

On 26–28 September 1996 the Directors of Childwatch International key institutions within the field of child research gathered for a workshop in Wild Dunes, South Carolina, under the auspices of the Institute for Families in Society at the University of South Carolina, and its Director, Gary Melton. The purpose of the workshop was to define further lines of collaboration among the institutions of the network, and to promote the results from child research.

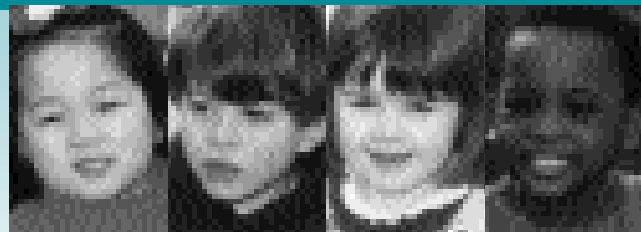
Since the birth of Childwatch in 1992, the small secretariat, located at the University of Oslo, Norway, has concentrated its work on identifying needs for international research collaboration and information exchange on children's issues, and to find adequate ways of responding to those needs. The primary objective has been to initiate and coordinate international research and information projects on children's living conditions and the implementation of children's rights. Today the network counts 28 key institutions and a multitude of individual contacts.

Out of the 28 key institutions, 22 were represented at the Wild Dunes Workshop. In addition, the president of Childwatch for the last three years, Professor Ferran Casas from the University of Barcelona, and Associate Professor Sharon Stephens from the university of Michigan, took part in the meeting, together with the three members of the Childwatch secretariat. Needless to say, such a group represented a wealth of experiences and competencies from the wide variety of disciplines, and gave three full days of rich discussions.

In his opening speech, the former President of Childwatch, Ferran Casas, compared Childwatch to a child. Not a baby or a toddler any more, but an independent being, actively exploring the world, reaching beyond the secure home base. It has learned the basic skills for relating to the world, but has still a lot to learn. As Childwatch is getting more consolidated,

# CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL

## Towards a Consolidated International Network



**Anne Kielland**

discussion that not only highlights the similarities and common interests of the key institutions, but that also aims to explain the diversity among them, was found to be in its place.

Professor Sharon Stephens presented her plans for a meta-research project that could give a more complete picture of the diversity of international child research. Such a project can be a comparative approach to institutional, cultural and historical frameworks for doing research on children and childhood, focusing on the international institutionalisation of child research – and some of the difficulties and challenges of international collaboration. The project calls for an active participation from several key institutions.

The meeting shared experiences from working in various networks at global and regional level. The particular aim of this

discussion was to find ways to expand the Childwatch to cover all relevant parts of the world, to use the networks as effective fora for cooperation and to mobilise relevant networks to facilitate and support capacity building and capacity strengthening within the field of child research.

The workshop also discussed how the World Wide Web and the Internet can be used as network tools to achieve common objectives. For the moment, seven key institutions cooperate with representatives from UNESCO, International Save the Children Alliance, The World Bank and the Child Rights Information Network on the Childwatch initiated project 'Children's House in Cyberspace'. Children's House is an interactive resource centre on the Internet – a meeting place for the exchange of information that serves the wellbeing of children. Dedicated to

### Preventing

### Abuse and

### Neglect of

### Children with

### Disabilities

A report entitled *Proposed Plan of Action for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect of Children with Disabilities* identifies the special protection needs of children with disabilities.

Commissioned by the Department of Health and Family Services, under the auspices of the National Child Protection Council, Wallis Consulting Group undertook extensive consultations in 1994 with experts in the field, service providers, community and mutual support groups, governments, parents and carers.

The report outlines eight Action Areas for priority. While all eight were strongly supported, support for carers of children with disabilities was regarded as the highest priority. Within the Action Areas, Priority Actions are recommended for implementation by either the Commonwealth or State and Territory Governments.

The report is available free of charge. For further information and copies of the report, contact: Ms Ramanee Weearatne, Family Services Branch, Department of Health and Family Services, GPO Box 9848, Canberra, ACT 2601. Phone (06) 289 3735. Fax (06) 289 4369.

# TECHNOLOGICAL

## Work for Child Research



supporting the generation and dissemination of knowledge about children's issues, Children's House facilitates the translation of the benefits of research and programming into policy and practice. The most important criteria for placing information in the Children's House are the needs and concerns of children. Any specific institutional interests or promotion of institutions or organisations are to be placed within individual web sites.

Not all key institutions have the opportunity to access the Internet, neither as information providers nor information users. An important challenge for Childwatch could be to work to reduce the technological gap between the institutions of the network, as a means to improve the flow of information. It was suggested that Childwatch could serve as an Internet coordinator, and offer server space, capacity

building and technological supervision to assist in an initial phase.

The last, and very central issue for discussion at the workshop, was the role Childwatch can play in linking research needs of the international community to the global research activities. Philip Van Haecke, senior evaluation officer at UNICEF, said in his introduction that a main trend among the employees at the local offices of UNICEF, is a wish for more knowledge and information. They want to know where to find knowledge and expertise, and they demand precise knowledge on children in specific countries under particular circumstances. He also indicated that among the important up-coming issues for UNICEF we will find 'ethnic minorities', 'immigrants and indigenous populations', 'child labor' and 'children in war'.

The Director of Childwatch, Per Miljeteig, followed up by emphasising the growing awareness among non-governmental organisations and others working for children's welfare, of the importance of exact knowledge as a basis for adequate action. It will be an important objective for Childwatch to facilitate activities to meet these requirements.

The City of Charleston hosted a symposium with the Childwatch workshop and local researchers, administrators and policy makers. The Honorable Mayor Joseph P. Riley of Charleston; Ferran Casas, Childwatch president; Per Miljeteig, Childwatch director; Jim Garbarino, Director for the Family Life Development Centre at Cornell University; Rose September, Senior Researcher at the Institute for Child and Family Development University of the Western Cape; and Gary Melton, Director of the Consortium on Children, Families and the Law, gave brief presentations focusing on the importance of child research in a local and a global context. The symposium was recorded, and will serve as the basis for an educational video.

## New Advisory Board of Childwatch

Towards the end of the Workshop a new Advisory Board of Childwatch, for the period 1996-1998, was appointed.

Gary Melton (President), Director of Consortium on Children, Families and the Law, Institute for Families in Society, University of South Carolina, USA.

Irene Rizzini (Vice President), Director of Center for Research on Childhood, Universidade Santa Ursula, Brazil.

Per Egil Mjaavatt (Vice President) Director of Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norway.

Jack Habib, Director of JDC -Brookdale Institute Center for Children and Youth, Israel.

Nittaya J. Kotchabhakdi, Director of National Institute for Child and Family Development, Mahidol University, Thailand.

Harry McGurk, Director of Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australia.

Rodrigo Quintana Meléndez, Director of Instituto Interamericano del Niño, Uruguay.

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

Sharon Stephens, Professor at Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, USA.

Ferran Casas, Professor at Department de Psicologia Social Universitat Barcelona, Spain.

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## BECOME PART OF THE CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION NETWORK!

The National Child Protection Clearing House at the Australian Institute of Family Studies serves as an interchange point for information, research



and initiatives in the child abuse prevention field. It collects and distributes information, and aims for a two-way involvement with the community concerned with child protection.

To participate in the work of the Clearing House –

- send us materials relevant to child abuse prevention
- complete and return a questionnaire on research and program activities relevant to child protection with which you are involved
- join the National Clearing House mailing list – you will receive two newsletters and two issues papers free of charge each year.

*Please fill in details overleaf ➤*