory chapter, experience from the initial phase of Childwatch has been analysed and formulated with a view to assisting the further development of the Childwatch network. This has been an important part of developing the network, as it started with a relatively open approach to implementing its objectives. The main experience is that a well functioning network is best developed through a flexible process that is sensitive to the needs and interests of the members. This experience results from an approach that includes various kinds of activities to explore which ones are the most relevant. Three documents have been published that cover various aspects of this process:

### 4.1. Regularising Childwatch

This document describes the network philosophy that Childwatch has developed over the first three years. In particular, flexibility of the organisational format and the need to define and focus on common interests and information-sharing are underlined. The document also contains the proposal to formalise the role of the Key Institutions as the core of the network, including by establishing a new Advisory Board with members elected from among the directors of Key Institutions.

### 4.2 Terms of Reference

The Terms of reference aim to meet the needs to for a set of guidelines for the Childwatch network that reflect the nature of the network. Such rules should be based on mutual trust and on a realisation that too much formality would threaten the necessary flexibility of the network. Thus, the Terms of reference for the network was developed in accordance with this experience and is published in a separate document.

### 4.3. The first three years

To take full advantage of the experience gained through the various research, dissemination and information activities during the initial phase and to give a more detailed presentation of Childwatch than the annual reports can give, the Secretariat prepared a document that summarises the activities and experiences from 1993 to

1995. This publication has been circulated widely as a more detailed presentation of Childwatch.

## 5. Organisation

### 5.1. Funding and support

The Secretariat and its activities have been funded by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). One of the Key Institutions, Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina, hosted the meeting of Key Institutions directors in September and absorbed a significant part of the costs.

### 5.2 Human resources

Trond Waage, who served as Research Coordinator from 1993, left Childwatch in April 1996 to take up the position as Commissioner for Children in Norway. Marie Louise Bistrup was appointed as new Research Coordinator and started her work for Childwatch in August 1996. With her background from international collaboration within urban planning and public health, she brings a new dimension to the expertise of the Secretariat and represents an entry point to areas in which Childwatch was previously not well connected or represented.

### 5.3 Office space and infrastructural support

Childwatch continues to have offices at the Blindern Campus of the University of Oslo, as part of the agreement of collaboration between Childwatch and the University. Through this agreement, the University of Oslo provides substantial infrastructural support to Childwatch.

## 6. Collaboration with other organisations

Childwatch continues to collaborate with UNESCO, UNICEF, the Government of Norway, Redd Barna, Rädde Barnen, CRIN and others. Several of these organisations were also involved in establishing Children's House in Cyberspace, together with some of the Key Institutions.

Childwatch was invited with a group of other relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to participate in discussions of follow up of the recommendations of the report from the United Nations Study on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children (the Graça Machel study). Childwatch has continued collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child concerning the Committee's information and research needs.

## 7. Future development

Based on the conclusions and recommendations from the Key Institutions meeting, Childwatch intends to consolidate and increase the network, inter alia through continued information-sharing activities and through identifying projects that cover areas of common concern to the participating institutions, such as research related to

children's rights, capacity building and outreach to policy-making and programming agencies.

## ANNEX 1

### CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL Key Institutions and directors

Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Australia

Director: Harry McGurk

Canadian Institute of Child Health, Ottawa, Canada

Executive Director: Denise Avard

Center for Children and Youth, JDC-Brookdale Institute, Jerusalem, Israel

Director: Jack Habib

Center for Independent Ecological Programs, Socio-Ecological Union, Moscow, Russian Federation

Director: Maria Chercasova

Centre for Child Development, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong

Director: Lau Sing

Centre for Family Research, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Director: Martin Richards

Center for Research on Childhood, Universidade Santa Ursula, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Director: Irene Rizzini

Centre for the Study of the Child & Society, University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK

Director: Stewart Asquith

Centre International de l'Enfance et de la Famille, Paris, France

Director: Olivier Brasseur

Centro de Estudios del Menor, Madrid, Spain

Centro de Investigaciones para la Infancia y la Familia (CENDIF), Universidad Metropolitana, Caracas, Venezuela

Director: Maria Angelica Sepulveda

Child Development Centre of China (CDCC), Beijing, People's Republic of China

Director: Niu Xiaomei

Childhood Programme, European Centre, Vienna, Austria

Children's Issues Centre, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand



Director: Anne B. Smith

Children's Rights Centre  
University of Gent, Gent, Belgium  
Director: Eugeen Verhellen

Consortium on Children, Families & the Law, Institute for Families in Society,  
University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA  
Director: Gary Melton

Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, Haydenville, MA,  
USA  
Director: Judith Evans

Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA),  
Dakar, Senegal  
Executive Secretary: Achille Mbembe

Department of Child Ecology, The National Children's Medical Research Center,  
Tokyo, Japan  
Director: Masako Tanimura

Department of Educational Psychology, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya  
President: Frederick Moses Okatcha

Family Life Development Center, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY, USA  
James Garbarino

Fundación Paniamor, San José, Costa Rica  
Director: Milena Grillo

Institute for Child and Family Development, University of the Western Cape,  
Bellville, South Africa  
Director: Fanie Sonn

Instituto Interamericano del Niño, Montevideo, Uruguay  
Director: Rodrigo Quintana Meléndez

National Institute for Child & Family Development, Mahidol University, Bangkok,  
Thailand  
Director: Nittaya D. Kotchabhakdi

Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Trondheim, Norway  
Director: Per Egil Mjaavatn

Programme on International Rights of the Child, Faculty of Law, Queen Mary and  
Westfield College, University of London, London, UK  
Director: Geraldine Van Bueren

UNICEF - International Child Development Centre, Florence, Italy  
Director: Paolo Basurto

Unit for Child and Youth Research, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India  
Chief: Usha Nayar

## Annex 2

### CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL Advisory Board 1996-1998

- Gary Melton, President  
Director, Consortium on Children, Families & the Law, Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina, USA
- Irene Rizzini, Vice President  
Director, Center for Research on Childhood, Universidade Santa Ursula, Brazil
- Per Egil Mjaavatn, Vice President  
Director, Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norway
- Jack Habib  
Director, JDC-Brookdale Institute Center for Children and Youth, Israel
- Nittaya J. Kotchabhakdi  
Director, National Institute for Child & Family Development, Mahidol University, Thailand
- Harry McGurk  
Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australia
- Rodrigo Quintana Meléndez  
Director, Instituto Interamericano del Niño, Uruguay
- Fanie Sonn  
Director, Institute for Child and Family Development, University of the Western Cape, South Africa
- Sharon Stephens  
Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Social Work, University of Michigan, USA
- Ferran Casas  
Professor, Departament de Psicologia, Universitat Girona, Facultat Ciències Educatives, Girona, Spain