

PROCEEDINGS OF THE GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON  
RESEARCH AND CHILD RIGHTS

**CHILD RIGHTS AT A CROSSROADS**

30 November – 2 December 2009  
UNECA Conference Centre  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The organisers of this Conference, The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), Childwatch International and UNICEF Innocenti Research Center are grateful to the organisations listed below for their support towards this Conference.



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## ACRONYMS

<b>ACPF</b>	African Child Policy Forum
<b>ACRWC</b>	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CWI</b>	Childwatch International
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>IRC</b>	UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
<b>GOE</b>	Government of Ethiopia
<b>HRBAP</b>	Human Rights based Approach to Programmes
<b>MDGs</b>	Millennium Development Goals
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>PRSPs</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
<b>SP</b>	Social Protection
<b>SPP</b>	Social Protection Programmemes
<b>UNCRC</b>	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>UNECA</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>VGC</b>	Vulnerable Groups of Children
<b>YAF</b>	Young Africa Forum

## SECTION 1: PLENARY SESSION PROCEEDINGS

Day 1 – Monday - November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2009

### OPENING SESSION

**Facilitator:** Mr. David Mugawe, *Deputy Executive Director, ACPF*

#### **Presenters:**

**Dr. Assefa Bequele, Executive Director, ACPF**  
**Dr. Irene Rizzini, President, Childwatch International**  
**Dr. David Parker, Deputy Director, UNICEF Innocenti Center**  
**Prof. Yanghee Lee, Chair, UNCRC**

#### **Opening Remarks:**

Mr. David Mugawe, the Deputy Executive Director of the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), opened the session and welcomed all participants. He observed that the conference attracted participants from varied backgrounds including experts in child rights, representatives of governments and civil society and youth.

Mr. Mugawe explained that Childwatch International Research Network, UNICEF Innocenti Center and ACPF were the three organisers of the conference and the main donors were the Norwegian Foreign Ministry, the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, Hope Foundation, Plan, GTZ, International Child Support, Oak Foundation, Overseas Development Institute and UNICEF.

#### **Dr. Assefa Bequele, Executive Director, ACPF**

Dr Assefa Bequele, the Executive Director of The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), opened the conference by welcoming the Vice-president of Malawi and the Honourable Minister of Women's Affairs in Ethiopia as well as all participants. He observed that despite the dull conference title, many people had come from around the world because of the importance of

research and child rights. He expressed his gratitude towards all those who had organised the conference naming specifically the members of Childwatch International and the UNICEF Innocenti Centre.



Dr. Assefa Bequele, Executive Director, ACPF

He noted the attendance of participants with a wealth of knowledge and experience in the field of research and child rights and highlighted the presence of numerous leaders in the area of child rights including Professor Jaap Doek, Mr. Saad Houry, Dr. Marta Santos Pais, the Minister of Women's Affairs from Ethiopia and the Vice-President of Malawi. He encouraged all to take advantage of the expertise and to make the most of this exceptional gathering of professionals.

#### **Dr. Irene Rizzini, President, Childwatch International (CWI)**

Dr. Rizzini started her presentation reflecting on the past twenty years since the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). She reminded participants that it was an enormous accomplishment to develop a worldwide code for the decent and proper treatment of every child on the globe and noted that such an achievement has not been made in any epoch of human history.

Dr. Rizzini expressed her gratitude to the

Norwegian government, the CWI secretariat and its board, and other key institutions for bringing together such an international gathering of researchers, advocates and policy makers devoted to the improvement of the status of children. She stated her appreciation to Childwatch partners in Africa and especially those in Ethiopia for being such wonderful hosts. She called on all participants to reflect on how the network and gathering of policy makers, advocates and international organisations can be made greater than the sum of its parts.



Dr. Irene Rizzini, President, Childwatch International (CWI)

She highlighted the many achievements regarding child rights over the last 20 years including:

- Improvements in many children's indicators such as the significant reduction in infant and child mortality;
- The more positive way of thinking about and listening to children; and
- Increased response to those who abuse children.

Despite these achievements, she noted that many old problems still exist in too many places. She provided the following examples:

- In occupied Palestine, the Gross National Income per capita is US\$1,230. In Ethiopia it is even lower than US\$280 per capita. In Norway it is US\$87,000.
- In Morocco the share of national income that goes to the poorest 40% of households is 17% while 47% goes to the richest 20%.
- In Bangladesh, 22% of all babies are

low birth weight

- In Afghanistan, 39% of under-fives suffer from malnutrition.

From her own experience with the CWI Network, Dr. Rizzini shared her lesson that any mutual assistance that helps each of organisation do their work better is invaluable. Second, she stressed the need to subordinate pressing institutional and professional demands to the demands of children.

Dr. Rizzini concluded by stating that the CRC won't be implemented unless organisations go beyond their normal duties and stretch their comfort zones. She underscored that nothing will be accomplished unless the polished rhetoric about cooperation and collaboration is turned into action. Finally, she encouraged the Conference to cherish its multiplicity and use it to give more children the future they deserve.

**Dr. David Parker, Deputy Director, UNICEF Innocenti Center**

On behalf of the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Dr. Parker stated it was his privilege to join the representatives of African Child Policy Forum and Childwatch International Research Network in welcoming participants to the



Dr. David Parker, Deputy Director, UNICEF Innocenti Center

conference. He emphasised that the conference builds on the recognised value of knowledge in addressing the situation of children in all areas. Dr. Parker pointed out that a rights perspective

guides and shapes research on children in several distinct ways:

- It influences the content of what is studied, in particular by promoting a whole-child, multi-dimensional view of the child, spanning all areas of children's lives and wellbeing.
- It guides how research is conducted, for example giving emphasis to participatory approaches and learning from, with and by children;
- It focuses attention on important principles of analysis which are central to child rights, such as non-discrimination, the right of the child to be heard and to be involved in matters affecting them; the primacy of the best interest of the child, and sensitivity to the evolving capacities of the child.
- Finally it makes one look to the future and the conditions into which children will grow, and in which future generations of children will emerge, in line with human rights aspirations.

Dr. Parker encouraged participants to address many of the challenges faced including:

- Working across sectors beyond disciplinary boundaries, bringing together different areas and themes of children's rights in new ways,
- Giving new impetus to supporting the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals in the few years remaining to the year 2015.
- Looking beyond the MDGs, finding an even more child-appropriate selection of goals and targets in the era that will follow; and setting a research agenda to support this.

In closing, Dr. Parker gave special recognition to Dr. Assefa Bequele of ACPF, Dr. Rizzini of CWI, Dr. Marta Santos Pais and Mr. Trond Waage formerly of IRC, and to all the others who initiated and organised the conference.

#### **Prof. Yanghee Lee, Chair, UNCRC**

Professor Yanghee Lee, via video, expressed her gratitude to the organisers and donors of

the conference. She stated that the Committee on the Rights of the Child is well represented at the conference. She remarked that this is a landmark year for all who work for and with children, as it is the celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup>



anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She explained that the Convention was adopted in 1989 and it has proven to be an important footprint for children. Despite the many achievements since the adoption, she remarked that children still face many harmful effects from natural disasters and climate change. Professor Lee noted an increase in research and documentation of rights violations particularly in the area of discrimination, exclusion from decision making, exploitation, trafficking, forced labour and the consequences of conflict, hunger and disease. She highlighted that the Committee on the Convention of the Rights of the Child is also aware of the absence of political will, which has hindered the full implementation of the Convention.

Professor Lee pointed out to the Conference that the CRC is the only human rights treaty that has almost full ratification. Despite this, she stated, the MDG progress report shows that many children still live in poverty and that the economic crisis has an enormous impact on children and women. She noted that this is seen all around the world and not only in developing countries. She emphasised that poverty undermines all aspects of childhood and prevents children from exercising their rights.

Professor Lee observed that in the area of research and child rights there is an increase in

evidence-based programmes, intervention, plans and policies and that evidence supported by sound research has greatly improved plans and programmes. She stressed that there is a need to mainstream children's issues in all research initiatives and stated that children's rights must not be viewed as a silo or in isolation. She provided examples of how children's rights need to be mainstreamed in budget planning and in research. She concluded by saying that all researchers will benefit when they consult children and when they interface child rights with all disciplines.

## WELCOMING ADDRESSES

**H.E. Minister Mufrihat Kamil, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ethiopia**

### **Summary of address:**

Mrs. Mufrihat Kamil, the Honorable Minister of Women's Affairs, expressed her gratitude to the organisers of the conference. She stated that the conference is a milestone for all who work with children. She noted that it is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the CRC and reminded participants that the CRC offers the highest legal framework to date on how to protect and ensure the participation of children.



H.E. Minister Mufrihat Kamil, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ethiopia

She reviewed the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) to implement the CRC, to uphold the rights of children and to meet the MDGs. She stated that the GOE has secured

encouraging results in the area of child rights to date. In the area of health, children and women have increased access to health care due to the implementation of a health extension programme. In addition, child and maternal mortality has been reduced. She pointed out that the enrollment of children at all levels of education has increased and that in the justice area, child-friendly courts have been established. She revealed that The Ministry of Women's Affairs has implemented information campaigns under the theme "Lets care for the children and also respect their rights". She stated that the government intends to scale-up the good practices to increase the impact of government programmes.

The Honorable Minister underlined the importance of evidence-based plans, programmes and policies. She emphasised the importance of research to influence effective programmes and policies. She commended the work of ACPF and the research it has done to help influence plans and policies. The Minister concluded with her best wishes for a fruitful conference.

**H.E. The Right Honorable Joyce Banda, Vice President of the Republic of Malawi Guest of Honour**

### **Summary of address:**

The Right Honorable Joyce Banda, the Vice President of Malawi, expressed her pleasure to be the Guest of Honour for the conference. She stated that she was representing the President of Malawi and that she was happy to perform this duty as children's issues are dear to her heart. She thanked Ethiopia for its warm hospitality.

The Vice President expressed how the timing of the conference is ideal as it is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CRC coming into force. Looking back over the past 20 years, she reflected that the statistics show that global trends are positive however much remains to be done. She emphasised that children in poverty is the primary issue to deal with. She was

hopeful that the research and studies presented during the conference would present an opportunity for all participants to develop better strategies to fulfill child rights.



H.E. The Right Honorable Joyce Banda, Vice President of the Republic of Malawi  
Guest of Honour

She emphasised that research needs to be relevant. For example, the world is facing a serious financial crisis and more research is required on the impact of the crisis on children. It is commonly known, she said, that the social sector is usually cut first when there is financial crisis and this negatively impacts on children. She expressed her hope for researchers to provide information to help policy makers support countries get through the crisis without a negative impact on children. She further stressed that researchers need to address climate change research from children's perspective. Additionally, she emphasised that the main concern in Sub-Saharan Africa is the issue of orphans due to HIV/AIDS. She also observed that many policies and programmes do not address children with special needs such as children in prison, children heading households and pregnant girls.

She noted that ACPF's 2008 *Report on Child Wellbeing: How child-friendly are African governments?* reported that it is not necessarily the government's economic wellbeing that determines how child-friendly they are. It comes down to political will. She shared with

participants that despite Malawi not being a country of plenty, it scored in the top 10 African countries on the child-friendly index. The Vice-President stated that Malawi has enacted programmes and legislation with children as a focus and that the growth and poverty strategy has a focus on women and protection of children. She shared that Malawi has reviewed its laws and programmes based on the CRC and ACRWC.

The Vice President highlighted the numerous achievements of Malawi including:

- free primary education
- universal immunization
- decrease in under-5 child mortality rates
- implementation of several nutrition policies and programmes
- national plan of action for orphans of HIV/AIDS that focuses on strengthening legal protection of those most vulnerable
- establishment of four child-friendly courts
- increase in the number of child protection workers

The Vice President highlighted that part of Malawi's focus on child rights centers on the importance of child participation. She provided the example of a child parliament that allows children to make resolutions and suggestions to government.

She reiterated that Malawi has been able to implement such programmes and achieve results despite being a resource-constrained country. She emphasised that the 2008 ACPF Report should serve as a springboard for all government's to improve their work with children.

In conclusion, the Vice President stated that it is our moral obligation to not let our children down. She shared what one child had told her "Let there be nothing about us, without us." and concluded that it is important to ensure that children actively participate in all decisions that affect them.

## PRESENTATIONS

### i. Children's Rights and the UN Convention

**Prof. Jaap Doek, Former Chair, UNCRC**

#### **Summary of presentation:**

Professor Jaap Doek, former chair of the UNCRC, reviewed the history and major characteristics of the UNCRC. He emphasised that child rights are a new concept however the history of care for children is old.

He went on to describe the child savers movement, which was well known because it was a movement that established juvenile



Prof. Jaap Doek, Former Chair, UNCRC

courts in 1899 in the United States. He stated that Europe was influenced by the child savers movement and enacted measures in the area of child protection. He pointed out that most of the child savers were concerned about ending the suffering of children due to delinquency and poverty. The movement in Europe and the US led to the establishment of Save the Children. Women primarily led the movement. Most child savers were socialist at heart but their programmes were reformist. Professor Doek explained that this became the political reality of increased control over poverty. It resulted, he said in the deportation of children to Australia and in Canada and Australia aboriginal children being taken out of the home and put into institutions. Professor Doek stated that the concept of child rights emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup>

century and that the first aspect of child rights was about caring for children. Professor Doek described a number of key points for children's rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child in 1959. The latter declaration, he stated, was not given much priority. He noted that a study has not been conducted on the impact of the declaration.

For the second half of his presentation he reviewed the main characteristics of the UNCRC stating that it:

- recognises the child as a rights holder
- recognises the child as a special being and
- recognises the role of the parents

Professor Doek explained that one of the interesting aspects of the Convention is that sees the child in a holistic manner and sees the child growing. This aspect, he observed, is not found in other international conventions. Moreover, he explained that the vulnerability of the child is recognised in many articles and there are many provisions to address the vulnerability in areas of health care, violence and abuse.

He clarified that the CRC does not explicitly state there is a right to participation but it is interpreted through reading several articles. It is implied that states should ensure participation but it is left to the state to decide how to have children participate. Professor Doek explained that it is interpreted that the greater the capacity of the child, the more the child should be allowed to participate. He emphasised that states should reflect the process of child development in laws and policies.

One of the key points of the CRC, he explained, is that it recognises the parents as the main duty bearers of children. Article 18 section 2 specifically states that the responsibility of child rearing needs to be supported by the state. He emphasised that parents have primary responsibility on the conditions of living for the development of the child and that parents are

the front line people when it comes to recognition of the rights of children. In his analysis he thought that the role of parents has not been sufficiently recognised.

In his conclusion, Professor Doek stated that over the next 20 years, the major obstacles in the area of child rights would be poverty and violence. He lamented that when it comes to poverty, it is upsetting about the limited translation of commitments into targeted programmes. He stressed the need for more research on the role of the parents, the support the government offers to parents and how parents can be the front line people in respecting child rights. In conclusion, he stated that the UNCRC is a tool that needs to be used by academics, activists and practitioners.

## ii. Research and the UN Study on Violence

**Dr. Marta Santos Pais, UN Special Representative on Violence against Children**

### **Summary of presentation:**

Dr. Santos Pais started her address expressing her pleasure in participating in the Global Conference on Research and Child Rights and



in working again with African Child Policy Forum, Childwatch International as well as with the Innocenti Research Centre. She expressed her appreciation to her good friends Dr. Assefa

Bequele and Mr. Jon Kristian Johnsen, for their decisive commitment and tireless efforts to make the meeting an unprecedented event and a very successful initiative.

She reflected that the Conference celebrates the significant process of change promoted, over the last two decades, by the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and that it also provides a strong platform to renew commitment to children's rights.

In spite of the important achievements made over the last 20 years, and the significant experience gained along the way, Dr. Santos Pais underscored that children's concerns continue to run the risk of being perceived as minor questions and they are often placed in a growing waiting slot. She lamented that there is also a wide perception that policy decisions are neutral to children and existing mechanisms provide the necessary environment to protect children from any negative development. Moreover, she observed that in these initial years of the XXI Century, nations are challenged by many competing priorities, pressed by the downturn provoked by the economic crisis and facing an increasing difficulty to secure funding and sustain investment.

Due to these challenges, she highlighted the importance of research and quality data as knowledge lays the foundation for creativity, openness for change, and confidence in investment in human development. She stressed that with child sensitive data and research, national planning, advocacy and policy making can be strategically shaped, external relations influenced and mind sets shifted in favour of the realisation of children's rights.

Despite the strong rationale for objective and disaggregated child related data, she observed that insufficient steps have been made in child rights research. She emphasised that the Conference can become a landmark turning point.

The second half of Dr. Santos Pais's address focused on violence against children and

specifically the UN study on Violence Against Children. She explained that the UN study is inextricably linked with the history of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She further stated that the study is solidly grounded in the principles and provisions of the treaty and illustrates well the indivisibility of human rights. Due to the study, she explained that there is now a worldwide movement in favour of the protection of children from all forms of violence. She noted that the study has helped challenge the acceptance of violence against children, highlighting that no violence is justifiable, and all violence can be effectively prevented. She cited numerous findings from research studies on the extent of violence against children:

- Between 500 million and 1.5 billion children worldwide endure some form of violence every year
- More than 85% of children between 2 and 14 years of age experience physical punishment and/or psychological aggression
- In some countries, three in every four children are subject to physical punishment and one in three is hit violently
- In a wide range of cases, violence is perpetrated by people children trust the most, in schools or within the home
- Girls are at particular risk of sexual abuse and exploitation, of child marriage and other harmful practices, including female genital cutting and honour killings.

Despite these findings, Dr. Santos Pais stated that overall, information on violence against children is weak and difficult to gather. Widely perceived as a social taboo or a needed form of discipline, she reflected that available information simply reflects the tip of the iceberg, while official statistics remain limited in their capacity to capture the true scale and extent of this phenomenon.

In her mandate as UN Special Representative on Violence against Children, she stated that her highest priority is improving child related

data systems and the development of a national research agendas on violence against children. Dr. Santos Pais outlined three priority areas for a strategic research agenda:

- a) Data and research are essential to support the development of national comprehensive strategies to prevent and respond to all forms of violence; a strategy effectively coordinated by a high level focal point, mainstreamed in national planning and supported by adequate human and financial resources to support implementation.
- b) Secondly, data and research are critical to support law enactment and enforcement to prevent violence and protect children. As the UN Study has acknowledged, it is urgent to introduce in each and every country, an explicit legal ban on all forms of violence against children.
- c) Thirdly, in the fast changing world, emerging areas call for well thought solutions to protect children from violence: the potential and risks presented by new technologies to the fulfilment of children's rights; the largely hidden face and fate of children on the move, including in the context of trafficking, asylum seeking and migration; and the dramatic combination of violence with HIV and AIDS stand out as primary candidates for significant research initiatives.

Dr. Santos Pais reminded participants that in all areas, a gender sensitive perspective is required to understand the different ways in which girls and boys suffer violence, to inform the common and distinct strategies that will need to be pursued to address them and to promote a change in behaviour. Similarly, she emphasised that a child sensitive approach is essential.

Dr. Santos Pais emphasised the need to partner with children and youth in the development of surveys and planning of research. She reminded participants that child participation

was an essential dimension of the UN Study and remains a core component of its process of follow-up.

In conclusion, she reiterated the importance of quality research in making a difference against violence against children. She expressed her desire to continue to work closely with participants in following up on the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

### iii. The Child at the Heart of Policy Making

**Mr. Saad Houry, Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF**

#### **Summary of presentation:**

Mr. Houry started off his presentation by stating that child protection is now a much more important aspect than it was 20 years ago due to the CRC. He pointed out that the Convention, through article 2, sets out the vision to achieve the rights of all children and to ensure non-discrimination. He underscored that children are excluded by design and not by oversight. He reminded participants that the CRC tells us to focus on those most vulnerable: the trafficked, those in conflicts and the disabled. He lamented that despite economic growth in some countries, there is still a large portion of children in poverty. He emphasised that article 3 states that the best interests of the child is of primary consideration and it is a matter of making child rights a key part of government decisions.

In his presentation, Mr. Houry explained the three key approaches of UNICEF:

1. Make the best interests of the child a central point of all government policies. He emphasised that there is no such thing as a child neutral policy or budget. Research can be conducted to help develop capacities to realise the rights of child including supporting parents, mobilising communities, and

supporting leaders. He stated that all girls and boys must know their rights and engage them in an active way.

2. Work together to meet the promise set in the Convention. Children are essential partners.
3. Put children at the heart of policymaking and test all decisions about how policies will affect children and whether it complies with the CRC.

In conclusion, Mr. Houry stressed that research should not be limited to high-level government decisions. He further stressed that the obligation to children is not only from government but it is an obligation from all partners. He called on organisations to see the opportunity to put children at the focus of policy and to broaden the conversation and learn to speak the language of all stakeholders including media, religious leaders, advocates, politicians, and children. He concluded that UNICEF views the conference as an opportunity to learn and to forge new partnerships.

### iv. The Outcome Document - Purposes and Process

**Ms. Tincati Carlotta, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)**

#### **Summary of Presentation:**

The purpose of Ms. Carlotta's presentation was to explain what the final conference outcome document would look like. Based on research that she and her team at ODI had conducted, she stated that there are a number of factors that make a good outcome document and effective conference message:

1. Definition/Title: use catch phrase such as "The Rio Declaration" or "The Yokohama Global Commitment"
2. Context: include the document on an ad-hoc website and make it downloadable as a PDF document
3. Type: ensure that it is an independent, stand-alone paper and that it can be inserted in relevant publications

4. Length: produce a short document without diluting the message
5. Form: ensure the messages are conveyed in the form of participants' intentions and use sub-sections and numbered or bullet points
6. Structure: structure the document with the following sections; preamble, review of progress, review of challenges, declaration/commitment, call for action and follow-up

She stressed that the Declaration and the Call for Action are most important. She clarified that the Declaration includes participants' promises and general recommendations clearly spelt out. The Call for Action, she stated, is a very important section with a list of action points that the conference delegates convey to State parties and other relevant partners such as the UN, civil society and the media. She emphasised that the nature of the recommendations are relatively more specific, identifying actors to whom the action points are directed to as well as deadlines or timeframes.

For the conference participants to develop such a document, Ms. Carlotta proposed the following process for consolidating roundtable discussions:

- Step 1:** Development of a set of recommendations/key points
- Step 2:** Presentation of key points to Editorial Committee
- Step 3:** Consolidation of roundtable inputs into a draft outcome document
- Step 4:** Presentation of draft outcome document and discussion

## Day 2 - Tuesday – December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2009

### PRESENTATIONS

#### i. The Child at the Heart of Policy Making

**Dr. Agnes Akosua Aidoo, Vice-Chair, UNCRC**

#### **Summary of presentation:**

Dr. Aidoo started her address by reminding participants that in addition to it being 20 years

since the adoption of the CRC, this auspicious year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of Convention Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). She pointed out that this crucial human rights treaty for women and girls is also nearing universal ratification with 186 States parties to date. She emphasised that gender equality is fast becoming a national standard and CEDAW has enabled us to distil and analyse the general dimensions of child rights, especially where throughout the world social and cultural practices and attitudes give priority and preference to male children.



Dr. Agnes Akosua Aidoo, Vice-Chair, UNCRC

Dr. Aidoo reminded participants that it is also the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coming into force of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). She explained that the Charter is grounded in African realities where the responsibilities of the families, including the extended families, communities, states and the children themselves are recognised. She acknowledged that the African Charter is the first and only regional human rights treaty on children and its current ratification by 48 out of the 53 Member States of the African Union is a tribute to the growing political will on the continent to focus attention on children's rights.

Dr. Aidoo stated that the purpose of her presentation was to encourage some reflection on certain aspects of the rights of the child, the yardsticks, measures and targets employed in assessing their implementation in development policy and practice and the relevance of these

in concrete national or regional contexts where policy and political choices have to be made. She highlighted that hardly enough research on Africa's children has been made, and least of all by African researchers and research institutes, to inform policy. She drew particular attention to what she calls the "missing children" whose rights are not being fully delivered in current policies and also drew attention to the nature of two dominant international frameworks; the Poverty Reduction Strategies Papers (PRSPs) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which heavily influence policy making in Africa, and whose shortcomings, in her view, do not support disadvantaged children in the continent in the enjoyment of their rights.

Dr. Aidoo provided an overview of the key work of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and its main achievements to date. She highlighted the numerous gaps at the policy level. For instance she stated that in Africa, most of the common "missing children" whose rights are not fully ensured are children in the preschool age, children out of the school system and those in the adolescent years between 15 and 18 years.

She shared that most reports received by the UN Committee on the implementation of the CRC show that apart from education and to a lesser extent health, research on school age and adolescent children is quite limited in Africa. For example, she stated that more than 40% of the primary school age children in Sub Saharan Africa are out of school, most of them girls. Despite this, she stated that there is not much policy-oriented research on them. She revealed that data on adolescent and older children between 15 and 18 years is not systematically collected in Africa and in other parts of the world.

What is of concern, Dr. Aidoo argued is that for these categories of children not covered in data collection and analysis, their rights are hardly covered in policies, and their continuous development to their full human and social potential as foreseen by the Convention is not assured.

The second part of Dr. Aidoo's presentation focused on the yardsticks and targets set to assess child development policies. She pointed out that African countries have often been obliged to pursue child development policies mostly inspired by global and international agendas that establish the yardsticks and targets for achievement. Her concern, she explained, is that when the international system establishes the targets there is not much room or space for individual countries and regions to assert their realities in other quantitative or qualitative terms.

She argued that the internationally set goals and targets have in fact stopped African governments from focussing on the issues most pressing in the African context. She provided the example of meeting MDG 4 of reducing child and infant mortality. Such a goal does not address neonatal mortality rates, which in Africa account for 25-40% of the IMR. Similarly, she pointed out that the MDGs and present targets do not allow African or other countries to take action on child rights in early childhood. Due to this, she stated that not much is done or measured on holistic early childhood development, care of children, mental health, early learning and stimulation, development of social skills and social competence which must all start before the children enter the classroom.

Dr. Aidoo pointed out that few African countries address child poverty within Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans (PRSPs). She stressed that child poverty in Africa is particularly dehumanising and is an underlying factor in the preventable diseases, malnutrition, lack of education, child abuse and neglect, exploitation, worst forms of child labour, lack of appropriate juvenile justice and recruitment of children in armed conflict situations. She emphasised that childhood lost through poverty, deprivations and the denial of rights is difficult to recover for the child's development to her/his full human potential.

She concluded by encouraging African States party to the CRC and ACRWC to focus more on the true realities of their children and engage

more of their own researchers and research institutes to provide relevant information and knowledge to deal with the specific contexts and circumstances of the African child. She concluded, “our concern is global; our vision universal; but the solutions must be local and responsive to the concrete realities in which the vast majority of disadvantaged children live and in which their rights must be realised.”

## ii. NGOs and Research-based Programmes

**Mr. Jim Emerson, Deputy CEO, Plan International**

### **Summary of presentation:**

Mr. Emerson started his presentation by offering his congratulations to ACPF, Childwatch International and UNICEF Innocenti Centre for organising the conference.



Mr. Jim Emerson, Deputy CEO, Plan International

To begin, he pointed out to participants that he is not an academic but that he tries to be a reflective practitioner. He shared his angst with reviewing large volume research documents and being drained of energy and interest. He stressed that as a practitioner, he believed that research has to be about impact. He further emphasised that if research is not oriented towards positive results for the child, for children, children today and children tomorrow, then it is of limited value.

Mr. Emerson pointed out that despite the rhetoric about ‘evidence based programmes’, practitioners have sometimes failed to build consistently upon the proven evidence of the past 50 years of development experience and learning. He provided numerous examples of areas where there is a wealth of information and strong evidence for a certain action yet no action takes place. He argued therefore that it is not the evidence that is lacking but the acceptance of the evidence and the consistent application of that learning which is the main problem.

He expressed his frustration that institutions, boards and donors are often incapable of consistent, mutually supportive, joined-up, equitable and long-term investment on evidence-based programmes that are known to produce consistent results and impact. He emphasised that despite research, knowledge, medicines, technology and best intentions, too many children:

- are still being born with HIV
- are still not vaccinated
- have no birth certificates
- have no access to basic micro-nutrients
- have no opportunity to go to school

He called on participants to reflect on which direction to take at this point in time.

He made the following suggestions based on shared lessons with Plan:

Use knowledge and research that already exists

- Make sure research is real
- Strengthen the impact of research through communications
- Develop and implement a more strategic and holistic approach in setting the research agenda
- Increase child participation and children’s perspectives in research

Mr. Emerson emphasised that the challenge for the conference is to coordinate research agendas on children’s issues.

*“Knowledge is like the bird of the forest: one person alone can never catch it”*

Ewe proverb

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is, he stressed, a great example of the power of a coordinated and

focussed research agenda. But it is only the beginning. He encouraged all to use the conference to focus research efforts on children issues worldwide.

## PANEL DISCUSSION

### i. CRC as a Framework for Research, Policy and Practice

**Chair: Ms. Akila Aggoune Belembaogo, Head, UNICEF Liaison Office, Special Representative to the African Union (AU) and UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**

The chair of the panel session, Ms. Belembaogo, opened the session by pointing out that the purpose of the panel session was to review how the CRC had been and could be used as a framework for research, policy and practice. She acknowledged that earlier presenters stated that the CRC has been used first of all as a tool for advocacy to bring about political commitment, to raise awareness of child rights, as a tool for fund raising and as a tool for research.

#### *Summary of panellists' presentations:*

**Mr. Yehualashet Mekonen, Coordinator, Information and Statistics, ACPF**

The purpose of Mr. Mekonen's presentation was to share ACPF's experience with measuring governments' performance using the CRC as an inspired approach and how the approach can be used to hold governments accountable.

Mr. Mekonen started his presentation by reviewing the CRC's comprehensive list of child-specific human rights as well as the corresponding list of governments' obligations. He explained that this combination was a stimulus that:

- Helped us think beyond survival
- Brought children's issues to national and international development agenda

- Initiated more research, conceptual and methodological developments
- Initiated more effort to monitoring compliance and holding duty-bearers accountable

Despite these developments, Mr. Mekonen stated that there is still:

- Insufficient information on children
- Unsystematic information
- Limited analysis and policy focus

Due to this, he suggested a monitoring framework that:

- Spells out specific commitments/ obligations and actions taken
- Has a mechanism for scoring and comparing performance, and
- Identifies strengths, gaps and provides specific policy recommendations for improvement.

He explained that ACPF had developed an approach to measure government performance as a response to these concerns. He described the approach as a quantitative framework with a feature that allows for comparison both between countries and progress over time. He noted that it is simple in that it summarises the results into one composite index – The Child-friendliness Index. In addition, he stated that it serves as a powerful tool for advocacy and it demonstrates how the CRC can be used as a tool for monitoring compliance.

He further clarified that the approach draws on the governments obligations stated in the CRC broadly described as: Protection, Provision and Participation. Accordingly, three dimensions were identified for monitoring:

- Legal and policy framework put in place
- Governments' budgetary commitment
- The efforts governments put to ensure child participation

Mr. Mekonen went on to share the results of the analysis and how the African countries ranked based on how child friendly governments were.

Mr. Mekonen noted the following key findings:

- It is possible to perform well in the realisation of children's rights even at very low levels of development.
- It is the political will that matters more than the economics.

In short, he explained that the elements of child-friendliness are:

- Politics that value and prioritise children
- Laws that protect them from harm and exploitation
- Budgets that provide for them for their basic needs

In his conclusion, Mr. Mekonen stressed that this approach can be used to hold governments accountable. He explained that the CRC-based approach could be used by advocacy groups and treaty bodies such as the UN Committee and African Committee of Experts to monitor government compliance. Additionally, he suggested that governments could use the approach to build on their strengths and exert more effort on areas that need improvement.

**Ms. Shanta Sinha, Chairperson of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, India**

Ms. Sinha started her presentation with the question "What has the CRC given us?" She reflected that the CRC is a crystallization of the perspective that every child is unique; an individual in her/his own right and every child is a complete human being with immense and evolving capacities. Moreover, she stated that the CRC shows that children are equal to adults. She pointed out that the CRC emphasises equality: equality of rights and equality of children. All rights are equally important and every child counts. She shared that sometimes governments promotes a progressive law when only some children or some priority rights will be met. She strongly refuted this approach and stressed that all children and all rights must be addressed at the same time. In addition, she pointed out that the CRC outlines the states obligation to the child; it is the state and the state alone that must protect the child.

She shared with participants the achievements of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights in India:

- Increased public awareness through regional consultation related to a social audit and public hearing; especially hearing the voices of children.
- Response to complaints and intervened in rescuing children from work situations
- Guided by the CRC, the Commission has conducted research and collected data that has informed policies.

Miss Sinha concluded by providing participants with her suggestions on considerations for a research agenda:

- Research must be used as a way to promote child rights
- For research to be effectively used, it is important to promote a working relationship between community leaders and develop trust for and from the poor
- Research should enhance the capacities of the state. Often studies will show that governments are corrupt or incapable to deliver services. This is unhelpful. The CRC states governments are obliged to provide services.
- Research is important because it is a space for contestation. It creates space to fight for child rights. We need research that brings out the truth and questions the assumptions. We need honest research at multiple levels however it is very important to have research at the local level.
- Research must have a longer vision. The protection of children rights is inherently inclusive, democratic, non-violent and it harmonises society and brings about stability. Research can create a mood, atmosphere of zero-tolerance, and energy that shows that all are equal.

**Dr. Sheila Greene, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland**

Dr. Greene began her presentation reflecting on the influence that the CRC and the child rights

perspective have had on what researchers research and how they conduct research. Despite this, she stated that there is need to communicate the value of a child rights perspective to all researchers in order to improve the quality of research and to make a positive difference on the lives of children.

Dr. Greene informed participants that the CRC can provide a framework for research in two main ways; it can provide direction for *what* is researched, and, it can provide direction for *how* research is conducted. This will result, she stated, in better quality research and will more likely make a positive impact on the lives of children.

She expressed that a greater understanding of the conceptualisation of childhood is needed. Additionally, Dr. Greene felt there was a need to continue to interrogate the CRC as the best vehicle for the promotion of child rights and to persist in challenging the tenets and assumptions behind the Convention. Such discussion, she felt, is important to see the CRC as a whole and advances our approach to support, enable and empower children.

Dr. Greene reiterated the importance of using the CRC to provide direction on what is researched and how research is undertaken. She stated that it can draw the attention of researchers to areas in which children's experience has been invisible for too long, where they have been oppressed, disabled, exploited and discriminated against.

She questioned how the researcher could inform a child rights perspective in their research? She remarked that this should happen at every stage especially when deciding what to research. She reflected that aside from the child's urgent right to be heard according to their capacities, the quality of understanding of children is diminished if their experience of the world is not taken into account. She emphasised that researchers must continue to develop a range of methods suited to answering the questions that matter to children.

In relation to dissemination, she stressed that if research aspires to make a difference, it must

of course reach the right audience. She emphasised the need for finding new and effective ways to communicate. Dr. Greene concluded by stating that the CRC is a critically important framework for research and practice with children.

**H.E. Mrs. Clara M. Pulido, Ambassador, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cuba**

*Since the beginning of the Revolution, nothing has been more important than the child*  
Jose Marti

Mrs. Pulido, the Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba, began her presentation with a review of the rights of Cuban children

laid out in the constitution. She explained that everyone has the right to education and it is free and compulsory education. The Ambassador pointed out that Cuba has already achieved MDG 2 and 3. She further informed participants that Cuba has special education programmes to support handicapped children. She noted that many of the positive child development indicators are due to the high literacy rate of women in Cuba. She informed participants that in the 1960s and 1970s, Cuba instituted a women's education programme, which has ensured women are educated.

In the health sector, the Ambassador pointed out that the state has played an important role in providing medical care for free and implementing public information campaigns. She stressed that the main strength of the health provision is primary health care and noted that Cuba has family doctors for all small primary care centers.

Lastly, the ambassador explained that the Cuban constitution outlines numerous social rights for children including the right to culture, sport and recreation. Additionally, she stated that children play an active part in the decision-making process in Cuba.

## ii. Policies for Applied Child Research

Chair: Mr. Robbie Gilligan, *Childwatch International*

### **Summary of panelists' presentations:**

**Mr. Haktor Helland, Ministry of Children and Equality, Norway**

Mr. Helland, of the Ministry of Children and Equality in Norway, started his presentation by discussing the paradigm shift in how children are viewed compared to 50 years ago. He remarked that children are now conceived as individuals with their own rights and their own needs and that much more is known about these needs than before. He argued that research has been the main contributor to this shift in paradigm. Mr. Helland pointed out that the UNCRC is built on research and has been an important measure to strengthen this new view or conception of children.

Mr. Helland stated that in order to get a good child policy there are two aspects to underline. First of all, he suggested that that all stakeholders have a common goal – to improve the living conditions for children and that the best strategy to achieve this is to cooperate and to compete. The second aspect, he suggested, is that all the work of institutions or stakeholders be based on research and knowledge.

He stressed that it is important to keep in mind that research is just one of the many measures in a child-policy. Sometimes it is better to act than to try to find out more about a phenomenon. Mr. Helland further stressed that one does not have to replicate all projects in every country.

Mr. Helland emphasised that it is the governments' responsibility to make a research-policy and to provide the necessary resources to finance the implementation of the policy. He pointed out that it is the governments' responsibility to make sure that the organising of the research activities is effective and promotes productivity and good quality research.

In the area of research financing, he recommended that funds be given as a lump sum for doing

research within a broader theme with little constraints on the use of the money. This, Mr. Helland argued, is the most effective way to achieve outcomes. He observed that most researchers are more effective, more enthusiastic, and more creative when they are allowed to do what they like most, namely doing research they are committed to.

He went on further to say that the researcher has a responsibility in making research findings available to all the other stakeholders. The results have to be presented not only in international journals but also in languages that are understandable to the different stakeholders in their own country.

In conclusion, Mr. Helland underscored that a child policy and the implementation of the UN Convention should be based on knowledge about children. In this endeavor, he stressed that research and the researchers have to play an important part.

**Dr. Sewpaul Vishanthie, University of Natal, South Africa**

Dr. Vishanthie of the University of Natal began her presentation stating that there is need for “sound” academic research that can inform policy and practice. She questioned, “What constitutes “sound/good/ethical” research?” She reminded participants that critical social research on human rights, policy, practice and research are not mutually exclusive. Ms. Vishanthie emphasised that we need to think of research for transformative/emancipatory ideals. She further stressed the need to use existing research for social change and to challenge policies and practices that maintain people in vulnerable, oppressed, marginalised, powerless and excluded positions.

Dr. Vishanthie went on to explain the ideological context of social science research: modernity and positivism. She explained that social science research emerged during the period of modernity, which has remained a significant structuring force in our conceptualisation of the world. She further stated that, as opposed to the pre-modern belief

in the divine and unquestionable order, modernity raised reason, rational thought and systematic enquiry to an ontological status. She pointed out that the cosmos is based on universal principles that are discoverable with replicable research. She observed that this approach has turned the human beings into objects of their own rational enquiry.

She described how modernity has influenced research and inquiry in a number of ways:

- No place for intuition or emotions in scientific research
- Linked to categorisation, rational enquiry, ordering and scientific intervention
- Progress is synonymous with the restraint of the natural
- Questions about facts and values can be known with outside, detached, neutral researchers and practitioners
- Separation of the personal and the professional self

Dr. Vishanthie explained that modernity was the ideological paradigm within which the elite legitimised their economic and social aspirations. Capitalism was the economic order that logically fit into the paradigm of modernity. She argued that the globalizing capitalist economy perpetuates and intensifies some of the inherent contradictions of modernity.

She stated that there is a taken-for-granted assumption about the convergence between democracy and the market. However, she felt that when you breakdown the values associated with democracy and the market, opposing values emerge.

She explained that the values associated with democracy are:

- Human rights and social justice
- People participation
- Respect: human dignity & environment
- Access to information
- Expanded freedom of choice

The values associated with market are:

- Profit & corporate greed
- Centralized power

- Indifference to suffering, inequality and to the environment
- Ideas commodified
- Constricted choice to illness, starvation & death

In conclusion, she stressed the need to consider one's political and ideological background as it has a profound influence on how one shapes their research question and methodology.

### **Professor Lothar Krappmann, *UNCRC***

Dr. Krappmann, of the *UNCRC*, provided a succinct presentation outlining four main conclusions. For his first conclusion, he noted that research sometimes or often provides ambiguous or unclear answers to questions. Secondly, he shared that if research would show that corporal punishment would not negatively influence the child's wellbeing and development, he would tell state parties that corporal punishment is not in agreement with the spirit of the Convention and with the dignity of the child. Professor Krappmann's third conclusion also related to corporal punishment. He explained that the studies on corporal punishment have been conducted completely outside the framework of human rights. He clarified that there were no variables included to operationalize concepts enshrined in the Convention such as mutual respect, giving rights to views, and parental guidance. He emphasised the need for research that considers and integrates the human rights dimensions.

In his final conclusion, Professor Krappmann stated that research design is often centered on the need to explain an outcome. He provided the example of corporal punishment; "Does corporal punishment prevent the child from enjoying his or her rights?" He stated that the researchers often ask, which factors, in which combination and in which conditions produce, determine, and influence a specific outcome. He stressed that this is a very useful research procedure but that it is not the only question research may ask. He stated that one could

also comprehend child rights as an *intervening variable* – child rights introduced as an intervention in order to change an established practice.

He called for more studies on child rights as an intervention. He stated that now that 193 state parties have decided that they respect, protect and fulfill the rights of the child it is time to investigate child rights in operation.

Dr. Krappmann further emphasised that research on child wellbeing be conducted locally and in all different contexts. He called for the research to be conducted in Africa, Asia, and Europe. He emphasised the need to for research in Europe, as there is a lack of such interventions and studies in Europe. He concluded that the conference is just a start in the exchange of these ideas.

### Day 3 – Wednesday - December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009

#### i. The African Charter and Evidence based Policies

**Honorable. Ms. Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté, Chair, The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)**

##### **Summary of presentation:**

The focus of Ms. Diakhaté's presentation was on how the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child can influence government and politicians. First, she provided background information on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. She explained the rationale for an African Charter in addition to the CRC. She clarified that the CRC did not consider the specific problems related to the African child, for instance, children in armies, early marriage, begging and female genital mutilation. She reminded participants that it is the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the Charter. To date, she stated, there are 45 ratifications of the Charter and there remain 7

states to ratify. The Charter, she explained, has comprehensive rules around non-discrimination, child participation, best interests of the child and it defines duties and responsibilities of the child.



Honorable. Ms. Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhaté, Chair, The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

She argued that there two levels at which the Charter can influence government. The first is the ratification of the Charter and the implementation of the Charter. The ratification is a signal that the state recognises the existence of the Charter. She pointed out that the Charter serves as a framework to achieve the aims related to the promotion and protection of children's rights. The second element, she explained, is the translation of the Charter into action. This includes taking measures at the political and judiciary level. State parties are obliged to enact policies and programmes.

She stated that the Charter is controlled and monitored through its monitoring mechanism: the Committee of Experts. She clarified that the mandate of the Committee is to promote the rights outlined in the Charter.

Ms. Diakhaté expressed the importance of states submitting reports to the Committee. She expressed that the review of the reports is not an exam of governments but instead it is a framework of sharing and exchange between state parties and the Committee. To date, she

recalled that 11 states have produced and submitted reports to the Committee: Burkina Faso, Niger, Uganda, Egypt, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria and Togo.

She called on all member states to submit reports so the Committee can see what has been done by the states to respect the commitments regarding the Charter. She stated that the reports can also discuss the challenges that member states have in respecting the Charter. She explained that, after reviewing the reports, the Committee makes conclusions and recommendation to the member states. The conclusion and recommendations allow for member states to improve their efforts.

She emphasised that support is required to enable the Committee to achieve its mission. She further stressed that there is no reason why the African committee cannot have the same influence that the CRC committee has on its member states.

Ms. Diakhaté reminded participants that the Committee establishes a theme for the day of the African child and for 2010 it is Budgeting for Children. She reminded participants that without a budget, nothing is possible.

To conclude, Ms. Diakhaté stressed that the gap is becoming large between the ideal and the reality for children. She lamented the fact that many children are not registered at birth, children are working and school is a dream for too many children. With this gap in mind, she called on member states to recognise and implement their commitment because children are the future. When their rights are always overlooked, then there is no future.

## ii. Gap Minder- Communicating Child Research

**Ms. Birgitta Rubenson, Senior Lecturer, Department of Public Health Sciences, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm**

### **Summary of presentation:**

Ms. Rubenson of the Karolinska Institute shared with participants a computer programme entitled *gap minder*. She stated that *gap minder* is a tool that allows teachers to show how the world is changing and highlights gaps. She further clarified that these gaps are often within countries and not only between countries. Ms. Rubenson demonstrated how *gap minder* can be used. In an interactive diagram, bubbles are used to depict countries and the countries are differentiated by size and region. She explained how graphs can show numerous situations including GDP, economic situation of a country and health indicators, population, infant mortality, primary school enrollment and secondary school enrollment.

Ms. Rubenson expressed that the tool allows one to see that the world is no longer bifocal with the developing world and the industrial world. The tool can show how wealth situation changes over years and how regional wealth changes in comparison to other regions. She demonstrated the Human Development Trends programme, which has the ability to illustrate the difference in health rates between the rich and poor within each country. She explained that the life expectancy graph is an illustrative way to show what HIV/AIDS has done to Southern Africa. She clarified that the programme depends on good data received by the UN and census.

Ms. Rubenson demonstrated how the programme looks at emergencies, how the world reacts to

emergencies and what it means to the people where it occurs. The programme can show natural disasters since the 1990s and how many people are affected by drought, epidemics, flood and storms.

She concluded by urging all to view and use the programme. The programme can be downloaded at [www.gapminder.org](http://www.gapminder.org).

### iii. Doing Research to Influence Policy and Practice - Young People's Agenda

#### *Summary of presentations by youth delegates:*

##### **Aloys Angelo Fungafunga and Nyabuchwenza Metusela, TAMASHA, Tanzania**

The focus of Ms. Fungafunga and Mr. Metusela's presentation was on a project that TAMASHA undertook where children conducted research. They explained that the project focused on children as researchers, children selecting research topics, conducting research and feeding research findings into an international document.

They provided background to the project explaining that the research was to be presented at a Regional Conference on Children Affected by AIDS as well as an international conference. In preparation for the conferences, they explained that eight countries held consultations with children including Tanzania. TAMASHA was contracted to facilitate the child research and participation in the Regional Conference.

They further explained that in each participating country there was a meeting of organisations working with children. Each organisation selected children to participate in national research. At the first workshop, children decided the issues they wanted to research, based on the theme of the conference, and how they wanted to carry out the research. They stated that each child researcher was given two weeks to go back to their home

areas/organisations and carry out research among their fellow children on what they wanted to be presented to the conference. The researchers then returned for a feedback workshop and development of national report.

They stated that the manner, in which the workshops and the research were conducted, made it feel like the process belonged to them.

*"Don't put your research in your pockets. Do something with it."*  
Nyabuchwenza Metusela

They explained that at the International Conference, their presentations were well received by the majority of participants. They felt that this was largely because it was clear they were not just speaking for themselves but represented examples and views of many other children and groups of children. They shared that some adults were not prepared to treat them as serious researchers with serious points to make. In conclusion, they thought the research process had been a success but were unsure of how much of their research findings and recommendations had been followed up.

##### **Kerida McDonald, UNICEF Ethiopia**

Ms. McDonald, of UNICEF Ethiopia, started by introducing a UNICEF programme entitled Speak Africa. She explained that it is a communication platform and a multi-partner supported initiative. It has a multi-component strategy, in terms of advocacy and media training. She described how the programme focuses on training young people for media purposes and engages children and youth in decision-making processes.

Ms. McDonald explained that a component of Speak Africa is the Young Africa Forum (YAF). The YAF was conceived as an ongoing process of consultation and engagement of young people in important continental matters, the outcome being a consolidated set of thoughts and opinions of young people across the continent that could feed into continental debates. She described how the Youth African

Forum collected views from youth across Africa, conducted youth consultations and fed these consultation results into the African Union Heads of State meeting in Libya. The innovative youth consultation process used such means as documentaries, face to face consultation, connecting classrooms, Xpress Xchange on the Speak Africa website, interviews, SMS survey.

She concluded by stating that more information on Speak African could be found at [www.speakafrica.org](http://www.speakafrica.org).

#### **Natan Tilahun, *Speak Africa, Ethiopia***

The focus of Mr. Tilahun's presentation was to further describe the Young Africa Forum. He explained the key strategies of the YAF including:

- Creation of an enabling environment for children and youth issues and taking to action political commitments already made
- Expansion and institutionalising of opportunities for young people to meaningfully engage and contribute to decisions and actions that affect their lives
- Opportunities for youth to research specific topics related to Africa and devise solutions and suggestions

He further described the objectives of the YAF:

- To institutionalise processes for children and youth engagement in decision-making, governance and on-going development activities
- To provide a platform for bringing closer the agendas of children and young people
- Supports instruments such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Youth Charter

Mr. Tilahun described a youth led consultation process held on agriculture for economic growth and food security. He shared with participants a film that had been made in the north of Ethiopia as part of the consultation process. In addition to documentaries, he described a number of different outcomes of the consultation process including:

- Youth Recommendations summary document

- Inputs from the platforms were synthesised into a set of recommendations "Speak Africa Young People Recommendations on: Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security"
- Recommendations submitted to Heads of State at the AU summit in Libya

In conclusion, Mr. Tilahun outlined the next steps of the YAF including screening the documentaries, continuing to network with interest group and initiating a new consultation process.

#### **iv. From Research to Policy - New Perspectives and Opportunities**

##### ***Summary of presentations:***

##### ***Dr. David Parker, Deputy Director, UNICEF Innocenti Center***

Dr. Parker of the UNICEF Innocenti Center began his presentation explaining the purpose of the session – to bridge some of the issues raised and to work towards some conclusions of the discussions. Dr. Parker outlined a number of challenges and opportunities through promoting child rights through research.

First, he stated, is the political dimension. He explained that while one can raise and discuss sensitive issues, the issues of political economy and its dynamics needs to be thought about further.

Second, he explained, is the issue of the complexity inherent in child rights and how to reflect that in both the research and policies. He questioned how to bring these complexities into the policy domain.

Dr. Parker's third point was around the complexity of the world and what that means for the realisation of child rights. He pointed out that communication technology has changed the way child rights issues are discussed and taken forward and the real challenge to research is how to take advantage of these new technologies. He cited the YAF documentary

shown as a good example in sharing information and *gap minder* as a good tool to manage the overwhelming information on child rights.

Dr. Parker explained that the subsequent presentations are examples of the bridge between policy and research.

**Katherine Hall, Senior Researcher, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town**

The purpose of Ms. Hall's presentation was to discuss the link between research and policy through advocacy work. She described some of the principles and strategies that have been used at the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town. She described her institute as multi-disciplinary institute and consequently there are many skills within the institute. She explained that the focus of the institute's work is to address children rights through research and advocacy.

Upon reflecting on the institute's work, she explained that they have found that a rights-based argument does not often persuade politicians. She explained that the institute needs to do more than disseminate research and have realised there are four types of continuums related to dissemination and advocacy.

**Continuum 1:** Dissemination of research on a continuum of passive to focused. Ms. Hall explained that some of the institute's reports are sent via email to 2000 targeted recipients, other hard copies are sent directly to ministries while other reports are available for free.

**Continuum 2:** Engagement on policy issues on a continuum of responsive to proactive. She explained that the institute is now known for research on child rights issues and the government asks for advice on certain issues. The institute also participates in court hearings and reviews papers at the request of government. However, she pointed out that the institute also take a pro-active stance and publishes its own critiques of policies or suggestions for policy development.

**Continuum 3:** Relation to government on a continuum of supportive to adversarial. She explained that the institute has gradually nurtured relations with government and that the relation can be supportive, such as a service provider, to adversarial. She described that at the extreme end is litigation where they have taken ministers to court. She noted with interest that litigation has not resulted in a negative relation with government.

**Continuum 4:** Advocacy objectives on a continuum from direct to indirect. Ms. Hall described how the institute has established relationships with clear advocacy organisations and the institute's research strengthens their work. She stated further that for their own advocacy work, the institute uses the media and nurtures relations with reporters.

She explained that to make the institute's research central to policy development, there is need to:

- Link the research to policy and practice;
- Be aware of how governments operates, how the institute fits into it and how the budget and expenditure frameworks work;
- Be aware of timing. It is important to follow budget cycles, make use of specific days and state of the nation address to get a strong response from the advocacy work; and
- Plan, as long-term sustained work is the most effective.

Lastly, Ms. Hall stated that the institute's approach has been developed over many years and is quite successful in many respects but it has been difficult to prove its impact. She also noted that as governments become more research literate, the level of research needs to change.

**Caitlan Porter, Policy Manager, Young Lives, Save the Children UK**

Ms. Porter, of Save the Children's Young Lives Programme, described the programme as a long-term international study of childhood poverty. She explained that the study spans the

life of the MDGs and that there are five rounds of data collection with 12,000 children over 15 years. She clarified that it is both a survey as well as qualitative research. She pointed out that the programme has a great amount of data and many partners across the countries.

The Young Lives programme, she stated, tries to integrate a political economy perspective in child rights research but the challenge is trying to determine what that is. She cited the importance in understanding the policy environment when undertaking research because there is an obligation to understand and acknowledge the social and political context. Producing credible and policy relevant research is not just about developing good recommendations but asking the right questions and interpreting and situating results in the political context. She explained further that in order to influence policy one must understand and negotiate the politics of policymaking and understand how evidence is, or is not, used in policy. Political economy analysis enables one to scrutinise the environment within which policies are framed, understood, contested, designed and implemented and how and when political decisions are made. Analysing the policy environment enables us to understand the interests and incentives of political actors and the role that formal and informal institutions play in shaping the choices, values and ideas of policy makers.

Ms. Porter provided a number of examples of how the Young Lives programme is trying to integrate the policy perspective in research. At the design stage, the programme works with local policy staff to do political context analysis. This analysis helps determine the research questions. She explained that the Young Lives programme also builds the capacity of local policy staff to undertake political context analysis. The programme sets up roundtable events with NGOs to get their suggestions on what to research and the programme monitors the uptake of the research findings and the findings are used and help NGOs.

She described that at the interpretation stage, there is a new policy peer review. When the academic or researcher completes the paper it needs to be circulated to all academics in the project and to other academics and policy makers for review and comments.

She explained that at the communication and message development stage, the policy debates are mapped to assess how best to present and disseminate research findings. This mapping helps assess the political sensitivity and enables the programme to develop feasible messages. It also helps to frame and contextualize the findings.

Ms. Porter described that programme's challenges as:

- Being an evidence-based organisation, the findings can challenge some strong beliefs of partners.
- Ensuring that the evidence matters. The programme needs to ensure that key messages are disseminated well.
- Understanding more about why some evidence is not taken up.
- Promoting collaborative work between research, policy and communications staff/partners. Encourage other partners to use the evidence and data. Government needs to learn and take up the research.
- Thinking ahead about what the research questions should be in the future to address some of the key policy questions.
- Capacity of researchers to conduct political analysis.
- How to build relations with government and deal with political sensitivity.

### *Comments from the floor*

The ensuing discussions brought out the following important points:

- The examples provided about how to link research with policy change requires a fundamental change in

roles of researchers and advocates and perhaps requires an increase in capacities.

- In order to make a stronger link between research and policy, a number of changes are required:
  - Change around incentives – difference expectations, contexts, values, and political pressures
  - Change in the way resources are allocated and the timing of research
  - Change in infrastructure – how do children and youth think about research? We need to educate a citizenship that is comfortable with research and its implications.
  - Change the players - this endeavor takes place in a larger context than research and policy makers. There are other stakeholders.

It is important to understand whom influences the policy makers because there are systems and institutions that currently manage how policy makers act and therefore their capacity to act is constrained.

Policy making all over the world is not dependent on new information but instead is about politics more than facts. You need to select those leaders who are open to dialogue.

In addition to influencing policy, research needs to also inform the regular citizen, especially those most affected by issues. This entails taking a grass roots approach.

## v. The Double Invisibility - The Knowledge Deficit and Children in Africa

Dr. Urban Jonsson, *The Owls*

### **Summary of presentation:**

The purpose of Dr. Jonsson's presentation was to share the results of a study he conducted for

ACPF to determine the extent to which journals cover issues about children in Africa. Dr. Jonsson explained that the study was undertaken as ACPF had potentially felt that a journal dedicated to the policies of children in Africa could support their mission.

Dr. Jonsson explained the methodology and the type of journals that were part of the study.

Finally, Dr. Jonsson laid out the following conclusions from the study:

- The situation of children is worse in Africa than in any other part of the world, and the situation in some countries is actually worsening
- There is no peer-reviewed international journal dedicated to the issue of 'children in Africa'; African journals on children are limited in scope to the country of origin.
- In spite of the large number of journals prepared to publish papers on children in Africa, an extremely small number of papers on the subject are published. Only 4% of the about 9000 papers published annually by 'relevant' journals focus on children in Africa. Only 290 papers per year; or 25 papers per month, are published on 'children in Africa'.
- Less than half a percent of papers in international journals on Africa deals with children; only two percent of papers in international journals on children deals with Africa; and just one percent of international journals on development deals with children in Africa
- The very low number of published papers on 'children in Africa' is most likely the result of few papers of an adequate quality submitted for publication, which in turn is the result of a lack of or inadequate research on 'children in Africa'
- Journals on Africa have few papers on children; journals on children have few papers on Africa; and journals on development have few papers on

Africa – few papers on children – and very few papers on children in Africa

- Children in Africa are victims of a double invisibility; both from being children and from living in Africa

### **Questions and comments from the floor:**

The subsequent discussion led to the following questions and comments from the floor:

- Several participants highlighted a number of journals that were not observed:
  - General Psychology in Africa
  - The Global Journal of Childhood
  - Childhood today
- Concerns were raised about the details of the paper and it was questioned why journals with titles that included social work and psychology were not included as well as African journals. Dr. Jonsson responded that certain African journals were excluded because they focused on Nigeria and South African and did not provide papers on Children in Africa.
- The conclusion is that the issue of children is unimportant in the area of research and academia. It is this conclusion that needs to be addressed.

### **vi. Draft Outcome Document**

#### **Ms. Carlotta Tincati, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)**

Ms. Tincati shared with participants the draft Outcome Document. She informed the group that the editorial committee, with the support from the moderators, crafted the draft Outcome Document. She explained that the committee received the recommendations from the fourteen different roundtables and consolidated the recommendations into a Call for Action.

She explained that the recommendations were categorized under four areas drawing on insight from background documents and the major themes that emerged during the plenary sessions. She further clarified that the recommendations are suggestions that will further be refined.

Ms. Tincati emphasised that the focus of the current draft Outcome Document is the Call for Action. She explained that the preamble, review of progress and review of challenges would be written later.

She described the four main categories of the Call for Action as:

1. Address knowledge gaps
2. Secure knowledge generation
3. Use, manage and share of knowledge
4. Address the political context

Ms. Tincati concluded by reading the draft document to the participants.

The finalised version of the Outcome Document is found in section three of this report.

### **vii. Comments on Key Recommendations**

#### **Moderator: Mr. Jim Emerson, Deputy CEO, Plan International**

The moderator, Mr. Emerson from Plan International, asked each panel member to comment on the draft Call for Action and provide suggestions and recommendations for improvement. Listed below is a summary of the comments made by panelists as well as participants.

#### **The Outcome Document needs to be more articulate**

- Panelists expressed that the draft was too general and did not have a bite. They felt that the message needs to be clear and one that captures attention.

### ***Include the participation of youth and children***

- Panelists recommended that the participation of youth and children be added throughout the Outcome Document and specifically at the beginning of the Call for Action. They recommended adding a statement regarding young people as researchers.

### ***Additions and greater emphasis on the following***

- Panelists stated that the Outcome Document would be improved with the following additions or putting greater emphasis on:
  - The knowledge gap, particularly in Africa, and to call for the building of the capacity of universities and research institutes
  - The need for an ethical approach to research on child rights. Participants discussed the importance of a code of ethics for researchers.
  - The role of researchers to engage in positive advocacy to the extent possible
  - The role of parenting, research on parenting and issues around parents as the duty bearers of children
  - Name the duty bearers of each action called for
  - Include reference to children in conflict and wars
  - The religious element and how it plays into achievement of children's rights
  - The CRC as it should be at the heart of the Call for Action

### ***The Call for Action should be time bound***

- Participants shared that most Calls for Action have a timeframe

### ***Stress the need for collaborative work in research***

- Panelists suggested that the document needs to stress more collaborative

work, setting an agenda (particularly for Africa), commissioning the research, conducting the research and using the research

### ***The Outcome Document will be used to set agenda for agencies***

- Most panelists mentioned that they would encourage their organisations to use the Call for Action to inform next stages of work.

### ***Follow-up mechanism for the Call for Action***

- Once the Call for Action has been finalised, participants suggested that it be translated in key languages and that it be linked to the AU's Call for Acceleration in children's participation. Participants also expressed that a mechanism be developed to follow-up the Call for Action. If a plan of action is developed, participants suggested that the organisers hold a conference in five years to assess the implementation of the recommendations.

### ***Summary of Recommendations:***

#### ***Prof. Jaap Doek, Former Chair, UNCRC***

Professor Doek summarised the suggestions from the floor and from the panel regarding the draft Outcome Document. He brought forward the suggestions from the floor and panelists including the need for the Outcome Document to have more emphasis on parents and parenting and to address the political rights of children, early childhood development and children affected by war and conflict. Other suggestions, he summarised, included making the document time bound and giving it more bite. Suggestions were given, he explained, for follow-up to look at the impact of the conference and the Outcome Document. He emphasised that at a follow-up meeting, it is important to have the same participants attend. He reiterated that the Outcome Document needs to be a strong document and to have an articulate message. He called on participants to take the document home and use it.

## CLOSING

### **Adv. Bience Gawanas, Commissioner of Social Affairs of the African Commission**

Commissioner Gawana started by thanking the organisers of the conference for bringing together the advocates, researchers and policy makers to discuss the wellbeing of children and how to strengthen child rights. She reminded participants that the AU Commission on Social Affairs is one of the organs of the AU that deals with the rights of the child. She informed participants that the AU has developed key instruments to promote the rights of the child the most important of which is the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child as well as the mechanism for its implementation, the Committee of Experts. Commissioner Gawana emphasised that the ratification of the Charter places an obligation of states to protect their children. She explained that there are other policy instruments that call for accelerated action in certain areas such as the reduction of maternal mortality as well as an AU campaign to prevent human trafficking. She highlighted that the success of these campaigns in providing advocacy platforms cannot be underestimated.

Commissioner Gawana observed that when the rights of the child are addressed it is not only the legal aspects and the protection of the civil rights of the child that are important but also the rights that address poverty and low access to health and education. She emphasised the importance of the social and economic rights of the child.

She explained that one of the challenges is how to bring the nexus between those who create the knowledge and those who use it. She posed

the question “Are children merely the objects of research or are they active participants?” “Do we listen to their wants and needs and how do we translate their wants and needs to actions that make a difference to their lives?” She expressed that there is always a gap between policies and laws and action on the ground and she hoped during the conference discussions some recommendations had been made to address the gap. Similarly, she pleaded that the conference recommendations address how to empower leaders to take appropriate measures and decisions.



Advocate Bience Gawanas, Commissioner of Social Affairs of the African Commission

Commissioner Gawana concluded stating that the AU remains committed to confronting social injustices affecting children on this continent. She stressed that the AU will continue to provide the political leadership to harmonise African leadership on ensuring children are at the centre of the agenda. She further stressed that now is the time to accelerate and make a collaborative effort to protect and promote child rights and to ensure active participation of children.