

Childwatch International Research Network

Status 2006

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Strategy 2007 - 2009

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Introduction

Childwatch International Research Network (Childwatch International) was founded as a response from the research community to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention is the basis for the Network's common agenda.

From the first initiatives taken in 1993, Childwatch International is now a well established global network of research institutions with a strong focus on inter-disciplinary child research. The Key Institutions collaborate to strengthen child research and promote the use of research based knowledge in development of policy and practice, for the purpose of improving children's well-being around the world.

Based on the core funding provided by Norad, the network has been able to support networking and capacity building between 45 child research institutions, from all regions of the world.

In this document we are presenting a short update on the status of Childwatch International in 2006 and a strategy for the next three years.

(For information in more detail please see: www.childwatch.uio.no)

Status 2006

Childhoods 2005

The large international research conference "Childhoods 2005 Oslo: Children in Emerging and Transforming Societies" was a major event for the network in 2005. The conference gathered over 1000 researchers and practitioners in thematic sessions and plenary presentations over a period of five days in Oslo. Childwatch International was co-organizer of this big event. The conference was organized by University of Oslo, Childwatch International, Norwegian Social Research (NOVA), and The Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB). The network was responsible for organizing thematic sessions, presentations of papers and network meetings during the conference. Through the contributions from Childwatch International, administratively and financially, the conference had a wide presentation of child researchers from developing countries.

Regional Networks

In order to facilitate dialogue and mutual capacity building between the member institutions of the network, Childwatch International has supported establishment of regional networks. Through this effort well functioning regional networks currently operate in the following regions:

- Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Asia and Pacific.
- Middle East and North Africa

- Latin America and the Caribbean
- East and Central Europe.

Study Groups

Across the regions, researchers have collaborated on conducting child research in a number of different areas. All the study groups organised paper presentations and discussions during Childhoods 2005 and have published or are in the process of publishing papers in books and journals.

- Media and Technology: Adolescents and Modern Media
- Children and Youth Growing up in Contexts of Poverty, Marginalization and Violence
- Indicators on Children's Well-Being.
- Children's Perspectives on Citizenship and Nation-building.
- Religion and Spirituality of Children in Emerging and Transforming Societies.
- Growing up in an Era of AIDS.
- Caring for Separated Children.
- Children and Trafficking.
- Bridging the Gap between Theory, Policy and Practice.

Consultancies/Partnership

In order to further build the research and institutional capacity of the Key Institutions, the network provides an opportunity for senior researchers to act as consultants for members of the network. Through this arrangement and by establishing partnerships between institutions with a more long-term interest in close collaboration, Childwatch International has been instrumental in development of centres as well as in building research capacity among young researchers.

Forum for Child Rights and Research

In order to promote collaboration between researchers, policy makers and NGOs¹ in Norway, the Secretariat initiated, in collaboration with Norad and The Research Council of Norway, the establishment of this Forum. Several meetings were organised in 2005/2006. The number of people interested in participating in the activities is now more than 150 people. A steering committee has been established and a web site is providing information about the activities. Childwatch International has the secretarial responsibilities.

The Organisation

In general, Childwatch International has managed to develop close and good cooperation between staff of the 45 Key Institutions in the network. The core funding provided by Norad offers a financial basis for the network. However, the activities depend on contributions from the Key Institutions and other sources. The Key Institutions adds substantially to the work through providing additional funding for specific workshops,

¹ Non-Governmental Organisations

meeting facilities and covering salaries for their staff for organising and participating in Regional networks and Study Groups, Board meetings etc.

Increasingly the Key Institutions are including other members of the network in research projects with a comparative approach. In these joint projects, research capacity has been further developed.

Childwatch International has gone through a total revision of statutes and other basic documents for the network. The new organisational platform was discussed and approved by the Key Institutions Assembly in June 2005.

The Key Institutions Assembly elected a new board for the period 2005 – 2008. The members of the Board represent Key Institutions in China, Colombia, India, Ireland, Jamaica, Norway, Palestine, South Africa and the USA. The new Board appointed Dr. Irene Rizzini of the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood at the Pontificia Universidade Catolica do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil as President for a second three-year period.

In addition to the Childwatch Website, a newsletter with a wide international circulation provides relevant information to the Key Institutions as well as to a number of other interested people and institutions.

Strategy 2007 – 2009

Introduction

On the next pages we are presenting our four objectives and the related activities. We are then presenting the instruments we are using in our day to day efforts to reach our objectives. Through implementing the activities with the help of these instruments we are trying to reach our main aims, which are to:

- *Identify and investigate major questions of global significance in the lives of children.*
- *Strengthen the Child Research Capacity in Developing Countries.*

Objective 1: Strengthened Interdisciplinary Child Research Capacity

One of the four objectives for the work this period will be to further strengthen capacity in child research. Efforts to improve conceptualisation, methodology, dissemination, training, and management are crucial in order to achieve this objective.

We will support network activities that facilitate exchange of ideas, experiences and practices between researchers with different resources and professional and cultural backgrounds.

Quality child research and relevant policy development have to speak to the realities of local contexts. Consequently, a strategy for capacity building will be based on efforts to develop models of research that respects diversity, are culturally relevant and scientifically competent.

Through providing financial and administrative support to regional networks and study groups, Childwatch will:

- Help to identify and promote a research agenda on critical issues of global significance in children's lives
- Support documentation about the situation of children and demonstrate the importance of child research
- Promote child research in disciplines where a child perspective is weak or lacking
- Facilitate sharing of information related to research development and monitoring of indicators
- Assist the development and strengthening of regional and national child research centres, study groups and networks
- Organise workshops where experts on selected themes are brought together to analyse existing knowledge for action, and/or define new areas for urgent development
- Support initiatives for exchange of data and joint research

- Encourage collaborative projects among Key Institutions
- Establish and support partnerships between Key Institutions
- Organise training for staff of Key Institutions and participants in study groups and regional networks
- Organise and support consultancies where participants in the network can draw on experiences from other members of the network
- Facilitate exchange programmes for scholars and students within the network

Objective 2: Child Research Relevant for Implementation of Child Rights

Implementation of child rights as stated in the UN Convention on the rights of the child and other human rights instruments is dependent on professionally solid child research. Policy makers, service providers and those implementing programmes for children need access to information about and analysis of children's lives and well being.

In collaboration with governments, non-government agencies and international agencies we will contribute to generating, exchanging and applying research based knowledge about children.

Childwatch will:

- Organise consultancies, conferences, seminars, workshops and training that facilitate dialogue between representatives from research, policy and practice professions
- Promote interdisciplinary child research
- Document and disseminate good practices based on child research
- Coordinate international research projects on children
- Initiate and support events where child research is on the agenda
- Disseminate information through publications, the Internet and other channels.

In Norway, Childwatch International will:

- Provide efficient secretarial support to the Forum for Child Rights and Research.
- Further develop and maintain the Forum's homepage as a portal for accessing relevant information on child research and child rights related initiatives.
- Promote cooperation between Norwegian child rights efforts internationally and Childwatch International Key Institutions
- Establish productive collaboration between Childwatch and other Norwegian research networks relevant for development and child research (Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP), Norwegian Association for Development Research, AidsNet, etc.)

Objective 3: More resources allocated for Child Research

Childwatch advocates that more resources be devoted to child research, particularly in developing countries. We will actively promote increased funding on the agendas of relevant local, national and international bodies.

In order to secure improved resources for child research especially in countries and regions where little exists, Childwatch International will:

- Support the Key Institutions in their efforts to raise the demand for child research in their countries and regions
- Support the coordination of the regional and international development activities of existing associations and institutions involved in child research
- Document the potential and importance of improved child research capacity both nationally, regionally and internationally
- Support efforts to secure funding for collaborative research of global significance to impact policies for children.

Objective 4: A membership culture and structure supporting the overall objectives

Childwatch International is a network of research institutions governed by a culture of reciprocity and interest in learning from differences. Exchange of ideas and resources rooted in true respect for the strengths and competence of each institution is the basis for our work.

In this strategy period Childwatch International will seek to expand the membership base in the following regions: Latin America and Caribbean, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa.

Child research institutions in these regions will be encouraged to apply for membership, especially those that can play an active role in promoting child research in their own countries and regions.

In Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand additional Key Institutions will be considered given that the relevant institutions have top international expertise in research areas prioritised by Childwatch International. They should also represent access to resources of crucial importance for realising the objectives of Childwatch International. (People, networks, research agenda, publications etc.)

Key institutions in this part of the world are only of interest if they have a research policy and programme that includes work with and capacity building of institutions and researchers in the South.

Implementation of the 2007 – 2009 Strategy

The instruments:

The implementation of this strategy is dependent on a set of different instruments. Our membership; the Key Institutions are our base. Our budget provides the opportunity for financial and administrative support to regional networks, thematic study groups, consultancies, partnerships and other activities. Our organisational structure provides guidance and direction. The Secretariat is the administrative hub.

Membership

The most important instrument we have for reaching the objectives is our membership. The Key Institutions are actively engaged in collaboration that adds value to the network and to the work of other Key Institutions through mutual capacity building, research collaboration and further strengthening of the network.

Through the Study Groups and the Regional Networks, the Key Institutions are:

- Playing an active role in Childwatch International; in the relevant regional network and contributing to the work taking place in study groups and research activities prioritised by the network.
- Facilitating staff in initiating and participating in international workshops and study groups on child research with the aim of contributing to a global body of child research relevant for implementation of the Convention of the right of the child.
- Involved in collaborative international research project on children's rights and actively seeking to engage other Key Institutions in such projects.
- Keeping the network informed about their research activities and making child research available to the rest of the Childwatch network.
- Sharing experience on the building of academic institutions that merge theory, research, policy and advocacy to improve children's lives.
- Forging partnerships of advanced scholars with young scholars on the design of research and on methodologies related to key areas of research for the improvement of the quality of children's lives.
- Promoting exchange of young scholars who are in the early stages of developing research programmes on children's rights, development and well-being.
- Expected to act as door-openers with funding agencies and in other ways contribute to expanding the funding base of Childwatch International.

Regional Networks

In the last strategy period Regional Networks have been established and supported by Childwatch. Currently we have well functioning networks in the following regions:

- **Sub-Saharan Africa:** 2007: A colloquium on Child Research in Sub Saharan Africa will be organised in November 2006. The colloquium will take place in Dakar, Senegal, and will focus on issues concerning research funding, research programs and research needs in light of the realization of children's rights in Sub-Saharan Africa. A plan for how Childwatch and the Key Institutions in the region can contribute to capacity building in the region will be developed and prioritised.
- **Asia Pacific.** The main focus is: The Socio-Cultural Contexts of Child Participation. 2007: The initiated collaboration on Child Participation will continue. Country specific studies have been conducted and results will be published.
- **Middle East and North Africa (MENA):** 2007: An assessment of the child research challenges in the region will be carried out. Continued cooperation with NUFU funding between Child Research Unit at Al Quds University in Palestine and Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) in Oslo, Norway. This cooperation was initiated as a Childwatch International Partnership Programme.
- **Latin America and the Caribbean:** The main focus is: Children growing up in the context of poverty and marginalization. 2007: A pilot programme on training for junior staff of the Key Institutions will be implemented by the Latin America network. The network will continue its efforts to bring child research closer to policy makers and practitioners. With a focus on the Caribbean in 2007 and Central America in 2008.
- **East and Central Europe.** 2007: Based on the collaboration on child indicators, a plan for how to further build the network will be developed in a network meeting late 2006.

Through continued financial support to regional networks the Key Institutions will have the opportunity to raise and address child research issues of specific importance for that particular region.

The regional context offers a good and relevant platform for development of capacity building and establishing links to regional institutions with influence on the child rights policies. The regional networks represent cost effective opportunities for involving more staff of Key Institutions in international networking.

Thematic Study Groups

Childwatch has unique potential to harness the collective capacity of international child researchers to identify and investigate major questions of global significance in the lives of children. Through establishment of and support to thematic study groups Childwatch International has the opportunity to link local, regional and national research efforts. The

results of the work in these groups has the potential to improve the international research based knowledge, practice and policy on children's issues.

The Board will continually assess relevant global trends in order to initiate study groups on the most crucial issues. In 2006 Study Groups on the following issues are provided with financial support:

- Children's Perspectives on Citizenship and Nation-building.
- Monitoring and evaluating young people's participation.
- Rural Childhood
- Caring for Separated Children.
- Children and Trafficking.
- Children and Law.
- Bridging the Gap between Theory, Policy and Practice.

An initiative to establish a group on Children and Migration has been taken based on research already being done in existing groups.

Consultancies and Partnerships

Contracting senior researchers to provide capacity building for Key Institutions and their staff has been a successful instrument in building organisational and research capacity. Recently the Key Institution in China benefited from a short consultancy where their research programme was developed with input from a senior researcher from the Network. This is an arrangement where Childwatch normally just covers travel costs for the consultant.

Partnerships between two/three institutions that see a mutual benefit in entering in to a more long-term agreement have proved to be a good framework for joint capacity building, and result in joint projects as well as attracting the interest from more institutions in the same region.

Communication

For a global network a well functioning system for communication is of great importance. So far we have developed a website with links to all our Key Institutions, information about our organization and activities. There are also links to relevant events, other organisations and resources available on other websites.

In the next strategy period Childwatch International will:

- Further develop our website to become an important portal for people seeking information about child research issues and relevant resources.
- Establish collaboration with Child Rights Information Network in order to make child research materials more easily accessible through already existing websites and search engines.

Attachment 1 Organisational Structure

The Key Institutions Assembly

The Key Institutions Assembly is composed of representatives from member institutions; it meets every third year. The next Assembly will be organised in 2008.

It is the responsibility of the Key Institutions Assembly to:

- Elect the Childwatch International Board
- Approve general policies and strategies
- Approve changes in statutes and by-laws
- Review and provide guidance on the work of the Board and the Secretariat

In conjunction with the Key Institutions Assembly a conference will be organised. This will serve as a forum for groups supported by Childwatch to report on their findings and results to a wider audience. The conference will include participation from NGOs, INGOs, UN organizations and other interested parties. It will create a forum for discussing child rights and collaboration between the network and external organisations.

The Board

The Childwatch Board of ten members oversees the implementation of policies and strategic direction between General Assembly meetings. The Board meets once every year.

The role of the Board is to:

- Elect a President and two Vice-Presidents among its members.
- Identify suitable programmes and projects which shall be given priority
- Approve and monitor the implementation of annual plans and budgets
- Regularly review and revise current programmes and activities
- Give advice on the staffing of the Secretariat.
- Be responsible for convening and developing the agenda for the General Assembly
- Advocate for and promote Childwatch policies and strategies
- Promote and encourage collaboration within the Child Research community and between this community and relevant decision-makers
- Develop relations with third parties, such as international NGOs and the UN system

It is expected that the members of the Board seek to mobilize additional resources for the effective functioning of the network

The Business Committee

The Business Committee serves as a forum for discussions and decisions regarding administration and management of finances and staff. It is comprised of the Executive Committee (the President and the two Vice Presidents) and a representative appointed by the host institution, currently the University of Oslo.

The Business Committee shall ensure that the administration and management of finances and personnel are in compliance with rules and regulations set by funding agencies and the host institution.

The Secretariat

Childwatch has a Secretariat staffed by a Director and a Coordinator, hosted by the University of Oslo. The Director reports to the Childwatch Board.

The Secretariat will:

- Develop and implement an annual work plan in accordance with the strategic priorities and within available resources.
- Facilitate dialogue among member institutions
- Promote and encourage collaboration between members and initiate collaborative projects
- Disseminate information about current developments and opportunities in child research to members of the network
 - A newsletter will be sent to the network and external contacts four times per year.
- Develop the Childwatch International Website to provide easier access to relevant information and to collaborate with Child Rights Information Network to provide good access to child research through Internet.
- Promote awareness regarding child research and its application to promotion of child rights to decision makers and society at large
- Develop relations with relevant public authorities and other agencies
- Actively raise funds for Childwatch initiated activities
- Provide funding agencies with the required reports and other information.