

CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

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1. Introduction

In 1998 the collaboration in the Childwatch International Research Network was strengthened by the initiation of new of research projects, involving a number of Key Institutions and individual researchers. Childwatch Key Institutions and the Secretariat were involved in the planning and running of several conferences and seminars. This is a reflection of an interest in using and applying research results on the rights of and the living conditions of children, and confirms the need for international cooperation and networking on advancing research results to political settings.

The Advisory Board met to review the progress of the network activities. The guidelines for global research initiatives developed by the Advisory Board have proved useful for the research projects and created synergies between the competencies of institutions in the network and address issues of global nature relating to children and their living conditions.

2. Working with the Key Institutions

The core of the Childwatch network consists of 32 institutions or organizations world-wide representing child research (see Annex 1 for a complete list). The Key Institutions are central actors within child research and represent major forces in their countries, regions or thematic networks. An important task of the Advisory Board and the Secretariat has been to work with the Key Institutions in developing ways to serve their information needs and to define research areas of common interests. Bringing together the experience and various areas of expertise of the Key Institutions is an effective way of facilitating inspiration and promoting cooperation. Childwatch International is seen and used as a vehicle for further international collaboration.

The Key Institutions are conducting research at different levels, different topics, with various methods and a variety of target groups. Characteristic for all Key Institutions though is the inspiration from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and interest in participating in discussions and research on global issues with an impact on children. Such collaboration within the Childwatch network enhances the individual institutions' own capacity and research agenda in the process and gives opportunities to play leading roles in the development of child research.

2.1. New Key Institutions

In 1998 two new child research centers joined the network of Key Institutions:

Children's Environmental Research Group, CERG, the City University of New York.

Children's Environmental Research Group has for the last 20 years conducted research on children's and their environments. Co-director Roger Hart is known for his research and expertise in children's participation nationally as well as internationally.

Child Research Net, Japan, is a network of Japanese child researchers with an interest in testing the opportunities of conducting research on the Internet, and in research on children and multimedia environments. Dr. Noboru Kobayashi, one of the founders, founded the Center also of Childwatch International Research Network.

The **Centre International de l'Enfance et de la Famille**, Paris, France, was closed. The **Norwegian Centre for Child Research**, Trondheim, Norway, started a process of structural change.

2.2. Key Institution Profiles

The Key Institution profiles were updated in September 1998. The update gives the Key Institutions an opportunity to review and renew information that they want to present to each other and externally. The Key Institution profile is a brief information page that gives a quick overview and describes the main fields of research, the professional disciplines and staff and the network of each Childwatch Key Institution.

The Key Institution profile meet the demands for information about the research institutions, and is an important promotional tool in the network for Childwatch International. The institution profiles are available in hard copy and can also be accessed on the internet at: childhouse.uio.no/childwatch/profiles/.

Whenever possible a profile is linked to the homepage of the key institution and its relevant Internet information.

3. Advisory Board

On 11—13 October 1998 the Advisory Board of Childwatch International met at the Institute for Child and Family Development at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. Harry McGurk, Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and Sharon Stephens, Professor of Anthropology and social Work, University of Michigan, both members of the Advisory Board, passed away in 1998. The Advisory Board commemorated the two colleagues and observed one minute of silence in their honor.

The Board reviewed modes of collaboration in the network and the Board initiated two more research projects. The project proposals are expected to be developed in 1999. Then the Key Institutions will be invited to participate in the research project.

The first new project is the Role of media and information technology on children's socialization. The project proposal is being prepared by Professor Ferran Casas, Research Group on Childhood and Quality of Life, Institut de Recerca sobre Qualitat de Vida, Universitat de Girona, Spain, and Dr. Noboru Kobayashi, Child Research Net, Tokyo, Japan.

The second new project is an analysis of the Reporting on the Rights of the Child to health and to a safe environment. The project proposal is being developed by Executive Director, Dawn Walker, The Canadian Institute for Child Health, Dr. Philip Cook, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria, Canada, and Dr. Malgosia Fitzmaurice, The International Programme on the Rights of the Child, London, UK.

Please see Annex 2 for details about the Advisory Board.

3.1. Criteria for becoming a Key Institution

In order to strengthen the collaboration in the network, between the Advisory Board and the Key Institutions the criteria and mechanisms for getting into and out of the network were clarified:

Each Key Institution should be willing to promote the objectives and goals of the network. The network should be international, regional interregional, and national as well. The Key Institutions should have a significant involvement in child research, should be interested in and willing to collaborate with other Key Institutions, and should have the capacity to take lead in regional networking and to build relations nationally and/or regionally. The Key institutions should be research institutions, not individuals, in order to ensure the maximum continuity and institutional commitment.

Based on these considerations the Advisory Board decided to reestablish the network at two levels: one network of institutions with substantial focus on child research and with a capacity or potential to play a role in regional networking and in collaborating on projects. The other level is a network or set of affiliated institutions, NGO's and other interested parties (including individuals).

3.2. Research Projects

Childwatch projects should be based on the comparative advantage of networking and on the common interests in research efforts with a global scope. The following projects are by 1998 initiated by the Advisory Board:

- (I) The significance of political and economic transformation on the lives of Children;
- (ii) The application of child research in international organizations;
- (iii) The impact of research on child policy and child welfare;
- (iv) Role of media and information technology on children's socialization.
- (v) The reporting on the Rights of the Child to health and a safe environment.

3.3. Communication and collaboration

E-mail is used extensively in the network and more and more Key Institutions develop homepages and place material on the Internet. Other more personal and direct ways of connecting and communicating that e-mail does not provide were discussed: Satellite video-conferencing, regular discussions with Key Institution directors, periodic telephone interviews, and establishing partnerships between institutions.

3.4. Partnerships

The Advisory Board suggested that an important way of strengthening the linkages and building institutional support and agenda setting could be to establish links between two or more Key Institutions, like siblings or sister institutions. These partnerships will strengthen capacity building and knowledge transfer in child research. It is not just a matter of pairing institutions, but in developing structures that will result in products, for example in a research paper, a workshop or training sessions.. Joint research proposals would be a natural expectations of pairing.

4. Children's House in Cyberspace

Children's House in Cyberspace was launched in 1996 in order to use the opportunities for effective information exchange represented by the Internet. 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.

Children's House is managed by a House Committee, that prepares and decides on the number of entry points or themes in the House. The main entry points are called floors in line with the house metaphor. Members of the House Committee are representatives from Childwatch Key Institutions and partner organizations. Each organization is the responsible moderator for a specific theme. In 1998 The European Forum for Child Welfare, Brussels, became moderator for the Conference floor.

5. Activities

5.1. The significance of political and economic transformations in the lives of children

Childwatch President Gary Melton, Vice president Irene Rizzini and Sharon Stephens met in January 1998 and developed the main principles and concepts for the project The significance of political and economic transformations in the lives of children. The project proposal was discussed at the International Child Research 2000 seminar in Cape Town in October 1998, and further development of the project was discussed at the workshop in Kiawah, South Carolina, December 1998.

5.2. Environment and Child Health

Together with the Ecological Council, Denmark, Childwatch International Research Network organized and hosted a meeting in March discussing the special vulnerability of children and the emerging research proving children to be more susceptible to environment effects than previously thought. The meeting was supported by the European Environment Agency, the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, and the Children's Council, Denmark.

5.3. Workshop: Will children speak and who will listen?

With Ann Smith, Director Children's Issues Centre, Dunedin, New Zealand, as the main presenter, Childwatch organized and hosted a workshop in June at the University of Oslo among researchers interested in research on children's participation. The workshop **Will children speak and who will listen** was attended by 20 researchers and discussions were based on Ann Smith's paper: **Incorporating Children's Voice in Research.**

5.4. International Conference on Children's Environment and Health

Childwatch co-sponsored the International Conference on Children Environment and Health, Amsterdam 11—13 August, organized by the Dutch Association of Environmental Medicine.

At a special workshop a group of interested people and organizations were discussing the interest in creating a network to follow up on themes discussed at the conference. The result was consent at launching the International network on Children's Environment, Health and Safety, INCHEs. The workshop was supported by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, The European Environment Agency and the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe.

5.5. Collaboration among child researchers in South Africa: Child Research 2000

The Advisory Board participated in the seminar Child Research 2000 at the Center for Child and Family Development at the University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa. The seminar was an initial meeting among child researchers in Cape Town to start a process to establish a South African network of child researchers. 1416 October 1998

The seminar was Co-hosted by:

The Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western Cape,
The Board of Childwatch International Research Network,
The Office of the Deputy President; National Programme of Action for Children, and
The Department of Welfare.

The seminar discussed the nature and impact of rapid political and economic changes in the everyday lives of children and how researchers can support the process towards meeting the obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The seminar provided an opportunity for South African representatives from government and non-governmental organizations, as well as researchers, practitioners and professionals working in areas, that impact on the lives of children, to identify gaps based on the South African country Report to the United Nations Children's Rights Committee. The seminar was useful in developing a child research alliance in South Africa, a multi-disciplinary, intersectoral research agenda, and for creating new and enhance existing research partnerships.

Childwatch presented scope and purpose and status of the project The significance of political and economic transformation on the lives of Children. Presentations by child researchers from Brazil, South Africa, The Palestine and the Russian Federation shed a light on some main effects on the lives of children of rapid political and economic changes.

5.6. Monitoring children's rights

The project on indicators for children's rights was started in 1994 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. The project has taken place as a series of country case studies, with local research teams, and conducted in collaboration with a large number of partners from government, inter-governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia. through a series of country case studies. The project was brought to an end in 1998, and is expected to result in a series of reports and training material. Some is it is already available on the Internet.

The project continues to draw attention and to create new opportunities for collaboration with academic institutions and relevant organizations. In Nicaragua, Senegal, Thailand and Vietnam the experiences from the project have been used as the basis for establishing national monitoring mechanisms.

The African Context of Children's Rights Seminar took place in Harare, Zimbabwe, 12-14 January 1998. The seminar was result of collaboration between four agencies with interests in children's rights. The seminar was hosted and funded by Redd Barna-Zimbabwe and organized by ANPPCAN, Zimbabwe, Childwatch International and CODESRIA. The seminar put on the agenda the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare on the Child and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and was stimulating multidisciplinary debate and research on children's rights in African Contexts.

5.7. 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 growing up in Cities project aims at involving children and young people and governments in evaluating and improving local environments. Multiple methods and specific themes will be applied and explored in the process of carrying out the project. The project will 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 Fullbright 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 eight countries:

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

The research manual will be updated and edited according to the findings and experiences. It will become a guide in documenting how the project's findings are assimilated into local, regional and planning initiatives and. After the up dating it will be published, and an analyses of the site experiences will be produced. Updated program information is available on the Web at: <http://www.unesco.org/most>

The project is supported by the Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Childwatch International, the Management of Social Transformations, MOST, programme of UNESCO, and by UNICEF, in addition to the local support and funding of sites.

6. Organizational matters

6.1. Funding and support

Funding for the Secretariat and its activities came from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Norwegian Research Council.

6.2. Human resources

In September Jan Olav Baarøy joined Childwatch to assist with administrative and research tasks. Jan Olav is a graduate student of anthropology and is engaged in a project on children rights and responsibilities in Uganda. Several assistants are employed by Childwatch on part-time basis to assist in specific tasks, particularly related to our information activities.

6.3. 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.

7. Collaboration

Childwatch continues to collaborate with UNESCO, UNICEF, WHO, Redd Barna, Rädda Barnen, CRIN and others. Several of these organizations are also engaged in maintaining Children's House in Cyberspace, together with some of the Key Institutions.

Childwatch International was invited to participate Child Research Nets, CRN, International Symposium "Augmented Childhood" Evolution of Child Development in the Multimedia Environment, Tokyo 2224 January 1998. Childwatch Director Per Miljeteig spoke about the organization and advantages of the Childwatch International Reassert Network, and Research Coordinator Marie Louise Bistrup presented the international and historic qualities of the Growing up in Cities project and the advantages of electronic communication when conducting the research at 8 different sites around the globe. The Symposium featured distinguished international and Japanese researchers, and created new links and opportunities for sharing perspectives and new research agendas. As a follow up to the symposium Childwatch and CRN have established collaboration on a new research project: The Role of media in Children's Socialization.

Every third year the Key Institutions in the Childwatch International Research Network meet at the so-called Key Institution meeting. Anne B. Smith, Director Children's Issues Centre in New Zealand, had offered to host the Key Institution in June 1999. The meeting will take place just prior to the Conference on Children's Rights, National and International Perspectives, to be held at the Children's Issues Centre, 7-9 July 1999.

The Key Institution meeting will use the opportunity to establish better network contacts in Asia and the Pacific. A special session will focus on how to make links between research and policy, the participants at the meeting will review current research projects and identify partners for new research projects and for the new pairing strategy. The new Childwatch Advisory Board, to be elected in Spring 1999, will meet in Dunedin, New Zealand, and prior to the Key Institution Meeting.

ANNEX 1

CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL Key Institutions and directors

Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Australia
Director: Harry McGurk (Deceased)

Canadian Institute of Child Health, Ottawa, Canada
Executive Director: Dawn Walker

Caribbean Center for Child Development
Acting Head: Sian Williams. Director: Janet Brown (on leave until August 1998)

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 Cherkasova

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: Turid Midjo

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**
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 (Deceased)**
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 (Deceased)**
Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Social Work, University of Michigan, USA
- **Ferran Casas**
Professor, Departament de Psicologia, Universitat Girona, Facultat Ciències Educació, Girona, Spain