

# Childwatch

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH NETWORK

### WORKPLAN 2008

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# THEMATIC GROUPS

## **Bridging Research, Policy and Practice**

This thematic group works to improve and understand communication between different stake-holders in the work to improve the lives of children. Bridging research, policy and practice is an overarching theme for the Childwatch International network as a whole.

This project was initiated with the working seminar on Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice in Beijing in April 2007 which engaged Childwatch International Board members and participants in the Asia/Pacific Regional Network of Childwatch International. The 2008 activities include:

1. **Planning for Bridging Research, Policy, and Practice Panel at the Childwatch 2008 Key Institution Meeting.** Building on the engagement of the regional networks, the group plans to develop a Bridging Research, Policy and Practice panel at the Childwatch Key Institution meeting in 2008. A broader group of Childwatch International members including those from centres in the developing world.
  
2. **Prospective Study on the Impact of Actionable Research.** This research study will use current child policy research projects from Childwatch International Key Institutions and others to systematically explore the theoretical models put forth in the working group's collaborative publication, "Research for Action: Cross-National Perspectives on Connecting Knowledge, Policy, and Practice for Children" (Eds. Chaskin, R.J. and Rosenfeld, J.M., 2008, Oxford University Press). Exploring the processes of research development and utilization in their various contexts (geographical, political, social) will draw out the mechanisms of stakeholder engagement and dissemination of knowledge that most effectively impact the lives of children.

The aim is to develop prospective research with Childwatch Key Institutions to inform efforts on how to more effectively link research, policy, and practice, potentially including the development of a research protocol and plan for further comparative, cross-national case-study research.

3. Investigate other issues that a Childwatch thematic network might pursue, e.g.:
  - i. How to effectively evaluate the impact of research and dissemination efforts on policy and practice
  - ii. Explore lessons learned from both successful and failed dissemination efforts

4. Develop dissemination strategies and an infrastructure to make research findings and activities available to a broad range of people inside and beyond the Childwatch Network, e.g.:

- b. Develop working papers, journal articles, and other products from work of the thematic network to reach a number of audiences
- c. Explore the possibility of developing a web-based tool to promote, collect, track, and disseminate findings from a broad range of dissemination evaluations and studies to be collected from Childwatch Key Institutions and other organizations

5. Planning 2: Bridging Research Policy and Practice Conference in 2009:

The group will begin early planning for a larger conference in 2009 intended to engage a much wider constituency of Childwatch members and others.

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## **Child-Friendly Cities and Communities Research Network**

The Child Friendly Cities Initiative (CFCI) was launched in 1996 to act on the resolution passed during the second UN Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) to make cities liveable places for all; in UNICEF terms, for "children first." CFCI advocates the adoption of governance approaches and participatory urban management that promote the realization of the rights of the youngest citizens. It is a powerful tool for identifying disparities and forms of discrimination, and addressing them in a systemic manner through the holistic implementation of full rights for all children.

The thematic group is planning national or regional workshops to establish partnerships between child friendly cities and communities and Childwatch International key institutions. In most instances it is expected that no existing partnership between 'child friendly cities' and research institutions will be found. This program will link these cities up with Key Institutions and, where these do not exist, with other research institute partners.

An interactive database and a web user interface will be designed using DevInfo database system developed for UN and UNICEF. Research organizations as well as communities who are doing work in the area of child friendly cities will be able to download information and assessment instruments from this site and upload information about their activities and self assessments. The database will be designed and maintained at Innocenti Research Centre UNICEF with technical assistance from Children's Environments Research Group at the Graduate Center at City University in New York (CERG).

The international research partners will be meeting during the year. The purpose of this meeting is to share and critique instruments and for planning the next phase of development and expansion of the research network

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## **Children and the Law**

The Childwatch Children and the Law project was initiated as a Thematic Group in 2006. In 2007 it set out a project to investigate how children's rights are respected in laws across different countries who are members of the Childwatch Network.

The thematic group on Children and the Law are planning the following activities and outcomes in 2008: 1) publicising the Children and the Law study group throughout the Childwatch International Research Network to enable all Key Institutions (not just those who completed the initial questionnaire) to express interest in being part of the study group; 2) liaising further with the Innocenti Research Centre and the Childwatch Secretariat to ascertain how best to co-operate in the development of research on topics of shared concern relating to children's legal status; 3) convening a meeting in May 2008 with study group representatives (especially those from the Majority World), Childwatch International and Innocenti Research Center to discuss areas of mutual interest and to plan a project which builds on the findings of our 2007 survey of Key Institutions and gives effect to furthering the partnership agreement between the Innocenti Research Center and Childwatch International. It is expected that the comparative project which is developed will comprise policy, research literature, and empirical components. Care will be taken to ensure the study group emphasises the participation of children and young people in the development and implementation of all stages of the research project; fairly reflects the diverse range of Key Institutions which have already expressed interest in such a study group; invites the input and participation of all other Key Institutions; and looks to build research capacity on this topic internationally.

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## **Children and Young People's Perspectives on Citizenship**

The Citizenship study group is carrying out a comparative research project on children's perspectives of citizenship and nation building, with research being carried out in [Australia](#), [Brazil](#), [New Zealand](#), [Norway](#), [Palestine](#), [South Africa](#) and [USA](#).

Members of the thematic group are organizing a Panel entitled "International Perspectives on Children's Understanding of Citizenship" at a forthcoming conference in Cyprus in May 2008. The First international conference organized by the International

Childhood and Youth Research Network (CYRN) entitled "Child and Youth Research in the 21st Century: A Critical Appraisal" is being held at the European University Cyprus, in Nicosia, Cyprus. The panel comprises 3 papers on aspects of the study group's project and forthcoming book.

Nicola Taylor (study group facilitator) will participate at a leading South Pacific conference in Melbourne in July 2008 where she will present a paper entitled "Children as Citizens? International Voices"- The 10<sup>th</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference is being held in Melbourne and Nicola has submitted an abstract for a presentation reporting on the study group's activities and forthcoming book. This will enable the study group's work, and Childwatch International, to be promoted to leading Australasian and Asian child / family researchers, policy makers and practitioners.

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## **International Society for Child Indicators (ISCI)**

ISCI is the outgrowth of the multi-national project for Measuring and Monitoring Children's Well- Being which Childwatch International participated in and supported from its beginning in 1996. Childwatch International supports the running activities of ISCI in 2008.

In 2008 ISCI plans to continue publishing 3-4 newsletters both in English and Spanish and to continue the operation of the web-site (also in both languages). Moreover, the new journal Child Indicators Research (CIR) will be launched as a full scale Springer publisher academic journal.

ISCI plans to hold a small seminar and a steering committee meeting in Europe in fall of 2008 to organize their second international conference to take place in November 2009 in Sydney, Australia.

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## **Rural Childhoods**

The thematic group on rural childhood was initiated in 2005. The focus of the group is on the specific challenges faced by children and young people in rural communities. The multi-year project allows cross-national comparisons of "rural childhoods" as they relate to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The thematic group on Rural Childhood is preparing Literature Reviews on ruralness and rural childhoods. The group is setting up a draft Research Protocol for a joint Study. A draft of the research instruments and protocols to be used in the research design will be presented in 2008. The research protocol will be made available to all Childwatch International key institute members who are interested in participating in the rural childhoods project, through websites and made known through email distributions.

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## **Social Exclusion or Inclusion of Vulnerable Youth in Societies in Transition**

The thematic group is a new initiative building on current research and knowledge of several Key Institutions of the Childwatch International network. The group is planning a seminar which will explore the thematic of how to avoid social exclusion of vulnerable youth in Eastern European countries.

This project will address (a) what initiatives, both public and NGO-based are actually taken towards including these groups, (b) what interventions seem helpful, (c) what are possible developments of new initiatives, and (d) how do the different countries succeed in engaging the youth themselves as partners?

An important part of the project will be to formulate initiatives that can be disseminated to public and NGO stakeholders in the participating countries, with the aim of establishing a wider network that can continue working on these issues in their respective countries and also collaborate between themselves.

Institutions that are members of the Childwatch International network in the region will be invited to participate, but also researchers and stake holders in countries that are not represented in the network will be approached and invited to participate.

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## **REGIONAL NETWORKS**

### **Africa**

To strengthen the commitment of the Childwatch International Research Network on the African continent, an initiative was taken for the Key Institution in Africa to join forces.

### **Regional Consultative Workshop on Children and Migration in Africa**

The workshop is an activity of the Children and Migration thematic study group of the African Regional Network of Child Watch International (CWI) which brings together researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to explore and identify gaps for future research and programming initiatives on the issue of children and migration in Africa

The consultative workshop will be hosted by the Children's Institute (University of Cape Town) and the Child and Youth Research and Training Programme (University of the Western Cape) over 2 days in Pretoria, South Africa. The purpose is to initiate/establish a thematic study group on "children and migration" that would facilitate discussions on critical issues children and migration in Africa, define the key knowledge gaps that the thematic group and other research and program initiatives should focus on, and propose recommendations for future research and program directions to improve policies and programs relating to the plight of children in the context of migration. The proposed workshop would involve a detailed review and analyses of the existing evidence of the impacts of migration on children in Africa as well as propose future research directions and program/policy recommendations. It is also expected to act as a platform to foster and enhance mutual support and partnerships among key CWI institutions and their partners in the African region.

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## **Asia and the Pacific**

Socio-cultural contexts of child participation in the Asia-Pacific region is the title of the collaborative project between Childwatch Key Institutions in Australia, China, India and Thailand. The group is collaborating in a comparative research project identifying commonalities and differences in the meaning and contexts of child participation in the countries involved in the study. In 2008 a book based on the work in the regional group will be published. Future work will be based on this publication.

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## **East and Central Europe**

The Childwatch International Monitoring children's well-being study group is partly a continuation of the former Childwatch project on identifying indicators to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

**Impact of Poverty and Social Exclusion on Children's Lives and their Well-Being: International Follow-up Workshop and Meeting of the Childwatch International Regional Network of Central and Eastern Countries (CEE).**

The 2008 workshop will focus on the impact of poverty and social exclusion on children's lives and their well-being, compared to the 2007 workshop which focused on children's experiences and their strategies for coping with poverty and social exclusion. The 2008 workshop will give special emphasis to health issues in this regard.

A meeting will follow with the Childwatch International Regional Network of Central and Eastern European countries to promote the 2007-2009 strategy by linking already existing regional networks (e.g. in the CEE region) as well as thematic groups or other Childwatch International initiatives related to the workshop topic (e.g. the child poverty workshop in Oslo 2007).

The objectives of the Follow-up Workshop are to discuss the theoretical approaches of child centered research concerning child poverty and social exclusion, along with its practice, policy relevance and their challenges. To identify main priority areas/ specific groups of children whose well-being is seriously at risk in different regions in particular of children living in the CEE region, the Southern part of Europe and the Middle East. To collect ideas for follow-up activities on the main topic in the respective regions.

The objectives of the meeting of the Regional Network of Central and Eastern European Countries are to discuss future activities within the CEE Region, but also linkages between the CEE-network and other regions as well as other already existing networks, study and thematic groups of the Childwatch International network. To discuss ideas how to contribute to the planned global conference to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UN CRC (scheduled for November 2009) and to encourage the participants to take actively part in the preparation and implementation of this event

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## **Latin America and the Caribbean**

The Latin American regional network is a continuation of the Partnership Programme between the Childwatch Key Institutions in Brazil, Colombia and Venezuela (2001 - 2004). The regional network is based on research cooperation within the framework of the study group Children Growing up in Circumstances of Poverty and Marginalization.

### **Consolidation of the Training Course for Young Researchers and the Childwatch International Latin American Conference.**

The aim with the consolidation of the training course is to strengthen the research capacity of Latin American Institutions belonging to the Childwatch International network and other institutions of the extended Childwatch International Latin American Network. To finish the pilot research course for Junior Researchers and adapt the materials and methodology for use in other Latin American contexts and English

speaking contexts. Identify and share the lessons learnt to encourage the interchange of knowledge and research practices among organisations.

The activities will include; keeping the networking in action to finish the formulation of the projects; review of the projects by CINDE tutors; on-line seminar; development of the project and attendance to the Childwatch International Latin America Network Conference to socialize the research projects.

### **CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL LATIN AMERICAN NETWORK CONFERENCE: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Participatory Research on Children and Youth Participation**

This will be another activity of the Latin American network, a continuation of the previous conferences that will be articulated with the final activities of the Training Course for Young Researchers. Great deal of emphasis will be placed on strategies for strengthening the network in the region and for doing cooperative research projects.

The general objective is to present findings from child and youth participation and participatory research done by the Childwatch International Key Institutions and others in Latin America and provide a forum for sharing experiences and promoting collaborative research in order to strengthen the Childwatch International network of researchers on children and youth in Latin America.

Specifically to disseminate findings of recent research on child and youth participation done by Childwatch International Key Institutions and others in the region in order to improve awareness and encourage further research and collaboration. To socialize the research projects formulated and implemented as an outcome of the Young Researchers course. Give more visibility to the Childwatch International Network and its activities in the region and facilitate identification of potential new Key Institutions in the region.

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### **Middle East and North Africa (MENA)**

The establishment of the Arab MENA Research Network for Children Under Difficult Circumstances was initiated by the researchers' belief to promote and strengthen research among the MENA Arab region and ensure the rights of children under difficult circumstances, such as children affected by violence, working children, refugee children, disabled children, children deprived of family care (street children and orphans), and juvenile delinquents. In 2008 a regional conference on the effect of war and armed conflict on children will be organised in October.

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## **Other Network Activities**

### **Child Poverty**

Childwatch International has joined forces with the Comparative Research Programme on Poverty (CROP) to initiate activities focusing on child poverty. A group of researchers representing the two networks, as well as researchers from the Young Lives project and the Unicef Innocenti Research Centre are contributing to the planning and implementing of this effort.

CROP and Childwatch International organized a workshop on child poverty at the University of Oslo in September 2007. The organizing committee is working on the editing and publishing of three volumes on child poverty based on papers from this workshop as well as invited papers to complement these. The initial suggested themes of these volumes are a) Poverty and children's activities, roles and responsibilities; b) methodological problems in child poverty research; c) Child poverty and policy.

The issue of child poverty and disparity will be a major issue at the planned conference celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. See details on conference below.

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### **Violence Against Children**

Childwatch International is participating in a global process to identify and develop indicators on violence against children. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) are coordinating this process as a first step to follow up Recommendation 11 of the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children from 2006. The study recommends that "States improve data collection and information systems in order to identify vulnerable subgroups, inform policy and programming at all levels, and track progress towards the goal of preventing violence against children. It also recommends that "States should [...] develop a national research agenda on violence against children across settings where violence occurs [...]" (UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children, 2006, chapter VI, part A, paragraph 11).

Several of the network's key institutions have staff that are highly competent on the issue of violence against children. Others have in depth knowledge of the development and use of indicators in data collection on issues concerning children. Childwatch International

will draw on their resources and contribute to the UNICEF/WHO coordinated process through active participation in the working group.

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## **CRC Anniversary Conference 2009**

Childwatch has in collaboration with Unicef Innocenti Research Centre initiated a global conference on the role of research in realization of Child Rights in 2009.

The CRC Anniversary is an opportunity to focus on the role of research in the implementation of child rights.

The objectives of the conference are:

- Consolidate a knowledge base for the continued efforts to realise the rights children are entitled to according to the Convention
- Improve collaboration between researchers, policy makers, practitioners and young people in order to take us closer to the vision of the Convention: A world where children's rights are respected and honoured.

In 2008 the conference will be planned in more detail with other agencies.

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## **Norwegian Forum for Research and Child Rights**

The Childwatch Secretariat has taken on the responsibility to administer a Forum for Research and Child Rights. The Forum will organize meetings and workshops in order to secure a productive dialogue between child rights NGOs, relevant government agencies and academics involved in child research.

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