DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 983 PS 022 864

TITLE	Mobility and Young Children.
INSTITUTION	Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague (Netherlands).
REPORT NO	ISSN-0921-5840
PUB DATE	Oct 94
NOTE	25p.; Photographs might not reproduce.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022)
JOURNAL CIT	Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter; n76 Oct 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Child Welfare; Developed Nations; Developing Nations; Family Environment; *Family Mobility; Foreign Countries; Immigrants; *Migrant Children; *Migrant Programs; *Migrants; *Mobility; Nomads; Parent Child Relationship; Program Descriptions; *Transient Children; Violence; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS	Greece; *Gypsies; India; Ireland; Israel; Kenya; Malaysia; Thailand

ABSTRACT

This newsletter theme issue deals with the phenomenon of mobility or transience in India, Kenya, Greece, Ireland, Malaysia, Thailand and Israel. The primary focus is on mobility's effect on young children, specifically their health and education; some of the broader concerns also addressed by the newsletter are the causes of mobility and its effect on the economy. The newsletter notes that while some of the mobile populations are known as nomads or Gypsies or Travellers, others are known by their occupations such as plantation workers or construction site laborers. Projects and programs that work for the welfare of mobile families and their children are described. Other features in the newsletter are: reports on child-related issues in different countries, with a special mention of The Isolated Schools project in Portugal, which supports the development of educational resources for children living in isolated areas; reviews of books concerning social bias and multicultural education; and an article on violence against children. Summaries of new publications from the Foundation, a report from New Zealand on production of a video about a project for teaching Pacific Islands children, and information on resources are also included. (BAC)

Bernard van Leer Foundation

Newsletter

Number 76 October 1994

Mobility and young children

above: many peoples in Africa are mobile or nomadic. Here two women and a child walk long distances to fetch the family's water (Kenya)

It is often assumed that a mobile lifestyle is detrimental to children's development. This assumption is made by most official bodies and by people of fixed addresses on the basis that children need stability in order to successfully develop physically, socially and emotionally. Children do indeed need stability, but the experience of mobile populations shows that this does not necessarily need to be physical stability, it is a matter of having constant elements in their lives and being part of a stable group of people who care for them and who they trust.

Mobility is not a new phenomenon. The human race has been mobile and migratory since our early days as hunter-gatherers and shifting cultivators. However, the scale of movement in the twentieth century is unprecedented and, in recent years, has become the subject of debate and dilemma.

In this article we are concentrating mainly on people who are transient. That is to say, people who by choice or involuntarily move their place of residence periodically and whose children are sometimes expected to continue this lifestyle. While mobility implies periodic moves, migration implies a one time movement of people from one place to another, usually on a long-term or permanent basis.

The 'push' and 'pull' factors

People move because of tradition, culture, natural disasters, oppression, wars or economic reasons. While some mobile groups such as nomads or forest dwellers are increasingly adopting a more settled lifestyle, modern technology has put other people on the move by greater war devastation, adding man made disasters to natural disasters, and the pressures on land.

For those groups that are traditionally mobile, there are many pressures on their way of life. Much of the land that could once be freely accessed is now being invaded for its mineral wealth or its short-term agricultural potential. There are over 200 countries and territories in the world, and most maintain border controls. In addition, the majority of their citizens settle permanently – or aspire to that – and operate within cash economies via money making activi-

In this issue

above: Gypsy children have a completely different culture from the mainstream society (Greece)

ties. Overwhelmingly such people are protective of what they have and wary of perceived or real threats from outsiders.

A major factor that has 'pushed' people from their homes is the shift from agriculture-based to industrial-based economies. Together with technological advances in agriculture, this has resulted in large-scale movements to urban areas. Other 'push' factors include development projects such as the building of large dams; population expansion pushing people into marginal areas; and government policies that impose forced migration and settlement of territory.

One of the main reasons why people move voluntarily is to sustain their livelihood. This can be seen in nomadic groups who follow their herds of animals in search of better pastures; in seasonal workers who follow the harvests of different crops; and in market women who follow a set circuit of village markets over a large area in order to sell their wares. This can also be seen in the movements to western Europe from developing countries since the 1950s. The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 15 million people entered western Europe as migrants between 1980 and 1992 alone[1].

However, despite the economic benefits that accrue to receiving countries from immigration, many immigrants are subject to discrimination and to laws limiting their rights. Worldwide economic recession leading to high unemployment rates and reductions in social services has sparked off increased violence against migrants: they are blamed for taking jobs and using up state resources.

Migration and the economy

Though studies show that immigration is often good for the economy of both the receiving country and the sending country, evidence suggests that the receiving country reaps the most benefits. The receiving country gains from the fruit of the migrants' labour, while the sending country can lose its most skilled workers and suffer a 'brain and age drain' as the most qualified and fittest members of society leave. This is exacerbated when the receiving country imposes selective immigration procedures, accepting only the highly skilled and physically strong.

However, the sending country can benefit from the relief of the pressure on its resources, and countries and families can benefit from money sent back by its emigrant population – known as remittances. Exact figures are not known but 'the total value of international remittances, put at some US$60.9 billion in 1989, came second only to trade in crude oil.'[2] For some countries such as Turkey, the Philippines or Cape Verde, remittances form a substantial proportion of their national incomes. Although it is not always clear how much a country benefits from remittances, it is clear that individual families gain from the additional income. In many cases, someone working away from his or her home is the only means of support for the whole family.

When one or both parents migrate to find work, the children are often left behind with either one parent or their extended family. There are numerous examples of this the world over from the Filipina women working as domestic help in Asia and Europe, to the many people drawn from all over the world to the work in the oilfields of the Middle East. Though mothers do migrate alone, it is more often the fathers who do so. All over southern Africa, for example, households are run by single women whose male partners work in the region's mining belt. Because of the distances involved the men may only return home once or twice a year for holidays. Similar situations arise in the Caribbean and Central America where thousands of men migrate in the harvesting seasons.

Though the absence of the father has an effect on intra-family relationships, the children may not suffer as much from their fathers' absence as may be expected. Recent research shows that some female-headed households with low incomes have lower levels of malnutrition among pre-school age children than in male-headed households with high incomes.[3]

However, despite the fact that adults often move in order to improve their and their families' economic welfare, research suggests that people often actually become worse off, and this has an impact on their children. Many skilled workers migrating to another country are only able to get unskilled jobs as their qualifications and experience are not recognised.

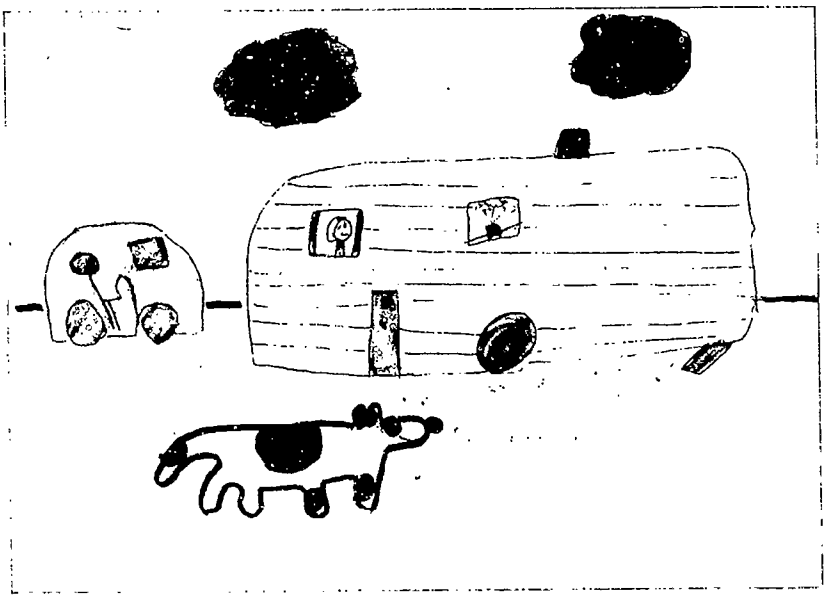
Children who work

Migrants may also find themselves trapped by discrimination in situations of indebtedness and exploitation. In this case, for the survival of the entire family, many parents prefer that one or more of their children go out to work rather than get an education, thus contributing to the well being of the whole family. This has been found by a project working with plantation workers in Malaysia where children can earn more in tips picking up golf balls on luxury golf courses than their parents can earn on the plantation. The youngest children of the workers are in crèches that the estate owners have to provide by law. Interestingly, increased mobility among the workers is persuading some owners to improve facilities in order to keep them (see page 10).

At a few years of age, children often participate in economic activity. In Travelling communities in the UK, though children are not prevented from going to school, it appears usual that a boy will leave school early to learn 'how to earn a living from his dad'.[4] Girls of the same age are expected to help their mothers with domestic chores and child care in preparation for their future roles. The main factor is that formal education is considered irrelevant by many mobile families, who favour preparing their children to function in accordance with their communities' values.

There are cases where children – even those under the age of eight years migrate – by themselves. In many instances the children are from poor rural families and migrate to urban areas because they must work to either send back money to their families, or to relieve the pressure on their families by leaving their homes. These children, being young and in need of jobs in order to survive, become the victims of exploitation through bad working conditions, low wages, and often become trapped in forced labour or prostitution. With the long hours that many of them work, education and interaction with other children is out of the question.

The position is even worse for children who migrate to another country to work. Already suffering because they have been forced to leave their homes and families, they are frequently treated as criminals. Because they are often residing in another country illegally the authorities can arrest them and deport them back to their homes. The journal *Child Workers in Asia* reports[5] that there are many cases in Thailand of children migrating from neighbouring countries to Bangkok, and doing this trip - often alone - many times. Each time they are deported, they find their way back again (see page 11).



above: many Traveller children are proud of their way of life and wish to continue it. This illustration is taken from Bringing up Children in a Traveller Community *produced by Save the Children (UK)*

Imposing values

Settled people do not only believe that a mobile lifestyle is bad for children, they are usually also convinced that their own lifestyles are intrinsically better. Clashes can occur when a majority group attempts to impose its own values on a mobile group without understanding that the mobile group also has traditions, beliefs and values that are equally valid. The usual consequence is that settled people expect mobile people to adapt to institutions, rather than the other way around, which then leads to mutual incomprehension, disputes, and, frequently, withdrawal.

An example of adapting an institutional practice is seen in the work of the Aristotle University in Greece which has devised a curriculum for work with children of Gypsy families (see page 8). The project has designed a range of school books which are adapted to the Gypsy culture in Greece. As the children move to different schools when their families travel, their new teachers should be able to continue teaching from where the previous school left off.

Gypsies have long brought up their children to be skilled in their specific lifestyle. So have nomadic groups where children take on family and communal responsibilities from as young as three years of age. The Samburu in Kenya have a culture that revolves around their livestock, a rich set of values, and tried and true methods of training their children. Although children can count and calculate from an early age, their tradition does not include writing. They are thus at a disadvantage in a modern society. An early childhood project has been endeavouring to find a way to blend the traditional and the modern but has met many problems along the way (see page 6).

Despite the complications involved in reaching groups that are transient, some projects or organisations are doing just that. In India, Mobile Crèches follows migrant workers coming mostly from rural areas as they move from one construction site in Bombay to another where they are employed as labourers (see page 5). Under the hazardous conditions in which the – adults and many children – work, and the lack of child care facilities, many parents are only too happy that their children can attend the crèches. Unfortunately, economic reality means that the eldest girl children are often unable to benefit as they have to look after the household, or work in order to contribute to the family income. The work can be dangerous or damaging to the children's health as they work in factories, as street vendors, on construction sites, or on garbage dumps.

Parental aspirations for children

People who feel that they have been pushed into a mobile lifestyle may not necessarily want their children to continue this pattern. In the case of mobile labourers, the parents and children who aspire to education as a way out of their transience can face disappointment. In India, for example, among the construction site workers the years of struggle to enable the children to go to pre-school and continue through the education system have often not paid off. In the face of high unemployment many secondary school, and even university, graduates cannot get jobs. These youngsters are in an extremely difficult position as they are not prepared or able to earn a living through hard physical labour, and yet they are unable to find employment through their education. According to Mobile Crèches, this bleak future for their children can discourage the parents from putting their children through the education process, starting with pre-school, as they see no point to it.

Also in Kenya, the Samburu have found that 'modern education produces misfits, dependants and people without self confidence. The young adults who have received some form of modern education do not fit well either in Samburu rural society or in the urban system.'

A programme that has been working in Israel with immigrants from Ethiopia has found that families

become bewildered by the many new circumstances that they have to confront. This leads to feelings of inadequacy at their inability to cope with a new life or to guide their children. By training people from the community to work with the families both in their homes and in the various institutions that they come into contact with, parental aspirations can be reconciled with the realities of their situations: 'The essential element is the Ethiopian para-professional who works with the families in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance – simply because nuances, body language, and respect for custom are understood "without language"' (see page 12).

Are there special needs?

Some of the needs of young children are universal – adequate food, warmth, shelter – but most of all they need a caring and stimulating environment and a continuing relationship with an older carer, usually a parent. Many children growing up in mobile groups of people receive all these, and more, yet there will often be other needs that their own families are unable to meet. Such needs may be related to health or nutrition, they may be related to contradictions between cultures, or they may be related to the need to prepare the children to survive in today's world. The problem is how to establish what those needs are. Obviously, parents and families must be a part of the decision-making; it is essential that they contribute their own values and ensure that their children do not become alienated from their own communities.

But it is also essential that the rest of society – 'the settled people' – is prepared to make adaptations too. We cannot expect that everyone else will conform to the ideals and standards of the majority society, we have to find ways to meet one another somewhere in the middle. Understanding our own prejudices and confronting them is an essential prerequisite for helping the younger generation to build a just society. Some ideas of how this can be approached are to be found in work done on multiculturalism, anti-racism and anti-bias in Europe and the USA (see page 17).

The lessons of the programmes described in the accompanying articles are fairly simple to assert but not easy to carry out in practice. They show us that programmes must be adaptable in all ways: premises, food, schedules, materials and so on; that it is essential to work with and through members of the group who have the same background and can become role models; and that we should never under-estimate the length of time that may be needed to help groups to come to terms with a different way of life for themselves and their children. As the people working with the Samburu have noted: 'When working in such a community one must be very patient as it takes a long time to convince the communities to accept innovations.'

Prospects for the future

Prospects for the future are mixed. For every peace settlement made there will be political instability to ensure that there are waves of people on the move. For every mobile group of people that decides to settle, there will be others who opt for a mobile life. For every person that is forcibly settled, there will be others who are pushed out of their own environment.

Prejudice, discrimination and racism do not seem to be decreasing and their effect on young children can be devastating in terms of personal anguish and the damage done to society. Families continue to be subject to 'social exclusion' and have limited access to social services, quite often falling outside the health and education systems. This means that mobile children are denied their basic rights to health, education and protection. If abused, they have no institutions to turn to for they feel alienated from the mainstream society and its services. Children who suffer from their parents' social exclusion are themselves excluded from much of society's 'wealth' in terms of cultural activities and services.

On the other side, while many settled people may acknowledge the need for more and different approaches, they do not want their money spent on those approaches, and they certainly do not want to associate with 'those people'.

There are programmes that aim to help children of migrants settle in their new country and there are plenty of materials and curricula focused on language learning, multiculturalism, and integration. But there are far fewer programmes and materials specifically centred on children of mobile groups. Yet these children have their needs too.

References

1 *The State of World Population: the individual and the world: population migration and development in the 1990s* United Nations Population Fund, New York, 1993

2 Sharon Stanton Russell and Michael S Teitelbaum 'International Migration and International Trade' World Bank Discussion Paper no 160, World Bank, Washington DC 1992, quoted in *Europe and international migration* Sarah Collinson, Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1993

3 Frank Kennedy, E and Peters, P (1992) 'Household food security and child nutrition: the interaction of income and gender of household head', in *World Development* Vol 20, pp 1077-1085

4 *Bringing up children in a Traveller Community*, the Final Report of the West Yorkshire Travellers Project, Save the Children, London

5 *Child Workers in Asia* vol 9 no 4, October-December 1993 Bangkok, Thailand

Further reading

Derman-Sparks, L 'Revisiting multicultural education: what children need to live in a diverse society' in *Dimensions of early childhood*, Winter 1993

Rocha Trindade, M B (ed) *Recent migration trends in Europe*, Instituto de Estudos para o Desenvolvimento, Universidade Aberta, Lisbon, Portugal, 1993

International migration of Women in *Issues in Gender and Development*, No 5, April 1993, Asian and Pacific Development Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

The State of World Population United Nations Population Fund, New York, 1992

above: Mobile Crèches has noticed improved care practices among mobile labourers

Children and mobility

India: following shifting labourers

Hundreds of families from rural areas all over India work on the construction sites of Bombay. They follow the work, moving from one site to another as the buildings are completed, living in makeshift homes on the sites themselves. Sometimes their children work, mostly they hang around the site. Services are few. If the children are lucky, they attend the day care centres established on some sites by our organisation, Mobile Crèches.

Mobile Crèches runs day care programmes for these children in centres located on the sites close to the workers' temporary residences. They take children from birth to 12 years of age, divided into four age-groups: birth to three years in the crèches; three to six years in *balwadi* (pre-school); six to eight years in the pre-primary classes; and eight and above in the primary classes. Often, children of eight or nine enter school for the first time.

Coming to the city

The children arrive in Bombay with their parents who are unskilled manual labourers. They arrive in groups with a labour contractor who has promised to provide them employment in the city. Each family unit usually consists of a mother and father with one or two young children. On a big construction site there could be 200-300 families, with as many children below the age of ten years. More often than not, the labourers cannot speak the language of the city. They are totally isolated, and do not enter into the mainstream of city life. They therefore do not have access to amenities like hospitals, schools, shops, and transportation.

The labourers' children usually spend their time wandering around on the building site. Children from four years onwards are often responsible for caring for their younger siblings, guarding the meagre family belongings, and doing household chores. They sometimes supplement the family income by working. This leaves them no time for childhood pleasures and peer group interaction, let alone education.

Mobile Crèches is constantly opening new and closing old centres in the effort to follow the migrants. The high turnover of families on construction sites is evident from the children's attendance at our centres. On average we cater to 2,000 children, with at least 250-300 new children entering the centres every month. Though the enrolment rates are high, the great majority of children only stay for about three months.

Overcoming hurdles

Locating a site and negotiating with the contractor is a tedious process. Very few contractors approach us to start a crèche. Either our staff locates the construction sites or we hear about new sites from the workers themselves who are keen to have a crèche on their new workplace. Most of the contractors view the entry of Mobile Crèches as a liability. While they reluctantly provide the space and other basic amenities for the centre, they impose many restrictions on our role and relationship with the labourers. They do not want us to take up any issues with the workers, which may encourage them to demand their rights. As long as we are seen as an organisation that only provides health care and education to the children, we are allowed to function. Any attempt to educate the workers is seen as a threat.

Nevertheless there are other contractors who have been open-minded and their response to the crèches has been overwhelming. Some of them not only provide us with the minimum facilities such as space, electricity, water and toilets, but have increased their financial contributions. Any success of Mobile Crèches is the outcome of a joint effort by our staff, the workers and the contractors.

Cultural and socio-economic disadvantage

Since these children are constantly on the move, they miss many of the opportunities available to settled children, hence they are culturally and socio-economically disadvantaged. As they generally attend the centres for a very short period, the curriculum aims at both literacy and numeracy, and at orienting the children towards basic health habits, social attitudes, motor skills, group participation, emotional maturity and creativity. The delivery of information has to be done in an interesting way, while remaining relevant within a friendly environment.

The crèche atmosphere is informal and the children are admitted at any time of the year or month. Because we try to take the families' situation into account, they may also come to the crèche after they have finished their chores at home.

However, the children are sometimes confused about attending school. While they enjoy the attention and the sense of belonging to a group, they rebel at supervised learning. The school environment is as strange to them as the city in which they find themselves. The younger children often hold onto their brothers or sisters at the crèche, as they are the only familiar faces there.

The staff members of Mobile Crèches are drawn from similar levels of society to the labourers, so that there is no social distancing when they work with the children. They are usually young women who want to earn some wages. More than 60 per cent of our energy, time and resources are spent on staff development. This is essential as these are the teachers who are going to mould generations of children into informed citizens who will be in control of

This article is adapted from two reports produced by the Bombay based Mobile Crèches: *In the Shadow of the Scaffolding* (1987) and *Mobile Creches Bombay Annual report 1989-90*. Further information about the work of Mobile Creches can be obtained from: Mobile Creches, Bombay, Oxford House, 2nd Floor, Apollo Bunder, Bombay, 400 039, India.

above: few construction sites have care facilities for children, who simply hang around the site all day

their lives. Only a teacher who has a sense of values can pass on similar ideas to the children she teaches.

Though we provide practical information to improve the lives of the families, it cannot always be acted upon. For example, much advice on improved hygiene cannot be followed due to the temporary housing conditions: the source of water is dubious, and there is no space or soil for defecation. While the children learn about nutrition and basic health requirements, they cannot include these in their everyday lives.

Improved health

However, on a positive note we have seen increased awareness, and changes in personal care and in the children's surroundings. Messages regarding clean drinking water, prevention of flies, and a tidy environment were all accepted and could be carried out. Prevention of dehydration has now become routine, and the children can identify measles and chicken-pox. Most of the parents receive the health messages through their children.

In Mobile Crèches we have learned a lot from the work we do with construction site labourers' children. Dealing with them is a lesson in understanding the transitory lives of several million people in India. In such a milieu, it is a testament of human hope that children learn to be literate and numerate, develop self-confidence, master skills, and absorb health care principles. We also see the irony in these families being perpetually homeless while building apartments and shopping complexes for the affluent, or office monoliths which they or their progeny will never step into. ⌟

Children and mobility

Kenya: when tradition is not enough

This article is based on the *Report of the Samburu community-based early childhood care and education project (1990-1993)* published by the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE), Kenya Institute of Education, Nairobi. The project was initiated by the Samburu District Development Committee and the Samburu County Council. It was implemented by the Samburu District Centre for Early Childhood Education (SACECE) in close collaboration with NACECE in Nairobi and in partnership with parents, communities, various non governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

The people who live in the Samburu District of Kenya – who are also called the Samburu – are nomadic by tradition. Their culture revolves around their livestock. In recent decades this culture has been increasingly threatened by man and by nature. The semi-arid district suffers from sporadic droughts resulting in the death of much cattle and serious famine; while pressures of settled agriculturalists and the tourist industry have encroached on the lands where the Samburu have grazed their cattle for generations. The majority of people prefer to limit their migration within clan land. In many cases nowadays, families do not move outside a 10 kilometre radius.

Traditional socialisation

Traditional socialisation practices ensured that even the very youngest children played their part in the life of the group and, as they grew older, they learned what was necessary for survival. Socialisation and early stimulation of the children is the community's collective responsibility. The main values emphasised right from early childhood are cohesion, cooperation, development and preservation of the pastoral mode of life. Since livestock forms the mainstay of the people, the main training is related to the care of animals. The community also has clearly defined gender roles.

From as early as three years children herd calves and kids around the homestead (group of huts). Between five and six years the children are allowed to graze the calves and kids within a radius of two kilometres from the homestead and are taught how to remove pests like ticks from the animals. Counting and identification of the family livestock through the family marks and other characteristics are also emphasised. At about the same age, girls join their mothers and are trained in skills such as milking, preparing the milk, cooking and cleaning the huts and animal enclosures, and so on.

From the age of seven, the children are considered mature enough to herd the animals far away from home while still receiving further training on the care of the animals. The girls' training also involves learning how to construct huts - which is the women's responsibility.

All this training is informal: the children learn through participation under the supervision of adults while much guidance is provided to ensure that the various skills and knowledge are acquired at the right time.

Attendance at school

Primary school enrolment rates in the District are very low: in 1991 the average primary enrolment was 54 per cent for boys and 39 per cent for girls; the drop out rate remains very high and attendance is irregular. To help counter this situation there are boarding schools. About one-third of children enrolled in primary schools are in boarding schools but 'parents regard these schools with suspicion and feel that they alienate children, and girls in particular, from the traditional way of life.' The Samburu 'lament that modern education produces misfits, dependants and people without self confidence. The young adults who have received some form of modern education do not fit well either in Samburu rural society or in the urban system.'

below: children in nomadic societies are expected to contribute to the family income (Samburu, Kenya)

Because such a large proportion of the children are not in school several projects for out-of-school youth have been established voluntarily. The aim is to make them literate and give them skills that will enable them to better their lives and that of others in the community. One example is a programme in Baragoi which was attended by 150 learners aged between six and 16 – including 90 girls. Classes are held in the evenings, allowing learners to do their normal chores. The DICECE has given assistance in developing special materials and teachers' guides for such programmes.

Livestock are an important part of the life of the Samburu. Children are socialised from an early age to take care of the animals.

The early childhood project

The overall aim of the three-year early childhood project was to improve the quality of life of the young child and the family in the changing Samburu society, especially in areas related to education, socialisation, health, nutrition and care. There are high rates of malnutrition and diseases, particularly eye, skin and diarrhoeal diseases, while parents and local communities were not aware of the causes or how to prevent them. There was little parental and community participation in the pre-school programmes that existed, there was insufficient training for teachers, and there was a lack of coordination between various sponsors.

The strategies implemented in the three project sites included mobilising communities and raising awareness on health, nutrition and care; curriculum development including developing culturally relevant materials; and training teachers.

Mobilising communities

A number of approaches were used to mobilise communities: awareness meetings, discussion groups, workshops, seminars, demonstrations and special projects in some pre-schools that could act as models. For example, it was realised that there was a need for demonstrations on how to prepare and cook certain foods which were provided by feeding programmes but were unfamiliar to the parents.

Following a practice that has been carried out in other districts in Kenya, the DICECE developed and published books containing stories, poems, riddles and games that were collected from local communities. The project also developed new songs and poems that focused on personal and environmental hygiene, health, nutrition, care of children and education – these have also been published.

Additional trainers were brought into the District as teacher training was seen as the key to the work. This is because 'teachers provide the link between pre-schools, parents, community members, trainers, local administrators and other agencies working for the children in their areas. A well organised and innovative teacher creates a positive image in the community. This motivates the community members and other agencies and they therefore provide the required support to the programme.'

The trained teachers were expected to use the pre-school as a base to provide outreach services to local communities. They were also expected to move with the communities when and if they migrated.

Problems

The majority of the pre-school teachers are women and they face a particular problem in fulfilling the wide-reaching role foreseen for them – in Samburu society, community mobilisation can only be effectively undertaken by men because women are silent participants in most meetings, their contribution to decision making is usually minimal. It is difficult for women to address a gathering that comprises men, especially when standing. This means that the trainers have a difficult role to play to try to overcome this cultural barrier and ensure that the teachers are accepted as leaders, capable of organising and leading community mobilisation programmes. If they can succeed, the continuity of the work should be ensured, particularly when people migrate during times of severe drought.

The report found that the teachers led a very isolated life and that they often felt lonely and rejected. This led to the suggestion that a mechanism should be found that would ensure that teachers within an area have regular opportunities to meet and share experiences and problems with other teachers.

Another problem that was identified concerned the lack of collaboration between the various partners. It was found that there was little sharing at any level between the different governmental agencies, the NGOs, the parents and the communities. This led to

duplication of activities, to conflicts and to the poor use of resources.

Although there had been successes, the report noted that by the end of the project period 'it was evident that the training did not prepare them [the teachers] to face the challenges and the problems of the Samburu environment. Some of the trained teachers are facing serious problems such as isolation, low salaries and lack of professional support. This has adversely affected their morale and their ability to provide for the needs of young children.'

Time is of the essence in such work – in this case a long time. This is because the 'Samburu community has strong traditional ties which means that they require longer interactions with change agents to accept new ideas. When working in such a community one must be very patient as it takes a long time to convince the communities to accept innovations.' ❑

right: girls learn how to look after younger siblings (Samburu, Kenya)

Children and mobility

Greece: an approach to irregular school attendance

Professor Georgios Tsiakalos

Professor Tsiakalos, Chair of the Department of Education at Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece, together with a team of faculty members, has been fighting against social and educational exclusion of Gypsy children. The team has developed a new curriculum for Gypsy children adapted to their needs, and is now trying to disseminate this curriculum to schools throughout Greece

Policy makers and education experts often attribute the poor level of school results achieved by Gypsy children, and their erratic school attendance, to the Gypsies themselves. Some people see these as a deep rooted lack of interest in education on the part of the Gypsies, and others as a conscious resistance to the dangers of assimilation through education. Rarely is it taken into consideration that the Gypsy way of life and the organisational format of school systems are mutually incompatible, or that many Gypsies have a limited command of the Greek language.

Policy makers, education experts and public opinion expect this incompatibility to be removed by means of radical changes in the Gypsies' way of life. However this is impossible and undesirable. One solution could be to adjust the school systems to the Gypsies' way of life. This is feasible.

Travelling and school attendance

Many Gypsy families travel from one place to another. They do not travel aimlessly or at random but with definite objectives at certain times of the year to particular places in order to carry out seasonal work such as fruit or cotton picking. This is their means of support; if they do not do this they will starve.

As the children accompany their parents their schooling is interrupted. Gypsy children usually 'disappear' from school towards the end of April, while the school term in Greece continues until mid-June. The children are obliged to repeat the year as they do not then qualify to progress to the next year. This creates a cycle of failure which only ends when they leave school. To the Gypsies, this constantly repeated experience proves that attending school is pointless.

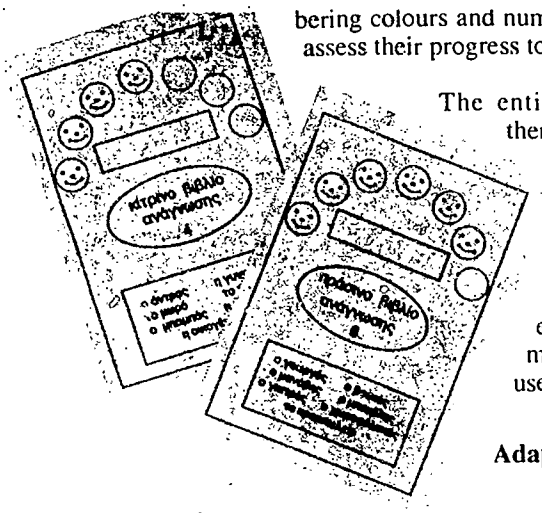
The Gypsy way of life and the school system are incompatible in other areas too, such as the content of the curriculum and the teaching materials used. School books, which in Greece are given free to all pupils, become a source of conflict with the teachers, because they are not looked after properly and are rarely seen as an aid to learning by the Gypsy children.

A child centred literacy programme

Over the last eight years, a group of education experts, psychologists and social scientists at Aristotle University's Education Department have been working on a child centred literacy programme. The group has been supported by the European Community and, for the last year, by the Ministry of Education and local education authorities in Greece. But the most important support is from the Gypsies themselves who collaborate with the group.

The group's most urgent task is to bring literacy to Gypsy children who have either left or never attended school. To do so it has designed appropriate materials drawing on an idea developed in England. Using a simple system of symbols, it divided short readers into seven different colours: one for each day of the week. White is the first day, blue is the second day, green is the third day and so on.

Each 'day' consists, in turn, of seven books of the same colour, which can be distinguished from each other by the number of smiling faces on their respective covers. For example, day two begins with a blue book which has one smiling face on the cover and ends with one with seven faces on the



above: two examples of the special readers which form part of the curriculum for Gypsy children in Greece

bering colours and numbers, they find it easy to assess their progress to date.

The entire curriculum consists therefore of 49 readers. Each of these also has an accompanying exercise book for practice. To facilitate the teacher, the curriculum includes word cards, word games, exercise books for assessment and instructions for use.

Adapting the approach

These readers, word games, and practice books contain the 343 most frequently occurring Greek words in primary school readers and television guides.

This curriculum has been developed specially to take into account the special characteristics of Gypsy children. For example:

- if the pupils interrupt their schooling, they can start again where they left off upon their return. Alternatively, they can continue their education by giving information, based on the colour of their books and the number of faces on the cover, to the teacher at their new stopping place about their progress so far;
- the words selected serve the children's needs at both primary school and in everyday situations;
- the books are cheap to produce and easily replaced, so that if they do get destroyed, the pupils can draw in them, play with them, and when they have finished with them, can keep them or throw them away;
- the concentration on a limited vocabulary enables teachers to be flexible and adapt their lessons according to the level of the pupils' knowledge of the Greek language and to their age.

The birth of the literate person

The course has been given the name *Genesis*. In Modern Greek *Genesis* means 'birth' and the association in this case is with the birth of the literate person. In spite of the symbolism, the word *Genesis* has no religious connotation: it is solely based on teaching concepts.

Genesis constitutes a framework for a whole curriculum that is intended to teach more than just literacy. Other subjects evolve around the 'day' that the children are dealing with, as the words develop from the sky and the earth, light and darkness, man and woman, and so on.

But is specially adapted teaching material such as *Genesis* enough on its own to change the situation of Gypsy children's education? In some cases it might be, but not in all. Children who are not used to going to school, will not alter their behaviour overnight, even if the learning material is particularly attractive to them. However, after a year of using the *Genesis* method in one encampment, four young gypsy girls succeeded in acquiring their primary school certificate. This was the first success of the *Genesis* method and it has encouraged many more young people and children. ❑

Irish Travellers: breaking down the barriers

These extracts give snapshots of what it is like to work closely with Traveller families in Ireland. They are taken from the *Annual Report 1993* of the Community Mothers Programme of the Eastern Health Board, Dublin. The Community Mothers Programme uses experienced mothers to support first and second time mothers – including Travellers – of infants from zero to one year.

I made my first visit to the Travellers only 10 months ago. In this time my whole concept of the Travelling Community has changed. My first instinct was always fear. This was based on stories when I was a child of robberies and violence. I suppose a wariness always stayed with me.

All these feelings disappeared with my first introductions and I found that the barriers vanished straight away. The girls were so friendly and open that I fell into the routine of the visit automatically.

The problems facing them are sometime insurmountable but hopefully having some backup and encouragement is helping in some small way.

Now I am a friend who helps them with their babies. I not only visit them to do a visit, I call on special occasions like birthdays and if their mothers are visiting. My children have come many times and played with their children. Sometimes I brought neighbours from my road and they got on great and were told they were welcome anytime.

I have found that they have a lot of concern for the welfare of their children. Some of them are upset if they miss an immunisation. On two occasions I was asked to bring a cartoon I had brought the previous month because they had lost it. One was on the use of words; the other on nursery rhymes. Some of them confide in me which is a big step forward.

The children were spoken at, not to. Through regular contact with the Programme, the interaction between parents and children has improved steadily. The parents become more involved in their children's play, and the positive results of this can be seen in the much improved, and more frequent communication between parents and children.

Their progression and development so far reflects the untapped potential that is hidden within the Travellers. Through playing with the children it has come to my attention that they are now more assertive and forthcoming as regards making choices and decisions.

Malaysia: whose responsibility is child care?

Paul Sinnapan

We feel that if labourers work for one estate company for a long time and help make it profitable, the management should support their workers' child care needs. By law only children between zero and four years are the responsibility of the estate management. From four to six the children are supposed to go to pre-school; after that, the children should go to primary school and it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that they do.

At present children below four years are mostly left in crèches on the estates. These are built by the estate management and have an *ayah* (a nanny) to take care of the children. She is paid by the management, and is often one of the old ladies from the estate. The crèche's structure depends on the size of the estate and its management. If a big company owns a large estate the facilities may be quite good, but if it is a small company or individual, the facilities and activities are minimal. The crèche is often then a dumping ground for the children.

Learning to understand the community

When PSO first started to work on the estates, we ran tuition classes, sewing classes, and youth awareness sessions. Even though we ourselves came from an estate community, it was through these activities that we really started to understand the community, its values, traditions and culture. We realised that the root cause of the plantation workers' situation was economics: the management gets the profits and the labourer a low wage. The workers often get into debt as they need money to send a child to school, to pay for medical care, to marry, or pay for funerals.

We wanted a project which could address these economic problems at the core, but which would at the same time address the social problems. We had heard about the credit union movement in other countries, and thought that we could implement it ourselves in the estates. There are now credit unions in many estates, which move the communities towards self reliance. With them we are developing activities like child care centres, pre-schools, parent education classes, exam preparation, and skills training.

Getting support from estate management

Under the law, all estate crèches have to be converted into child care centres, and the people looking after the children have to be trained. The problem is the implementation of the law as the management is responsible for training. In some plantations the management has begun to upgrade the facilities in general by starting a fund, some of which went to the centres. But it often ends up in toys and playthings rather than in training the *ayah* to become a childminder.

Many large estates' managements support our child care related work. They provide milk, teachers' salaries, and improve the centre's facilities. The small companies however are not supportive. They say that there is not enough money. In these cases we raise funds and when we come with the money, the suggestions and the work the management is favourable – as long as we don't interfere in matters relating to work. But it is unavoidable that through the process of awareness building and empowerment the workers start questioning wages, overtime, and labour laws of their own accord. The management becomes very cautious of us. PSO cannot stop the empowerment process: pre-school development, youth development and women's development are related to the labourers' working lives. The household economy is related to their wages; indebtedness and children's education is wage-related. We therefore have to talk about wages sometimes, and we have to advise the workers where to get necessary services.

Encouraging parental responsibility

We feel that parents should take responsibility for their children's education from birth onwards. The plantation communities originate from the low caste strata from India who were brought to Malaysia under British occupation earlier this century. They have always been illiterate and the estate managements have kept them so by not providing education. So historically estate workers do not know how to handle educational matters and are dependent on the teachers. If there are good teachers in estate schools the children will learn, if not, the children will suffer. If the children are not doing well the parents scold the teacher. But gradually they are taking on more responsibility.

above left and above: if the children are lucky the estate will provide them with a crèche with drawings on the walls

Continuing migration

When the plantation workers first came from India they kept moving from one estate to another. Later they settled on one estate and raised a family. Now the workers living in estates near a city are moving to the cities, and new immigrants are moving into their places, as are workers from the estates far from the cities. People move to estates near the cities so that their children can work in the factories, and in the hope that in the future they can move there themselves.

Malaysia is attracting migrant workers from Indonesia, Bangladesh, and the Philippines who come to work in the factories and on the estates. Where do their children go to school? There is no school for them. What will happen to these children? Every two years migrants have to leave the country to renew their work permits. If they stay in Malaysia to work, their children will be born there but every two years their parents have to leave and the citizenship issue will arise.

Children at work

Another new phenomenon that we are facing is the development of golf courses. Some small estates cannot make a profit in the face of the big companies, so they turn their estates into golf courses to make money. The estate children become the ball pickers on these golf courses, sometimes dropping out of school to do this. Even though their salary is small they earn a lot of tips, and sometimes earn more than an estate worker. Some parents send their children to pick balls rather than sending them to school because the family needs their earnings. This is bringing about a new trend of parents putting the earning capacity before the education of their child, and moving from estates to the golf courses in order to let their children become ball pickers.

Working towards the future

We are gradually making in-roads in the estates for the welfare of the young children and community as a whole. Through the training of the *ayah* we are introducing into the centre workers' training the values of love, brotherhood, teamwork and how to look at the caste system. They then develop activities such as story telling to help the children to understand these concepts. If the centre workers move to another estate, or even settle in a town, they take their new found child care skills with them for the benefit of themselves and their new community.

But we must realise that changing people's attitudes takes a very long time. We have to remember that my generation was the first that was able to go to school, and we now have children and find their education important. There are now parents who visit the pre-schools to see what is happening, and who talk to the teachers to see how their children are doing. We are happy about that. ⌟

Thailand: keeping a low profile

The city of Bangkok acts like a magnet, attracting the rural poor from all over Thailand with its images of plentiful opportunities and the dream of a better standard of living. A significant number of illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries similarly make their way to the metropolis. They come from Burma, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and China.

The migrants' most urgent need is to find work so that they can survive, leaving them open to exploitation from the many unscrupulous job recruitment agencies and businesses that operate in the city. Their illegal status means that they have no rights whatsoever. The employers are aware of this and take advantage of their difficulties. At the forefront of this exploitation are the children. They are confused, lost and alone.

It is difficult to get a clear picture of the number of children illegally living and working in Bangkok, and whether they are children of migrant families or unaccompanied and working alone. It is a matter of survival for these children to keep a low profile. Immigration detention centres in Bangkok hold children whose parents have been arrested for illegal entry and children who have entered the country on their own. The children are normally held for a period of one or two months before being sent back to their country of origin. When they go back, they return to the same situation that forced them to migrate in the first place. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the children at the detention centres in Bangkok have been there a number of times previously.

(Source: *Child Workers in Asia*, Vol. 9, No. 4, October-December 1993, Bangkok, Thailand.)

Israel: the 'feel of home'

Chasia Levin

The Association for the Advancement of the Ethiopian Family and Child in Israel and the Ethiopian immigrant community in Beer Sheva and the Negev Region have been working together over the past three years in early childhood and parent education. The Beta Yisrael project, supported by the Foundation, was originally established to meet the needs of the thousands of immigrants who arrived in Israel in 1984-1985. It runs family programmes to enable children and parents to settle in their new country without losing their cultural identity. Having successfully implemented several programmes, the Association is rapidly now becoming an advocacy group for the Ethiopian community and, in particular, for its young children. Chasia Levin is the director of the Beta Yisrael project, and in this article outlines some of the approaches and principles that underlie the project's work.

Our Association is the only immigrant absorption effort in Israel founded on the principle of immigrants working with their own community, in this case the Ethiopian immigrant community.

Our professional staff consists of a team of Israeli specialists in early childhood development, parent education, community development, and health education. They are programme coordinators, trainers, supervisors and consultants. The Beta Yisrael project is made up of a flexible mix of programmes staffed by an ever growing cadre of Association-trained Ethiopian para-professionals. Each programme is part of a comprehensive, developmental approach to the specific problems that Ethiopian families and children face in coping with their new environment. Each programme has evolved through a process of mutual learning and modification to meet the needs of each community.

The basic principles underlying the project

The project is based on the following principles.

1. It is a grassroots, community-based approach, rather than the service provision, instructional-based approach to immigrant absorption generally adopted in Israel.

2. Initially, a link between the project and the mothers is established by involving them in their children's pre-school enrichment activities.

3. The Ethiopian para-professionals, attuned to the newcomers' concerns and difficulties communicate in their own languages. Thus the programmes provide the 'interface' between the professional staff and the Ethiopian families and children, and reduce the potential for cultural and language misunderstanding.

4. The immigrants' cultural identity is recognised, and the parents' self-esteem and honour preserved. The families continue to function as respected and strong units, and eventually become more independent and confident in dealing with their new environment.

5. The entire family unit is gradually involved, avoiding the cultural alienation of the youngsters from their parents' 'old-fashioned ways'.

The para-professionals in the programmes

We began work in 1985 by asking several mothers to act as helpers in our 'Afternoon Children's

Enrichment Programme' for pre-school age children, which started life in two rooms situated in the housing block allotted to Ethiopian immigrants in Beer-Sheva. Thus, the basic principles of the Association were put into action: Ethiopian mothers were to be trained as para-professional workers and given salaries. They would further learn from on-the-job supervision, enrichment seminars, workshops and group meetings. They would also be trained in specific areas of early childhood care and development, to serve as health educators in *Kupat Holim* (statutory health clinics), well-baby clinics, and hospital pre-natal and maternity wards.

Using Ethiopians to work with young children during the first stages of the immigrants' transition period was crucial: they served as a cushion to soften the culture shock for both children and parents. Upon arrival in Israel the children entered a structured pre-school environment where they were expected to cope with unfamiliar games and materials, and behaviour patterns. Equally, their parents suddenly had to dress them in certain ways, get them to school on time, and follow recommended schedules for meal and bed times.

The Ethiopian para-professionals could comfort, explain, and encourage the families, dissolving the fear caused by unfamiliar expectations. They provided a secure, informal environment, inspired trust and the motivation to keep on going – all in the Amharic and Tigre languages. On top of this, each para-professional herself was an example to the newly arrived mothers of bridging the gap to a new life in a new country.

We have found that the Ethiopian community settles more rapidly if encouraged to use their own languages during the years of transition. This goes against the traditional view in Israel that learning the Hebrew language is the key to integration.

Involving – not excluding – mothers and fathers

The Association's programmes have an impact on the family unit from many sides at the same time. The aim is to gradually involve first the mothers,

left: mothers are trained as para-professionals to work with young children

right: children are welcome at the activities that the project runs for mothers

and then the fathers and other family members, using the care and nurturing of their young children as initial avenues of communication.

For example, a mother with a pre-school aged child, a toddler and a nursing baby, would perhaps first meet the para-professionals either in the 'Afternoon Children's Enrichment Programme' or, in some communities, a morning cooperative pre-school programme. The para-professionals encourage her to attend informal weekly coffee meetings with staff and mothers where the children's routines are explained and discussed, and where child-related problems can be aired by the mothers. In the cooperative pre-school, mothers participate on a rotational basis, gaining hands-on experience of the learning through play approach. In addition, the mothers meet for a weekly informal workshop where topics of concern to parents such as nutrition, child development, and health education are discussed.

At the same time, the mother receives a home visit from the para-professional responsible for the 'Mothers and Infants Morning Programme' in her neighbourhood. She is invited to attend group meetings, bringing along her nursing infant and toddler, where activities focus on meal preparation, nutrition and new foods; preventive health care; and exchanges of information and experiences among the mothers. Materials illustrated with drawings of Ethiopians in various life situations are used for teaching such things as Hebrew, sign posts and directions, and the use of money. Women's personal health concerns are discussed discreetly on request, and referrals made to appropriate agencies. The Ethiopian para-professional health educators often act as go-betweens.

All the Association's programmes encourage parents to maintain their Ethiopian child rearing practices. The para-professional staff provide a nurturing environment without taking responsibility away from the parents. The parents are the first and best educators of their children, and no one can or should replace them.

The 'Health Education Programme'

The 'Health Education Programme' reinforces this belief. Para-professional health educators are assigned to the neighbourhood health and well-baby clinics. They act as intermediaries between the clinic staff and the patients, interpreting the patients' concerns and medical complaints, and explaining the doctors' orders, the medication, return visits to the clinic, and so on. In addition, the health educators organise follow-up home visits, and demonstrate home care of convalescents, hygiene, nutrition and first-aid. This practical reinforcement, added to the nutritional and health information gained from the other programmes attended by mothers, is extremely valuable.

Later, as the initial culture shock begins to fade, the parents of children participating in Association programmes are invited to attend the weekly 'Evening Parent Meetings'. These are designed to increase parents' self-respect and participation in their children's education; and strengthen Ethiopian traditions and maintain family honour. As is customary in Ethiopian society, the groups of men and women meet separately. Para-professional counsellors (men and women) present materials and conduct interactive problem-solving workshops, using slide shows, movies, videos and role-play. A typical topic to begin an 'Evening Parents' Meeting' might be 'Is it reasonable for your elementary school child to ask for a schoolbag in order to be like the other children?' From this may flow discussions on the role of fathers in decision-making, women's and older children's questioning of fathers' authority, dealing with money and financial planning, or problems with language. These parent meetings also serve to spot troubled families, or youths at high risk. These cases are then referred to the appropriate resource agencies.

Language as a tool for social integration

All these programmes owe their success to more than just the use of Ethiopian languages to communicate with newly arrived parents and children. The essential element is the Ethiopian para-professional who works with the families in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance – simply because nuances, body language, and respect for custom are understood 'without language'.

Interestingly, quite early on, the children and the para-professionals speak mainly in Hebrew together. The hesitation, shyness and reluctance to participate often observed in Ethiopian children in traditional pre-school programmes are rarely seen in our programmes. Children and mothers demonstrate free and fully involved behaviour. Participation in activities is high spirited, with humour and nuances understood by all. Learning in such circumstances proceeds pleasantly, informally and quickly.

The programmes have the 'feel of home', as children and parents participate together, with grandparents and other relatives nearby, in holiday events and year-end parties with very poignant traditional presentations. Many of the games played at parties are revivals in a new homeland of those played in Ethiopia – to the delight of the parents. ⌟

Network news

Australia and New Zealand: working together

In April, Foundation-supported projects in Australia and New Zealand met in Alice Springs, Australia, for two days. Their objectives were to share knowledge and materials; to build up a basis for networking; to get to know the work of each project; to discuss common issues; and to work together as a group of organisations active in the same field of interest. The participants reported this a very positive experience that set the groundwork for working together closely in the future. The Foundation supports six projects in Australia and New Zealand, most of which work with children and families of indigenous and minority groups.

China: rural pre-schools

A conference on pre-school education in rural areas attracted 60 participants, including some from Australia, Japan, Pakistan and Thailand. Organised in Chengde in August by the China National Institute of Educational Studies (CNIES), the keynote speech was given by Dr Rien van Gendt, Executive Director of the Foundation. The CNIES has been implementing the Hebei Province rural pre-school programme with Foundation support since 1988 and has developed a training system for 'backbone teachers' who work to enhance the skills of village caregivers and parents. The programme has demonstrated that pre-school education in rural areas is distinct from that in urban areas and has developed a methodology that uses the rural environment as a natural learning resource. Now operating in Hebei and Guizhou provinces, the CNIES is hoping to disseminate the programme to remote provinces.

Europe: seminar on mobility

With borders across Europe opening, more families are moving to other countries. This recent phenomenon of mobility has a tremendous impact on the children involved; and the implications for their rights, education and health are as yet not fully known. A three-day conference, held in Greece in April, discussed the effects of mobility on children in Europe. It looked at such issues as children at risk, children's rights, minority communities, racism, refugee children, children and poverty. Participants included representatives from Foundation-supported projects in Ireland and Portugal. The conference, entitled 'The effects of mobility: the rights of the child in Europe', was organised by the European Forum for Child Welfare based in Belgium, and the National Welfare Organisation of Greece.

Ireland: all-Ireland children's summit

As part of the International Year of the Family, an all-Ireland summit on children was held in Dublin and Belfast in September. The first day of the 'Focus on children summit conference' took place in Dublin and was opened by the President of the Republic of Ireland. The following day, the conference continued in Belfast in Northern Ireland. Representatives of governments, NGOs and the United Nations addressed the conference and there were presentations by children and young people. An International Panel included Kate Torkington, the Foundation's Head of Training.

Mexico: democracy starts at home

More than 150 people representing 35 non-governmental organisations attended the second national forum on 'Democracy starts at home'. Presentations were made by experts, including psychologists and lawyers, and discussions centred on family relationships within the home, the position of women in the household, and the rights of children. It became clear that there are contradictions in both theory and practice. For example, although the law states that children must not be employed, there are also regulations stating that employers must allow working children to have time off for education. In addition to the discussions on the theme, the forum served to reinforce contacts between the participating organisations, all concerned with children and youth. The forum took place in Cuernavaca in June and a report will be available from the organisers: *Colectivo Mexicano de Apoyo a la Niñez* (COMEXANI), c/o ENLACE, Benjamin Franklin 186, Col. Escandón, 11800 Mexico DF.

Morocco: audiovisual days

Pre-school education was brought to the Moroccan public's attention in April by the *Journées internationales audiovisuelles sur le préscolaire* (international audiovisual days on pre-school education) for the Maghreb, Middle East and Europe. The days were jointly organised by ATEALE and the University Mohammed V with the support of the Embassy of France and the Foundation. The event aroused much interest with hundreds of people attending throughout. The extensive press coverage helped bring pre-school education to the attention of the general public and policy makers. International participants included delegates from Egypt, Tunisia and Kuwait. Staff members of Foundation-supported projects in Israel benefiting Arab communities, Belgium and Spain also attended. The event centred around the themes of pre-school education in Morocco and elsewhere; toys and play materials; the rights of the child; pedagogical instruments in pre-school; educational innovations and activities in pre-school; language; music; health; and audio-

visual products. The ATFALE project, based at the University, cooperates with the Koranic Pre-schools project run by the Ministry of Education to develop new approaches for the in-service training of pre-school teachers. Both projects are supported by the Foundation.

Netherlands: approaching the target group

A study day in September organised by the *Samenspel* project aimed to come up with very practical answers to the question: 'how do you approach your target group?' The project works with families from immigrant communities in the city of Rotterdam, many of whom are from Morocco. Play leaders involved with the project and others who work with the Moroccan community in the city came together for a day to exchange experiences and learn from one another. Of the 47 participants, 30 were members of the Moroccan community. They were split into four workshops that looked at: the right approach to the target group – how to emphasise the importance of ECD; recruitment – who should be doing it?; partnerships between play leaders and parents; access to facilities and their acceptability to the target group.

Peru: using evaluation

Since early 1993, the Ministry of Education in Peru has run the National Non-Formal Education Programme which pays special attention to the situation of rural Aymara (Amerindian) children aged zero to seven. Components of the programme include teacher training, integrating the programme into the Ministry's mainstream activities, and developing appropriate training materials. At the end of the programme's first year, the Ministry organised a national seminar on the impact of evaluation which brought together NGOs, specialists from a wide range of institutions and universities, teachers and consultants. Though the central theme of the seminar was evaluation, three other topics were also under discussion. These were: the programme itself, and the results of the evaluation of its first year of operation; innovations developed in the programme and how to apply them in the course of the second year of operations; and the socialisation of young children in the rural Andes. One issue that emerged from the seminar was the need to clarify project and evaluation objectives. The seminar outcomes are being used as a basis to prepare the external evaluation of the Programme. The evaluation began in July and runs concurrently with the second and third years of programme operations. It is hoped that the evaluation will contribute to the continuous improvement and further dissemination of project results.

South Africa: an umbrella organisation for early childhood development

A new organisation for early childhood development was launched in South Africa in March. The 'South African Congress for Early Childhood Development' is a merger of the South African Association for Early Childhood Educare (SAAECE) and the National Interim Working Committee (NIWC). It augurs well for the emergence of a strong unified voice for early childhood development in the new South Africa. Among the people who were elected to the executive committee were directors of several Foundation-supported projects in South Africa. These were Roy Padayachie of the

Portugal: isolated schools on the move

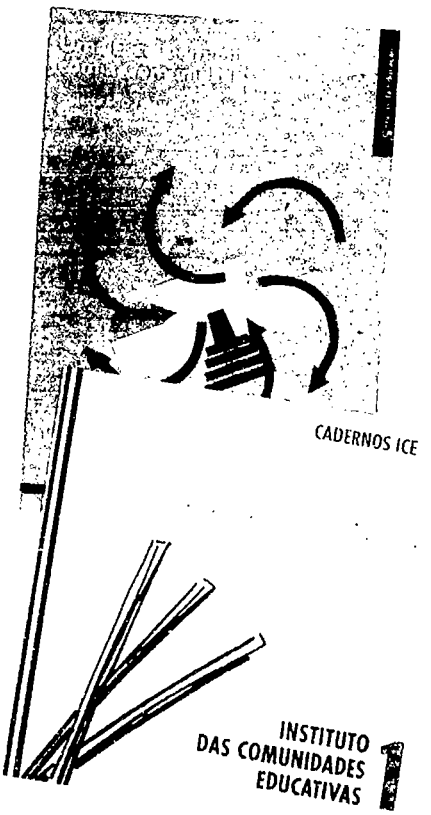
The first of a series of *Cadernos* (notebooks) has been published by the *Instituto das Comunidades Educativas* (ICE – Institute of Educational Communities) which runs the Isolated Schools project. Titled *Escolas Isoladas em Movimento* (Isolated schools on the move), it is a collection of essays on the work of the project which supports the development and continuation of appropriate educational resources and facilities for young children living in isolated areas.

In July, ICE organised its second national meeting which attracted over 300 participants, including some from other European countries. The event emphasised the exchange of experiences and placing those experiences in a wider context and a theoretical framework. Among the recommendations made by participants was that training of teachers should emphasise how education can become a cultural act, appropriate to the local context. Other suggestions concerned schools becoming agents for local development, teachers becoming managers of local resources, and communities assuming a truly protagonist role in the education process.

The Isolated Schools project grew out of the experience of the ECO project (*Escola Comunidade* – School and Community) which operated between 1986 and 1992. A final report, published in June 1994, describes the context, the strategies and the experiences of the project and how they led to the concept of an educational community – which is the basis of the Isolated Schools project.

Uma Escola em Mudança com a Comunidade, Projecto ECO, 1986-1992, Experiências e Reflexões. Instituto de Inovação Educacional, ISBN 972-9380-26-0

Cadernos ICE, Instituto das Comunidades Educativas, Av. Jaime Cortesão, 85 - 1 Esq., 2900 Setúbal, Portugal



Chatsworth Early Learning Centre, Mapitso Malepa of the Entokozweni Early Learning Centre, and Sal Muthayan of the Border Early Learning Centre.

Venezuela: workshop in Cuba

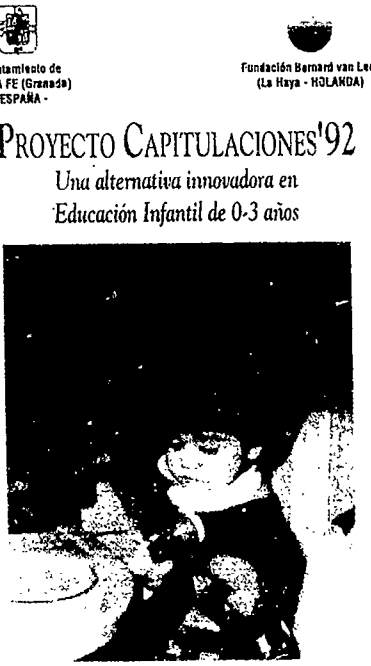
Two people from Foundation-supported projects in Venezuela – Reina Sanchez of the Pacomin project and Soraya Medina of CECODAP – participated in a workshop held in Cuba in June on early stimulation of pre-school children. The workshop was organised by the National Institute for Pedagogical Sciences of Cuba and the objective was to exchange information and documentation and establish contacts between non-formal early childhood programmes. In addition to Venezuela and Cuba, participants came from Bolivia, Chile, Mexico and Spain.

Zimbabwe: children traumatised by violence

A three-day workshop was held in Zimbabwe in May on the psycho-social needs of children exposed to war and violence. Organised by Redd Barna (Norway), the Finnish Refugee Council, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, participants included government representatives from Malawi and Zimbabwe, NGOs, and practitioners working in Mozambican refugee camps. Also participating were staff members of the Children's Desk of the Council of Churches in Namibia and the Foundation. During the first two days, topics covered in the workshop included children's basic needs in the healing process, community-based programmes for traumatised children, training and using volunteers in working with refugee children. The last day was devoted to issues of refugees' return to their own countries. Participants discussed working with unaccompanied children, reuniting children with their families, and the role of substitute families for children whose parents are dead or cannot be traced. Among the outcomes of the workshop was the preparation of guidelines for the protection and care of refugee children. The Foundation and Redd Barna are discussing the possibility of holding a follow-up workshop in Mozambique on resettlement issues and ways to mobilise indigenous practices to address psycho-social needs of children.

left: Working towards better childcare *is the result of 13 years of research and training carried out at the University of Ghent in Belgium with the support of the Foundation. The 150 page book has been published in English to 'enable other countries to acquaint themselves with the organisation of childcare in Flanders'*

Published 1994 by Resource and Training Center for Childcare in cooperation with the Dept of General Psychology, University of Ghent. ISBN 90-73996-08



above: Proyecto Capitulaciones '92: una alternativa innovadora en Educación Infantil de 0-3 años *describes work carried out since 1989 by the Foundation-supported project in Santa Fe, Granada, Spain with children aged zero to three, their parents, families, caregivers and other organisations*

By Celia Merino Rodriguez and others, published 1994 by Ayuntamiento de Santa Fé.

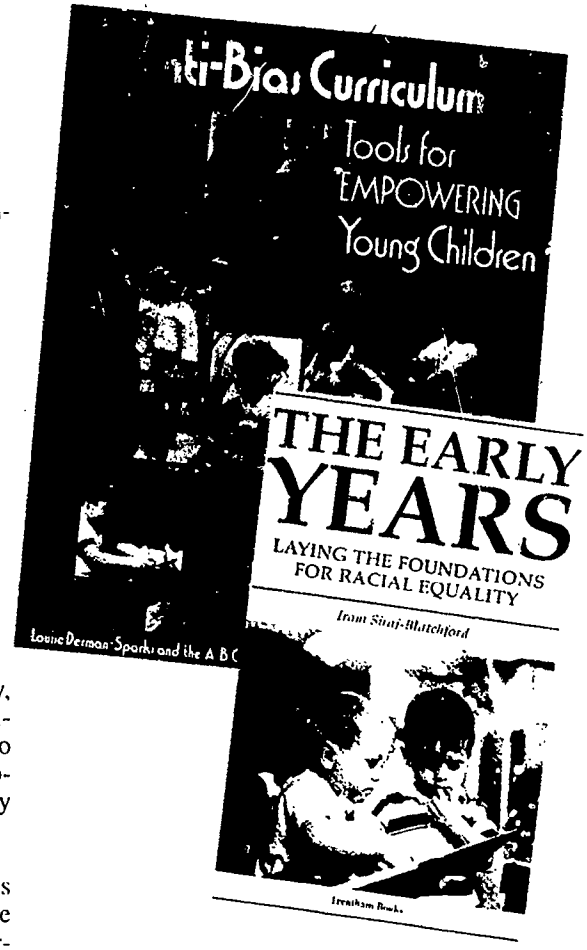
Letters to readers

We have had a very good response to the letters with questionnaires that were sent to Newsletter readers in July. The information in the questionnaires is being analysed and we will be reporting on it in a future issue of the Newsletter. In the meantime, if you have not yet returned the letter to the Foundation please do so as soon as possible. Otherwise, you may not receive any further copies of the Newsletter.

Learning about diversity

Anti-Bias Curriculum: tools for empowering young children. Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force. ISBN 0-935989-20-X. National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1834 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington DC 20009-5786, USA

The early years, laying the foundations for racial equality Iram Siraj-Blatchford. ISBN 0-948080-64-7 £11.95 (UK) or £15.00 (overseas). Available from Trentham Books Ltd, Westview House, 734 London Road, Oakhill, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 5NP, England



Almost every nation on earth includes people of diverse origins and cultures. Frequently they look different from one another, their skin colour or other physical characteristics may vary. Sometimes the differences are not immediately visible but concern culture, religion, habits, attitudes, beliefs. We all live in a world of diversity, whether or not our immediate neighbours are ethnically different from ourselves, yet, according to Louise Derman-Sparks, many early childhood programmes either deny that diversity exists, or they 'visit other cultures like tourists'. (see box below)

In the *Anti-Bias Curriculum* Derman-Sparks points out that it is not differences in themselves that cause the problems, but how people respond to differences. Children are not blank slates and by the age of two they notice differences and similarities among people and they ask questions about what they notice. The anti-bias approach teaches children to understand and comfortably interact with differences, to appreciate similarities, and to recognise and confront ideas and behaviours that are biased.

WARNING: TOURIST CURRICULUM IS HAZARDOUS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILDREN

Watch out for the signs of tourist curriculum:

Trivialising: Organising activities only around holidays or only around food. Only involving parents for holiday and cooking activities.

Tokenism: One Black doll amidst many White dolls; a bulletin board of 'ethnic' images – the only diversity in the room; only one book about any cultural group.

Disconnecting cultural diversity from daily classroom life: Reading books about children of colour only on special occasions. Teaching a unit on a different culture and then never seeing that culture again.

Stereotyping: Images of Native Americans all from the past; people of colour always shown as poor; people from cultures outside the US only shown in 'traditional' dress and in rural settings.

Misrepresenting American ethnic groups: Pictures and books about Mexico to teach about Mexican-Americans; of Japan to teach about Japanese-Americans; of Africa to teach about Black Americans.

Anti-Bias Curriculum, page 63

The *Anti-Bias Curriculum* is based on US experience. Writing from a UK perspective, Iram Siraj-Blatchford notes that children learn from their environments 'like sponges soak up water'. Even the very youngest children are constantly learning from what and who is around them: 'they learn not only from what we intend to teach them but from all their experiences. If black people are treated differently from white people then children will absorb the differences as part of their world view. To deny this effect is to deny that children are influenced by their socialisation.'

Siraj-Blatchford is a lecturer in early childhood education with years of practical experience and she has based this book on the questions that have been raised by practitioners, trainers and policy makers from a variety of disciplines. She shows how children express racist attitudes almost from the time they learn to speak and that they have picked up these attitudes from those around them – adults, other children, and even the mass media.

Although there is a very British orientation to much of the material, the messages and the practical discussions are relevant to all early childhood workers. The racism that is inherent in our societies is damaging to all children, not only those who are perceived as belonging to a 'minority' or 'out' group. The sections concerning practice look at language, curriculum and parental involvement and emphasise the need for staff of early childhood centres to understand their own attitudes and to build the confidence to discuss these issues with parents whose own attitudes may well be different from the ethos of the centre.

(continued on page 18)

(from page 17)

The *Anti-Bias Curriculum* is also full of examples of actual practice, ideas and materials. The book represents the work of a task force of 12 early childhood workers in California who, over a two-year period, conceptualised and implemented this curriculum.

Whereas *The early years* is specifically about racial differences, the *Anti-Bias Curriculum* is about all sorts of bias: racism, sexism, handicappism, homophobia. Bias is defined as 'any attitude, belief or feeling that results in, and helps to justify, unfair treatment of an individual because of his or her identity' and it is clear that prejudice and/or discrimination affects the perpetrators as well as the victims. Research about the impact of racism on children shows that it damages them intellectually and psychologically, can affect their ability to reason, and can distort their judgment and perception of reality.

Both of these books emphasise work with parents but Derman-Sparks is clear that 'respecting parents does not necessarily mean acquiescing to all their beliefs'. She outlines several strategies for working with parents, including for those times when workers and parents disagree and stresses that 'the more fully teachers do anti-bias work with parents, the longer lasting will be their work with children'.

Anti-bias is not, however, a subject to be taught, it is a way of life: 'you teach anti-bias by living it, by helping children to say **yes** as often and as loudly as possible, both for themselves and for each other.' In order to achieve this way of life, early childhood workers need to understand themselves and their attitudes. Both of these books will be helpful in gaining that self-knowledge and in enabling people to identify activities for young children that positively reflect the diversity of the particular world in which they are living. ❑

Dealing with incidents of a racist nature

* if you hear a racist remark do not ignore it or you will be condoning the behaviour and therefore complying with the remarks;
* explain clearly why the remarks made were wrong and hurtful or offensive, and ask the abused child how s/he felt so that both children can begin to think actively about the incident;
* do not attack the child who has been racist in a personal manner or imply that the child as a person is wrong, only that what was said is wrong;
* explain in appropriate terms to the abuser why the comment was wrong, and give both the children conerned the correct information;
* target the parents of children who make racist comments to ensure that they understand your policy for racial equality and that you will not accept abuse against any child. Point out how this damages their child;
* involve parents and children (depending on the age of the children) in decision making processes, particularly during the development of a policy on equality;
* develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies for children who are acquiring English so that they do not get bored, frustrated and tempted to be naughty – negative labelling is a common problem.

adapted from The Early Years, pages 87-8

Victims of aggression

Don't hit kids

Joe McGrath

Children can be the victims of many different forms of aggression. Here we look at two of these forms: children who are hit by adults, and children who are victims of armed conflicts. 'Don't hit kids' is by Joe McGrath who is a prisoner and was a victim of aggression when he was a child. The article is adapted from the February/March 1994 edition of *Scottish Child* and is printed by kind permission of the editor. Scottish Child works to promote greater understanding of the importance of children and childhood in society through its magazine and through conferences and training activities.

Don't hit kids? Who says so? It's not a crime; it's not illegal; it's not one of the Commandments (of the Bible); it's not even a 'sin'. It is left entirely to us, in this delicately balanced 'civilised' society we live in, to make our own interpretation of what in this area of behaviour is right and what is wrong.

At the recent Scottish Child conference I was very firmly in the 'don't hit kids' majority. As the day progressed the debate turned, as I suppose it was bound to, to the issues of child discipline, reward and punishment. And then it almost foundered, because people seemed to feel that the business of

bringing up a child inevitably meant that hitting was and would always be the only way to deal with problems in certain circumstances. One example, much quoted, was of a parent smacking or – note the euphemism – 'tapping' a child who is interfering with a dangerous appliance like a fire. That seemed to lots of people to be right in principle. By the end of the day, the 'don't hit kids' faction was still in the majority but by now with the dilemma of lots of grey areas.

Hitting kids for any reason – I'm not talking about the headline-grabbing stuff of major abuse and injury – is still legal and therefore left to parents' own discretion. There are two main reasons I believe why hitting kids is still treated as acceptable, or tolerated. The first is that most people think that the smacks or 'taps' they had as children 'never did them any harm' and never really hurt them. Though they also fail to recall whether those smacks did them any good either. The second is possibly more problematic: how does one deal with the situation of an adult smacking a child in a public place? We've all seen it and we leave it alone mostly because it is still acceptable, because it is still legal. Violence – which is what we went to the conference to talk about – is unacceptable in a civilised society, even one which disregards its own laws or fails to make laws to protect its weakest members.

I know violence is unacceptable – as a victim and as a perpetrator. I had a very early grounding in the subject, was then schooled in violence, attended the college of violence as a young offender, and eventually passed out of the university of violence at Peterhead Prison, with honours. I got where I am today from those earliest experiences of violence – a long, long time in prison, a large chunk of my life in fact.

Violence is at the centre of many of our institutions. I'm not talking simply about overt physical violence but about the ever-present psychological threat and the fear of punishment. In a word, overweening unaccountable authority. Only institutions wield this kind of authority and power, only institutions have the law on their side against the powerless small child, the defenceless prisoner – both without rights or with very few that they can exercise. That fear of the threat of unaccountable authority began for me in the home and from it grew the anger and resentment at authority which has coloured my adult life.

Somehow therefore, we have to get to a point where we can agree that all violence is unacceptable, not just some kinds of violence. That means violence against children will have to stop. We can use the law to hasten that process but what we need as well is a more honest acknowledgement of what we are perpetuating when we allow ourselves to hit kids or to watch kids being hit, no matter what the circumstances. ⌟

Children in armed conflict

The rights of children in armed conflict are the vital subject matter of the 'Declaration of Amsterdam' adopted by an international gathering in June.

The basic theme in all discussions was the recognition that some armed forces – governmental or non-governmental – clearly accept three propositions that, by any civilised standards, are unthinkable. These are that children can be regarded as inevitable casualties of war; that children cannot be given any special consideration because this slows and hinders conquest; and that children can be strategic targets for the realisation of military aims.

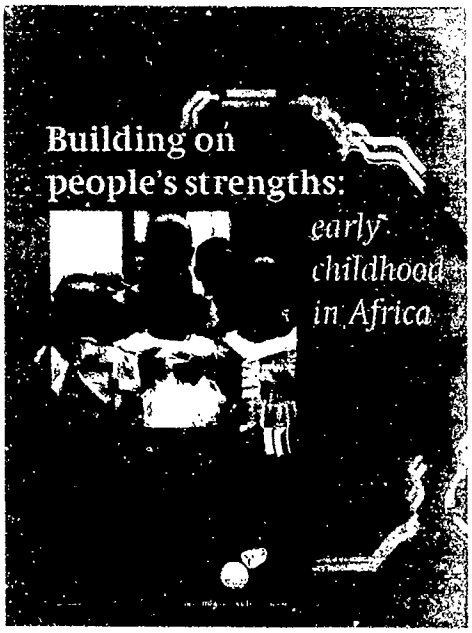
The Declaration, which defines children as those under 18 years, recommends that 'in all actions during armed conflict the best interest of the child shall be the primary consideration'. Two topics that received close attention during the discussions were the continuing casualties among children and families from anti-personnel landmines, and children bearing children following rape during armed conflict.

At the end of the two-day meeting in Amsterdam, the first copy of the agreed Declaration was handed to a representative of the Dutch government with the expectation that it will eventually become an official United Nations document. The Declaration will also be handed to other governments with requests for it to be taken to the UN.

Further information from International Dialogues Foundation, Van Stolkweg 8, 2585 JP The Hague, The Netherlands. tel: (31-70) 354 2864, fax: (31-70) 352 3511

from the Foundation

Building on people's strengths: early childhood in Africa



Children in Africa face a set of serious problems: economic decline, malnutrition, poor or non-existent health care, inadequate services, civil conflicts and war. Yet at the same time, large numbers of African children are growing up in families and communities that recognise children's particular needs. Increasingly too, governments and policy makers realise that failure to pay attention to children is at the heart of many current problems.

What can be done to improve the situation of children in Africa? First, we must acknowledge that parents and families are responsible for their children. Most already do all they can to ensure that their children survive and thrive. Second, we must accept that the world has changed and that many parents and families find it increasingly difficult to achieve their aspirations for their children. Third, we must set in place programmes that support parents, families and other caregivers.

This publication does not contain any blueprints for projects or programmes. Instead, it looks at the context in which Africa's children are growing up; it explains why the early years are important for an individual child, for the family and community, and for society as a whole; it discusses the kinds of outcomes that early childhood development (ECD) programmes should be seeking; it differentiates the many actors on the ECD stage and their respective responsibilities; and examines how the costs and effects of ECD programmes can be assessed. Key issues that are highlighted include the holistic development of children, multi-sectoral programmes, and the needs of women and girls.

Accompanying the main text are examples of current ECD approaches in Africa. There are many possible approaches, but the basis must be building on what exists rather than imposing alien solutions.

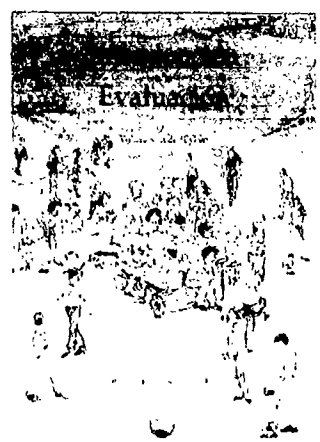
Building on people's strengths: early childhood in Africa is aimed at policy makers, decision makers, planners and those who implement programmes as well as those who work in foundations and in international and bilateral funding agencies. Given sufficient understanding of the needs of children and their importance to society, they are in a position to help to ensure that young children and their families get the attention and support that they, and society, need.

Published October 1994, illustrated, 72 pages, ISBN 90-6195-030-9

Introducing evaluation

This is the Spanish edition of *Introducing Evaluation*, originally published by the Foundation in 1992. A Portuguese-language edition will also be available shortly.

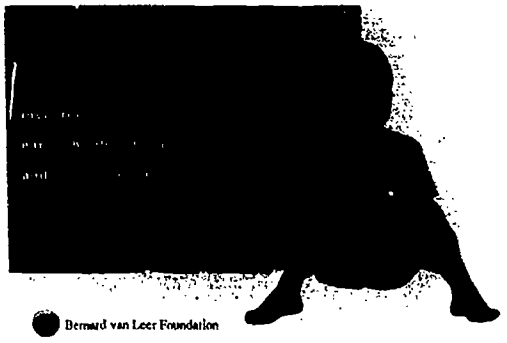
illustrated, 48 pages, ISBN 90-6195-025-2

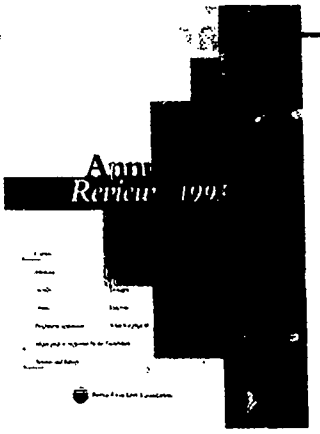


Why children matter/ *El porque de la importancia de la niñez*

The English and Spanish editions of this important advocacy tool are now available. Sub-titled 'investing in early childhood care and development', this publication clearly sets out the arguments why investing in young children and their healthy development has benefits for society as a whole, for parents and families and, of course, for the children themselves. Examples of approaches being taken around the world help to explain why investing in early childhood care and development is one of the best ways of building a better, brighter future.

illustrated, 32 pages, ISBN 90-6195-027-9 (English), ISBN 90-6195-032-5 (Spanish)





Annual Review 1993

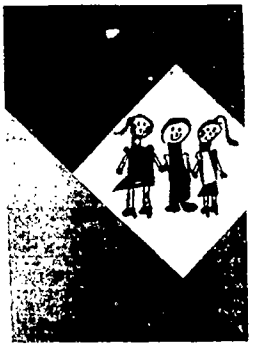
A new approach to reporting the work of the Foundation has been taken in the *Annual Review 1993*. The aim is to show the varied aspects of the Foundation's activities as well as the richness of the work that is undertaken in the field by the projects that the Foundation supports. In addition to an annual report and financial report for 1993, the *Annual Review 1993* includes feature articles that highlight areas such as: the Foundation and advocacy; working with families; teaching and learning creatively through drama; and targetting teenagers. Descriptions of major projects being supported by the Foundation are also included. The *Annual Review* replaces the *Current Programme* which has been published annually since 1986. A Spanish-language edition will be published later in the year.

Published July 1994, illustrated, 72 pages, ISBN 90-6195-029-5

The environment of the child/ *El ambiente del niño*

Terezinha Nunes (Occasional Papers Nos. 5 & 6)

The English and Spanish language editions of a paper that outlines models of children's socio-cultural environments which could help in the design and evaluation of programmes aimed at improving children's welfare. Two common characteristics of many children's environments are examined: poverty and discrimination.



44 pages, ISBN 90-6195-026-0 (English)
ISBN 90-6195-031-7 (Spanish)

Planteamientos multiculturales en la educación: una experienca alemana

C. Treppte (Studies and Evaluation Paper No. 14)

A Spanish-language translation of *Multicultural approaches in education: a German experience* published as Studies and Evaluation Paper No. 11.

20 pages, ISSN 0925-2983

The publications mentioned here are available free of charge in single copies to interested individuals and organisations from:

The Communications Section,
Bernard van Leer Foundation,
PO Box 82334,
2508 EH The Hague,
The Netherlands

New Zealand: making a video

Poko Morgan

When the *Anau Ako Pasifika* project in New Zealand decided to make a video in 1993, one of the main concerns was to take account of varying cultural norms. Poko Morgan, Project Director, gives a flavour of what it is like to embark on a video.

Copies of the tape on the VHS-PAL system are available at US$30 from Poko Morgan, Project Director, *Anau Ako Pasifika*, c/o Tokoroa East School, Main Road, Tokoroa, New Zealand

Anau Ako Pasifika works to ensure that the pathways of learning for young Pacific Islands children take into account their strengths and differing abilities which stem from their cultural backgrounds. In May 1993 we decided to make a video about our work. We intended to use it as part of the project's training and also to disseminate the principles and practices of the project to communities, training establishments, and policy making groups at Ministerial level.

The contents would include the history of the project, its objectives and the way it operates, the roles of the people involved, and a look at future developments. It was decided to tell much of the story through the eyes of three families in order to give the viewer a personalised picture of the work – the selection was based on the three main ethnic groups: Samoan, Niuean and Cook Islands.

left: most children seem to quickly become accustomed to video-making going on around them, making it possible to record their activities and development (China, Hebei Project)

Sharing private thoughts

Planning involved consultations with staff, community groups and, more importantly, the families involved in the filming. With several ethnic groups in the project, cultural views towards film makers working in private homes differed. Home tutors approached parents about this new experience of opening up their homes and sharing their private thoughts, feelings and ideals with total strangers. Three families in three different locations agreed to participate but were still anxious about the outcomes. They had reservations about people prying into their private world, and were concerned about how their own community would assess their contributions.

Before filming began, the film director visited the families with the home tutors to reassure parents, to get to know them a little and to explain what the film crew would be doing. The film director, a Cook Islands woman, and her three Maori professional assistants, worked intensively in the pre-production week to become fully in tune with the objectives and flow of project operations. The courtesies and protocol required for working with the three families from different ethnic backgrounds were discussed. There were no difficulties in communicating the cultural sensitivities to the film crew.

The filming

There was considerable learning for everyone involved in the filming process. Children, parents, grandparents, home tutors and curious onlookers participated in the often repetitive routines.

It was amazing how unimpressed family members were with the heap of technical equipment and strange people in their living rooms. Children responded in a quieter and more withdrawn manner, resulting in anxious parents coaxing and encouraging children to talk. Individual interviews captured the essence of parents' views and the frankness of some of the conversations were reflective of the views frequently articulated by parents in the project. An interview with me was used as voice-over commentary to illustrate or emphasise particular aspects of the project.

Pre- and post-production

The planning took three months. In addition to the film crew, we also had a professional writer who revised the script several times following consultations with project staff. The final script included duration, montage, sound and voice-over details. This provided us all with a clearer picture of the technical process. The actual shoot took five days.

Editing was done at a studio in Auckland and I was present with the film director and other specialists. The editing process ensured that the video projected the strengths of families working together in promoting and strengthening their cultures and languages. It was important that the filmed segments portrayed the strengths of each individual. The video was completed four weeks behind schedule.

We launched the video in the three project centres. A copy of the tape, together with the 'little readers' developed by the project, has also been given to the early childhood section of the Ministry of Education of the Cook Islands. All the feedback we have received has been very positive. ❑

GREETINGS

WHICH OBJECTS MOVE FASTER?

Islamic education

A teacher's guide to integrated Islamic early childhood education is available from the National Centre for Early Childhood Education at the Kenya Institute of Education. The guidelines combine secular pre-school education with Islamic education and are designed to help the teacher make learning stimulating, enjoyable and fun. The well-illustrated guide includes many activities, all of which have been 'planned so that Islamic thought or practices are incorporated ... by the end of this level, the child will have been moulded into proper Islamic faith and at the same time, properly prepared to fit in as an acceptable member of the Kenyan community.'

Integrated Islamic Education Programme, NACECE, Kenya Institute of Education, PO Box 30231, Nairobi, Kenya

Children's rights in the Arab region

Representatives of non-governmental organisations met for three days in May to look at problems related to the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Arab countries. The workshop was jointly organised in Cyprus by the Arab Resource Collective and Radda Barnen, Yemen. It was stressed that the culture of each country must be taken into account in the implementation of the Convention. For example, Islamic states are reviewing the Convention article by article in order to assess compatibility with Shari'ah (Islamic) law.

The 34 participants from six countries agreed that they would seek the formation of parliamentary committees that would be entrusted with the transformation of the Convention into legislation. They also agreed to work towards the formation of alliances and national coalitions of NGOs and that NGOs should revise their programmes to harmonise with the Convention's philosophy and integrated approach.

A report of the workshop is in preparation. Further information from Arab Resource Collective, PO Box 7380, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Rural communities in Nepal

The Save the Children Federation (USA), has been working in integrated literacy for community development in Nepal since 1981. In *Working with Rural Communities in Nepal: Some Principles of Non-formal Education Intervention*, Amy Jo Reinhold describes an approach to non-formal education that 'energises the process of becoming literate with useful daily information relevant to the needy communities'. The illiteracy rates in the mountainous rural villages are high, particularly among women, and the literacy programme has led to a network of women's groups that have become the centre of 'a community development approach that addresses issues of health, education, sustainable agriculture and natural resource management, and economic activities.'

One of the examples in this publication is a home-based rotating childcare scheme established by six women after they had completed the literacy course. They requested support and have received materials and training in child development and stimulation. Their scheme enables the women to carry out their agricultural work in the knowledge that their children are well looked after, they do not have to keep their older daughters at home to look after

(continued on page 24)

Dear Reader

The theme of *Newsletter 78* (April 1995) will be 'Reaching rural Families'.

Topics will include distance learning, special needs of rural children; special approaches to meet these needs, and so on.

As always, we need your contributions. Please send them by mid-February to the Communications Section of the Foundation at the address shown on the back cover.

Bernard van Leer Foundation
Newsletter
Number 76 October 1994

ISSN 0921-5840

Bernard van Leer Foundation
PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel: (070) 351 2040
Telefax: (070) 350 2373

About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group of Companies – established by Bernard van Leer in 1919 – a worldwide industrial enterprise of which the Foundation is the principal beneficiary. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Foundation concentrates on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from educational and social development opportunities. The Foundation currently supports approximately 100 major projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of successful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work.

Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals. In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established.

Board of Trustees

Chairman: J. Kremers (Netherlands);
Mrs M.C. Benton (USA); W.H. Brouwer (Netherlands); W.W. Cross (USA); V. Halberstadt (Netherlands); H.B. van Liemt (Netherlands); P.J.J. Rich (France); I. Samrén (Sweden)

Administration

M.C.E. van Gendt, Executive Director

(from page 23)

their small children, and they do not have to pay for childcare because they operate a rota. Additionally, the children benefit from a safer, healthier and more stimulating environment than was possible before.

Working with Rural Communities in Nepal: Some Principles of Non-formal Education Intervention by Amy Jo Reinhold. Action Research in Family and Early Childhood, Monograph No. 1. Available from the Young Child and the Family Environment Project, UNESCO, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France.

EFA database

UNESCO has published the first edition of the INNOV database which features 81 innovative basic education projects in developing countries. This database is part of UNESCO's international project: 'Education for All, Making it Work'. The database will be regularly updated, adjusted and re-issued and all comments, enquiries and contributions should be sent to: UNESCO Basic Education Division/CBE, 7 place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France. Tel: (33-1) 45 68 23 64 Fax: (33-1) 40 65 94 06

Infant feeding and maternal nutrition

Mothers and Children is published three times a year in English, French and Spanish and covers many aspects of infant feeding and maternal nutrition. Articles in a recent issue described a programme to combat anaemia in adolescent girls in India; training health professionals in Bolivia; promoting appropriate reproductive health policy and programmes in Tanzania; and a checklist for communication and training to promote safer motherhood. Every issue contains a page of useful publications and other resources.

Mothers and Children is available from the Clearinghouse on Infant Feeding and Maternal Nutrition, American Public Health Association, 1015 15th Street NW, Washington DC 20005, USA.