



Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

May 2007

Conflict, Poverty, AIDS, Academic Pressures Threaten Childhoods: World Forum Foundation Convenes Global Conversation

Press Release • May 23, 2007

Hopeful futures for all children was the focus of the 7th World Forum on Early Care and Education in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 750 early childhood professionals from 73 nations gathered for brainstorming and planning. This conference was organized by the World Forum Foundation in Redmond, Washington.

A burgeoning global economy has created pockets of unprecedented wealth, yet nearly half of the world's 500 million children under the age of six, live in abject poverty or unrelenting terror. Even in industrialized countries, childhoods are being threatened as children are lured away from nature and play by tantalizing media and fast food addictions and by pressures placed on younger and younger children to hit the academic fast track.

Recognizing the threats facing all the world's children, the 750 delegates discussed critical issues....

• **HIV/AIDS**

World Forum Action Tank on HIV/AIDS brought together leaders of 16 grassroots programs from around the world serving young children impacted by HIV/AIDS. Leaders shared their strategies and developed plans for a world-wide network.

• **POVERTY**

Tony Meloto, Executive Director of Gawad Kalinga Community Development Foundation in the Philippines, an organization which is on target to provide 1 million homes for homeless families by 2010, told delegates "the problem of poverty is huge but not without end. Since it is man-made, it can also be man-Unmade. In a world where there are enough resources for all but not enough sharing for all, our motto is 'less for self, more for others, enough for all.'"

• **VIOLENCE**

International Working Group on Peace Building with Children launched its groundbreaking book, *From Conflict to Peace Building: The Power of Early Childhood Education*. This book shares strategies early childhood programs in areas experiencing armed conflict such as Palestine, Colombia, Northern Ireland, Nepal, and Rwanda, can utilize to bring divided communities back together.

• **NATURE DEPRIVATION**

Nature Action Collaborative for Children brought together environmentalists, landscape architects, and early childhood professionals to develop strategies for reconnecting the children of the

world with nature bringing back into their lives, joy, curiosity, exuberance and physical fitness.

- **ORPHANS**

Early childhood professionals serving children orphaned by tsunamis, war, AIDS, and poverty from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe gathered together and developed a plan for providing sound early childhood services to these children.

- **EDUCATION**

Nicholas Burnett from UNESCO's Education For All project which aims to make education accessible to all children of the world by 2010, shared the great strides that have been made, particularly in Africa, but disclosed the goal of universal education is threatened by the failure of industrialized countries to live up to their commitments of financial support.

- **MEN**

Male early childhood professionals from around the world met to plan an upcoming Working Forum on Men in Early Childhood Education which will take place in Hawaii in June, 2008.

- **ADVOCACY**

Emerging leaders from 26 countries, participating in the World Forum Global Leaders for Young Children project, convened for five days of mentoring and training to propel their careers as advocates for improved childhoods for all the world's children.

The mission of the World Forum Foundation is to promote an on-going global exchange of ideas on the delivery of quality services for young children in diverse settings. This mission is accomplished through convening gatherings of early childhood professionals around the world and by promoting the continuing exchange of ideas among participants. Previous World Forum gatherings have taken place in Singapore; Athens, Greece; Belfast, Northern Ireland; Auckland, New Zealand; Honolulu, Hawaii; Amsterdam, Netherlands; Acapulco, Mexico; Manizales, Colombia; Nebraska City, Nebraska; and Montreal, Canada. Ongoing projects focus on the topics above.



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For more information, contact:

Bonnie Neugebauer
World Forum Foundation
Redmond, Washington, USA
info@WorldForumFoundation.org
1 (800) 226-4651