



Setting our agenda
on early learning,
violence and
physical environment

Early childhood matters

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Bernard van Leer  Foundation

Contents

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- 1 Editorial**
- 3 New horizons: The Bernard van Leer Foundation's new goals**
Michael Feigelson
- 9 Scaling up Early Child Development**
Sara Hommel
- 15 Care for Child Development**
Meena Cabral de Mello, Nurper Ulkuer and Patrice Engle
- 22 "We need data to find out exactly what's going on"**
An interview with Marta Santos Pais
- 27 Violence against young children: What does gender have to do with it?**
Gary Barker and Marcos Nascimento
- 33 The status of children in local government spatial planning**
Lia Karsten
- 37 Children of Turkish seasonal workers**
Müge Artar
- 40 Space to play: Experiences from São Paulo**
Marco Figueiredo
- 43 Improving the life chances of low-income young children in urban Brazil**
Irene Rizzini and Malcolm Bush
- 50 News from the Foundation**
- 52 Further reading**

This edition of *Early Childhood Matters* offers a first introduction to the Bernard van Leer Foundation's thinking as we flesh out our three new goals for the period 2010 to 2015.

For an overview and orientation of our new goals, we recommend you start with the article by Michael Feigelson, Programme Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation, on the rationale and ambitions behind the choice (pp 3).

As Michael explains, the new goals vary in the extent to which they are exploratory or clearly defined. The most clearly defined has to do with taking quality early learning to scale. Early learning has been an area of expertise for the Foundation for most of our history, though the challenge is now moving from finding out what works for children to finding out how to make it work for very large numbers of children without compromising quality. Ongoing research by the Wolfensohn Centre is at the cutting edge of this question and is summarised on pp 9.

This goal goes beyond pre-schools, by encompassing attention to how children learn before they are at pre-school age – that is, from ages 0 to 3. Parents and caregivers in particular can do a lot during this time to get their children's cognitive development off to the best possible start. But how can large numbers of parents be reached? On pp 15, the WHO and UNICEF explain what they have learned from the last

decade about the potential to scale up counselling for parents on these issues, by incorporating them into health services for young children that already are or can more easily be taken to scale.

Our next goal is to reduce violence against young children, an issue which is only just starting to penetrate the agendas of policymakers. The Foundation is supporting the newly-created office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children to beat the drum about this issue. Marta Santos Pais is charged with this important task and you can read her impressions during her first few months, and her ambitions for the rest of her term, in the interview on pp 22.

As we pursue our new goals for children, we have the ambition of forging new alliances with people working in other fields. One example is illustrated by the article on pp 27 by Gary Barker and Marcos Nascimento, looking at evidence from global survey data and the Instituto Promundo in Brazil. They make the case that there are intricate links between violence against children and violence against women, and much to be gained by considering the issues together.

Our third new goal is to improve the physical environments in which children live. This is the most exploratory of the three, and in many cases we are still at the stage of mapping the current situation rather than strategising how to change it. Two articles share some insights into what we are finding out. On pp 33, Lia Karsten shares her research into the status of children in spatial planning at local government level in the Netherlands: what factors most significantly influence planning decisions on the child-friendliness of neighbourhoods and availability of spaces for play?

When we asked our contacts in Turkey what aspects of children's physical environments are potentially interesting but currently unstudied, they pointed us to the situation of young children of seasonal agricultural workers who live half the year in temporary tented accommodation while their parents work on farms. We funded researchers to study their living conditions and you can find out what they discovered on pp 37.

There are, of course, many potential overlaps between the three goals. An obvious example is providing safe spaces for children to play, an

Providing safe spaces for children to play, has relevance to both improving children's environments and protecting them from violence.

Photo: Jim Holmes/ Bernard van Leer Foundation



approach with which the Foundation has experience, and which has relevance to both improving children's environments and protecting them from violence. Marco Figueiredo works on safe spaces for children in São Paulo, Brazil, and on pp 40 he shares his insights about what makes them work and how to get more of them.

Finally, and staying with Brazil, on pp 43 we share a summary of a report we commissioned from the International Centre for Research and

Policy on Childhood (CIESPI), looking at context, priorities and potential opportunities for our three goals in low-income urban communities in Rio de Janeiro.

We hope this leaves you as inspired as we are about the potential of our new goals to make a real difference to young children, and we look forward to updating you on them in future editions.

New horizons: The Bernard van Leer Foundation's new goals

Michael Feigelson, Programme Director, Bernard van Leer Foundation

As the Bernard van Leer Foundation starts working on its three new goals – bringing quality early learning programmes to scale, reducing violence in young children's lives, and improving the physical environments where young children grow up – the Foundation's Programme Director, Michael Feigelson, explains why these goals caught the imagination and discusses some of the directions in which they might lead.

When Oscar van Leer focused the Foundation's resources on young children, nearly 50 years ago, the Bernard van Leer Foundation began to work on young children's issues, nearly 50 years ago, we were pioneers. At that time few others appreciated how significant on a human life are the effects of its early years. This is no longer true: especially in the last decade, the importance of nutrition, stimulation and education for young children has become widely acknowledged (if unevenly acted upon). For us, this represents both an encouragement and a challenge.

It's an encouragement because it shows that our efforts have contributed to a growing interest of a wide variety of new partners and voices as the issue moves gradually towards the mainstream. Of course, we can't claim credit for all the increase in interest in the rights of young children over the last half century. But we think we played our part.

The challenge – a welcome one – is that with so many other organisations now concerned with the world's youngest citizens, we need to rethink how our resources and expertise can

best be used. We need to consider how our knowledge, independence and networks can help capitalize the increased interest in this field towards greater change for young children as we go forward.

Over the last year, we have been focusing our attention on precisely that question. We have read reports, crunched data and consulted more than 500 people on five continents aged from 4 to 75. We have met new people, and had new kinds of conversations with old friends. We have answered some questions, and raised many more.

At this stage we have identified the three goals that will define our programming for the coming years, and 11 countries and regions in which we will work – a smaller number than previously. This reduction in countries is a result of our more limited resource base following the global financial crisis, but also of our desire to have a greater depth of engagement while still maintaining a wide enough presence to ensure that what we learn will retain global relevance. We are now refining our strategies at a country level.

In this article I hope to share some of our preliminary thinking behind

each of the three new goals – why they excite us, and what we hope to achieve.

Bringing quality early learning programmes to scale

Of the three, this first goal is the most clearly rooted in our experience. Early learning has been a flagship issue in our foundation for most of our sixty-year history. In that time we have seen global concern for this issue proliferate, powered by research such as the Perry Pre-School study and carried forward by a passionate group of advocates who have helped to make early childhood care and education the first goal in the Global Campaign for Education for All (EFA).

We are moving in the right direction. According to the 2009 EFA Global Monitoring Report, the global pre-school enrolment rate has risen to 42% and at least 104 countries have official programmes targeting children under the age of three. There seems to be widespread acceptance that these kinds of services ought to be universalized, but doing so remains a challenge in most countries, especially in the current climate of economic instability.

With regard to the physical environment goal, a more challenging question is how the ideal home or neighborhood might in fact look different from a young child's perspective.

Photo: Jon Spaul/ Bernard van Leer Foundation



So what is needed? One thing that has become clear is that, when early learning services are scaled up to serve a greater quantity of young children, quality often suffers. Moreover, we have observed that in many diverse contexts the kinds of children who are left out or left behind tend to be similar. They are from poor families. They are girls. They are disabled. They are children who don't speak the right language, or whose skin is not the right color. They are children who live very far away from the city or live in urban slums. They are children who have experienced political violence and who have grown up with war.

And they are also the very youngest children, those aged 0-3. Generally, the importance of learning for kids of preschool age is acknowledged. It's less well acknowledged that learning begins at (or even before) birth, although advances in neuroscience in recent years are helping to drive this message home. And so, while programmes for 0-3 year olds that deal with nutrition and health are fundamental, we think they need to focus much more on aspects of early learning – a broader concept than 'pre-school', and one that needs to be more firmly embedded in the public imagination in order to gain the widespread support that it needs.

Context matters, and in many cases the limiting factor is money. But not always. In our host country, the Netherlands, availability of funding for early learning is not a significant obstacle. But the five-year-old child of a

poor or immigrant family is still likely to be less prepared for school. Is this an issue of language? A lack of positive reinforcement at home? A mismatch between the home and school cultures? A problem of discrimination? These are among the questions we are currently grappling with.

Another example is from the Indian state of Orissa, where our work has focused on helping tribal children to make successful transitions to formal education: how to ensure, as services for early learning scale up, that every teacher has enough grasp of both the official language Oriya and the local tribal language to bridge the gap between tribal homes and public schools?

In the pursuit of our early learning goal, we envisage advocacy playing a major role. Young kids need older voices to advocate on their behalf because they have no political representation of their own. We expect to be encouraging support for the view that, as governments embark on scaling up services for young children, they need to pay particular attention to the groups most vulnerable to being left out or left behind. Scaling up must be consciously pro-poor.

We also hope to become a repository of practical knowledge that can help governments and advocates alike think through the design and implementation of good policies: helping to forestall such problems as rural Ugandan communities missing out on pre-schools because they are

unable to buy chairs that meet the prescribed specifications; or helping mayors in the Peruvian Amazon to tailor public programmes to the needs of their community's kids, which are very different to those of the wealthy urban families in Lima.

We will test some specific ideas about how to assist governments and advocates bring quality early learning to scale in a global expert meeting later this year.

Reducing violence in young children's lives

As we went through our strategic planning process we asked ourselves not only what are the biggest global problems facing young children, but also which are the most under-addressed. An answer that kept coming up was violence.

In comparison to other aspects of young children's lives, data on violence is lacking. Since the 1960s we have had fairly good global data on child mortality. Similarly, a global movement for education has been producing monitoring reports since 1990. But the first time the United Nations published a global report about violence against children was in 2006. The study revealed two things. First, that violence has major effects on hundreds of millions of young children. And second, that we know far too little about the details, especially when it comes to the youngest kids.

What we do know is that violence against a young child is both a

violation, today, of her or his rights, and, according to UNICEF, one of the best predictors of experiencing violence in later life either as a victim or as an aggressor. This is true for both the young children who are targets of violence, and those who witnesses it.

Thankfully, the UN Secretary General's Office took up the recommendation of the 2006 report to appoint a Special Representative for Violence Against Children, Marta Santos Pais, to whose Office we made the first grant within our new strategy at the end of last year. As she explains in an interview in this edition of *Early Childhood Matters* (p. 22), among her priorities are legislative reforms, national systems for data collection, and the formulation of national action plans to eliminate violence against children.

We anticipate that momentum will keep growing to address this issue, and as it does we want to make sure the youngest children stay on the radar. Whenever a government sets up a data collection system or drafts a national plan of action, we want it to address explicitly the impact on those who are the least able to speak up for themselves and most likely to suffer violence that is hidden in the privacy of the home. The violence young children experience can lead to death or permanent disability today and can have lifelong consequences on their mental health, affecting all other aspects of their development and

learning. Keeping them visible will be a critical piece of our strategy.

In our pursuit of this goal, we also envisage putting a great deal of effort into research. When there is solid data – as on mortality and education – it is easier to make people pay attention. And when that data is disaggregated, showing the prevalence of which kinds of violence against what kinds of children under which circumstances, it becomes easier to figure out what to do about it. As we heard repeatedly at a global expert meeting we convened in The Hague in March, the question of ‘what works’ and under which conditions is still not properly answered when it comes to reducing violence in young children's lives.

We believe that some early childhood programmes can play a role in reducing family stress, shaping non-violent values and norms, improving bonding between parents and infants, and serving as a referral point for other social services. But we also know this is unlikely to be enough. The experience of Sweden, for example, has demonstrated that population-wide change in this area is something that takes a generation to take root and requires a broad approach. We will be looking at how we might partner people in other fields who are working on some of the root causes of violence including unemployment, public insecurity and alcohol abuse.

One root cause upon which we will focus a good deal of attention is the question of social norms – beliefs

about the acceptability of inter-personal violence, about masculinity and about the social status of women and children. If people come to think of, say, a caring father as the stereotype of a strong man (rather than a drugs dealer or gangster, for example) that might go a long way towards bringing about long-term, sustainable and self-reinforcing change.

In the shorter term, there are things we can do to address the impact in young children's lives of fear produced by community violence. Examples are improving mental health services in places like Israel; or helping to organizing communities to create safe spaces for their children in places where resources are more limited, such as Northern Uganda.

In the urban favelas of Brazil we are currently asking our partners how a community ridden with gang violence would change if playgrounds were built on every corner and citizen leaders negotiated safe routes and violence-free zones. If we supported these kinds of short-term initiatives while simultaneously improving opportunities for youth employment and working to reinforce non-violent male role models, would the combination make young children less likely to perpetuate the violence-cycle as they grow up to form the community's next adult generation? These are the kinds of questions we hope to be able to answer as we move forward in defining our strategies.

Improving the physical environments where young children grow up

Our third goal is arguably the most speculative. It was inspired by considering the list of the five main determinants of health identified by the WHO – genes, nutrition, health services, attitudes and behaviors, and physical environments. We realised that there is a lot of effort already put into studying how the first four factors affect young children, but less is known about the nexus between young children and their physical environments. If we looked here, what would we find?

with city planners, architects and construction companies to see how considering young children's interests might influence their approach. Some problems that clearly affect young children most – poor sanitation, poor quality housing, overcrowding – are important to solve for adults too, although the impacts on young children are arguably greatest. A more challenging question, however, is how the ideal home or neighborhood might in fact look different from a young child's perspective. We don't have all the answers yet, but we are finding out.

school toilets were improved, school attendance – especially by girls – increased significantly.² Another thing we already know is that more attention should be paid to providing safe and easily accessible public spaces for children to play. Even in more wealthy countries such as the Netherlands, experts we consulted believed that such places were lacking, with negative effects on children's development and family stress – the latter an important contributor to violence in the family. Could public parks improve child development outcomes and reduce violence in the family at the same time? We would like to find out.

"We need to consider how our knowledge, independence and networks can help capitalize the increased interest in this field towards greater change for young children as we go forward."

We are in the early stages of looking, but already this new goal is generating a lot of excitement. There certainly seems to be scope for making significant improvements. The WHO estimates that one-third of childhood diseases are attributable to poor physical environments, with children in developing countries up to twelve times more likely to be affected. Another striking statistic: globally, accidents and injuries account for as many deaths of under-5s as AIDS.

Given the trend towards urbanization, we anticipate that this goal will see us working closely

Here's one intriguing possibility: toilets. There is some evidence that young children find adult-sized pit latrines difficult to use; redesigning them could reduce the incidence of defecating in public, with its attendant health risks. As a report by UK Water Aid puts it, "children did not like using adult latrines as they were afraid of entering the dark, enclosed space and of falling down the drop-hole."¹

The link between good toilets and (pre-)school attendance is also well demonstrated. Evidence from Bangladesh and Ethiopia, among other places, shows that when the

In our pursuit of this goal, we also anticipate forming creative alliances with community associations and with private sector actors. As we are a foundation rooted in the private sector with a long-history of working with community-based organisations, we think we are well placed to reach out and create a bridge between the two. And, in places like India where billions of Euros of federal money are being allocated to help millions of slum dwellers move into better housing, it seems there has never been a better time to try. If we can determine how small adjustments in the urban plans financed by this money can have big effects for young children, we can envision positive change for millions.

The journey we will take to achieve this goal is not yet clearly mapped, but one thing is for sure. As Erio Ziglio, Director of the European

Office for Investment for Health and Development of the WHO Regional Office for Europe recently put it in a conference about Roma children in Europe, “we can treat all of the problems young children face – but it won’t change the situation, as long as we continue to send them back into the same environment which created the problems in the first place”. In this sense, improving the physical environments where young children grow up is critical both for its own merits, but also because of the relationship it has with our other goals, and many of the goals set forth by those who work to improve young children’s lives around the world.

Conclusions: Young children as a rallying point

As I noted at the start of this article, it is no longer unusual – as it was a few decades ago – to be interested in a child’s early years. What our new goals reflect, in part, is an aim to move young children even closer to the heart of society’s thinking.

By breaking new ground and forging new partnerships, we hope initially to contribute towards young children featuring in a wider range of conversations. For example, one might envision a scenario in which the link between housing conditions and early learning outcomes brings together architects, educators and city-planners to work, together, with young children at the center of their discussions.

Or, one could imagine we find

evidence that livelihood programmes or insurance schemes help to stop violence against children by reducing family stress thereby joining child right’s advocates, women’s movements, employers and insurance providers. Wouldn’t it be inspirational to see young children at the center of trade negotiations or conversations about access to credit for the poor?

Perhaps these ideas are dreams as yet, but we don’t want to discount the power of the world’s youngest citizens. In fact, if we have learned anything from our 60 years of experience, it is that in a world where competition for resources is increasingly intense and silos and sectors progressively harder to understand, there is a need to work together. And, in such a world, there are few issues more capable of uniting people across cultural, professional, political, religious and financial divides than those relating to young children.

Notes

- 1 [http://www.globaleye.org.uk/primary_springo7/focuson/wateraid.pdf]. Similar evidence comes from Tearfund Quality Standards for Humanitarian Programmes [<http://tilz.tearfund.org/Publications/PILLARS/Encouraging+good+hygiene+and+sanitation/PILLARS+Hygiene+W24.htm>] and the International Water Association [<http://www.iwahq.org/Home/>].
- 2 UNICEF report from Bangladesh: [http://www.wateraid.org/documents/plugin_documents/addressing_the_special_needs_of_girls.pdf]; report by WaterAid Ethiopia: [http://www.wateraid.org/documents/plugin_documents/school_sanitation.pdf].

Scaling up Early Child Development

Sara Hommel, Associate Director of the Wolfensohn Center for Development at the Brookings Institution in Washington DC, and Director of the Center's work on Early Child Development

Since the Wolfensohn Center for Development launched its Early Child Development Initiative¹ in December 2007, the project has completed six country case studies and organized – or played a central role in – more than fifteen global events. This article shares some lessons about scaling up early childhood programmes which have been learned from these first two and a half years of research and advocacy.

The Wolfensohn Center for Development was launched by the Brookings Institution in 2006 to be a new research center dedicated to global development and poverty reduction. Founded by former World Bank President James Wolfensohn, the Center conducts action-oriented research intended to improve development efforts around the globe. Early child development emerged as a core area of focus for us from preparatory consultations with global development stakeholders at multiple levels (policymakers, donors, practitioners and academics) to identify gaps in the global development agenda.

We were struck by two stunning statistics. The first is that in the next 40 years (2010-2050), the world will have to support an additional 2 to 2.5 billion people. The second is that more than 95% of this population increase will be in emerging or developing economies. Quality ECD (early health, nutrition, education, and social protection) is essential to ensure that these next generations are able to develop and thrive.

ECD provides a foundation for human development. It helps impoverished children to develop physically and mentally, to be able to enter primary school on a more equal playing field with their less disadvantaged peers. Across the spectrum of human development, quality ECD leads to improved physical and mental development, better educational outcomes, greater skills and higher employability. It can help poor children to get higher paying jobs as adult labor market participants, breaking the cycle of inherited poverty.

It was clear to us that the need for improved and expanded ECD programmes in the developing world is critical. What was not clear is why the majority of the world is not focused on such improvement and expansion. With all that is known about the benefits of ECD, why is it not a larger priority in the global development agenda? Why are more governments, development organisations, financial institutions, and other members of the global development community not prioritizing it as a poverty reduction strategy?

Launched in December 2007, our Early Child Development Initiative was intended to illuminate improved methods for scaling up ECD as a key poverty reduction strategy in the developing world. The project was designed to include a research component and an advocacy component: research to learn how to expand quality ECD, and advocacy to convince global stakeholders to expand it.

The research component of the project included country case studies that examine specific programmes and policies that have been scaled up, are in the process of scaling, or are intended to scale in the future. This resulted in lessons learned about what works, and doesn't work, with scaling up ECD –

"It will be no surprise to anyone familiar with ECD that the field is extremely complex, or that this complexity can be both a blessing and a curse."

as well as suggestions for what each country of study could and/or should do to begin scaling, continue scaling, or ensure quality sustainability at scale.

The advocacy component of the project included events such as conferences, seminars and policy dialogues that convene multiple stakeholder groups across sectors, convince them to prioritize ECD, and facilitate the connections between

stakeholders that are necessary for a successful scale up. The advocacy began in parallel to the research component, but became more targeted as the research gave rise to recommendations.

Lessons learned

What have we learned in almost two and a half years? Eight lessons have emerged, directly from the research itself and also through the often complicated process of organizing and managing research and advocacy in developing and transitioning regions.

Lesson # 1: ECD is incredibly complex

It will be no surprise to anyone familiar with ECD that the field is extremely complex, or that this complexity can be both a blessing and a curse.

Here are the challenges of complexity: as ECD is not contained by one sector, scaling up requires the consideration and accommodation of multiple stakeholders, whose identities are not consistent from place to place. Depending on the country of focus, ECD can encompass the sectors of Health, Education, Nutrition, Economic Development, Social Welfare... the list goes on. Within each

sector, stakeholder groups increase the complexity including policy makers, civil society groups, international donors, local NGOs, international NGOs, academics... again, the list goes on.

Most of these stakeholder groups then require further sorting. Country A has one specific ministry tasked with ECD, while country B has one specific commission tasked with coordinating ECD across three ministries. Country C, on the other hand, has no specific ministry or public coordination mechanism for ECD but four different ministries or government departments deal with issues relevant to ECD.

International donor A has one ECD specific programme. International donor B has eight different thematic and regional departments that deal with ECD. Once again, the complexity goes on and on.

And what can easily result is a lack of domestic leadership, and inconsistencies between international donors and local institutions.

On the other hand, complexity can lead to more positive outcomes when organized effectively. National systems that recognize ECD as a complex and integrated process involving health, nutrition and education, across an extended period of human development, have extremely positive outcomes. In Cuba, conceptualizing human development as ranging from pregnancy to the last stages of education has created one of the world's most impressive ECD programmes – a

programme that numerous countries are now attempting to emulate.

Lesson #2: Scaling up is not only complex, but extremely fragile

After sorting out the sectors and stakeholders involved in ECD, the next challenge is the complexity of the system of operation. In order for an ECD system, programme or policy to function, multiple individual elements need to be maintained and effectively coordinated: infrastructure, capacity, political stability and continuity, financing, monitoring and evaluation, and so on. If just one of these critical legs breaks, the scaling process can fail.

In the first round of country studies conducted by the Wolfensohn Center, the critical role of each of these elements to the successful, or unsuccessful, scale up of ECD was evident. Studies of ECD scale up in Macedonia and Madagascar were especially telling.

In Macedonia, in partnership with the Open Society Foundation, the Wolfensohn Center examined the scale up of the Step by Step pre-school teaching methodology. Although challenges regarding coverage remain, overall this was a successful case of methodological scaling, and financing emerged as having played a central role. From the start, all financing stakeholders (national and international) signed up to an incremental increase in domestic financing and decrease in international financing over an agreed time period.

This allowed national stakeholders to assume all financial responsibility after an initial injection of external funds, and ensured that the programme was sustainable without indefinite external donor support.

In contrast to this positive experience, our study of a nutrition programme in Madagascar demonstrated the negative consequences of political instability. Shortly before the conclusion of the research process, Madagascar experienced a coup d'état that left the national administration of the nutrition programme and the relationship between the new national government and the international institution financing the programme in limbo. This eventually resulted in the closure of the programme, after sixteen years of work to scale up national nutrition assistance.

Lesson #3: Importance of local data and local research capacity

Many countries suffer from a lack of local data and a lack of local research capacity for ECD. Both are critical for scale up. It is imperative to have data that allows for accurate assessments of programmes and policies, as well as qualified researchers to collect and analyze it.

Data and research capacity are critical for effective monitoring and evaluation systems that allow stakeholders to recognize benchmarks in scaling success, and identify and address weaknesses to accommodate

an evolving scaling process. Without quality monitoring and evaluation, there can be no trustworthy evidence of progress. And without such evidence, sustainability can be threatened.

In many countries, individual stakeholders change frequently. Policymakers are voted out of office, donor organisations shift the focus of their support, and sector managers at international organisations are promoted to other regions. The ability of ECD advocates to convince new stakeholders to continue the work of their predecessors, or indeed to convince established stakeholders to augment a specific element of their programme, depends on evidence.

Two practical first steps necessary to address the issue are:

1. an increase in funding for ECD data collection and programme- or policy-specific monitoring and evaluation;
2. an improved multidisciplinary ECD specific curriculum (both quantitative and qualitative) at local/ regional universities.

Lesson #4: Local expertise is strong

Despite a frequent lack of data and research capacity at the local level, local ECD expertise is often outstanding within local NGOs, civil society organisations, long-standing international organisations with high rates of employment of local staff, and other comparable institutions. Improvement in global attention to ECD in recent years, especially within the

international development community, is largely a result of the expertise and dedication of local advocates and practitioners.

Lesson # 5: Partnerships are imperative

The strength of the global ECD community relies on partnership. No one organisation can do it alone. Working on ECD for the past two and half years, the Wolfensohn Center has not only come to appreciate the many partnerships that have allowed our work to progress, but has also come to admire the incredible unity of the

the importance of ECD, a list of international donor institutions that do not yet prioritize ECD, a list of private sector stakeholders that should be convinced to support ECD, and the lists went on.

All of these lists were, and continue to be, of great use to our advocacy planning, but the biggest lesson we have learned in these two and a half years is that advocacy opportunities are everywhere. We don't need to wait until we sit down at a table full of finance ministers or stand in front of a room of private sector leaders to advocate for ECD. Every day, in our professional and personal lives, we encounter numerous people who do not understand the importance of ECD. Their ignorance supports the walls that the global ECD community works to break down.

The knowledge held by global ECD professionals and advocates needs to be shared everywhere and with everyone. Many people do not know the simple fact that nearly every child is born with the ability to physically and mentally develop to be able to start school, excel in school, acquire the skills necessary for transition from education to employment, and thus become able to support themselves and their family. This fact holds the potential to lift future generations out of poverty. Global ECD advocates need to spread this message not only to finance ministers and donor institutions, but to our friends, families, and neighbors.

"The biggest lesson we have learned in these two and a half years is that advocacy opportunities are everywhere."

global ECD community. In many sectors of global development, international organisations are in competition (for funding, for the attention of local governments, etc) but in many parts of the world, the global ECD community is able to unite to effectively support the development of children and thus the reduction of poverty for generations to come.

Lesson # 6: Advocacy opportunities are everywhere

We started our advocacy work with lists: lists of country level stakeholders that needed to be convinced of

The strength of the global ECD community relies on partnership. No one organisation can do it alone.

Photo: Sara Hommel



Lesson #7: Sharing both success and failure and speaking many languages

It is easy to share success. It is hard to admit failure. Experiences of success and failure in ECD scale up are equally important. Lessons regarding what worked for one country could help another country design a similar intervention with comparable resources in comparable conditions. Lessons regarding what didn't work in one country could prevent another country from making the same mistakes. Both lessons are of incredible value. Global

ECD stakeholders need to share both positive and negative experiences.

There are many languages of ECD: the languages of nutrition, health, education, and economic development. Professionals and advocates within each sector need to speak each other's languages, and speak them often. Nutrition experts need to speak about education. Education experts need to speak about health. Health experts need to speak about economic development. Economists need to speak about the role of early nutrition,

health, and education in human – and thus economic – development.

Lesson # 8: There is much still to be done, but also much to celebrate

The global ECD community has great challenges ahead of them, but also great victories behind them. It is important that we recognize both.

The next steps

Our first phase of research on ECD – which looked at countries that had already scaled up ECD, were in the process of doing so, or were about to begin scaling a specific programme or policy – has armed us with information on what has, and has not, worked at different stages in scaling in different parts of the world.

Over the coming year, we will be putting this information to work in two ways. We will use it to advocate for ECD scale up in several regions of the world, with our international partner institutions. And we will base on it a second round of country studies.

This next phase of country studies will look at countries that have not yet started to scale up ECD. These studies will provide a mapping of the ECD landscape of each country and will produce a key set of recommendations for what could, and should, happen next – a road map to improve and expand quality ECD for a greater percentage of the population. The results of these studies will be used by partner organisations and country-

specific stakeholders to design and implement ECD scale up strategies.

We anticipate that this new phase of work will combine research results with direct advocacy as we will organize, with our partners, regional and global consultations to present country-specific recommendations and lessons learned to the stakeholders responsible for such programmes and policies. These consultations not only provide a mechanism for advocating scaling up strategies, but will also facilitate connections between global stakeholders needed for implementing scaling processes, including policy makers, donors and practitioner organisations.

Note

- ¹ For more information on the work of the Early Child Development Initiative at the Wolfensohn Center please visit: [<http://www.brookings.edu/wolfensohn/early-child-development.aspx>].

WHO/UNICEF Joint Initiative for promoting early childhood development through health system

Care for Child Development

Meena Cabral de Mello, WHO Department of Child and Adolescent Health, Nurper Ulkuer, UNICEF Early Childhood Development Unit; and Patrice Engle, Department of Psychology and Child Development at California Polytechnic State University

As discussed by Michael Feigelson in his introduction to the Foundation's three new goals, the importance of early learning in the 0-3 age group tends to be under-appreciated. This article by WHO/UNICEF discusses what they have learned over the last ten years about how scaleable health services for the 0-3s can be integrated with counselling parents to promote early learning.

Starting right from the beginning of life, quality of interaction between young child (especially the newborns and infants) and her caregiver is crucially important for child's healthy development (Richter, 2000). Bonding and attachment are two inter-twined processes that help creating the rhythm of caregiver/mother and the child dyad that sets the tone of the care giving-receiving patterns affecting the quality of care for child survival and development. It is also considered to be an important element of maternal mental health, which is another important defining factor of the quality and continuum of care for the young child.

These processes start during the pre-natal period and continue throughout the early years of life. This is the time that health workers, doctors, midwives and community health workers are the ones who have direct contact with the mother (caregiver)-child dyad and help them to build this connection. Therefore it is the health care system, especially the part that reaches out to families and communities that play this critical role of the health care system in ensuring every child's right to survival and development and protection. So how can it best be harnessed to also

promote psychosocial development (social, emotional, cognitive, and motor development), along with child's survival and growth?

The critical role of the health care system in ensuring every child's right to survival and development has long been recognized. It is the only system which reaches children under 3, the most critical window of both risk and opportunity.

WHO developed the Care for Development Module to be a part of the Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) strategy which has been promoted by WHO and UNICEF in countries since the late 1990s. This module was also designed to operationalise one of the 17 key family care practices, which were identified as part of the community IMCI that was the third tier of the process.

The decision to develop a module for care for development, and the basis for the model, was outlined in an extensive literature review of the links between nutrition and development: *A Critical Link: Interventions for Physical Growth and Psychological Development* (WHO, 1999). The report concluded: "When simultaneously

implemented, interventions to promote growth and those to promote psychological development have even a greater effect than when carried out individually.

The report also pointed to the vital role of parents: “As the main source of physical and emotional care for young children is the family, parents need to be involved and provided with the necessary skills to feed their children adequately, stimulate their development and be responsive to their psychosocial needs. Of practical interest is recognising that behaviours to improve nutrient intake and psychosocial support require just a few skills from child caretakers. Counselling families to develop and strengthen those skills is therefore an approach to be undertaken.” (Pelto et al, 2000).

Empowering caregivers to be more responsive to child’s needs

The Care for Development Module included recommendations to parents to support cognitive development (play), social-emotional and language development (communication), and responsive feeding, as well as breastfeeding and complementary foods. These were derived from the “8 Guiding Principles for Good Interaction” (see on page 20) between mothers and children developed by the WHO Department of Mental Health and the International Child Development Programme (WHO Mental Health, 1998), and the critical care practices

as summarized in Care for Nutrition (UNICEF, 1997).

A number of decisions were taken in designing the recommendations. First, the decision was to focus on children 0-3 rather than older children, as this is a critical period of development and access is primarily through the health system. Second, it was recommended that the mode of delivery of preventative and promotive care through both the health system and community outreach, such as community IMCI. Third, the prompting questions for health workers to use with families were embedded into the feeding module to emphasize the value of responsivity both to a child’s feeding and to the child’s development.

And finally, the decision was made to emphasize recommendations and counselling of parents rather than to focus on screening¹. Since most interventions up to that point had emphasized milestones and screening, this decision requires explanation.

For example, in a screening instrument, the health worker assesses whether the child has begun to smile at 6 weeks, as is normally expected, and decide if the child needs special intervention. In a counselling approach, the caregiver is told to “smile at your infant, and respond to your infant’s smile” during the first two months of age. A developmental level is therefore provided, but not specifically assessed. If the child is not yet smiling, the parent may express a concern and there are suggestions

for resolution of the problem in the attached “problem list”. Growth cards that present developmental milestones without specific information as to how to encourage development through parental actions may increase parental concern without the associated guidance.

The Care for Development Module of IMCI provides information and recommendations for families to help them provide cognitive stimulation and social support to young children as part of the child health visit specified in IMCI. WHO prepared not only the Care for Development recommendations, as part of the Counsel the Mother Card, but also prepared advocacy materials (video and newsletter), technical seminars, training materials for the trainers of health workers, a facilitator’s guide for training of trainers, a checklist for a three-day training, and video training materials.

Successful trials and the need for scaling up

Since the approach was relatively new, four different trials were undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the materials. In Brazil, the materials were used with health workers, and their understanding and recall of the concepts were assessed (dos Santos, Gonçalves, Halpern, & Victora (1999)). In South Africa, a field trial assessed changes in health workers’ behavior in consultations, understanding of messages, and client satisfaction (Chopra, 2001).

In Ankara, Turkey, the impact of the evaluation on not only attitudes and behaviour, but also the quality of the home environment was assessed (Ertem et al, 2006). Finally, in a randomized controlled trial in rural China, Jin et al tested the efficacy and appropriateness of the Care for Development (CFD) counselling materials based on the Mother’s Card (Jin X, Sun Y, Jiang F, Jun M, Morgan C, Shen X, 2007).

“The decision to develop a module or care for development, and the basis for the model, was outlined in an extensive literature review of the links between nutrition and development.”

These research studies have shown that the appropriate use of the Care for Development materials can have a significant impact on parenting behaviours and child development. Mothers could recall the messages, and they reported higher levels of satisfaction when the health worker had been trained on care for development. Ertem et al (2006) found significant improvements in the quality of the HOME environment (parenting practices) one month after an outpatient session in which the pediatrician was trained in care for development, compared to a comparison group. In a randomized

As the main source of physical and emotional care for young children is the family, parents need to be involved and provided with the necessary skills to feed their children adequately, stimulate their development and be responsive to their psychosocial needs.

Photo: Courtesy WHO



controlled trial in rural China, Jin et al (2007) found highly significant differences in young children's cognitive development, and in mothers' understanding of the recommendations after home visits by a trained specialist within a 6 month period in the intervention group compared to a control group.

The results from all the studies are quite consistent: one can change health care providers' behaviours

substantially with training, and when they are observed, in order to improve care for development. With additional training, the quality of the caregiver/care provider interaction improved significantly, and in Ankara, so did satisfaction with the care provider.

Given these findings, it seems essential to scale up the intervention as soon as possible. To achieve this, it is necessary to expand implementation of the care for child development

intervention through community based providers, who are the cornerstone of primary care in most low-income countries.

Health workers at the community level are already concerned with the health and well being of mothers and children. In many instances, community health workers are the only health professionals with whom families come into contact in the early years of the child's life. They reach the majority of children in a community and there are windows of opportunity within health care encounters to help strengthen families' efforts to promote their child's development. Indeed they may be the only opportunity available for health providers in developing countries to positively influence parents of young children (Black 2000, Richter 2000).

It is important to integrate care for child development into the existing work of the community based providers so that they do not see it as an extra burden. A current project with Lady Health Workers in Pakistan shows that this is possible, when developed in close collaboration with the existing CHW programmes (Rahman A, 2007; and Rahman A, Roberts C, Husain N, 2009) and with a focus on training, support and motivation provided to health care providers. WHO, UNICEF and partners are promoting the integration of the Care for Child Development intervention into existing health systems in a number

of countries with special attention to poorly resourced areas.

Changes in the new Care for Child Development Module

After 10 years, and with a view to scaling up, there was a need for a review and revision of the Care for Child Development materials. Revisions include: reflecting an increasing focus on the newborn by giving specific recommendations for the birth to one week period; new recommendations for dealing with maternal depression, and with children affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic; addressing issues of child discipline, given growing concern about the dangers of harsh punishment and its wide usage in many countries; new suggestions for using books and pictures, where available; and specific suggestions for involving fathers.

Finally, there is an additional change aimed at allowing Care for Child Development to stand alone. Many countries do not have IMCI, and a new module was added that could be incorporated into any primary health care rather than only IMCI.

Way forward

WHO, UNICEF and partners are promoting the integration of the Care for Child Development intervention into existing health systems in all countries with special attention to poorly resourced areas. Care for Child Development is becoming an integral part of the Continuum of

Care Concept² and community-based packages designed to reach out families and communities to improve care for mothers, newborns and young children.

Notes

- 1 Screening is the early identification of possible developmental delay or disability in order for early therapeutic intervention to occur, roughly similar to the curative component of health care. Counselling, on the other hand, provides support, knowledge, and skills to the caregiver in order to help him/her support his/her child's development.
- 2 State of the World's Children Report (SOWCR) 2008 (*Child Survival*) and 2009 (*Maternal and Newborn Health*). unicef

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8

Guiding principles for good interaction

1) Show your child that you love him/her

Show positive feelings. Even if the baby can't understand what the caregiver is saying, s/he can still understand emotional expressions of love and rejection, joy and sorrow. It is important for the caregiver to show that s/he is fond of her/him, to hold her/him with love, caress her/him and express joy. The child will express her/his pleasure and appreciation by responding in her/his own way.

2) Talk to your child. Get a "conversation" going by means of emotional expressions, gestures and sounds

Even shortly after birth it is possible to get an emotional dialogue going with the infant through eye contact, smiles and exchanges of gestures and expressions of pleasure. When the caregiver comments positively on what the child is doing, s/he "answers" with happy noises. A usual way of doing this is for the caretaker to imitate the expression and noises that the child makes. Usually the baby responds by repeating it, and so the "dialogue" begins. This early emotional "conversation" is important for the child's future relationship with the caregiver and for speech development.

3) Follow your child's lead

In interacting with the child it is important that the caregiver pays attention to the child's wishes and body language, and tries to adjust to and follow her/his lead. If s/he wants to play with a particularly toy or object let her/him examine it or if s/he wants to play at bedtime let her/him play for a little more time before trying once again to put her/him to bed. The child will then feel that the caregiver cares for her/him and responds to her/his initiatives. This has, of course, to be balanced by some regulation of the child's behaviour (see Guideline No. 8). It is important for the child's development that, within certain boundaries, s/he gets some freedom to do what s/he wants and is not always pushed into activities by others. This guideline has some points in common with the last one, since any good dialogue depends on "listening" to a child and following her/his lead.

4) Give praise and affirmation for what your child manages to do well

For a child to develop self-confidence and drive, it is important the caregiver makes her/him feel valued and appreciated. Positive comments and praise for things well done are also effective in preventing him/her from doing something wrong. In this way the caregiver can guide and facilitate the actions of the child.

5) Focusing: Help your child to focus his/her attention and share his/her experience

Babies and small children need help in focusing their attention. Attracting and guiding their attention to things in their surroundings can do this. The caregiver can show the child what s/he is interested in and this will enable the caregiver to share experiences with the child. The caregiver can show something to the child and tell the child what it is.

A typical interaction would be:

"Look at this"
"This is a....."

Meaning: Help your child to make sense of his/her world by sharing and describing it. By naming and describing what the caregiver and child experience together, the child starts to get the meaning of things. A child needs guidance in order to understand the world around him/her and the caregiver can help find meanings in different experiences by vocal and emotional expressions.

Examples would be:

"Look here!"
"What is this?"
"It is a cup"
"It is red (or big or heavy)"
"It used to be your grandfathers"

6) Expansion: Help your child to expand and enrich his/her experience

As the child grows s/he finds the horizon widening. There are more options available to her/him. This is a crucial state where the caregiver can help the child make sense out of a bewildering variety of information and details by linking it up with past experiences. The caregiver can also do the same by telling stories on related topics or by providing explanations and further details whenever necessary.

Examples would be:

"Look here!"
"How many cups are there?" (Answer: one)
"What colour is this cup?" (It is red)
"Do you know anything else that is red?"
"Yes, strawberries are red."
"Do we have strawberries in our garden at home?"

Questions could lead to an expanding style of interaction:

"Have you seen such a thing before?"
"What does it remind you of?"
"How many are there?"
"What sizes?"
"Where are they?"
"Do you know how it is made?"
"Do you know why it is made like that?"
"What can it be used for?"
"Do you remember that we saw this?"

7) Tell a story involving the thing under discussion.

"I remember once my father had such a..... and he"

8) Regulation of behaviour: Help your child learn rules, limits, and values

A child needs guidance in developing self-control, making choices and in planning. This happens to a large extent through interaction with the caregiver who guides the child by giving her/him choices, helps him/her to plan things step by step and explains why certain things are allowed and yet some are not. Instead of always preventing and saying "No" it is important to provide positive alternatives. This can help prevent violence.

Examples:

"You could either do.... Or you could go for..."
"This is allowed because...; this should not be done because....."
"You know that when you do this...your friend feels...and you don't want to hurt him, do you?"
"How would Peter feel if you did the same thing to him?"
"Why don't you try?"

Possible ways of starting this kind of interaction:

"What do you want to do?"
"How will you do it?"

An interview with Marta Santos Pais

“We need data to find out exactly what’s going on”

Following the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children, published in 2006, Marta Santos Pais was appointed in September 2009 for an initial three-year term as Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children. Earlier this year, the Bernard van Leer Foundation became the first philanthropic organisation to offer financial support to her new office, through a grant of EUR 300,000.

To help us understand the significance of creating the office of Special Representative on Violence against Children, what are some examples of what special representatives for other issues have achieved?

I’m now one of two Special Representatives to the Secretary General who deal with subjects affecting the protection of children’s rights. The first one was established to deal with children and armed conflict, and illustrates well what can be achieved with the advocacy role of such a global position.

First, the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict has successfully raised awareness of the risks faced by children who are caught up in the middle of hostilities, keeping the issue on the radar by raising it in the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council (formerly the Commission on Human Rights), and in international peace and security discussions.

One result is that the involvement of children in conflict is now discussed regularly by the UN Security Council. This is a big step forward, because

previously children’s concerns were not considered serious enough for the Security Council to address.

Secondly, the Special Representative has helped to make visible and to expose the atrocities committed against children that were previously ignored or seen with indifference. She has promoted child-sensitive solutions to the demobilisation and reintegration of child combatants, and to the care and protection of girls who were kidnapped and enslaved by commanders.

Of course, there are differences associated with the nature of the mandates of the Special Representatives – for example, violence against children may not be addressed by the Security Council. But breaking the invisibility of violence against children, generating concern about children’s situations, and promoting legal and policy reforms to protect them effectively, are a vitally important part of what we can hope to do.

How do you go about breaking invisibility?

In two ways. Firstly, we need champions, spokespersons,

"Around the world there are many good examples of policies and practice, and many lessons to draw from experience that can support governments to accelerate progress towards ensuring children's rights." Marta Santos Pais

Photo: Angela Barrau-Ernst/ Bernard van Leer Foundation



ambassadors – many people's voices, not just mine. We need to tell the stories of the daily and long lasting suffering of children, thus giving a human face to what we are talking about.

And secondly, we need data to find out exactly what's going on, and to expose the magnitude and the incidence of violence towards children in all its forms. We need that data to be disaggregated including by age and by gender, by social and ethnic origin, and by rural versus urban setting, so that we can better map what we're tying

to portray. We need sound analyses to get the evidence out there and inform advocacy, policy developments and allocation of resources.

Breaking invisibility will not be quick or easy. For example, there is a very deep-rooted belief in many cultures in all regions that disciplining children through violence is harmless and even beneficial. It will take a long time, and a big effort, to make people recognise that this is, in fact, having a dramatically negative and lasting impact on children.

Your mandate is for three years. What can you hope to achieve in that timeframe?

Three years is short. It calls for an urgent and also strategic agenda. But my dream is that by 2012 combating violence against children will be not only a concern for a few but a commitment by all. By then, we should have a much clearer sense of what we know, what are the gaps we need to address and who should address them effectively. In case the mandate is not renewed, I want to leave behind a clear

legacy; one that sets the agenda for the future and that others can refer to in the years that follow. This would be a great step forward in helping other organisations to continue to mobilise interest, action and commitment towards the building of a society where violence against children has no place.

Specifically, we can achieve a number of things. In each setting where violence against children may occur – in the family, in school, in institutions, in the community, in the work context – we can refine the standards we have, so that we can be more concrete in the actions we demand from states. For example, I am speaking to you today after attending a conference on child labour in The Hague, where I made a speech supporting and encouraging efforts to improve legal standards for the protection of child domestic workers, who are often exposed not only to long hours of work but also to abuse and exploitation.

Secondly, we can hope to achieve the universal ratification of conventions that have already been agreed upon. The protection of children from sale, prostitution and pornography is a case in point. We have a protocol on this issue complementing the convention on the rights of the child and I am campaigning now for it to be ratified by all countries in the world to safeguard the rights of children, to protect victims and ensure their reintegration, and to fight impunity.

Thirdly, we can help governments who have ratified treaties to implement

them. By breaking the conspiracy of silence surrounding these issues, we can create the conditions for governments to devise and implement the right policies.

And finally we can make known good practices, rather than just listing concerns. We may understand that countries can feel overwhelmed by problems, and pressed by lack of progress. But around the world there are many good examples of policies and practice, and many lessons to draw from experience that can support governments to accelerate progress towards ensuring children's rights. This is why in my strategy I am prioritising the sharing of these experiences.

In your first few months, how have you begun to go about realising these objectives?

First and foremost, by recognizing that the task at hand cannot be achieved by a single voice based in New York. It's necessary for efforts to tackle violence against children to be owned at local and regional levels, and to be embedded into existing mechanisms. Furthermore, there's no point in merely addressing your own constituency of the already-converted.

So I have begun by reaching out to other offices and agencies within the United Nations system – including the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict – and to other child rights expert bodies and organisations.

When reaching out, you must conceptualise well the ideas that you want to get across, and tackle misconceptions – for example, the common misconception that protecting young children from violence necessarily involves accusing parents of bad parenting. There is a widespread idea that families are either golden environments or completely dysfunctional, whereas in reality there is a continuum, and most parents can benefit from advice and need some degree of support and reassurance.

So, deeply aware of the importance of violence prevention, I am encouraging states to provide support to parents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This includes financial assistance, so they can support children's development, and better provide their children with nutrition and health care. And it includes informational support, helping parents to understand how to nurture the personality of their child.

Here I am talking to states and other organisations about the many proven interventions that exist to promote good parenting, such as home visiting programmes, interventions to help families reconcile working life and family life, and raising awareness about the risks of shaking a small child.

I can also talk about proven initiatives when we move away from prevention and on to protection – for example, alternative care solutions that avoid taking children away from their family environment and placing them

into an institution as a result of the family's poverty – and the questions of how best to help with recovery and reintegration.

Your background is as a human rights lawyer. How important a role does changing legislation have, in comparison to changing social norms?

Legislation is not a panacea, but it is indispensable for children's protection from violence. Laws are an expression of states' commitment to and accountability for violence prevention and response. Laws legitimise action, including by child victims. The existence of laws provides a lever that people and organisations can use to promote change in society.

Last year, for instance, we marked the 30th anniversary of the first law in the world tackling violence against children, which was passed in Sweden in 1979. Social norms in Sweden have changed greatly in the three decades of this law's existence. It is now generally accepted that protecting children from violence trumps considerations of protecting the privacy of the family.

Another example concerns the adoption of legislation to prohibit female genital mutilation and to combat marriage under the age of 18, as has happened recently in Egypt. A law may be perceived as just a document, but what also matters is the awareness raising campaigns that have been promoted to accompany it. There have been discussions in the media and

an emotional public debate has been generated. The legal change has created a platform to discuss the issue widely.

This is important, because social and behaviour change do not happen by magic, merely by outlawing a practice in a way that might seem judgemental and accusatory to those maintaining it. It is critical to promote discussions with community opinion leaders, including religious leaders, as well as grassroots organisations. People need to feel that the impetus for legal change is not imposed but also comes from them.

As you know, the Bernard van Leer Foundation focuses on children aged up to 8. How are young children specifically addressed in your mandate?

Many people have difficulty in understanding the concept of a young child as an individual actor, as a citizen who is at the centre of things, as a person who feels and thinks and observes and has ideas, and is eager to interact with those around. But that is what young children are – even when we're talking about a small baby, crying is an expression of the child's feelings. So the first important step is to make people understand this, and move them away from seeing young children merely as passive and dependent and human beings in transition.

One encouraging development concerns the steps taken by countries like Sweden. In the context of the

country's review of the system of early childhood and development, an effort was made to take seriously the possibility of consulting young children. Through drawings and play and age sensitive discussions, children gave a strong idea of what they viewed as important for them in early child care staff and facilities – an opportunity to be joyful, to feel welcome, to feel part of a group – and this had a real impact on the outcome of the review and the shaping of the process of reform.

When it comes to tackling violence against young children in families, much needs to be done to support families and prevent violence, and to improve monitoring and reporting. Often the first people who can understand what's going on are medical professionals and educators, but they can at times be afraid or hesitant to report their suspicions because they see no way to do so without appearing to be judgemental, aggravating the family and potentially risking reprisals.

A first step here is professionalisation of those who work with young children, with professional standards and examples of good practice to guide them. But while codes of conduct are necessary, they are not sufficient because you can usually read them in many different ways. So you need also to create a climate of reassurance, through training and awareness raising. You need to create among professionals a sense that it is their ethical responsibility to get

involved, and that there is no need for them to be afraid to do so.

When you talk about the dangers of judgementalism, does this imply that you favour tackling violence against young children more through civil law than criminal law?

Legislation plays a very important role in the prevention of violence, the protection, reintegration, redress and reparation of victims, as well as in the fight for impunity. It is crucial to establish a clear and explicit legal prohibition of all forms of violence, and different solutions have been followed by countries that have already taken this critical step.

In some cases, the legal ban has been included in the Family Code, which has helped to highlight that the responsibility of the family for the care, development and protection of their children also includes not resorting to any form of violence. In other cases, the provision has been considered in the framework of child protection legislation, within which violence prevention and response have been addressed alongside with the overall protection of children's rights.

For other countries, it has been important to tackle violence as part of the criminal code, thus also placing a special emphasis on the penal punishment of those found responsible. This overall ban has at times been further strengthened by more detailed legislation to tackle specific forms of

violence against children, including trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse, female genital mutilation or early marriage.

These various approaches are not exclusive and can become mutually supportive, helping to encourage positive discipline. They can support and provide guidance to those involved, while being clear in their message of non-acceptability of any form of violence.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is currently considering how it should approach the goal of reducing violence against children. What niche can we most usefully aim to fill?

The Foundation is very well known for its commitment and expertise in early childhood development and in the promotion of the human rights of very young children, who are those at greater risk of violence. With its significant research, advocacy and policy work, the Foundation can play an influential role in the consolidation of data and research on the impact of violence on very young children, including those belonging to the most vulnerable groups of society; and in the promotion of national action plans on violence against children within which the protection of the very young people can be given decisive visibility.

Providing strong evidence on these critical areas is critical to support countries in their efforts to promote well tailored and child sensitive

policy approaches to ensure the protection of young children from all forms of violence. I look forward to collaborating closely with the Foundation in promoting progress in this important process of change.

Violence against young children: What does gender have to do with it?

Gary Barker, Director of Gender, Violence and Rights at the International Center for Research on Women, and co-chair of the MenEngage Alliance; and Marcos Nascimento, co-Director of Instituto Promundo and Latin America regional coordinator of MenEngage¹

Despite a clear connection between violence against children and violence against women, the two issues are rarely considered together. In this article, Gary Barker and Marcos Nascimento discuss results from their recent research in Brazil and from global survey data.

There are clear connections between children's experience of violence, as victims or witnesses, and violence against women – often referred to as gender-based violence – and, indeed, gender equality in general. For example, global UN estimates suggest that 30% of the world's women will experience violence from a male partner over their lifetimes. We know that young children are frequently present when this violence happens or live in households where it takes place.

Both programme experience and research suggest that violence against women and violence against children are intricately intertwined, and can and should be discussed and addressed together. Yet research, programme interventions and advocacy efforts on the two issues often operate in parallel, seldom-overlapping worlds.

In this article we use gender as a lens through which to view the issue of violence against young children and possible interventions. It is important to affirm from the start that the concept of gender is not only about women and girls. It should be understood as referring to the social factors that shape both masculinities *and* femininities, women *and* men, girls *and* boys, the power relations between them, and the structural

contexts that create and reinforce these power relations.

The global data shows that, in interaction with the individual characteristics and life experiences of caregivers and children, there are three overlapping factors which underpin violence against children:

1. poverty and structural inequalities that shape care settings and frequently affect whether parents, families and other caregivers have the means to adequately care for their children in non-violent and non-stressed ways;
2. cultural and social norms related to child-rearing practices and the acceptability of corporal punishment and other forms of violence against children (and women, and between men and boys); and
3. gender norms and dynamics, specifically views that boys need be raised to be physically 'tough' and emotionally stoic while girls are seen as fragile, inferior and/or subordinate to boys and men.

Nearly universally, gender-related trends are apparent in terms of violence against children. Worldwide, boys are more likely to experience bullying, fights and physical violence, while girls in most of the world are

more likely to experience sexual violence, psychological violence and specific forms of discrimination and exclusion. As the UN's World Report on Violence Against Children states, in recommendation 10:

“Girls and boys are at different risk for different forms of violence across different settings. All research into violence against children and into strategies to prevent and respond to it should be designed to take gender into account. In particular, the study has found a need for men and boys to play active roles and exercise leadership in efforts to overcome violence.”

Taking this recommendation as our starting point, we ask: what are these gendered patterns in terms of violence against children? And what does a gender lens imply in terms of implications for action to tackle violence against children?

The situation in Brazil

Household surveys carried out by Instituto Promundo, a Brazilian NGO working to promote gender equality and end violence against children, provide examples of these gendered trends. While they are specific to Rio de Janeiro, they are similar to those seen in some other parts of the world. A representative sample survey carried out with parents in 2005 in three low income neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro showed that:

- *Physical violence against children was a common experience: 35% of parents had used some form of physical violence in the past 3 months (36% against boys and 33.8% against girls).*
- *Psychological violence was more common against girls: 39.3% of parents reported using psychological violence against a daughter or girl in the past three months compared to 32.6% against sons or boys.*
- *Severe physical violence was more common among boys: 16.8% of parents reported using physical violence against sons or boys compared to 12.9% against daughters.*
- *Violence was most frequent in the case of younger children: the highest rates of violence reported by parents were against children ages 6-11, but violence was also used against children ages 3-5.*

Building on this household survey research, and informed by evaluation data from parenting intervention programmes globally, Promundo developed an intervention that combined parent education with community campaigns enjoining parents to “educate, not beat” their children. The parent education workshops emphasized alternative, non-violent childrearing techniques, children's rights and basic tenets of child development.

An impact evaluation of the experience, with two intervention

communities and a delayed intervention community that served as a control group, provides useful lessons on both the challenges of reducing violence against children in low income settings and the role of gender. The communities where the study was carried out are low income, but with high degrees of social support between residents, and with a high prevalence of community violence – both gang-related and police reaction to gangs.

There is also a high prevalence of women-headed households. In the three communities, between 43-49% of the participants (who are broadly representative of the communities as a whole) were single mothers or women-headed households, meaning the woman's income was the major income and women supported the household. Even when men are living in the households, their participation was reported to be limited in terms of their participation in the care of children.

National data from Brazil shows that these patterns are not limited just to these communities. National household data in Brazil show that women spend on average of 21.8 hours a week on domestic chores, including child care activities, compared to 9.1 hours for men – and that women with children under age 14 who live *with* a man present spend two hours *more* per week on average than households where a man is not present. In other words, national data in Brazil show that having a man present in the household creates more work for women than less.²

Brazilian women's experiences of childcare and violence

In this setting, what is possible in terms of reducing violence against children? The results of the impact evaluation of the “educate, not beat” intervention found that participants showed a statistically significant increase in awareness of Brazil's national law on children's rights (the Statute on Children and Adolescents), and slight increase in understanding of mechanisms for child protection, compared to no change in the control group.

There was also a slight change in one community in terms of attitudes that support the use of violence against children – in effect, an increased understanding of and support for children's rights.

The vast majority of participants – around 80% in all three communities – believed that parents have the right to use violence when a child does not show them respect. Between 19-32% of participants in the three communities reported having carried out physical violence against a child in the past three months, prior to participation in the parenting groups. After the intervention, there was a small but statistically significant decrease in parents' reported use of violence against children in one of the communities – the one that combined both parent education and a community campaign.

At the same time, however, psychological violence increased in

all three communities, suggesting that parents may have been substituting psychological violence for physical violence, or that the ways they talk to their children – as an alternative to using corporal punishment, or not – were still violent.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of the study, however, is the qualitative findings. Almost no fathers, nor men as caregivers of children, participated in the workshops – because they were not interested, reported not having time, or were not present in the home or involved in caregiving on a regular basis. During the course of the parent education workshops and afterwards, the mothers who participated expressed frustration with the situation. They were virtually alone, though sometimes supported by other women, in terms of child care, and also generally worked long hours outside the home.

They also complained of feeling powerless in general in their communities and workplaces, and in their relationships with male parents. And many had experienced violence from a male partner, either current or previous.

For most mothers corporal punishment and psychological violence, such as humiliation and shouting, were viewed as “necessary evils” – something they knew they should not do, but frequently did when they lost control or were stressed. Tellingly, some women said that all they needed was someone to look after

Some public policies have been analyzed to examine how existing social welfare and gender equality policies can encourage greater involvement by men in caregiving, health and child development issues

Photo: Pedro Silva



their children for a few minutes at the end of the day so they could have a short break between their work outside the home and starting their “second shift” when they arrived at home and were the principal caregivers.

Mothers who participated in workshops were clearly appreciative of the information they received, but seemed equally or even more appreciative of the opportunity to talk with other parents about their lives and their daily frustrations.

Global links between childhood and gender-based violence

These findings lend additional support to the case for providing support for low-income and stressed families, as has also been demonstrated in numerous studies on the efficacy of home visitation programmes in various parts of the world. Indeed, what this research suggests is that while parents appreciate and need information on child development and on alternative, non-violent child-rearing, what they most often need are changes in the household gender dynamics and

caregiving patterns – and additional support from the often-absent men.

To probe these issues further, Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women, with partner organisations in South Africa (the Medical Research Council), India (ICRW-Asia Regional Office), Mexico (Colegio de Mexico), Croatia (CESI) and Chile (CulturaSalud) recently carried out a representative household survey with women and men called the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES). The study will be expanded in collaboration with additional partners in 2010, both in Africa and in Asia (in collaboration with Partners for Prevention, the Joint UN Program for Engaging Men and Boys to Prevent Violence Against Women in Asia and the Pacific).

While results are still being finalized, and will be published later in 2010 and in 2011, preliminary analyses on men's use of violence against women is being confirmed by the high rates of men's reports of sexual violence against women and girls (both stranger rape and marital rape) and high rates of physical violence against female partners, in numbers similar to those found in the WHO's multi-country study on violence against women, which interviewed only women.

Initial analyses from three of the countries where IMAGES³ has been carried out (South Africa, Croatia, and India) found that four factors were associated with men's self-reports of

sexual and physical violence against women:

- A belief in inequitable norms related to gender, in other words believing that men have more rights than women;
- Childhood experience of violence – in and outside the home, namely being victims of bullying in the school or community or a victim of physical violence in the home;
- Men's economic disempowerment, that is reporting feeling stressed, ashamed or depressed as a result of not having enough work or income; and
- Alcohol use.

While it is still being analyzed, the IMAGES data so far suggests a cluster of behaviors on the part of men, including risky sexual behavior (especially low use of condoms), alcohol use, and use of violence against women, exacerbated by economic disempowerment.

Insights for action

Along with the IMAGES survey data, the partner organisations (working together as the Men and Gender Equality Policy Project) have also analyzed public policies in their countries to examine how existing social welfare and gender equality policies can encourage greater involvement by men in caregiving, health and child development issues (men's own health and the health of their partners, and the health and development of their children).

A qualitative study – called the “Men who Care” study – is also underway, and involves carrying out life history interviews with men in the same settings who show more involved participation in caregiving in the home or are involved in caregiving professions.

Taken together, the studies discussed in this article provide a number of insights for action. They suggest that reducing violence against women and against children should be part of integrated interventions and policies including:

- Family support and home visitation programmes, building on those which have shown evidence or promise of effectiveness. This includes building on women's economic empowerment programmes that have shown effectiveness in reducing violence against women, and that could be adapted to engage men and also include efforts to reduce violence against children;
- Campaigns and legal reform to promote changes in the social norms that sustain men's violence against women, violence between men, and parents' use of violence against children;
- Promoting paternity leave and work-life policies that seek to engage men to a greater extent in caregiving (these have shown impact in some upper income countries);
- Teacher training and school-based and daycare-based interventions that

have shown evidence or promise of promoting gender equality, engaging men in caregiving positions and changing cultures of violence and gender stereotypical views; and

- Social support for boys, girls, women and men who have experienced violence in the home or community, recognizing how early experiences of violence are often associated with later use of such violence.

Family support policies and child support policies also need to move beyond a view that gender refers only to women and girls, and acknowledge the significance of relationships between men and women and boys and girls, and between social norms related to masculinities and femininities.

There are numerous concrete examples of what such gender “relational” programming can look like, both at the policy and the programme level, and the potential benefits of such an approach. Norway – the world’s richest country per capita – invested 20 years in promoting equal pay for women, together with incentives to engage men as fathers and caregivers. The result: in a recent national survey 70% of men and 80% of women say they are happy with the equality achieved and family violence has been dramatically reduced. In a household survey that sought to evaluate the impact of such policies, the authors conclude that, among other benefits of an integrated children’s rights and children’s rights policy approach: “

...the father’s role as the performer of physical punishment/violence is disappearing from the average Norwegian home.”⁴

At the level of programme interventions, in recent interviews with beneficiaries of a combined community micro-finance and gender-based violence programme that engages men and women, we heard this report from a man who participates in the intervention:

“...men in my community thought I was controlled by my wife because I let her go out by herself and participate in the village savings and loan association... then I joined too... we pooled our money and we bought animals. We invest together and we make more money... my wife seems to me more beautiful than she used to be, and our children are happier. I stopped using violence [against his wife and his children]”

To be sure, changing both the social norms and the community and economic conditions that underpin both violence against children and women, and between men and boys, is a long-term process. But these examples suggest both that the issues must be considered together and that individual and societal change are possible.

Notes

- 1 The authors wish to thank several colleagues for input on this article: at ICRW, Juan Manuel Contreras, Ajay Singh and Ravi Verma; at Promundo, special thanks to Marcio Segundo, Isadora Garcia, Gabriela Aguiar, Rafael Machado. Thanks also to Rachel Jewkes for assistance in data analysis.
- 2 Cited in “What Men Have to do with it: Public Policies to Promote Gender Equality,” International Center for Research and Women and Instituto Promundo (2010). Available at: <http://www.icrw.org/docs/2010/What-Men-Have-to-Do-With-It.pdf>
- 3 The South Africa data are from the study “Understanding Men’s Health and Use of Violence: Interface of Rape and HIV in South Africa,” 2010, Jewkes R, Silkweyiya Y, Morrell R and Dunkle K, South African Medical Research Council. The same questions were used as part of the IMAGES research in the other countries. Special thanks to Rachel Jewkes for analysis of the initial data.
- 4 Holter O, Svare H and Egeland C (2009). *Gender Equality and Quality of Life: A Norwegian Perspective*. Oslo: The Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK).

The status of children in local government spatial planning

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Translated and edited by Margaret Kernan

This article describes spatial planning processes at local government level in the Netherlands in relation to opportunities for children to play and explore the outdoors close to home: in their neighbourhoods, and in early childhood care and education and school services.¹

In 2009 the Department of Children, Care and Welfare in the Province of North-Holland wanted to research the extent to which children and youth are taken into account in spatial planning across the province's 61 municipalities. The department hoped to increase their understanding of how municipal governments could help meet young children's needs for learning, development and wellbeing, in ways that would also improve the social functioning of neighbourhoods.

Key questions were: What is the local government policy perspective on children, spatial planning and the physical environment? Which sectors and departments in municipal governments are involved? Who has power and influence? Who takes the initiative? What actually happens in practice? And how does all this relate to broader research findings? Methods used were a review of local policy documents and plans, and a survey among civil servants and policy officers, complemented with in-depth group interviews with staff from a range of departments.

There are five broad types of places distinguished in which children can play, learn, meet other children and generally grow, develop and discover

the world. The article will consider them in turn.

Formal play spaces

Formal play spaces are all the physical places specifically designed for children's play. They include such places as playgrounds, football pitches, play gardens, and places to 'hang-out'. The research reveals that formal play spaces, of all five types of spaces, receive by far the most policy attention at municipal level. Municipalities in the Netherlands are advised to ensure that 3% of developed land should be reserved formally for the playing needs of children, although this is not compulsory. The national government has no policy on play, but most municipalities have local *Playspace Plans*.

The number of formal play spaces planned locally depends on the ages of the children to be served, and the distance from their homes. Younger children are seen as needing play spaces nearer to home, which consequently tend to be smaller and more widely dispersed. Play spaces for older children, which may include facilities for skate-boarding or playing football, tend to be fewer, bigger, and further from residential housing.

It is unclear whether this system of planning and distribution actually serves children well. In practice there are many small, unattractive and sometimes badly maintained play spaces distributed around the neighbourhood. Only one municipality tried to change this situation and developed larger 'play oases', catering to the needs of different ages and interests, and of bigger groups. All municipalities complain about the growing safety regulations that make the building of attractive play equipment "a hell of a job".

Evaluations of children's experiences of play spaces rarely take place. Municipalities do not set out to answer such questions as: What is the pedagogical and social climate in the playgrounds? Do girls use them as much as boys? (Research indicates they tend not to). Do many small playgrounds attract the same amount of children as fewer larger playgrounds? Which groups of children? In which kinds of neighbourhoods are many small play places better, and in which kinds of neighbourhoods is a concentrated approach better?

Informal play spaces

Informal play spaces are all the public spaces in the neighbourhood that are not specifically designed for children, but are *also* meant for children and youth, such as green spaces, parks, canal sides, beaches, sidewalks, shopping centers and empty car parks. Such spaces require the municipality

to develop a broadly child-friendly approach to spatial planning. Research reveals that such policies hardly exist. Reasons cited included an absence of norms and guidelines, the cost of land, and the competing demand for car parking. Recently, pleas are more often made for broader sidewalks to accommodate playing children.

Some municipalities try to create child-friendly spaces in green areas such as parks, dunes and woods. They try to arrange more 'wild' and 'messy' or less organized green spaces, and they are sometimes successful. But they are operating against a trend for tidy and arranged green spaces, particularly when those green areas are privatized. Although nature and play is a hot topic in the Netherlands at the moment, good practices are still rare. Or, as one of the policy makers admitted, "There is still a world to win".

Outdoor spaces in children's services and institutions

Play spaces in institutions such as schools, daycare centres and community centres are generally semi-public, and the institutions themselves rather than the municipality are responsible for their organisation and upkeep. When asked about policies in relation to outdoor spaces in schools and daycare centres, the initial response of those interviewed was that there were fewer difficulties in this area because regulations specify a minimum of 3.5 square metres of space per child.

Photo: Lia Karsten

However, there was less clarity on who, in practice, checked that the regulations on quantity of space were being adhered to, or on what the quality of space was like. Regarding schools, a policy official from a middle-sized municipality admitted that she didn't have much insight: "only if a school actually alerts us to a problem, do we go and have a look". Significantly, plans relating to school accommodation deal mostly with the actual building; the schoolyard comes second.

This also applies to the rapidly developing integrated school and daycare centres, where space for outdoor play is a secondary consideration. Daycare provision in the Netherlands is privatised. The officers of the municipal health service are responsible for checking safety of provision, but those interviewed were not aware of specific regulations regarding size and quality of outdoor space.

In some of the municipalities there is a specific policy to make schoolyards accessible to the general public after hours, at weekends and during school holidays. This is supposed to be a response to the shortage of play opportunities in older densely populated neighbourhoods. And there are some success stories, though these remain the exception rather than the rule. Municipalities often have difficulty persuading schools to open up their schoolyard, especially if wear-and-tear of equipment and vandalism

become an issue. Sometimes a deal is made whereby the municipality takes over responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of the space, and the school in turn promises to open the schoolyard for neighbourhood use.

Other play and cultural provisions specifically designed for children

These may include children's farms, cinemas and theatres, and commercial 'pay-to-play' centres – indoors and outdoors – such as amusement parks. How do such places come about? Typically, they are established through initiatives of stakeholders such as residents, private developers, employers or other organisations. Municipalities react to such initiatives, but don't often initiate those projects themselves. So far, municipalities in the Netherlands do not in general consider that such provisions for children increase the attractiveness of a residential area. Children's physical spaces are not included in policies and plans of departments that do not deal specifically with youth.

Safe routes for children

Research has demonstrated that children's possibilities to move around the neighbourhood and beyond safely and independently have decreased enormously. Increasingly, children are accompanied by adults when going to school, visiting friends or going to activities such as swimming classes.

To what extent are municipalities aware of children's safety on their



Background: Local government and young children in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is divided into 12 provinces and 430 municipalities. Policy areas related to children and their environments that are administered at provincial level include child protection, land management, and zoning issues. At municipal level, local elected representatives coordinate and implement policies for young children on education and other service provisions such as programmes for disadvantaged children, and public playgrounds.

daily routes between school, daycare, libraries and football fields? In many local communities there are projects to improve the traffic safety around school – often initiated by the police, and sometimes by the school. Even if only a small percentage of children are brought to school by car, traffic can compromise the safety of those children who come to school unaccompanied. Parents are requested to cycle to school. Bike routes are not always safe for the youngest children

nor are they always considered to be socially safe, since they sometimes go through more isolated green areas.

There is an interesting contrast between the high degree of attention paid to physical safety issues in designing formal play spaces – such as equipment and surfaces – and the relative absence of attention to social safety and traffic security. The costs involved in developing a specific ‘child route’ are high, and for some civil servants the endless calls for safety are too much. One remarked: “How busy are roads in such new housing developments anyway? Nowadays, there is too much emphasis on safety”.

Conclusions

Initiatives relating to children and their physical environment are almost exclusively focused on formal public playgrounds. Children’s use of the outdoors is narrowly defined in terms of play needs only, and those needs are accommodated only in spaces specifically designed for children’s play. This is regarded primarily as an implementation issue and is isolated from broader agendas. All municipalities researched have some civil servants working in the field of play spaces. They work mostly in small, isolated, lower status departments. Success depends mainly on individual capacities and communication skills, particularly useful for getting access to the – higher status – spatial planning department.

There is not much development of new policies focusing on informal play spaces or the outdoor spaces of schools and daycare centres, although these are spaces where children spend an increasing amount of time. The absence of specific norms, evaluation research, and overviews of ‘good practices’ in these areas makes it difficult to make a strong case. Nor is there much development of new policies on creating safe routes for children. While traffic safety around schools receives much support, the development of safe routes for children to increase their range of independent movement rarely happens.

The play sector needs to be involved more in spatial planning from the outset. One of the possibilities to do so is the interdisciplinary development of child-friendly policies at the local level, that mirror children’s daily lives more broadly.

Note

- 1 This article is a summary of the research report: Karsten, L. (2009) *Ruimte voor de Jeugd! Gemeentelijke beleidsinspanning op het terrein van jeugd en ruimte in de provincie Noord Holland (Space for Youth! Local policies in the field of youth and physical space in the region of Noord-Holland)*. Haarlem: Provincie Noord-Holland. More information: c.j.m.karsten@uva.nl.

Children of Turkish seasonal workers

Müge Artar, Development Workshop Cooperative, Turkey

Part of the thinking behind the Bernard van Leer Foundation's new goals (see pp 3) is to find new niches where children's situations are not receiving the attention they should. Discussions with academics and civil society in Turkey identified children of seasonal migrant agricultural workers as a significant group whose needs are not on the radar. To explore what these children need, it was first necessary to find out how they live. This article shares the results of the research the Foundation commissioned.

Seasonal migration for agricultural labour is increasingly coming under the spotlight in Turkey. The national government's Labour Department has recently set up a panel to look at the working conditions of these labourers, who typically spend up to six months of each year living in temporary tented accommodation and working on farms. Often they are former smallholders who abandoned their rural homes as industrialisation of agriculture made small-scale farming uneconomical, and who find they lack the skills to secure employment in the urban centres to which they migrated.

These seasonal migrant workers tend to lack rights and negotiating power. They also tend to travel with their families, including small children. What is life like for these children in their temporary tented homes? This research set out to answer that question by using 'participant observation' methodology – in other words, the research team lived in the tent camp and had the opportunity to combine their own firsthand observations with data-gathering. The result is a uniquely

textured insight into young children's realities which it is hoped can now feed into the growing national debate about the situation of migrant labourers.

Focusing on children between the ages of 0-6, the study was conducted over seven days in Yassihöyük village, Ankara, Polatlı, at the beginning of October 2009. This article summarises the main findings.

Living conditions in the labourers' camps

Approximately one kilometre north of Yassihöyük, groups of 32 and 35 tents were pitched on each side of the road. The tents were made from thick linen balecloth and iron frames, tied down with soil-filled sacks and sometimes covered with nylon for extra protection against the cold at night. Tents had generally one single room which could be occupied by up to 10-12 people, and each tent harboured at least one married couple with children. They were mostly Kurdish families from Şanlıurfa, with also a couple of Arabic families. Many were related or acquainted.

What is life like for young children in temporary tented homes of seasonal migrant workers? The research set out to answer that question by using 'participant observation' methodology.

Photo: Courtesy Development Workshop researchers



They had limited contact with the village, and villagers tended to prefer these camps to be sited at a distance. The employer provided water by tanker every two or three days. Each tent had its own bath area, also improvised from fabric and tent poles, a couple of metres away from the tent, with a hole dug for a toilet. Electricity was provided by generator for three hours per evening and used for lighting and charging cellphones. Cooking was done inside the tent, in an area separated by a curtain, using both gas cylinders and wood-fired stoves.

The workers had found their seasonal employment via labour intermediaries, who charge

commission to both worker and employer. Some said that they had borrowed money from the intermediary and came to work in return. Often they work in different places from year to year. Some had been doing this work for only one year, some for almost 30. The workers generally set out for the fields at about 6 or 7 am and work for 12 to 14 hours. They are paid according to how much produce they collect, and do not know how much they will be paid until the work is completed.

Most members of the family work in the field, often including children from around as young as eight. Women do the domestic chores – cleaning, child care, breadmaking, dishwashing – after they get back from work, often making bread together. They did not seem to expect help from their husbands, believing it would damage male dignity. Young males said they were bored in the camps, but in any case their work left them little leisure time to do anything other than sleep. It was usually the elders who watched over young children during the daytime.

Conditions for children aged up to six

Young children generally played in groups, often with objects they found – dirt, rocks, pill boxes; tying a rope to a can and pulling it, using an animal bone as a shovel. Girls sometimes had rag dolls made by their mothers or grandmothers. As well as classic games such as Hopscotch and Blind man's buff, some children

introduced games they had picked up at school or kindergarten – often the children of the intermediaries, who appeared better groomed and educated. Generally the children were peevish and intolerant, both boys and girls often resorting to violence. Though they were fluent enough in Kurdish, it was evident that they lag behind their peers in understanding and expressing themselves in Turkish.

Most mothers had limited interactions with their children, and although some included their children in their work activities as a form of play – rolling dough, baking bread or doing laundry – none were observed to initiate interactions with the aim of teaching the child something or building their cognitive skills. Father-child interactions were extremely limited, in line with cultural expectations; children were expected to be silent and not disturb their fathers while they rested after work.

Mothers said they bathe their children every day, though it was observed that they seemed to bathe them while doing the laundry, which happened at most once a week. Clothes tended to be dirty and stained. Almost all mothers said they breastfed their children, then give them the same foods they eat themselves. They were not aware of any need for a special diet for children, and in general they had no source of advice or information on appropriate parenting.

The migrant lifestyle made it difficult to follow up on children's vaccinations.

After food, healthcare was the biggest expenditure: diarrhea, flu and cold were rife due to poor nutrition and hygiene and the combination of extremely hot days and freezing nights. Healthcare can be a major expense as the money earned during this seasonal work has to last for the rest of the year, so dealing with health problems is often postponed unless they are serious.

On the whole, all children were deprived of education. Most parents had no concept of pre-school education, and accessing primary education was difficult due to the migratory lifestyle which typically takes them away between May and October. Most older children had dropped out of school, or were thinking about it, as a result of difficulties in catching up with the work they missed. Most under-10s were lacking in literacy. Some of the more experienced seasonal labourers recalled that they themselves had grown up in these camps in similar conditions, and saw little prospect for their children to have a different future.

Space to play: Experiences from São Paulo

Marco Figueiredo, Project Coordinator and Director of Ato Cidadão, Brazil

***Ato Cidadão* (Citizen Act) works with the Project *Estação Atitude Cidadã* in communities of São Paulo where children are especially at risk. Together they support the creation, organisation and consolidation of safe spaces for children, which provide access to quality care, games, leisure and social interaction.**

São Paulo is the largest city in South America and one of the largest in the world, and its social issues are on a matching scale – notably, a huge and growing difference in the quality of life between different social classes. Vulnerable and excluded populations are concentrated in peripheral areas of the city, distinguished by higher rates of deprivation and unemployment, as well as the highest rates of infant-child mortality.

In these areas children are growing up in environments marked by violence, alcoholism and drugs, where they lack access to basic rights such as education, health and culture, and also to safe spaces that would contribute to their healthy development. Three striking characteristics are present in all such communities:

- *A culture of violence.* The effects that a culture of violence has on ways of living, interacting and communicating can be defined as ‘indirect victimization’. They include a fear of speaking about violent events outside the privacy of the home, and restraint in the use of public spaces. There are negative influences on contact between individuals, social cohesion, social capital and possibilities for collective action.

- *Overlapping disadvantages.* Comparative analysis of different population groups shows that inequality goes beyond just the economic condition. What little protection children have comes from their own community, and the fact that there is still a small measure of capacity for collective action in an environment of incivility and disrespect, shows that deprivation is due to the deficiency of the public authorities.
- *The fight for survival.* A phenomenon that affects the entire human being: the fight for survival. It dominates actions as well as feelings. It limits individuals’ prospects of growth and development and compromises their well-being.

Beyond these three common factors, each community also has its own specific social risks. To be successful in creating safe spaces for children, we knew we must also consider the differences and variations between communities. We could not hope to transform communities by imposing a standard model. We needed participation of the community, including its children, in order for the project to ‘fit’ the profile and vision of each community.



According to Ato Cidadão, proposing to create a space dedicated to playing always gets attention, positive feedback and support from all members of the population straight away or over time.

Photo: Courtesy Ato Cidadão

A great deal of work went into developing the participatory methodology used in this intervention. It's important to remember how relatively recent and novel the principles of the democratic process are to Brazil.

Our strategy has two parallel strands. Firstly, institutional engagement in order to promote public policies for children. This has two stages: engaging first with the various councils and institutions of the Rights Guarantee System (RGS) – primarily the Tutelary Council, which comprises five councilors elected by the population of each district, and is responsible for guaranteeing the rights and protection of children and adolescents; and then with other representatives from the

area and with professionals from public schools.

Using public spaces for play

Parallel to these institutional actions, we carry out direct actions to allow people to experience first hand the positive effects on children of playing and socializing with each other. In public spaces such as squares and sports areas, many in precarious situations, we organise leisure activities – offering toys, entertainment and traditional games for the young and for their families.

This practice helps the project to become universally accepted: even those who do not actively contribute tend to become supporters in some way. In our experience, proposing to

create a space dedicated to playing always gets attention, positive feedback and support from all members of the population straight away or over time. Playing contributes towards socialization, family life and physical, cognitive and emotional development. Those who embrace these activities directly improve the quality of their lives.

There is also a second stage to the project, involving technical training in leisure and recreation for members of the community. This not only strengthens each student, but also helps to promote family integration, optimise public and collective spaces, identify existing potential in the community, implement activities developed during the project, and encourage community

members to value leisure and the culture of childhood.

The importance of playing in appropriate environments is ever more significant in a society where children are pressured by expectations into assuming the roles of adults at an increasingly young age. We can see this happening when children prefer clothes and electronic objects to simple and collective toys and games, when children are more consumerist and status-conscious. Nowadays children generally play less than in the past; they don't play as many street games, and they are no longer capable of producing their own toys.

We also see this phenomenon in the increasing amount of restrictions to children's playing environments, and the lack of spaces where children can be without having to share the space with an infinity of other things.

For these reasons it is important to develop activities and spaces that promote spontaneous fun and games, offering the natural joy of freedom, involving children and helping them to grow. However, it is also necessary for playing to contain innovative elements, based on listening to the needs and expectations of the children. Child participation is fundamental in constructing such new concepts.

It is also essential to involve adults in the development of the project, sensitize them to the children's needs, and emphasize that enabling children to play games is a great way to contribute to their development. We

therefore begin with a personal story from each participant – their memories of playing games, voices from the past that may give a new voice to today's children. By the end, such a sensitized and involved adult – along with the team of the Citizen Act – is more likely to want to create spaces for children to grow in a healthy environment.

Challenges from adult culture

All individuals are influenced by context and culture, the environment in which they grew up, and the family and non-family relationships that shaped them. The main challenges faced by an intervention of this type very often derive from this adult universe and the cultural context of communities. The challenges include:

- *Questions of survival.* When adults' attentions are focused on survival, it is harder for them to establish and maintain an identity that considers the needs of children.
- *Public policies.* Public authorities do not prioritise considering children as citizens with full rights, with special attention to their particular development needs. Nor is this one of the main aspirations of the community, which prioritises more immediate needs.
- *Child participation.* Many people are culturally conditioned to consider children as 'small adults', without any belief in children's capacity and autonomy, and – including managers of public policies –

without understanding their needs. Such people see only a need to keep children busy, rather than to allow them to exercise citizenship – including the right to occupy spaces and participate in public actions: a right that a child should have to the same extent as any other citizen.

- *Social risks at a macro scale.* Severe situations that continuously affect children, in all the regions of the city to a greater or lesser intensity, include diverse types of exploitation and violence. Some of the most common are the use of drugs, exploitation and child labor, sexual abuse and aggression.

The concept of full protection for children remains a novel one in Brazil, despite many initiatives to disseminate and spread ownership of this concept. But we believe it is necessary to do justice to the work of many people championing the rights of children.

Improving the life chances of low-income young children in urban Brazil

Irene Rizzini, President of the International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood (CIESPI) at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), and Malcolm Bush, Research Fellow Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, and Senior Consultant for CIESPI.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation commissioned CIESPI (International Center for Research and Policy on Childhood) to study opportunities and challenges presented by the Foundation's three new goals – reducing violence, improving the physical environment and scaling early learning – in low-income communities in urban Brazil. This article is a summary of their report, the full version of which can be found on www.bernardvanleer.org.

As well as a wide variety of reports, documents, and news stories, for this research CIESPI carried out an in-depth examination of the situation of young children in two low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro: Rocinha and Bangu. This involved interviews and focus groups with neighborhood residents, youth, service providers and public officials.

We chose Rocinha and Bangu because they are significant low-income communities, and also because they illustrate some important differences among low-income communities. While young children in Brazil's low-income communities face many of the same challenges, low-income communities differ from each other in ways that impact children's life chances.

Rocinha is the largest low-income community in Brazil. Bangu is a more moderate-income community with some low-income sub-sections (Nova Alianca, Vila Alianca and Minha Deusa, and a poorer area within Minha Deusa called Beira Linha) which we chose for the study because they are on the periphery of the city, forty

kilometers from the center. The study included a representative range of environments from the partly planned to the worst of unplanned shacks.

This article discusses in turn the relevance of the Foundation's three goals – improving physical environments, reducing violence, and scaling early learning – in these communities, and in low-income urban communities in Brazil more generally. For each goal, the context is described and some priorities and opportunities identified. It is important to note that the three topics overlap in many ways. Violence and poverty affect many aspects of life in Rio's low-income communities, and relief from these basic problems would improve the overall life chances of young children.

Before addressing the three goals in turn, it is helpful to bear in mind some overall challenges and opportunities. In general, there is a stark contrast in Brazil between the comprehensive and detailed rights for children guaranteed by the 1988 Constitution and the 1990 Statute on the Child and the Adolescent, and the implementation of

those rights in the lives of children in low-income communities. In a sense, the challenge is implementing rights that already exist.

This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that there is little tradition of public policy advocacy and monitoring in the non-profit sector in Brazil, because of the long years of oligarchic and dictatorial rule. This includes lack of any tradition of public access to detailed, line-item public budgets to see whether funds are being spent as planned.

A key opportunity therefore is better monitoring of the public sector to persuade the different levels of government to fulfill their responsibilities under the law. Better monitoring relies on a number of tools. These include regular output of reliable data that can be thrust into the public debate, and local activism to draw public attention.

Local activism in turn requires strong and honest local non-profits that connect in networks to amplify their voice and effectiveness. There is a growing practice of forming non-profit networks to press for change. At the

local level, however, these networks are chronically short of resources, and often lack the technical tools to collect the kind of evidence needed to make their case and to present it in ways that gain the attention of the appropriate public bodies. They would benefit from technical assistance in areas such as public budget analysis and advocacy.

The presence of effective community organisations can make a big difference in the lives of low-income communities, especially in providing childcare. But such community organisations need help to tap public and private funds. Amplifying the local residents' voices inside and outside their community – and promoting

"A key opportunity is better monitoring of the public sector to persuade the different levels of government to fulfill their responsibilities under the law."

fair-minded media coverage – is also an important opportunity, especially to tackle the problem of discrimination against the poor and the non-white.

Looking at wider structural issues, about 50% of Brazilian workers work in the informal sector, where they lack the basic protections of a minimum wage, anti-discrimination rights, and access to a public pension. Some economists argue that changes in the tax system to

reduce employers' tax on employment would bring many people in the informal sector into the formal sector, with many benefits to low-income workers and their young children.

Finally, Brazil and Rio in particular are currently in the international spotlight because of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games. A great deal of infrastructure investment is planned for these events. Community groups and coalitions could draw up an agenda for how the preparation for the events could be shaped to permanently benefit the residents of low-income communities.

Improving young children's physical environments

The basic characteristics of low-income communities in Rio de Janeiro and elsewhere in urban Brazil are that most of them are unplanned and built without any reference to building codes. As a result they are poorly constructed, often lack basic urban infrastructure, and are overcrowded, dangerous, and unhealthy. Many of the home floor plans are as small as three by three meters, and in the hillside communities may get no sun or ventilation throughout the day.

Recently, after heavy rains in Rio, two hundred people were killed instantly in one low-income community by a mudslide that engulfed their homes. The community had been built on a garbage dump.

All our correspondents were clear that there are no places in the low-

income communities that are healthy and safe for young children to play in except for inside some educational and religious institutions. All the other places where young children actually played were unhealthy and dangerous. The few paved streets are garbage ridden and contain open sewers, and the homes have illegal electric transmission wires hung over the flat roofs where children play.

These conditions produce high rates of respiratory disease, tuberculosis, leprosy and injuries. There is a massive underinvestment in primary care facilities, and children go untreated until their health conditions become severe.

Priorities

- Highlight and act on the inter-relationship between the environment and health. A treated child often returns to a home that was the source of the health problem.
- Act immediately on the largest threats to health namely the lack of safe water, adequate sanitation and garbage disposal.
- Remove the residents of the most dangerous communities, such as the Beira Linha, to publicly subsidized housing.
- Develop, if necessary, and start to enforce basic safety regulations especially in relation to illegal electric wires, bus safety, and traffic violations that are life threatening.

- Use local groups and networks for education and training to help women who wish to avoid unwanted pregnancies.
- Give local resident groups the necessary technical assistance to develop strategies for holding the municipality accountable for the poor state of local services.

Opportunities

- Promote policy development and policy activity to improve low-income communities in connection with capital expenditures for the 2014 World Football Cup and the 2016 Olympic Games, which are to be held in Rio de Janeiro.
- Ensure that the current urban renewal schemes take into account the range of residents' concerns.
- Existing official and voluntary networks could be strengthened to promote low-income communities' agendas with the municipality and the state.
- The way parents with young children use the extensive public health programme just starting in Rocinha could be compared to the experience of parents in the majority of favelas with poor access to primary care. This comparison would help make the case for extending the programme.

Reducing violence

Violence pervades many aspects of life in low-income communities, including commerce, education and simple daily

tasks and routines. The violence in Rio favelas was captured in the film *Cidade de Deus* (City of God), although some residents and critics argue that the film exaggerated and ritualized the violence in the community.

As the research evidence mounts that early exposure to violence influences adult behavior and impacts early brain development, it becomes imperative to chart the reality of violence in low-income communities and to suggest ways in which it could be reduced. In Rio, community level violence has four major sources: the drug traffickers who control a number of the low-income communities; the informal militias composed of off-duty policemen who have organized themselves to oppose the traffickers but who inflict their own violence on people who oppose them; the "groups of exterminators" (*grupos de extermínio*) who kill for hire; and the various police forces who until quite recently "invaded" the low-income communities, killing indiscriminately. They did this when the favela violence spilled out into middle-income neighborhoods.

There are a number of ways to illustrate the appallingly high rates of violence in low-income communities in urban Brazil. Adolescent deaths from homicides are an all too vivid reminder of what faces the current generation of zero to eight year olds if the levels of violence are not reduced. In 2006, 3,424 adolescents between the ages of twelve and nineteen were

murdered in Rio de Janeiro – a rate of 4.9 per 1,000 adolescents in that age group.¹ In Sao Paulo, a much larger city, the total number of young people who died from homicide in the same year was 1,992, a rate of 1.4 per 1,000.

To put homicide rates in international perspective, the rate of homicides for all ages per 1,000 inhabitants (latest figures available for each country) are 0.0088 in Germany, 0.0382 in the Philippines, 0.054 in the United States, 0.58 in Venezuela, and 0.25 in Brazil.²

In Brazil, the risk of adolescent males being victims of homicide is 12 times higher than for adolescent females, and the risk for non-white adolescents 2.6 times higher than for white adolescents.³ While the homicide rate is very high for adolescents, it is twice as high for people in the nineteen to twenty-four year age group. The risk only starts to diminish notably after age 30.⁴ In addition to the violence in the streets, community leaders report high rates of domestic violence.

Recently, unprecedented cooperation between the federal, state and city governments produced the first ever scheme to bring regular order to a few favelas. The scheme is called UPP, or police peace-keeping units, and involves a heavy “invasion” to chase out drug traffickers followed by systematic attempts at community policing. While the scheme is currently only operational in eight of Rio’s over 1,000 favelas, it has been received with cautious optimism by residents and has

produced some striking indicators of success.

Priorities

- The UPP pacification project is the largest sustained and broadly community oriented police action to stem violence in recent history. The programme needs to be extended to more communities and its integrity protected by preventing corruption in the new community police forces.
- Even very young children are leading lives heavily circumscribed by violence. One key to reducing the impact of violence on their lives is constructing and protecting safe places in the community where they can play outside of their homes.
- Violence inside the home is the result of a mix of pressures on parents. Relieving some of the pressures on parents caused by the challenges of living with a low-income is likely to give parents more energy for effective childrearing.
- Community mothers would like a physical space where they could talk to each other and to wise reference people about their children and get some guidance in raising them.
- In low-income communities, families rely heavily on public services. But many of these services are grossly inadequate. Resident leaders would welcome assistance to organize decent services more effectively.
- A more open discourse about physical and sexual abuse and more

resources for helping abused women would help more mothers cope with these problems.

- The public health authorities are particularly concerned about the rapid spread of crack cocaine among young people, particularly street children. There need to be continued attempts at more effective prevention and treatment strategies.

Opportunities

- *O Sistema de Garantia de Direitos de Crianças e Adolescentes* (System for Guaranteeing the Rights of Children and Adolescents) is a public/non-profit/individual structure for guaranteeing the rights of all children. There is a great interest in implementing this system among key judicial and political actors.
- If crèches and pre-schools could access more support for e.g. out of the home activities for children and their parents, more children would spend more time in stimulating and safe environments.
- Parents can access such opportunities directly from the churches and other existing non-profit organisations. Supporting those programmes to become more effective and stable (including improving the management skills of their leaders and their ability to attract public and private sector grants) would in turn increase their ability to help families with young children.

One key to reducing the impact of violence on their lives is constructing and protecting safe places in the community where they can play outside of their homes.

Photo: Courtesy CIESPI



- The public and private sector attempts to turn half-day schooling into full-day programmes for older children is, in the opinion of residents, likely to reduce violence on the streets as growing children are given alternatives to hanging around on the streets.
- Remnants of community and sports centers in low-income communities still exist from prior administrations, although many of them are deteriorated or even closed. Renovating these facilities with some attention paid to programming for young children and their parents would provide more opportunities for these children.

Scaling quality early learning

Parents in low-income families in Brazil are likely to have had a low level of education. While rates of basic as opposed to functional illiteracy have been declining rapidly, low-income populations still have low levels of years of schooling. However eager parents are to see their children succeed, they may not have the resources and knowledge to maximize their children's development by effective practices in the home. Long commutes to work on very inadequate public transportation also mean that some parents only see their children at the weekend.

While there is increasing interest, and indeed a federal mandate, to

provide pre-school education to all in Brazil, few of our respondents talked about the earliest years of life when most infants and young children stay at home. This lack of information or even interest in the infant years may reflect a premise that child development strategies and programmes are only relevant to children three years of age or older, or a lack of knowledge or interest in strategies to assist younger children.

"Some of our respondents saw a huge difference in quality between public and private crèches and pre-schools."

Despite the mandate for pre-school, many low-income communities do not have enough places in public pre-schools and many of the existing places are only half-day programmes. Working parents often have to lock their very young children in their homes during the unsupervised hours. In Brazil, the chances of attending pre-school are mediated by income. A recent report on schooling showed that 11.5% of the poorest children aged zero to three went to crèches, compared with 37.7% of the 20% wealthiest children.⁶ Both percentages increased dramatically for children aged four to five; those figures were 64.5% of the poorest 20% of children versus 94.2% of the wealthiest children.⁷

While only a few parents can afford the cost of private crèches, the municipality of Rio provides grants to some private crèches to subsidize poorer children. Some of our respondents saw a huge difference in quality between public and private crèches and pre-schools, based in part on the fact that private facilities may have a staff student ratio of 1-15 compared with as few as 1-40 in the public sector. There are also serious concerns about the quality of early childhood facility staff. Both public and private facilities report serious difficulties recruiting and retaining trained staff.

Parents are the key to young children's development and many parents in the favelas struggle against harsh odds to maximize their children's development. But some are overwhelmed by life in the favelas or have succumbed to drug abuse or depression.

A number of non-profit and public organisations provide cultural, educational, and leisure programming for young children, but these groups have very few resources and simply cannot meet the demand.

Priorities

- Articulate more strongly the importance of developmental strategies for the earliest years, zero to three. Recruit and retain trained teachers in the poorest neighborhoods and offer appropriate

incentives for working in low-income schools.

- In the new federal Administration which will follow the October 2010 presidential elections, maintain the priority of providing enough whole day crèches for every child whose parents want a place.
- Promote more effective monitoring of the quality of early education.
- Monitor the new teacher training programmes to ensure that they result in more effective education in the classroom.
- Develop safe recreational places in the community for very young children and their caretakers.
- Develop strategies to reach out to the neediest parents including single parents to give them support as they struggle to raise their children. Carefully constructed parent education programmes in other countries could be used as models to extend such programmes in Rio.^{8,9}
- Establish a new openness and non-profit sector interest in the key tool of monitoring public budgets against mandates and programme plans for very young children.
- Improve public transportation because poor transportation increases the difficulty of getting parents, children and staff to and from early childhood facilities, and parents to and from work.

Opportunities

- A community rich in non-profit helping, cultural, social, and

religious organisations makes it easier for families to cope with the day to day demands of child rearing. These programmes can be a source of regular, safe and developmentally useful activity for very young children.

- Structural changes such as better transportation and the inclusion of more workers in the formal work sector with its attendant benefits would have large impacts on the residents of low-income communities.
- The laws and the plans exist for the extension of crèches and pre-school to all children. The keys to the implementation of existing plans is to develop through existing networks and coalitions the nascent tools of monitoring and advocacy to discover what is planned, what is happening and to press for full implementation of the mandates.

Notes

- 1 Observatorio de Favelas. *Indice de Homicidios na Adolescencia: Analise Preliminar dos Homicidios em Municipios Brasileiros com mais de 100,000 habitantes*. In partnership with Programa de Reducao da Violencia Letal Contra Adolescentes e Jovens, Unicef, Secretaria Especial dos Direitos Humanos, 2009.
- 2 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_intentional_homicide_rate Downloaded on May 5, 2010 . This entry was compiled from a large number of sources.
- 3 Observatorio de Favelas. *Indice de Homicidios na Adolescencia*, 2009, p. 33-34.
- 4 Ibid p. 35.
- 5 See, for example, ABMP (Brazilian Association of Magistrates and Promoters of Justice). *Cadernos de Fluxos Operacionais Sistemicos. Protecao Integral e Atuacao em Rede na Garantia dos Direitos de Crianças e Adolescentes*, 2010 (Comprehensive Protection and Implementation in Networks for the Guarantee of Rights for Children and Adolescents).
- 6 Conselho de Desenvolvimento Economico e Social. *Retrato das Desigualdades na Escolarizacao e no Sistema Tributario Nacional*, Brasilia, 2009, p. 19.
- 7 Ibid, p. 20.
- 8 See, for example, Nikita Tolani, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn and Sharon Lynn Kogan. *Parenting Education for Poor Young Children: a Cross-National Exploration*. Paper presented to the UNICEF/New School International Conference, New York, October 23, 2006.
- 9 For a comprehensive discussion of these issues see Deborah Ghate and Neal Hazel, *Parenting in Poor Environments: Stress, Support and Coping*, London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2002.

News from the Foundation



The Bernard van Leer Foundation's new website

What do you think of this edition of *Early Childhood Matters*? It's important to us to know whether our publishing programme is hitting the mark: we would like to invite your feedback through our website, www.bernardvanleer.org. We recently redesigned it to allow readers of our publications to comment on them. What would you like to see more of? How can we improve what we publish?

Other new features on our website include a dedicated section for regular messages from our executive director, Lisa Jordan, and a collection of resources for journalists who are interested in learning more about covering children's issues.

As noted by Michael Feigelson (pp 3), over the coming months we will be fleshing out the strategies for applying our three new goals in our new countries. Keep checking the website for these to be posted as they become ready.

The Foundation and Roma children

Europe is currently halfway through the Decade of the Roma, an initiative of the EU, Open Society Institute and the World Bank. The Bernard van Leer Foundation is playing a leading role in an initiative of the European Foundation Centre (EFC) to take advantage of this opportunity to highlight the rights and needs of Roma children.

In March the Foundation hosted a workshop on early childhood and the Roma. The meeting heard from representatives of the Roma people – from countries including Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Germany, Greece, Serbia and Croatia – that enthusiasm at the EU level does not always trickle down to its member states.

The workshop succeeded in establishing a shared understanding of the main barriers to effective implementation of programmes for Roma children, as well as agreement on key policy messages that were then taken to the EU Roma Summit in April 2010.

Readers interested in learning more about the EFC initiative for Roma children can follow links on our website to reports on both the March workshop and the April summit, along with a summary of research prepared for the former. From our website home page, navigate to ‘our programmes’, ‘geographical scope’ and ‘European union’.

The Oscar van Leer Fellowships: Promoting better media coverage of Early Childhood Development



Photo: Eric Wamanji N.

In June 2010 the six inaugural Oscar van Leer Fellows – young journalists from developing countries – completed a four-week professional training course conducted by the Radio Netherlands Training Centre (RNTC). The specially designed course combined high-level professional training in skills related to journalism on early childhood development (ECD) and children’s rights.

While RNTC worked to build the Fellows’ all-round journalistic skills – including training in multimedia reporting, which proved especially appreciated as all six are print journalists by trade – ECD resource persons including Elly Singer, Shanti George and Margaret Kernan ran sessions on the theory of ECD, democracy and citizenship, and children’s rights. The Fellows also visited Foundation-funded projects

in the Netherlands which showcase participatory methodologies with young children, and which they found a revealing comparison point for early childhood programmes in their home countries. At the closing ceremony, the Foundation’s executive director Lisa Jordan emphasised the importance of working with the media to promote children’s issues, while RNTC programme manager Peter Veenendale noted the importance of improving skills of young journalists from the majority world and helping them to establish for themselves a particular area of expertise.

The six Fellows, chosen from over 350 applicants in 2009, were Kanina Foss (South Africa), Namita Kohli (India), Tatiana Velasquez (Columbia), Carmen Matos (Dominican Republic), Eric Wamanji N. and Nick Oluoch (Kenya).

Further reading

The contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society

Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson and Yoshie Kaga Unesco, 2008

This document is the result of an international workshop 'Early Childhood Education for a Sustainable Society', held in Göteborg, Sweden, in May 2007, during which delegates of sixteen countries contributed a diversity of insights, perspectives and experiences on early childhood and how it can contribute to build a sustainable society. This report offers a rare and valuable collection of reflections on the linkages between early education and sustainable development.

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001593/159355e.pdf>

Building Young Hearts: Physical Activity, Young People and the Physical Environment

The National Heart Alliance, The Irish Heart Foundation, 2010

The National Heart Alliance (NHA) and the Irish Heart Foundation (IHF) recently launched their advocacy Position Paper Building Young Hearts - Physical Activity, Young People and the Physical Environment. The Paper aims to show how the physical environment can improve young people's opportunities for physical activity and that it should be a key focus of policy for Government and Local Authorities.

www.irishheart.ie/iopen24/pub/building_young_hearts_final_pdf_2010.pdf

Children and Violence

This website offers a shared platform for civil society on the follow-up to the UN Secretary-General's Study on Violence Against Children of 2006. This platform aims to support strong and effective follow-up to the Study recommendations.

www.crin.org/violence

The Daphne Toolkit

The Daphne Toolkit is an archive of projects supported by the European Commission's Daphne Programme to prevent and combat violence against children, young people and women, and to protect victims and groups at risk. It is also an active resource for those planning new projects in this field.

http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/daphnetoolkit/html/welcome/dpt_welcome_en.html

European Network Preventing Violence Against Children & Young People

This European network is an open meeting point of organisations and professionals promoting children's rights and preventing violence against

children and young people. The network currently consists of 290 members from 35 countries. Since 2001 members have been exchanging information, participating in debates and conferences, and accessing international funds, to promote the aims of the network and their local objectives.

www.omega-graz.at/DAPHNE-Database/index.asp

un Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children

2006

The United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children has been a global effort to paint a detailed picture of the nature, extent and causes of violence against children, and to propose clear recommendations for action to prevent and respond to it. This is the first time that an attempt has been made to document the reality of violence against children around the world, and to map out what is being done to stop it.

www.unviolencestudy.org

Transforming Children's Spaces Children's and Adults' Participation in Designing Learning Environments

Alison Clark

Routledge, 2010

With the expansion of early childhood education and the move to 'extended

schools', more young children will spend more time than ever before in institutions. Based on two actual building projects, this book is the first of its kind to demonstrate the possibilities of including young children's perspectives in the design and review of children's spaces.

www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415458603/

**A History of Children's Play and Play Environments
Toward a Contemporary Child-Saving Movement**

Joe L. Frost
Routledge, 2009

This valuable book traces the history of children's play and play environments from their roots in ancient Greece and Rome to the present time in the high stakes testing environment. Through this exploration, the author shows how this history informs where we are today and why we need to re-establish play as a priority.

www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415806206/

A sense of place: environments, community and services for young children

Children in Europe, 18

Children in Europe is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0-10, and those

interested in children's issues. Issue 18 considers the significance of 'place' and community and their relationship with services for young children. Place and community, as much as families, can shape children's lives, informing their sense of identity, social relationships and understanding of the world.

www.childrenineurope.org/english.php

Elements of a high quality early learning and child care system Working Documents, Quality by Design

Childcare Resource and Research Unit, University of Toronto, 2005

A system made up of a series of linked elements is the best way to ensure that high quality early learning and child care (ELCC) programmes are the norm rather than the exception, according to research and comparative analysis. These elements — Ideas, Governance, Infrastructure, Planning and policy development, Financing, Human resources, Physical environment, Data, research and evaluation — that make up the system need to be taken into account together. Considered individually, their potential to have a positive impact will be weaker.

www.childcarequality.ca/wdocs/QbD_Elements.pdf

Reaching the marginalized

EFA Global Monitoring Report Unesco, 2010

The global economic crisis could create a lost generation of children in the world's poorest countries whose life chances will have been irreparably damaged by a failure to protect their right to education. The 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report looks at concrete solutions for making sure that no children are excluded from schooling.

www.unesco.org/en/efareport/reports/2010-marginalization

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Bernard van Leer Foundation

Investing in the development of young children

The Bernard van Leer Foundation funds and shares knowledge about work in early childhood development. The Foundation was established in 1949 and is based in the Netherlands. Our income is derived from the sale of Royal Packaging Industries Van Leer N.V., bequeathed to the Foundation by Dutch industrialist and philanthropist Bernard van Leer (1883 to 1958).

Our mission is to improve opportunities for children up to age 8 who are growing up in socially and economically difficult circumstances. We see this both as a valuable end in itself and as a long-term means to promoting more cohesive, considerate and creative societies with equal opportunities and rights for all.

We work primarily by supporting programmes implemented by local partners. These include public, private and community-based organisations.

Working through partnerships is intended to build local capacity, promote innovation and flexibility, and help to ensure that the work we fund is culturally and contextually appropriate.

We also aim to leverage our impact by working with influential allies to advocate for young children. Our free publications share lessons we have learned from our own grantmaking activities and feature agenda-setting contributions from outside experts. Through our publications and advocacy, we aim to inform and influence policy and practice not only in the countries where we operate but globally.

In our current strategic plan, we are pursuing three programme goals: reducing violence in young children's lives, taking quality early education to scale, and improving young children's physical environments. We are pursuing

these goals in eight countries – Peru, India, the Netherlands, Israel, Uganda, Turkey, Brazil and Tanzania – as well as undertaking a regional approach within the European Union.

In addition, until 2012 we will continue to work in the Caribbean, South Africa and Mexico on strengthening the care environment, transitions from home to school and respect for diversity.

www.bernardvanleer.org