DRAFT MINUTES KEY INSTITUTIONS ASSEMBLY

26 – 27 June 2005
Hurdalsjøen Conference Hotel, Hurdal, Norway

Participants
37 of the 45 Key Institutions in the Childwatch International Research Network were represented by 47 participants at the Key Institutions Assembly. Apologies received from the other eight Key Institutions not able to send representatives to the meeting. Eight of the ten Board members were present. Gary Melton and Marian Jacobs apologized for being unable to attend the Assembly. The Childwatch Secretariat was present with Director, Co-ordinator and temporary Assistant.

Saturday 25 June
A lecture by Prof. Emeritus Stein Braten from the Department of Sociology and Human Geography at the University of Oslo set the tone for the meeting on the evening of Saturday 25 June. Braten's lecture on pre-verbal inter-subjectivity and new findings pertinent to early childhood research set off questions and discussions on the need for interdisciplinary child research and on the way child research is and should be conducted.

Sunday 26 June
Introduction
President Irene Rizzini welcomed the participants and opened the assembly. Rizzini thanked the participants for coming and for their interest and commitment to the work of the Childwatch International network to implement children's rights through research collaboration, cooperation with policy makers and practitioners and better and more accessible research based knowledge.

Director Jon-Kristian Johnsen welcomed the participants on behalf of the secretariat in Oslo and gave a brief overview of the administrative situation of the network, economy and current projects.

Child Research Towards 2015 – A Global Scenario
Three Key Institution representatives had been asked to hold short presentations on the global scenario for child research for the coming ten year period. Anne Trine Kjoerholt from Norwegian Centre for Child Research (NOSEB) in Trondheim, Norway; Jan Mason

of the Social Justice and Social Change Research Centre, University of Western Sydney, Australia; and Maylene ShungKing of the Children's Research Centre, University of Cape Town, South Africa presented scenarios for the future of child research within different contexts of social and cultural change. The papers are available on the Childwatch International web site.

Group discussions on the implications of these scenarios for networking within the framework of Childwatch International followed the presentations. The groups presented a list of recommendations for the work of the network which were followed up in the following discussions and presentations at the Assembly. A synopsis of the issues presented in the discussions follows in the last part of the minutes.

Background documents for Childwatch International
A committee consisting of board members Robbie Gilligan, Irene Rizzini and Anne B. Smith has been working on the revision of the Network's background documents, the former Terms of Reference for the last year and a half. New documents were presented to the Key Institutions Assembly. The documents are available on the Childwatch International web site.

The Aims and Ethos and Strategic approach document was presented by Robbie Gilligan of the Centre for Child Research at Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland. The Aims and Ethos outlines the vision and main goals of the network and the Strategic Approach points out the ways the network plans to accomplish these goals.

The Membership and Governance document, and the By-laws and Funding document were presented to the Assembly by board member Per Egil Mjaavatn of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway. The documents present the formal structure of the network as well as the organizational procedures for revising these structures.

The Assembly concluded with a formal acceptance of the background document and agreed on the following statement:

> *Key Institutions Assembly of Childwatch International Research Network agrees that the Network is committed to the principles contained in the Aims & Ethos and Governance documents and that the incoming Board further elaborates these documents based on comments and suggestions from the Key Institutions.*

Poster presentations
Participants had been requested to bring poster presentations of their institutions, with a brief description of the institution and short presentations of one or two research projects. Poster presentations were organized on both Sunday and Monday.

Presentation of experiences with networks, partnerships and consultancies
The different kinds of collaboration that are supported by the Childwatch International network were presented. One or two representatives of different Childwatch related activities were asked to present the project / activity, its origin and plans for follow up. The presentations are available on the Childwatch web site.

Regional Network: The MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Network was presented by Mohammad Shaheen, Unit for Child Research, Al Quds University, Palestine. The network is closely connected to the partnership between Al Quds University and Norwegian Social Research (NOVA) in Oslo, Norway.

The Partnership Programme: The Partnership between The Institute for Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University, USA and The Center for Family Environments in Prague, The Czech Republic, was presented by Mark Small and Lenka Šulová, from the respective institutions. The program ended in 2004 and is continuing in a commitment to a regional network in Central and Eastern Europe.

Consultancies: Marta Arango of CINDE, Colombia, and Roger Hart from the Children's Environments Research Group of the Graduate Centre at the City University of New York, presented their experience from a consultancy supported by Childwatch International to a strong collaboration continuing years after.

Childwatch International – Priorities for the network
Jon-Kristian Johnsen presented statements from the nominees to the Childwatch International board, on what wishes and visions they have for future collaboration within the network. The statements were structured within the following areas: The Childwatch culture; our strategy; ways of operating; thematic focus; methodological issues; membership; advocacy; and funding.

The presentation was followed up by group discussions on the priorities for the network. The following is a structured overview of some of the issues that was discussed in the groups.

With the aim of supporting *capacity building and strengthening the quality of research*, the network should prioritize:
Development:
- Methodology development (particularly qualitative research and methodology to involve children in research/as researchers).
- Development of ethical framework for research with children
- Capacity building and training of young researchers
Networking:
- Information sharing within the network and between individual researchers and centres.
- Staff exchange.

In order to *promote the network* we should:
- Develop name recognition for Childwatch International Research Network, through promoting the network (the logo) and its activities on the web sites and publications of the Key Institutions.
- Develop a funding strategy for the network and child research projects.
- Develop a common strategy to influence policy and to make policy makers and society as a whole value children and young people.

For the purpose of *advocating for child research in order to improve policies and practices*, Childwatch International should:
- Identify best practices.
- Promote child rights
- Identify strategies for effective dissemination of research results.
- Develop a "white paper" on the uses of child research in policy development and assessments.

Monday 27th June

Objectives & Activities
The second day of the meeting started out with a continuation of the discussion from the day before, led by Roger Hart and Selim Iltus of the Children's Environments Research Group. Each participant was give three pieces of paper and asked to write down 1) the most urgent child research question in their country 2) a current collaborative child research project he/she is involved in 3) a future possible collaborative research project he/she would like to participate in. The ideas were gathered and grouped. Several common issues were raised. The ideas were grouped into the following categories:
- Research approaches
- Everyday lives of children
- Monitoring child rights and indicators of well-being
- Children's participation and citizenship
- Rural childhood
- Health
- Violence and control
- Parenting
- Migration
- Media
- Social exclusion and discrimination
- Poverty
- Education
- Early Childhood
- The Environment
- Foster care
- Other

Participation and citizenship of children stood out as an issue many participants would like to do more collaborative work on. Parenting also stood out as one major current research issue. Health and poverty were the issues most often mentioned in need of urgent priority. Many mentioned rural childhood as an area of research that he/she would like to conduct collaborative research on.

The participants were asked to follow up the ideas for collaboration individually, and the board will take the ideas into consideration in the setting of priorities of the network.

Current International Issues
Key Institution representatives had been asked to present their work within two issues of central importance to the current international agenda on child rights: The UN Study on Violence; and the Tsunami response.

The UN Study on Violence: Julie Meeks-Gardner of the Caribbean Child Development Centre, University of the West Indies, Jamaica, presented the desk review on the situation on violence against children for the regional consultation of the UN Study on Violence in the English speaking Caribbean and Haiti. Swarna Wijetunge of NEREC, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, presented the result of several studies on children in armed conflict in Sri Lanka. Both pointed out the lack of coherent data about the situation for children in their region as well as a lacking response to the circumstances of violence many children live in.

The Tsunami Response: Usha Nayar of the Tata Institute for Social Sciences in Mumbai, India presented relief and rehabilitation work conducted by the students and staff of the institute in collaboration with other regional academic institutions after the Tsunami disaster. Nittaya Kotchabakhdi of the National Institute for Child and Family Development in Bangkok, Thailand presented the work the Institute had done in the areas of Thailand affected by the Tsunami.

Election and presentation of the next CWI Board
Written presentations of all 21 nominees to the Childwatch International board 2005 – 2008 were included in the folders of each Assembly participant. The ballots were handed out, one to each institution present, and the participants were asked to vote for up to ten nominees, keeping in mind that the result should be both gender balanced and represent a geographical spread. Votes were counted and controlled by the three persons representing the Childwatch International secretariat. The following board was elected:
Marta Arango
Robbie Gilligan
Roger Hart
Julie Meeks-Gardner
Per Egil Mjaavatn
Usha Nayar
Ju Qing
Irene Rizzini

Rose September
Mohammad Shaheen

Thanks were conveyed to the outgoing board and the new board welcomed.

Poster Presentations
The institutions not presented on Sunday were presented and discussed.

Implementation of Child Rights – Reflections on the role of researchers
Mark Courtney of the Chapin Hall Center for Children, Chicago, USA, and Anne Graham of the Centre for Children and Young People at the Southern Cross University in Lismore, Australia had taken on the task of reflecting on the role of research and researchers in the implementation of the rights of the child. Mark Courtney discussed questions concerning the role of researchers in advocacy and policy change. Anne Graham focused on the role or researchers in the implementation process of the Convention. Both presentations argued for the importance of research based knowledge in securing the well-being of children. The presentations are available on the web site of Childwatch International.

Plenary Discussion on development of Childwatch International

Many of the issues raised in the groups on the first day were repeated in the final discussion on the way forward for Childwatch International. There was agreement that the meeting had been an important starting point for further collaboration, as face to face interaction is necessary to involve in collaborative work. The participants also communicated that the thematic focus of the meeting, rather than focusing much the administrative matters, was positive to encourage discussion and involvement in the network. In facilitating continued communication between the Key Institutions the secretariat will continue publishing a biannual newsletter on activities of the network. It will also aim to set up a searchable database of the institutions based on their main areas of research, as well as a database on the research interests of individual researchers within the institutions. It was suggested that the web site should include a list of possible future research projects of the institutions, as a way to encourage contact between the researchers of the network.

Other suggestions to position Childwatch International as a child rights focused research network were to issue statements on specific issues, eg corporal punishment, child participation or other. It was also suggested that the network should develop conceptual position papers on the use of child research.

The following is a list of issue brought up during the final discussion of the Key Institutions Assembly 2005:

- We need to facilitate formal as well as informal contact
- We need a vision; who should we be ten years from now?
- A strategic approach to fund raising is needed
- Pay more attention to indicators and research methodologies
- We should issue statements on what we know from research
- We need more funding to grow
- A Business Plan should be developed
- A monitoring and evaluation system is needed, to be applied on a quarterly basis
- How to make Childwatch International more visible?
- Promote interdisciplinary work
- Form more groups
- Continue focus on child research issues, and little time on administrative issues
- We are heading in the right direction!
- Find inexpensive ways of sharing ideas