

Sixth World Forum on Early Care and Education  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada  
17-20 May 2005

Communication Team: Advocacy and Civic Issues  
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Sessions Attended

- #35 Supporting Quality in Home-Based Child Care through Training Mentoring, and Assessment
- #53 Men in the Lives of Young Children: The Roles and Contributions of Fathers, Father figures, and Male Professionals in Early Childhood Education
- #61 Taking Care of Children in Emergencies
- #2 Social Health Issues for Young Children: Mental Health, Nutritional Health, Environmental Health
- #39 Global Issues around Girls/Women

SUMMARY

The common threads running through the workshops I attended fell into several categories:

1. That similar conditions exist in every country regarding each topic.
2. That this situation gives us the common ground on which to stand and to meet and try to see the world through the eyes and experiences of another.
3. That young children are a focus and an emphasis not only for ECE educators and leaders, but also through them for the countries as well. The preschool classroom is in many ways the larger world writ small. What goes on in ECE programs is preparation for whatever the world gives the children as they grow older.

**#35 Supporting Quality in Home-Based Child Care through Training Mentoring, and Assessment**

Key Issues:

The value of having a small group of children in a home setting was universally acclaimed by the presenters. The ability of women to run a business and to meet the needs of other parents in their communities was highlighted.

Global Implications:

Every country has unmet needs for caring for and educating young children. Even when the level of provider training and education varies from very little to a great deal, the shared experiences among providers and their advocates is heartwarming.

Notables:

Three providers from the U.S. shared personal stories about how they have managed to increase the amount and the quality of family child care in their communities.

BELIEFS: Covert references to believing that children benefit in a small group in a home setting; that FCC providers need some training to be both a mother-figure and a teacher at the same time; that FCC providers need professional associations and colleagues as friends and mentors.

### **#53 Men in the Lives of Young Children: The Roles and Contributions of Fathers, Father-figures, and Male Professionals in Early Childhood Education**

Key Issues:

The sadness and missing pieces experienced by some of the panelists because they didn't have a close relationship with their own fathers seemed to imply that one solution is to have men present in the classrooms and other early childhood settings. Children need to relate closely with both men and women. The growth of early childhood programs worldwide offers an opportunity to bring men into the lives of all children, especially those living in a family where the single parent is the mother.

Community in particular is affected by the steady presence of men – whether fathers or friends or teachers & caregivers. Relationships are fundamental to individual growth and development and to the stability of the community itself.

“Men matter to young children.” Each culture must actively and consciously find ways in which men can be close to and educators of young children.

Global Implications:

Panelists from a disparate group of nations that included Hawaii in the U.S. with its unique multicultural composition, Nepal, New Zealand, and Malawi described a variety of situations from first-hand experiences. They spoke about fathers “running away” or not being there for various reasons. Both boys and girls need strong relationships with men as well as with women.

Countries with a dominant culture and one or more sub-cultures are especially threatened by absent male leadership or by ineffectual presence. Roles for men and women, fixed in past generations, now fluctuate because of cultural change and by economic necessity.

Still, child care tends to be seen as women's work. Every nation and every culture and subculture has roles specific to gender. Everyone must find a way to overcome inflexible and inaccurate stereotypes. The world needs more nurturing men who can care for the children appropriately and with grace.

Men and women together in the early childhood profession must address the issues of males and females in the operation of preschools of all types. Each “side” must overcome its own stereotypes and recognize the value of having both men and women in ECE programs.

Quotes: “A child has a right to a father and a mother.”

What does it mean to a child if his or her father is “detained by the government?”

Men in early childhood model what men do in the world itself.

Early childhood educators and leaders must “expect men to be in early childhood.”

People have to sit down and talk.

Are teachers born? Or are they educated and trained to teach?

BELIEFS: Teachers are educated and trained, based on the ability to care for and educate appropriately the children in the community; ECE leaders must create a climate in which men can contribute to the care and education of young children: families must expect to see men taking active roles in ECE programs.

### **#61 Taking Care of Children in Emergencies**

The emphasis of this session on the South Asia tsunami in December 2004 should not get in the way of all types of emergencies that arise in the lives of young children wherever they live. The tsunami seems to have been a microcosm of what happens to any child when life is turned up-side-down by health, nature or family upheaval.

BELIEFS: Children are vulnerable at all times, but especially at times of turmoil – war or any kind of disaster. Adults, especially ECE professionals must be familiar beforehand with ways in which to meet children’s needs in times of trouble. Some advocates will respond immediately to the disaster while others will take a slower approach to meeting needs after the worst is over. Other advocates will fight for preventive measures and work for policies that prepare for the worst, but live for the best.

### **#2 Social Health Issues for Young Children: Mental Health, Nutritional Health, Environmental Health**

The historical emphasis on physical health – pediatric and immunological medicine and practices – has tended to minimize the related aspects highlighted by mental health, nutrition and the environment. Except for a presenter from India, the remaining four presenters were from the U.S. and Canada. This suggests that Western nations have reached the point at which the lesser known health conditions are ready to be addressed.

Given the huge health concerns worldwide, ECE leaders must pursue learning about and describing the wider range of health problems and issues worldwide.

**#39 Global Issues around Girls/Women [Disclosure: I moderated this panel and wasn't able to take detailed notes. However, the session was videotaped.]**

Panelists from Ghana, Namibia, Nigeria and Bangladesh briefly described the following issues in their countries: girls and women as part of the population, status of education and employment for girls & women. Successes and challenges were mentioned and a major barrier was identified in each country. Participants in the workshop made a commitment to taking a next step in their community when they returned home.

**BELIEFS:** Women and girls are every bit as worthy of a community's resources and commitment to be cared for as men and boys. Yet, each representatives from each country recognized that problems about equality still exist and must be addressed constantly.