

# HOW DO WE WANT TO RAISE OUR CHILDREN ? International Mother Centres Conference

Bratislava, Slovakia November 17-20, 2006



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## Foreword

When we founded the Mother Center International Network (mine) six years ago we were a handful of women in Germany. We saw that Mother Centers, who had originated in Germany, had spread to many countries all over the world and we knew this meant something fundamental and special. This was not self evident and not to be taken for granted. Because this had happened on its own, by spontaneous dissemination, through grassroots peer sharing and peer learning, as a global self-help movement. Mother Centers have not spread as part of an official government program or a strategy of an international agency. They have spread by the own strength of the idea and the women dedicated to it.

As founders of the mine network we saw the need to create a structure for what had happened spontaneously, the spreading of Mother Centers into different corners of the world as a global answer to current conditions of parenting. We felt the need for a structure with which we could harvest the contributions, experiences and lessons learned from Mother Centers all over the world and with which mothers from all over the world could raise their voices and be heard.

At this first international Mother Center conference in Bratislava this structure has come to life. It was the first time that women from all Mother Centers around the world had the opportunity to meet each other face to face, share with each other, learn from and be aware of each other. We are forever grateful to the Union of Slovak Mother Centers who presented us with the idea and opportunity of the "How do we want to raise our children?" campaign. This was the first Mother Center campaign that was taken up internationally by Mother Centers world-wide. It brought us the opportunity to all come together for the first time. Together we are representing thousands and thousands of families in many continents. This Bratislava conference has been the birth of the international Mother Center movement. It has been the opportunity to find out together, what we have in common, what we are striving for, where we can speak with one voice, how we can support each other, and how we can join forces and create common actions. It is with great pleasure that we present the results in this reader.

Monika Jaeckel, mine founder

Netherlands, April 2007



# „Children are guests who are seeking the way“

On 17th – 20th November 2006 almost two hundred people met in Bratislava to seek answers for a question: “How do we want to raise our children”. It is also the title of a long-term campaign, the idea of which united almost 30 thousand parents during hundreds of hours of discussions about child raising in 24 countries across the world; 21 out of these countries sent their representatives to the conference (Argentina, Bosnia, Burundi, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech republic, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, the Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Trinidad, Turkey, Uganda and the USA). A hope for a better world for our children united all.

The international conference, which was only one of the milestones of the campaign was organised by the Slovak Union of Mother Centres together with the international network of Mother Centres mine and held under the auspices of the First Lady of the Slovak Republic, Mrs. Silvia Gasparovicova.

Its main goal was to harvest outcomes from national discussions and underline the importance of Mother Centres as natural “universities of parenthood”, the importance of community parenting and parental self-help. Particular goals were to reveal visions and objectives of contemporary parenthood, to make practical experience visible, to seek ways to balance traditional and modern ways in parenting in changing conditions of the current world. Mothers from all countries emphasised the importance of values awareness, a need to have more power to create ethical and cultural norms of society. They unanimously agreed that governments and public institutions do not pay sufficient attention to parenthood and children.

The conference shined by colours as did individual mother centres; emotions mixed with humour and new friendships were closed. The atmosphere was marked by interesting content, peer- learning and peer-listening, creative work in groups and deep authentic statements.

The key outcome of the conference was signing the International Platform of Actions, a strategic document aiming at securing better conditions for families and recognition of the importance of the work in mother centres.

Among active participants belonged the Mayor of Bratislava city Andrej Durkovsky and vice- mayor Tatiana Mikusova; Viera Hanulakova represented the Ministry of Social Affairs and Family, Jana Partlova represented the Association of Municipalities of Slovak Towns and Villages and others prominent state, public, business and public representatives.

The 3-day conference launched a process of changes and desire to improve things. It was a proof that a strong and true idea spreads across the universe, has the power to unite people regardless their race, religion, life style or economic prosperity.

I wish our campaign “How do we raise our children” would keep going and influence our thinking, will contribute to building a more responsible and children friendly world. Much love!

Eva Fiedlerova, the President of the Union of Mother Centres, Slovakia





## Mother Center Conference: “How do we want to raise our Children”

### Program:

#### Friday, November 17th: Arrival of Participants

16.00 – 18.00	Registration
17.00	Meeting of Workshop Facilitators and Panelists in Hotel
18.00 – 21.00	Getting to Know Each Other Informal gathering in the Mother Center Ráčík, Bratislava

#### Saturday, November 18th: Introducing the Theme

7.30 – 9.30	Registration
9.00 – 9.30	Press Conference Conference Facilitator: <b>Michaela Galvankova, Slovakia</b>
9.30 – 11.00	Welcomes and Introductory Speeches - <b>Silvia Gasparovicova, First Lady of Slovak Republic</b> - <b>Tatiana Mikusova, Vice mayor of Bratislava town</b> - <b>Emilia Krsikova, State Secretary of Ministry of Work, Social Affairs &amp; Family</b> - <b>Jolanda de Haan, Bernard van Leer Foundation</b>
11.00 – 11.30	Coffee Break
11.30 – 12.30	Goals and Structure of the Conference <b>Eva Fiedlerova, chair of Union of Mother Centres, Slovakia</b> <b>Monika Jaeckel, chair of mine</b>
12.30	Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30	Hearing from Each Other Country Reports on Content and Process of the Mother Centers How do we Want to Raise Our Children Campaign - International Evaluation of Campaign Results, Lucia Lipovska, Slovakia - 8 minutes reports in alphabetic order of countries: Argentina, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cameroon, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Ghana.
15.30 – 16.00	Coffee Break
16.00 – 18.00	Country Reports continued Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda, USA.
19.30	International Party with Traditional Slovak Cuisine, Primary school Tbiliska street

#### Sunday, November 19th: Harvesting Our Work

9.00 – 9.30	Summarizing of Saturday's outcomes
9.30 – 12.30	Workshops (2 parallel Workshops per Theme) 1) Visions and Values on Parenting: Commonalties and Cultural Differences Facilitators: <b>Joan E. Bishop and Barbara King Trinidad,</b> <b>Margaret Jobita, Kenya.</b>

	2) MC as Universities of Parenthood Facilitators: <b>Zora Pauliniova, Slovakia, Marieke van Geldermalsen, Netherlands.</b>
12.30 – 14.00	3) Recognizing of the place of MC in the system of Public Welfare Facilitators: <b>Sarah Silliman, USA,</b> Dana Marekova, Slovakia. Lunch Break
14.00 – 15.30	Summarising Results of the Workshops and Preparing Creative Reports for the Plenary Coffee Break
15.30 – 16.00	Reports and Results of the Workshops + Panel Discussion I. with Professionals on the theme: Productive partnerships between parents and professionals – A partnership building dialog
16.00 – 18.00	Guests: <b>Prof. Kadriye Yardakok, Turkey Magda Helman, Poland PhDr. Daniela Čechová, Slovakia MUDr. Jana Nosková, Slovakia</b> Facilitator: <b>Zora Pauliniova, Slovakia</b>
18.30	Dinner
19.30	Mine Networking Meeting Possibility to visit Bratislava downtown at night

#### Monday, November 20th: The Way Forward

9.00 – 9.30	Summarizing of the previous day
9.30 – 11.30	Workshops 4) Elements of an International Mother Center Policy Paper Facilitators: <b>Monika Jaeckel, Netherlands, Rhona Kave, USA.</b>
	5) Strengthening the Mothers Movement Facilitators: <b>Penny Irons, Canada, Andrea Laux, Germany.</b>
	6) Publicity and Advocacy : Raising Public Awareness of Grassroots Voices on Parenting Facilitators: <b>Arlene Bailey/Tamara Reynolds, Jamaica, Apolonia Sejkova, Slovakia</b>
11.30 – 12.30	Summarizing Results of the Workshops and Preparing Creative Reports for the Plenary
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch Break
14.00 – 16.00	Reports and Results of the Workshops and Panel Discussion II on the theme: How can we work together to strengthen an international Mothers Movement? Guests: <b>Esme A.C.Raphael, Trinidad Lorna J.Amutojo, Uganda Viera Hanuláková, Slovakia Prof. Iveta Radičová, Slovakia Bishop Ján Lacho, Slovakia</b> Facilitators: <b>Dana Marekova, Slovakia and Michaela Galvankova, Slovakia</b>
16.00 – 16.30	Coffee Break
16.30 – 18.30	Conclusion, Statement and Mission of the conference
20.00	Good – bye evening





**mine**  
Mothers Centers International  
Network for Empowerment

## Mother Center Conference *How do we want to raise our Children?*

### International Mother Center Policy Paper and Platform of Action

#### **I. We are mothers, we are competent, we have joined forces for a better future for ourselves, our families and our children**

We are women from Mother Centers, Mother Center Initiatives and other Grassroots Community Groups. We are from 22 countries. In total at least 45.872 women, men and children participate actively in our groups.

We have come together from November 17-20, 2006 in Bratislava, Slovakia, to discuss the issue: How do we want to raise our children?

We have been engaged in a year long campaign on the local level to discuss the issues of child-raising as they present themselves in our daily lives. We have gathered a wealth of hands-on practical knowledge from the bottom up, which needs to be entered into public debate and decision making.

30 000 women, men and children from over 75 local groups, Mother Centers and Mother Center networks world-wide participated in our campaign. What connects us is our concern for the well-being of our children. We represent parents' voices from Argentina, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Poland, Russia, Slovak Republic, The Netherlands, Trinidad, Turkey, Uganda and USA. Together we represent more than 348.353 families.

We mothers of all ages from nine to ninety, feel responsibility for our future as well as for the future of our children. We are often facing social isolation, lack of appreciation of our work, marginalisation and poverty. We share common problems, values, aims and we have similar strategies. In all our difference we all derive our values on a personal level from a deep sense of spirituality.

We are dealing with the task of parenting under conditions of isolation, devaluation, poverty, high levels of crime and substance abuse in the community, family violence and the sexual abuse and prostitution of young children. We are struggling to provide basic needs like a safe place to live, uncontaminated food, water, sanitation and clean air. We are taking care of children of all ages, of abandoned children, of AIDS-orphans. We are taking care of the sick and the old. Our centers are public living rooms for all generations.

We deal with our own problems, we are capable of designing feasible solutions and we have the support of each other. We also want to co-operate with and we seek support of other members of society,





BRATISLAVA  
MAYOR'S OFFICE

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mine

## **II. Mother Centers are a UN accredited Best Practice to promote healthy families and communities. Mother Centers and their networks need political and financial support.**

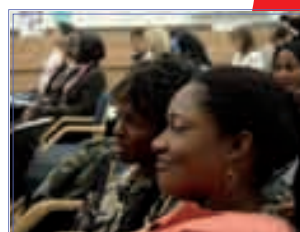
Mother Centers are being self-created all over the world by women who see the need of community support for the everyday task of raising children. Who see the need of recreating community and social cohesion where it has been destroyed by modernization, by migration, by wars, by totalitarianism and colonialism, by inner city violence, drugs and alcohol abuse, by natural disasters and by the HIV AIDS epidemic. Mother Centers are an answer to the weakening of social ties, family, kin and neighbourhood networks in the many different social, cultural and historic settings currently on our planet. They reinvent family and kinship under contemporary conditions. They are creating up to date support systems for child-raising in response to current historical conditions and demands. Mother Centers are paving ways for community parenting and social cohesion, for caring neighbourhoods and family friendly municipalities.

Mother Centers are a safe and caring space, where mothers of all ages can be supported and learn from other moms, a place of easy access, a home outside of home, a place to find community and support, a place of recognition and backing for parenting, a place for diversity and equality, a place that brings everything under one roof, implements a holistic and inclusive approach to families and communities and recreates neighbourhoods, a place to contribute talents and create family services, a place to generate civil society, to enter grassroots knowledge and resources into public life and public welfare, a place to share values and to realize dreams and visions.

Mother Centers provide many benefits to society including: quality improvement of family child rearing; promotion of tolerance and democratic skills; integration of socially weak families; support for better gender, family and neighbourhood relations; improvement of health for women and children; integration of migrants, ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples; development of knowledge skills and knowledge reserves; support of compatibility of work and family; community building that includes youth; reverse of demographic trends; reform of institutions; improvement of the living environment (habitat); creation of humane forms of ageing; promotion of peace and international understanding.

World wide Mother Centers are struggling for sustainability. They cannot survive without access to public rent free space. They cannot survive without political support, and without core funding of the centers and their networks. Existing Mother Centers around the world face daily challenges: lack of public recognition; lack of funding; difficulty maintaining grassroots ownership and burnout. Mother Center initiatives around the world are struggling to access space and funds to get their Mother Centers going.

We have shared our stories and we have defined the support we need.







**mine**



### III. We have a mission

The Mother Center International Network (**mine**), its member networks, supporters and partners stand for a world that values and supports the work of mothers. We stand for a world that places social cohesion and community at the base of social and economic development. We stand for a world in which the culture of care is reintegrated into public life, we stand for caring community development. As mothers we see the need to invest in a ecological, economical and socially sustainable future.

### IV. We see the need for the following policies and measures

We want the wealthy so called "developed" countries to acknowledge and address poverty and racism in their own communities.

#### We see the need for the following policies

- ❖ Policies that support welcoming structures for children and families in public life
- ❖ Policies that support access to employment and income generation
- ❖ Policies that support the compatibility and balance of work and family
- ❖ Policies that calculate the value of unpaid care work and translate it into economic terms, revealing the enormous, currently invisible value of care work
- ❖ Policies that support and resource the care work of women
- ❖ Policies that recognize, support, preserve and make visible Indigenous culture and traditions through Indigenous participation and most importantly, the rights of Indigenous parents/families to raise their own child/children
- ❖ Policies that allow women and men to spend quality time with their children
- ❖ Policies that combat poverty of families and single parents
- ❖ Policies that acknowledge the expertise and competencies gained by everyday life and in informal learning settings
- ❖ Policies that legitimize parental organized child care
- ❖ Policies that support kindergartens and schools to cooperate with parents as equal partners
- ❖ Policies that include Mother Centers and other grassroots women's groups as equal partners in local governance
- ❖ Policies that guarantee secure tenure and shelter for families
- ❖ Policies that secure access to safe water, air and sanitation
- ❖ Policies that secure family friendly services and family friendly urban and rural infrastructure
- ❖ Policies that support a healthy and sustainable natural environment
- ❖ Policies that support the equality of men and women
- ❖ Policies that ensure affordable quality childcare





### We see the need for the following measures

- ❖ Legitimization of the informal learning that occurs already in the Mother Center setting
- ❖ Support for incorporation of complementary formal learning, resulting in certification of the practice expertise gained in the Mother Centers so that for instance teenage mothers can continue formal education
- ❖ Creation of a Global Fund for exchanges and peer learning between Mother Centers and other Grassroots Women's Groups world-wide
- ❖ Core Funding for existing Mother Centers and their Networks and creation of a global fund for the setting up of new Mother Centers and their participation in the Mother Centers networks
- ❖ Creation of a Global Fund for grassroots women's groups to have rent free access to, to own and to self manage their own public spaces
- ❖ International formation and adoption of a Caring Community Index
- ❖ Invest in women and children at the budgetary level by implementing a gender and family perspective in the use of public resources
- ❖ Tax redemption for the work of grassroots community groups
- ❖ Institute international support for two percent of taxes to fund NGOs
- ❖ Funding of impact studies of Mother Centers on children, families and society

### V. We have collectively decided to engage in the following campaigns and actions

- ❖ Continuation of the How do we want to raise our children campaign
- ❖ Mothers March on Mothers Day
- ❖ We want to work together on the creation of an Indigenous Mother's Network as part of the International Mother Centers Network

### VI. We seek support and partnerships for these policies, measures and actions from all sectors of society

#### Media

We are able to offer positive stories and deep insight into various topics.

We challenge the media to publish positive news.

We do not get enough attention from the media, as we do not stand for crime, sex and scandals.

We ask the media to partner with us in making public the positive solutions as well as the stories of community and solidarity being lived every day in our groups and centers.





mine



### Local Authorities

We are able to offer positive models of organizing and developing communities. We ask local authorities to treat us as equal partners in local governance. We are not sufficiently recognized by local authorities and municipal councils. We challenge local authorities to design and implement their family policies WITH families rather than FOR them. Partnership with local authorities, police, the judicial system and health workers has to begin with listening and proceed to mediation and finally facilitating collaboration.

### Institutional Actors and Professionals

We are skilled in raising our children and managing families, as well as organizations, in practical as well as methodological ways. We challenge professionals to redefine their role from being the ones teaching and defining expertise to the ones engaging in principled and equitable partnerships with Mother Centers and other grassroots women's groups. We are not sufficiently recognized by professionals and institutional actors. We ask professionals to partner with us to enhance the visibility, recognition and remuneration of grassroots women's expertise, and to be door openers for grassroots women's experts to engage on an equitable basis with mainstream institutions.

### Private Sector

We can offer skills, expertise, endurance and passion to do various jobs. We challenge the private sector to adapt corporate culture to the needs of caregivers. The work of mothers and caregivers is not sufficiently recognized by the corporate world and the social partners. We ask the private sector to support community work and grassroots initiatives in civil society.

Signed on the International Day of Children's Rights 2006, by:

Mother Center International Network for Empowerment (mine)

Union of Slovak Mother Centers

NAME	COUNTRY	Signature
Olga Shalotova	RUSSIA	Olga
Yelena Sapozhnikova	RUSSIA	Yelena
Kadriye Yurdakök	TURKEY	K. Yurdakök
Dilek Hamedenglu	TURKEY	Dilek
Lukie Chennova	Bulgaria	Lukie
Jugrid Bregewer	Germany	Jugrid
Jana Gregussova	Slovakia	Jana
Milica Hromanić	Slovenia	Milica
Ritoda Nthoro Obahin	KENYA	Ritoda
MARGARET JOBITA		Margaret
Katarzyna Agnieszka	Poland	Katarzyna
Elena Chichikova	SLAVIA	Elena
Debrah Nyamathi	BURUNDI	Debrah
Katarzyna Hromanić	SLAVIA	Katarzyna
HANA LICHARDOVA	SLOVAKIA	Hana
Blanka Stachova	SLOVAKIA	Blanka
Debrah Nyamathi	ARGENTINA	Debrah
Echina Karabop	GUINIA	Echina
Fadila Halimoula	+	Fadila
Denila Lichanska	Slovakia	Denila
Mirana Lichanska	Slovakia	Mirana
Angela Lichanska	Slovakia	Angela





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NAME	COUNTRY	Signature
HAZIC SILVANA	BOSNIA	Hazic Silvana
Donelia Boyova	BOLGARIA	Donelia
Renata Stein	Argentina	Renata Stein
Sasha	Netherlands	Sasha
Hilda SANDILOVA	SLOVAK	Hilda Sandilova
HANANA KNOTORADIN	SLOVAKIA	Hanana Knotoradin
DOROTA GATZ	POLAND	Dorota Gatz
Renee Tel	Holland	Renee Tel
Petra Lent	Germany	Petra Lent
Karin Paulin Fink	Germany	Karin Paulin Fink
Andrea Faust	Germany	Andrea Faust
Katerina Zernitskaya	Russia	Katerina Zernitskaya
IRVINE EREMYE BAHUKUDDEMBE	UGANDA	Irvine Eremye Bahukudembe
SENDA DZANIC	BIH	Sendi Dzanic
Godana Daulic	BIH	Godana Daulic
Ann Wangin	Kenya	Ann Wangin
Michela GALANNOVA	SLOVAKIA	Michela Galanova



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NAME	COUNTRY	Signature
Jana Konecna	Slovenia	<i>[Signature]</i>
SILVIA DRAGOLINCA	SLOVENSKO	<i>[Signature]</i>
MAGDALENA KNAPOWSKA-NIZIOLEK	POLAND	M. Knapowska - Niziolek
KATEŘINA SKORINKOVÁ	SLOVAKIA	<i>[Signature]</i>
Larissa Gijfert	Germany	Larissa Gijfert
Anita Rutgees	Netherlands	<i>[Signature]</i>
Alma Ylvaund-Nuñez	Guatemala	<i>[Signature]</i>
RUT KOLINSKA	CZECH REPUBLIC	<i>[Signature]</i>
Magdalena Dulman	POLAND	M. Dulman
ANDREA BUNDECH	GERMANY	A. Bundsch
EVĀ FIEDLEROVĀ	ULOVAKIA	<i>[Signature]</i>
HELLEN KAMIRI	KENYA	<i>[Signature]</i>
IVANA GRAJČAROVÁ	SLOVAKIA	<i>[Signature]</i>
Rhonda Kave	U.S.A.	<i>[Signature]</i>
Lori Rappa-Rodriguez	USA	L. Rappa-Rodriguez
Mariska van Gijzen-van der Gijzen	Netherlands	<i>[Signature]</i>
Clara BAKOŠOVÁ	SLOVAKIA	Clara Bakošová



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NAME	COUNTRY	SIGNATURE
Alice Gorka	POLAND	
Lucia Reichbauerová	SLOVAKIA	
Eugenia Juaréz Xal	Guatemala	
MONIKA JHECKĚL	Netherlands	
MIRELA HEJIĆ	BIH	
Joaneth Jansen Duijls	Netherlands	
Kelly Hoogerhout	Netherlands	
Griet Rutgers	Netherlands	
ELENA BOLINKOVÁ	SLOVAKIA	
JARILA PATKOVÁ	SLOVAKIA	
PAOLA JOJARI	SLOVENISTO	
SONIA SANCHEZ	ARGENTINA	
Ella Arens Krieger	Germany	
ANFISIA BUNDSCHUK	GERMANY	
Eva Demes	GERMANY	
GABRIELA MNATJOVÁ	SLOVAKIA	
SILVIA ŠORSELOVÁ	SLOVAKIA	
Arlene Bailey	Jamaica	
Janiara Reynolds	Jamaica	
Maria Cindrelina	STOMBA	
Veneta Haxhendi	STOMBA	

• Mothers' Centres International Network for Empowerment (www.mine.cc)  
• UNION of Mothers' Centres • Data mothers' centres • Baku 5 • 2011 01/01/2011

HOW DO WE WANT TO RAISE OUR CHILDREN ? International Mother Centres Conference





## National Reports **Argentina**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: “Vicente Catalano” Mother Center, Suarez, Buenos Aires**

At the moment our group consists of 15 women and their families, 35 children (0- 12 age) and 10 young persons. The families live absolute absolute poverty. The average income level is 400 Peso argent. (100 pro family/ month). The majority is working by collecting rubbish. There is much drug abuse with children, starting from age 5 onward and violence again women and children is normal. Our participants have bad school education and there are many teenage mothers. Starting at the age of 13 years teenage girls have 1-2 children and they are not able to lead a household of their own. We think that education is very important and must begin in our Mother Center around the “kitchen table”, with basic information on hygiene and healthy nourishment.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Renate Stein, steinrenate@gmx.net

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

At the moment we can reach about 100 families and in the future more than 300 families can profit from our work. With the construction of our Mother Center we can create a structure for the empowerment of mothers and their children and can contribute to creating the basics for a good and healthy neighbourhood. Our program consists of:

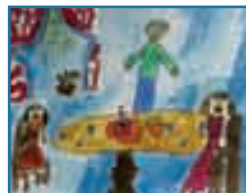
- Midday lunches for and with mothers and children (“the university at the kitchen table”)
- Care for children and help with their homework
- Activities with dancing and singing
- Training in hygiene and nourishment
- Workshops for learning handicrafts (hair cutting, cosmetics and needle work),
- Legal aid.

We want to support families to grow up in the experience of recognition and empowerment, to know their rights and be able to care of their children and take responsibility for their urban environment.

Our activities are funded through private and business donations. At the moment we do not have core funding, but our idea is open for support. Our organisation is run by grassroots women.

The Mother Center building is built through much voluntary work and many creative activities too. For the regular work in the center like cleaning, cooking and childcare we would like to pay small wages.

We are building good contacts to churches, sports organisations, and economic and political networks in Germany and in Argentina.



## National Reports **Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**NAME OF ORGANISATIONS:** Mother Center “Plamen”, Zavidovici, Mother Center “Klub Prima”, Sanski Most, and “Prijateljice”, Tuzla

Bosnia faces big problems with unemployment, poverty, discrimination and obsolete systems of education. Children with special needs are physically integrated into classrooms, but the government does provide neither the human nor the material resources for addressing their special needs. The problem is even more acute in the rural areas.

Mother Centers came to Bosnia through Bosnian war refugees, who found a “home away from home” in Mother Centers in Germany and introduced the concept in their home town when returning after the war. The Mother Centers in Bosnia create space for mothers and children to meet and learn from each other. The centers reach between 20 and 100 families.

**CONTACT PERSONS:** Senada Džankić, plamenmz@yahoo.ca,  
Edina Karabeg, ekarabeg@nili.uct.ba,  
Jasminka Tadić Husanović, prijateljice@bih.net.ba

### PROJECT SUMMARY

We bring hope back into the community by taking the lead with own activities and proving that you do not have to wait for the state, the government or your mayor to make improvements for families and children. We organise childcare and education for children and income generating activities as well as support for health and well-being for mothers. We want a city and society that respects mothers and children. In our Mother Centers we have members and participants from every part of society, from 0-70 years old, married as well as single parents, different income levels, different social status and members from different ethnic groups.

Activities include: childcare, savings and credit group, aerobic, massage, dance class, English classes, creative groups.

During the campaign “How do we want to raise our children?” Bosnian participants were especially interested in questions of alternative possibilities for pre-school and school education, and how parents can take influence on the educational process in kindergartens and schools.

In the centers we want to organise for:

- Our children to be safe in kindergartens and schools.
- A clean and bright environment for our children
- Good, trustful and professional teachers,
- Modern knowledge ( languages, computer)
- Active participation in educational process
- Government support (new laws, financial means)

Funding comes through grants from international organizations, local donations as well as own income generating activities. There is no core funding. 30% of our work is paid, 70% is voluntary work.



## National Reports **Bulgaria**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Integro Association-BULGARIA, Razgrad**

Integro organises over 500 Roma women, men and children in Roma communities. The income level differs to the degree if they are employed or unemployed. Activities are for children, for youth, for mothers and families and include income generating activities, as well as activities for community development, solidarity, and self organising.

1/3 of our resources come from the community, from voluntary work and our own contributions. Local Authorities also support our activities and we receive support by external donors from Dutch foundations and USA organisations.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Lili Makaveeva, L\_makaveeva@mail.bg,integro

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Currently there are 4 Roma Mother Center initiatives in Bulgaria, in Razgrad, Provadia, Simitli and Sandanski.

- Mother Centers are a place for women and children.
- We work together for a better future, because we believe that good mothers bring about good children.
- Our children will see their mothers in a new public role . We will be positive role models for our children.
- With us our children will develop their own positive dreams, talents and character.
- Through Mother Centers we can be visible and all together be one family.
- Mother Centers are a community of learning, helping and sharing our hopes.
- We engage in Mother Centers, so that our children will not fear the future.
- We want to provide better education to our children.
- Through the Mother Center we free ourselves to express our beliefs and to become part of public life.

The Roma Mother Centers in Bulgaria collaborate with local schools and governments. Through grassroots negotiation with local government authorities we have received public space for our Mother Centers.



## National Reports **Burundi**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Femmes pour la paix au Burundi (Women for Peace in Burundi), Bujumbura**

Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world and is facing reconstruction after civil war. The fight against poverty is the main issue. Especially the women headed households are extremely poor. They are in need of everything and often do not own more than the clothes they wear. The health situation has deteriorated and malaria is now the main killer, more even than AIDS, which has left thousands of children orphaned without help of other family members in children headed households. Then there is sexual violence, a curse which is on the rise. Finally there are land issues which, according to the experts in the matter, really are time-bombs undermining the security in the country. There are no clear policies in this field and women risk losing their property when they are widowed, it is difficult to get their rights.





Many children don't go to school for several reasons. When the war ended the demand was so large that the number of schools and teachers was largely insufficient. For many families it is too expensive, even though school fees have been abolished; they do not have the resources to buy food, a pen a note book and a school uniform. Our organisation was founded in December 1993, just after the civil war had started. The founders concluded that women were most affected by the crisis situation and they thought of ways to bring peace back to the country. Our association has women of different ages of all social and ethnic backgrounds and political affiliations. We reach about 50 families. We teach peaceful resolution of conflicts between women as well as between women and their children.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Béatrice NYAMOYA, bnyamoya@yahoo.fr

### PROJECT SUMMARY

We have been working a lot inside Burundi to mobilize people for peace, and we have been doing peace advocacy work during negotiations. Inside of Burundi we have been organizing meetings between war-victims, women who were forced to flee because of the war and those who could remain in their place of residence. A focus of our activities is on poverty eradication. We also visit the refugee camps outside of Burundi to talk with the women who fled the country to discuss returning. As a result of that we participated as observers in the peace negotiations that took place in Kampala, Dar-Es-Salaam and South Africa.

Our main goals include:

- Work towards the return of peace in the country
- Assist people, especially women and children, affected by the socio-political crisis
- Encourage solidarity amongst women
- Supporting families with the bare minimums of finding food, shelter, clothing, and access to school and health care
- Strengthen aspects in our culture and education that reinforce the status of women
- Try to support all sorts of initiatives to promote women through education and training
- Initiate elaborate and lobby for the adaptation and use of legal instruments that reinforce the respect for and dignity of women
- Support women in their socio-economic activities
- Support education children and youth that promotes the positive values of peace, tolerance, social justice and human rights.



## National Reports **Cameroon**

### NAME OF ORGANISATION: Ghaife Mother Center, Ntankah Village

Ghaife Mother Center is an initiative of the group Ntankah Village Women Common Initiative Group, which is a self-help organisation of twenty-four women. The group's mission is to improve the long term socio-economic conditions of women as well as enhance the long term capacity of women to deal with development actors. Activities are joint agricultural production and marketing, revolving loan fund and social solidarity and assistance. The group has developed a strategic plan to work with widows and property rights as well as orphans and vulnerable children. The group is

working on improving home based care for HIV/AIDS clients .  
In the framework of the How to raise our children campaign we have involved about 1,000 women directly, about 200 men and at least 300 children. Most of the members who participate actively at the Ghaife Mother Center tend to be adults in their late twenties, mostly married women. Single parent mothers also participate, as do children, youth, men and young adult bachelors and spinsters. The income level of most participants tends to be low because of general poverty in our society. There are some middle income participants. There is a lot of ethnic diversity because Cameroon has more than two hundred different ethnic groups. There is also diversity in educational levels. Participants vary from illiterates to university graduates.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Veronica Kini Morfaw, verkini@yahoo.com

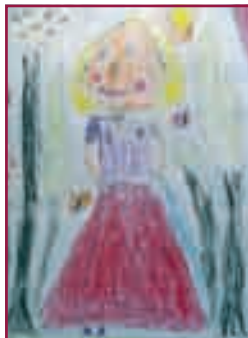
### PROJECT SUMMARY

At the Ghaife Mother Center we have the following on-going activities:

- Children play groups
- Remedial classes
- Elder care
- Children's vaccinations
- Debates
- Children's games room
- Farming, weeding and harvesting activities
- Sporting activities like handball, football
- We teach home economics and home management
- Language classes and oral tradition
- Cooking classes, common meals
- Sales of artefacts and handicrafts
- Tie and dye and soap making
- Laundry
- Home visits/Home based care of the sick and orphans/vulnerable children

Our activities are mainly funded from own resources as well as small grants from foreign donors. Our organisation is exclusively run by grassroots women. Most work done by members of our organisation is self help and voluntary and so is not generally paid. However those who do laundry are paid as well as those who do meals. Some people who do childcare are paid occasionally. Farming activities are on paid contract basis.

We have developed very positive partnerships with traditional rulers and traditional institutions. And we have developed very good partnerships with the media as well as the administrative and municipal officials.  
We also have developed a wide network of women's groups, both inside and outside the country.



## National Reports **Canada**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Aboriginal Mother Centre Society, Vancouver, BC**

We serve 300-500 families and about 700 children per year. Issues we address include poverty, housing, education, child care, racism and peer to peer learning. In our communities child apprehension by the government is a big issue. Mothers worry very day that their child(ren) may get apprehended and their right to parenting be taken away. As aboriginal mothers issues of self identity and culture are very important to us. The generational effects of our parents being forced to attend residential schools played a big part in not knowing how to parent, because their parents didn't know how to parent. We struggle with severe poverty and survival issues.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Penny Irons – Executive Director, penny@amcs.ca

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Mother Centers create a place for community support and community solutions. The Aboriginal Mother Center in Vancouver targets the large group of single and teen parents in the aboriginal community by providing parenting support as well as support towards self sufficiency through income generating projects.

We want to raise healthy and happy children. We know what we need help with in raising our children, but the government always tells us what they think we need. We want to learn more from our elders regarding our traditional ways of child rearing. We feel it is more effective to learn from other mothers and elders than from governmental parenting classes.

In the Mother Center we talk about our personal lives and learn what each of us struggles with. We learn about each others strengths and weaknesses and how we can be more supportive of each other.

We feel that Vancouver is not a child friendly city and it is also not culturally sensitive. There is a lack of playgrounds and a lack of child friendly space, where parents can just drop in any time. Society can support parents by creating more child friendly space, family affordable housing, free day-care. We would like there to be more Mother Centers in Canada. We dream of a society free of racism and discrimination. Society needs to understand that children belong in society and children should be seen and heard.

Our Aboriginal Mother Center is run by grassroots women. We provide a safe environment for mothers and children on a drop-in basis. We provide daily meal programs, childcare, educational courses and individual consultation. We run a social enterprise with our sewing factory.

We do not have core funding. We need to struggle every year with new project proposals and project funding.





## National Reports **Czech Republic**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: The network of Mother Centres in the Czech Republic, Praha**

The first Mothers Center in the Czech Republic was founded 1992.

The formal network was accomplished 2001. We have 187 members (Mother Centres) in our network, the average number of families reached by the individual Mother Center is around 100, altogether we reach about 20.000 families. You can find every generation in our Mother Centers but mostly you will see small children with their mothers, families from every social status and income level, and from time to time also refugees from different countries

**CONTACT PERSON:** Rut Kolínská, sit.mc@centrum.cz

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Mothers Centers:

- Help through mutual counseling, exchange of experiences, giving and receiving, mutual help, peer advice
- Provide programs for mothers, parents and children (creative, educational, sportive, requalification)
- Are a place for integration, problem and conflict prevention
- Provide a school for civic life
- Co-operate with non-profit organisations as well as state services with similar aims and with partner organisations abroad

Main tasks of the network include:

- Coordination of the network
- Support and methodological guidance for newly established Mother Centers
- Documentation of common projects, establishment of an archive documenting the activities of single MCs
- Organising projects on a national scale
- Cooperation with governing bodies
- Cooperation with partner organisations abroad
- Fund-raising

Our centers and network are run by grassroots women. We receive core funding through foreign foundations as well as the national government. We receive funds from the European Union and from private sponsors. Half of the work in the centers is paid, half is voluntary work.





## National Reports **Guatemala**

**NAME OF ORGANISATION:** Asociación Ak Tenamit, Mother Center Izabal

Guatemala has 11 million inhabitants of which 51 percent are women. It is a multilingual and multicultural country. There are 23 mother tongues and 23 different ethnic groups. In rural areas there are no kindergartens, children are cared for by family networks, mainly by their mothers. Childcare is only offered in the cities, there is no parenting support given to mothers.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Eugenia Juarez Xol, [eugeniajuarezxol@yahoo.com](mailto:eugeniajuarezxol@yahoo.com)

### PROJECT SUMMARY

Mother Centers offer an opportunity for mothers to support each other, to find childcare and to learn about parenting. We want to learn about Mother Centers from other countries. For our centers it is important to also include income generating projects as well as ways to integrate different cultural traditions and languages. We see Mother Centers as especially important in rural areas in Guatemala, since there are no services at all offered to families in the rural areas.



## National Reports **Germany**

**NAME OF ORGANISATIONS:** Mütterforum , Network of Mother Centers of Baden Wuerttemberg, Stuttgart, Mother-Father-Center Neuhausen, Munich, Bavaria, Mother Center Klara, Freiburg.

The regional network consists of 51 Mother and Family Centers. These centers have between 10 and 500 membership families, the number being determined by size, location (urban or rural) and service range. Many more families than are members benefit from the services offered.

In Mother and Family centers everyone from baby to senior citizen is welcome and may feel at home. Family composition (single parent, patchwork and classic families, migrant families), income level, social status, educational level and ethnic background do not play a role in the centers. Each participant receives equal respect and appreciation.

**CONTACT PERSONS:** Andrea Laux, [info@muetterforum.de](mailto:info@muetterforum.de)  
 Susanne Baier, [info@mvz-neuhausen.de](mailto:info@mvz-neuhausen.de)  
 Larissa Seiffert, [vorstand@muetterzentrum-klara.de](mailto:vorstand@muetterzentrum-klara.de)

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Mother Centers are places of informal learning with a low threshold status. Mother Centers offer family education in the context of daily practice. It is high time that this form of everyday life peer family education receives public recognition and sponsorship.

Activities include daily childcare, homework supervision for school children, playgroups, lunch service, creative workshops, music programs, sport and wellness activities, seasonal and cultural celebrations and festivities, educational programs for children (for instance nature projects, first aid lessons) and for parents (for instance computer courses), savings and credit groups, second hand shops, peer support and practical help (for instance with bureaucratic matters), flea markets and bazaars; political activities, networking with other Mother Centres and social organisations

We receive core funding from the government of Baden Wuerttemberg's Ministry for Employment and Social Welfare as well as from the municipalities. The tasks carried out in the centers are always honoured, whenever possible, by monetary remuneration.

Main areas of change parents want include:

- More recognition of the task of rearing children,
- More money for this undertaking,
- Fewer external demands and impositions,
- More places where men and women can learn how to be a parent,
- Parents need a lobby in society,
- The monetary resources for a free choice in the child/career question,
- Less materialism,
- Society to become more caring and sharing, where one does not need elbows to survive
- Compatibility of work and family
- Enjoying motherhood while young, without the threat of poverty,
- Not to have to rigidly plot life's phases: education/training – career – children, rather to enjoy a flexible life scheme.
- That the opinions of parents themselves are respected, we know what we what need



## National Reports Hungary

### NAME OF ORGANISATION: REGINA Foundation, Gödöllő

Our organisation reaches about 150 - 200 women and their families. Our members are mostly mothers, of diverse social status and income level. We also have single parent families and some singles. We reach mostly rural women.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Kinga Milankovics, [reginainfo@reginanet.hu](mailto:reginainfo@reginanet.hu)

## PROJECT SUMMARY

We offer information and exchange platforms for women on community development. Our activities include trainings, consultancy, news portal, film club, care and musical activities for children, teenage volunteer program.





We do not have core funding. Our activities are mostly project and grant based, and there is a lot of volunteer work from our members. About 30% of our work is paid, 70% is voluntary work.

We address the issues of how to balance the roles of women and men, mothers and fathers in the family, and in public life, how women can find balance for themselves regarding work and family life, housekeeping and paid work.

We see the necessity for a more balanced division of family life and work, equal opportunities for mothers and fathers within and outside the family, as well as a more conscious school system that pays more attention to the "soft skills" of children such as communication, equality and community skills.

Society needs to support parents in raising their children according to their visions by:

- More tolerance and respect of alternative life styles
- Laws and regulations that support parents raising children.
- More equal opportunities for women to gain financial independence within the family and in the society as well.



## National Reports **Italy**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Eltern Kind Zentrum, Bruneck, Bozen, South Tirol**

Our Center is mainly visited by young families, also grandparents sometimes visit us with their grandchildren. The people who visit us come from all parts of our society: married couples come just as single parent families do. We are sought out by German as well as Italian speaking people, and we are often the first point of contact for migrant families from other countries like Iran, Croatia, England, Bangladesh, Netherlands. We offer language courses to help them with the languages spoken in our region. In 2005 366 men, 4464 women and 5525 children visited our Mother Center. Our activities regularly reach a minimum of 1500 families.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Waltraud Erharder Hitthaler, bruneck@org

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Our activities include:

- Play groups for children in the age of 2- 5 years
- Play groups for babies and their mothers or fathers
- Music lessons for infants
- Swim groups for babies
- Courses to prepare the birth (before and after)
- Lectures
- Meeting place

- Our organization is funded 70% by public authorities and 30% by our own income generating activities. Our organization is run partly by grassroots women and partly by professionals.
- The work during the opening hours is paid, but all the rest, like meetings, shopping, planning the program, public relations etc. is voluntary work. We belong to the network of Mother Centers (Eltern-Kind Zentren) in South Tirol.



## National Reports **Jamaica**

### **NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Fletchers Land Parenting Association, Kingston**

Inner city communities in Kingston, Jamaica, face a lot of violence. We organize peace walks between the different communities to reach out across the imaginary boundaries between our communities to save our children and parents. We have reached more than one hundred families through our activities.

Contact person: Arlene Bailey, fletcherlandparenting@yahoo.com

### **Project Summary**

We offer information across Fletcher's Land community in regards to proper parenting skills.

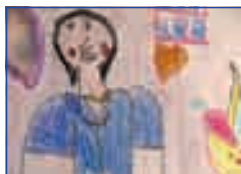
We have approximately 30 active persons in the group. These persons can be called on to assist the association in all endeavors.

We conduct empowerment workshops, Street Parents meetings, the Breakfast Assistance Program, liaison with parents and schools and the children's sessions. We support our students to go back to schools. We have created a community parenting program, where we patrol the streets at night to make sure that school children are not on the streets after nine o'clock on school nights.

Most of our members are not financially stable but all are willing to make the sacrifice in order to change the lives of our nation's children. We are mainly head of single households, whether it is fathers or mothers, there are a few nuclear and extended families.

Some of us have part-time jobs, low income or no jobs at all. We are all about development of our children and community. We want to see them grow to their full potential. We want our children to live purposeful lives, we are pioneers in changing the next generation to come.

The Fletcher's Land Parenting Association is not funded, all our members are volunteers. However the "Breakfast Assistance Program" is funded by The Inter-American Development Bank-Government Of Jamaica and the Citizen Security & Justice Project through the Ministry of National Security. There is no core-funding of such, but we are hoping that executive members of the association could be paid for the communication, traveling and any other costs that we may have incurred. We are a grassroots organization, our members come from the communities.



## National Reports **Kenya**

### **NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Spearheading Economic Development for Africa (Speed Africa), Kisumu City**

50 families are active in the groups (with an average of 6 family members). They are diverse in age, ethnic orientation and income level. They come from poor families, whose income levels are low regardless of ethnic background, but have the potential to actively engage in income generating activities if their potentials are developed. The groups address the inherent poverty, especially among the women folk living in the slums and poverty stricken areas. The aim is to make credit available to the financially marginalized slum and rural communities to start their own small business with a view to promoting their living standards; developing their capacity to manage credit, create awareness about their human rights and to empower them to participate in the development of their regions.

**CONTACT PERSONS:** Rhodah Ahono Obadha, rhobadha@yahoo.com

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Main activities include a micro finance business approach through a members savings and loaning scheme intended to empower the financially marginalised community members especially women whose capacities to do business have been developed. We also have civic education awareness programmes intended to teach members about their human rights.

We especially target the rural areas, where bank credit programs are not easily accessible.

The strength of the approach lies in the participation of the community and in their ownership of the programme as well as their ability to manage it through the creation of village banks. It encourages the community to take full control of the program and their destiny.

Our credit lending scheme is carefully designed and modeled along a unique grassroots structure that make small loans available to poor rural and slum women's income generating groups. The approach is built on the premise that lending to legally constituted and structured women's groups whose capacities have been developed will be more effective than lending to individuals because a larger number of women benefit while the group exerts pressure on its members to meet their financial obligations.

Small credit schemes are likely to become a factor in improving the quality of life of the poor who have limited or no access to major credit lending financial institutions

The organisation is run by grassroots women. Funding is mainly covered by members contributions. Paid work includes the project manager and training consultancy for community frontline extension workers. Voluntary work is done by providing free training to the members of the organisation.





## National Reports **Netherlands**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Platform Ouderkindcentra (Mother Centers) Nijmegen**

There are 4 Mother Centers in Nijmegen and in all centers together there are 6 fathers, 30 children and 47 mothers active. The centers reach more families with their programs. On an average week there are about 50 visitors. Most of our participants are young women with small children. Some of the women are divorced and take care of the children on their own. Half of the active participants in the centers have a education. Some of them are working part time. Most of them depend on social security. They have to live from a small income. The ethnic back ground of our participants is a mirror of our society. There are many participants from Turkey and from Morocco and a smaller group from Somalia, Indonesia and other countries, and of course there are also Dutch participants. The Mother Centers are started mostly in so called "problem neighbourhoods" where the local government supports positive initiatives from the people.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Jeannette Janssen Duyghuysen, j\_janssen\_d@hotmail.com

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Activities focus on organising courses for mothers and children, like bicycle lessons or cooking projects. It all depends on the skills and qualities of the women.

Activities include:

- Creative groups
- Drama classes
- Cooking with kids
- Coffee meetings
- Pedagogical course (together with a social worker)
- Informal teaching of the Dutch language
- Theme evenings
- Female day
- Turkish Women's group
- Moroccan women's group
- Creative afternoons for small kids
- Aerobics
- Bicycle lessons
- Camping weekend with mothers and their children

Our organization runs partly by grassroots women and by professionals. In every Mother Center there is a social worker and three assistants.

We have a network for the Mother Centers in The Netherlands. We have our own network with the four Mother Centers in our city of Nijmegen. And we also started a network with the municipal after school program "Home room for children". (there are 8 Home rooms for children in Nijmegen) .We are looking to cooperate with the Open School organisation to also network with the parents who are active in school.



## National Reports **Poland**

### **NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION: The Astrid Lindgren Institute for Early Childhood Development, Poznan**

The Astrid Lindgren Institute for Early Childhood Education is a non governmental organization, with the mission to create a positive culture for young children in society, and in particular to support a positive environment for young children in families and in pre-school programs.

The Institute promotes the importance of early childhood and good quality education for the development of young children. The Institute's team - psychologists, pedagogists, sociologists, pre-school and academic teachers offer activities and trainings both to families as well as preschool headmasters and teachers. They usually have an average or good financial situation, are young, well educated (high schools or universities) and involved in their children's development. We also cooperate with a program that works with persons who experience some kind of life crisis.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Magdalena Helman Barylska, m.helman@ali.org.pl

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The services of the Institute are diverse. About 150 families take part in our various family activities. Our services also include trainings for educators, local social campaigns (together with the media), and publications on early childhood development. Our goal is to create more public awareness on the needs of young children. We aim at improving the quality of preschool education and better accessibility of preschools in the city of Poznan. Thanks to the Institute's activities there is a better local community awareness of the importance of the adaptation process between home/ preschool and preschool/school transfers.

Polish parents need:

- Alternative forms of preschool and school education, as these institutions usually are not children-friendly
- Budget priorities for social solutions that support young parents.
- Changes in the awareness of politicians, decision makers, architects and CEOs. Better knowledge of what children need and what is important for them
- Changes in teachers' education and teachers' salaries, so that the youngest would be taught by the best
- More activity of parents, openness and involvement in local initiatives for children
- Leaving the communistic context in which the individuality and diversity of children are not respected
- Jobs for mothers with the possibility to combine raising up children and working
- Financial support, so that parents can choose to spend more time with their children
- A society based on higher values, not only on materialistic ones
- More equal opportunities for children, regardless of family income

The Astrid Lindgren Institute for Early Childhood Development is a NGO receiving financial means from non-governmental and local-government organizations as well as from individual and institutional sponsors, also from abroad. Partially it is based on volunteer work. Our work in the Institute is paid, but due to the specifics of the non-profit organization each employee has some volunteer work included in his or her schedule.



## National Reports **Russia**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Mother Center “Three generations”, Pushchino**

More than 80 people participate in our Mother Center, young mothers, older mothers (over 35 years), grandmothers and grandfathers, young girls and boys. We have married couples, single mothers and single grandmothers. The income level is low and middle. Our group includes housewives, teachers, psychologists, sociologists, businessmen and employees. The ethnic background is Russian, Ukrainian, Korean, Uzbek and others. We reach about 40 families.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Galina Sapozhnikova, [gpsapozhnikova@online.srack.net](mailto:gpsapozhnikova@online.srack.net)

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Our activities focus on the reconstruction of children's play-grounds, and on conducting seminars about our problems that include arts-trainings together with the Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum (ICIWF). We have organised a festival for children and sport-and ecological competitions.

Parents in our groups highlight that they would all want to give their children more time.

We have found out that mothers do not know how to make their children happy and healthy.

Parents want to share their experience and get new knowledge about raising children. They also think that schools and kindergartens should organize different activities and festivals for children.

Social policy of the city must provide opportunities for parents to work in their own city. Also young parents must be provided with good places to live.

We operate with very few funds from the Information Center of the Independent Women's Forum, the library of Pushchino, the Young Center and the Children's Center of Pushchino and some support from local businesses. Almost all our work is voluntary work.







## National Reports **Slovakia**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Union of Mother Centres of Slovakia, Bratislava**

There are more than 86 Mother Centres all around Slovakia – 64 are members of the Union and 22 are on the waiting list to become members soon. Our MCs are very diverse; it depends mostly on region where they are. Generally speaking, the most often active participants are mothers on maternity leave with their small children. Programmes and activities in the centres are open to all – regardless age, sex, religion, income etc. Many fathers and grand parents have started to participate in the last years. What we have in common is children.

The Mother Centers reach an average of 100 families around each centre, that means around 4000 people around each MC. Altogether within the Union we reach more than 300 000 people.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Elena Bakosova, elena@materskecentra.sk

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The mission of Mothers Centres' Union is to increase appreciation and honour for motherhood in the society and co-create supportive conditions for motherhood in order to advocate the highest interest of a child. The mission is fulfilled by implementing various projects through our member Mother Centers.

Our activities include:

- Spreading of the Mother Center concept. At the local level helping to create a friendly environment for mothers and children; at national level through joint campaigns and activities
- Keeping in touch with our members; coordination of joint activities; providing trainings and counselling services for Mother Centers; helping and supporting beginning centers
- Communication with state, private sector, NGOs, and media representatives in Slovakia and abroad
- Protection of rights and improving the situation of all mothers and children, fighting against discrimination of mothers and children
- Consultation, lobbying, publishing, information and educational activities and events for the public

Our funding is based on projects. Currently we are working on more than 10 projects which bring money for our work and activities. We have had core support by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Our Mother Centers are led mainly by grassroots women, who have been professionalising through their work in the Mother Centers. The Union itself has full paid staff: two coordinators, one for the network, another for PR activities, four regional coordinators on part time basis and an accountant. Our Board of Directors has executive functions and is rewarded for their work too. In a year we are going to change our organisational structure to separate decision making from the executive part of the work. All core people involved give their best – their time, energy, heart, soul. We feel the Union of Mother Centers like our child – therefore even with the paid staff there is very much voluntary work involved.

At national level we have come to a close cooperation with ZMOS (which is an umbrella organisation for municipalities), because the support from municipalities at the local level is crucial for Mother Centers. As the biggest women's organisation in Slovakia we are a partner of many NGOs. We have entered into cooperation with big private companies, who support our educational projects. At international level thanks to joint mine campaigns (Move the pram, move the world, How do we want to raise our children) we have been cooperating many groups.



## National Reports **Trinidad and Tobago**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: Creative Parenting for the New Era, Laventille**

We have 375 women and 30 men active in our groups and programs. The age ranges from primary school children to adults, 15% single, 75% are married or have common law, 10% are separated. The majority (70% have middle income), 20% are poor and 10% have income in the upper range. The ethnic background is predominantly African (80%) and Indian (20%). Our strategy is to reach families directly and through graduates of our programs who are gatekeepers in schools, churches and community organizations. Over the past five years we estimate to have reached 4 500 families.

**CONTACT PERSON: Joan E Bishop, cpne@wow.net**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Our group was founded to respond to the widespread concern of the breakdown in family life and its effects not only on children but on the community as a whole. A group of NGOs involved in parenting education initiated a search for a unified and systematic approach for dealing with the challenges of family life that impact negatively on the lives of children and youth. Their collaborative efforts extended to a conference on the theme "Exploring Tools and Skills for Innovative Parenting". Creative Parenting has been evolving, collecting and testing a body of tools on parenting from best practices both internationally and locally and has as a result built a curriculum that honors the wisdom present in every group of trainees.

We aim for the following changes in society:

- Purposeful parenting by self-aware parents.
- Enlightened parenting techniques sensitive to the needs and rights of children
- Responsible parenting
- Improved gender relationships and reduction of violence
- Healthy male/female communication
- Stable homes
- Stimulation of the development of family support systems and networks in keeping with the creative parenting philosophy
- Adoption of healthy lifestyles
- Creation of support for families and the development healthy community life
- Crime-free environment

Our activities include:

- Residential Train the Trainers Parenting Workshops for gatekeepers in NGOs, Government Ministries and community organizations
- Capacity building workshops for participating agencies
- Direct interventions with parents, using schools as entry to both urban and rural depressed communities
- Curriculum development
- National conferences
- Content analysis of newspapers on relevant issues



- Our funding source for the past five years is the J B Fernandes Memorial Trust<sup>1</sup>, who has negotiated matching funding on our behalf from the Ministry of Education. Our organization is run by professionals, 50% paid and 50% voluntary work.



## National Reports **Turkey**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: International Children's Center (ICC), Ankara**

The International Children's Center (ICC) was jointly established by the Government of France and UNICEF in 1949 in Paris. Fifty years later it was closed due to financial difficulties. With the efforts of Prof. Ihsan Dogramaci, in consultation with UN agencies and with the support of the Turkish Government the Center re-opened in 1999 on the premises of Bilkent University in Ankara. ICC concentrates on child rights, adolescent health (especially reproductive health), and disaster preparedness & management. With the campaign How do we want to raise our children we reached about 80 families.

**CONTACT PERSON:** Prof.Dr. Kadriye Yurdakök, [icc@icc.org.tr](mailto:icc@icc.org.tr)

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The goal of ICC is to promote the physical, mental and social well being of children and adolescents in the contexts of the family and the community and to foster women's health and reproductive health. By establishing branch offices and signing agreements of affiliation with similar minded centres in a number of other countries, ICC exchanges different views and experiences.

The Center:

- Conducts research to identify priorities for the improvement of the health and welfare of children, women and families everywhere
- Organizes international seminars, workshops and congresses in which participation from developing countries is specially encouraged
- Organizes projects and programs in education and health
- Establishes branches and collaborate with other organizations with similar objectives.

Our organisation is run mostly by professionals. We are funded from various sources, both governmental and non-governmental organizations, UN agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO).



# National Reports **Uganda**

## **NAME OF ORGANIZATION: Community Support for Capacity Development (CSCD), Kampala**

The organization includes 646 women, 592 men and 7100 children. The majority of members are married, they come from low income level households that depend on subsistence farming as a source of income. The majority are peasants, mainly with Bantu and Nilotic ethnic background. Approximately 2367 households are reached.

The Nutrition and Early Childhood Development Project (NECDP) of the Government of Uganda targeting infants, toddlers and pre-school children together with their care providers, had developed (holistic) programs for some few sub-counties (about 10% of Uganda's 1000 sub-counties). As a community based intervention, the project activities were suspended just as beneficiaries were getting to grips with it, leaving a lot of unfinished work. It's against this background that professionals who participated in implementing the NECDP wanted to replicate that which had been started in the few target districts, and also to help the communities that benefited from NECDP sustain the positive outcomes

**CONTACT PERSON:** Dr. Margaret Musoke Bukenya- Executive Director, [cscd\\_org@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cscd_org@yahoo.co.uk)

## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

Community Support for Capacity Development (CSCD) is an NGO founded to specifically address the needs of parents and other child care providers in an effort to strengthen their ability to care and support children and adolescents in the context of family, culture and community. Children especially those aged 0 to 17 years have their primary place of abode and care in their homes, families and communities. This is particularly true in rural areas where the majority of Ugandans live. Parents, siblings or other guardians/relatives from the extended family, the majority of whom lack adequate information and skills give childcare in rural Uganda. CSCD supports districts, sub counties and communities to manage and sustain programs that promote Early Childhood Development and give support to adolescents.

Lessons learned through our work and the How to raise our children campaign include:

- There is a lot of knowledge and skills at the grassroots on childcare issues that are not captured or documented. And since most of this knowledge is passed on orally from generation to generation some of it is lost
- There is need to ensure that parents play a more active role in pre-primary education centres
- Due to "modernization" most parents are not confident in regard to knowledge and skills on child upbringing
- There is a need for more parent support and education programs
- A community-based approach to Early Childhood development ensures collective and cost effective delivery of parent support programs to the parents
- The influence of the media on the character, morals and behaviour of children is very strong
- There is a need to narrow the gap between professionals and lay-persons in terms of knowledge and skills on Early Childhood Development
- Globalisation and cross-cultural influences have a very big influence on how the children are brought up.





Our sources of funding are: membership contributions, donations, and partners. The organization does not have core funding. Grassroots women and men through their management committees run the grassroots parental groups. However professionals run the secretariat at national level. Everybody is a volunteer. Early child development caregivers, management committee members are community volunteers. The staff at the secretariat are paid a subsistence allowance where appropriate to carry out the community support programs, capacity building and to provide technical support but are not paid a salary.



## National Reports **USA**

### **NAME OF ORGANISATION: National Association of Mothers' Centers, Inc., Levittown, NY**

The first Mother Center in the USA was founded in 1975 in Hicksville, NY. The National Association of Mothers' Centers was incorporated in 1995. At present we have approx. 1000 women participating in 35 Mothers' Centers and an alumni network of over 6000 women. Over the past 32 years hundreds of Mothers' Centers have existed but they have a finite life span due to the lack of financial support available to them in their communities. Overall our active members are married, white, middle class mothers between the ages of 25 and 40. We reach approximately 1,000 families through our Mothers' Center network. We reach additional families through our New Neighborhood program which brings parenting support groups to working parents in their workplace. We also reach many more women through our national advocacy initiative MOTHERS (Mothers Ought To Have Equal RightS).

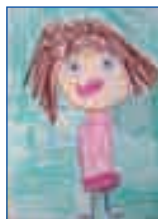
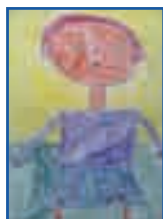
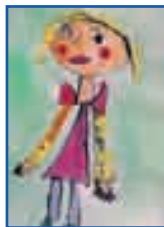
**CONTACT PERSON:** Linda Juergens, Executive Director, [LindaJ@MothersCenter.org](mailto:LindaJ@MothersCenter.org)

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The National Association of Mothers' Centers (NAMC) addresses the needs of mothers through a network of programs that offer information and support, break the isolation of motherhood, advance maternal health and well-being, recognize the importance of mothers to society, valuing both their paid & unpaid work, and become caring communities for mothers and families. We provide training and consultation to existing centers and those that are just getting started on topics such as non-hierarchy leadership and peer group facilitation skills. The interpersonal communication skills learned at a Mothers' Center are used by members to negotiate for themselves and their families and empower them to feel they can advocate more effectively in their communities and beyond. We partner with other organizations and professionals to provide information on parenting, normal child development and post-partum depression to our members.

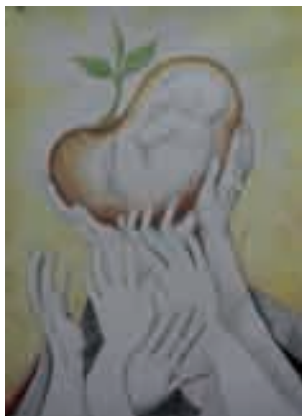
Our member Mothers' Centers throughout the U.S. are self sustaining, non-profit groups where mothers meet, engage in discussion groups, enjoy a respite from their child caretaking role (childcare is often available while the Mothers' participate in groups), and help keep their center going through cooperative responsibility. Many also offer informal playgroups, social events for families as well as structured nursery school or "mommy & me" programs.

- We advocate for a family friendly society, where there is “patience and time” for children and they are not “merely tolerated” but welcomed in public life and protected from harmful influences (media, marketing, environmental dangers).
- There is a growing movement in the US for child free spaces (housing developments, restaurants) Mothers’ Centers are vital community resources. They model what ‘child welcoming’ public spaces could look like. We also lobby for workplaces flexibility, work options that allow for care giving responsibilities for both mothers and fathers and for healthcare that is universally affordable, accessible and of high quality. The larger societal issues include – recognizing the role of mothers/caregivers as the earliest educators of children who need support, validation, accommodation; improved childcare and pre-school options in terms of quality, accessibility, and affordability
- We solicit private donations and grants. We also collect membership dues from our members. We receive no public or government support. We have several private foundations that have been core supporters but their funding is not guaranteed. We need to reapply form year to year. Staff at head office is paid, at the level of the centers most work is carried out on a voluntary basis including management and PR work.



## Impressions of the First International Mother Center Conference: „How do we want to raise our Children“

17 – 20 November 2006 in Bratislava, Slovak Republic.



**„It's unbelievable, we are really here. It has really happened.“** (Slovak organizer)

The conference was the end of a year long campaign. About **30.000** women, men and children from over 75 local groups, Mother Centers and Mother Center networks world-wide participated in a series of debates on the subject of ➔

### **Yes it really happened.**

End of last year an international group of 175 women from 20 countries all over the world came to Bratislava for the first international Mother Center Conference ever.

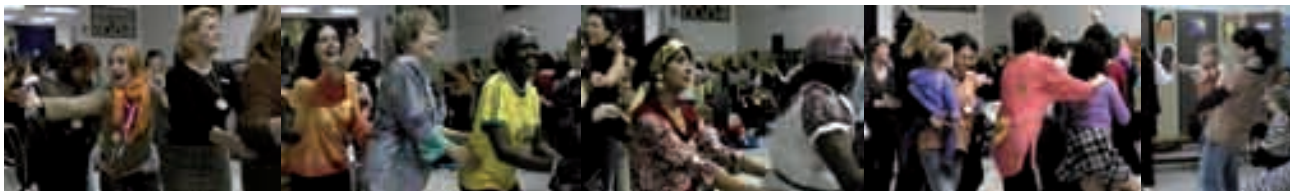
**It was the birth of a movement.** All went home inspired and enriched, full of new **plans dreams and ideas.**

Below are some of the first impressions, quotes and pictures. More will follow on the websites, so keep checking them.

## “How do we want to raise our Children”

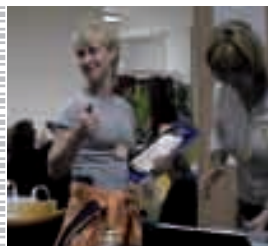
### **On the Campaign:**

“The subjects of the campaign were close to peoples hearts and minds. That made the participants in the dialogues come closer to one another and get more understanding for each other.” (Presentation of Dutch Mother Centers)



### **On the conference**

*“I have participated in many conferences but I have never been anywhere that combines both such spirit and an inspiring and connecting atmosphere with such rich content, covering the complete spectrum of motherhood”* (Participant from Trinidad and Tobago)



*“I find it easy to connect and exchange because we have communicated our view on how to raise our children and we have so many views in common”* (Participant from Bosnia)

*„Definitely the Conference is very informative and empowering.“* (Participant from Uganda)

*„Very creative Conference, full of positive and warm energy, what only mothers from Mother Centres are able to bring“.* (Participant from Slovakia)



*“In my Mother Center the mothers come together to raise our children, and here we do the same across borders and continents.”* (Italian participant)



*“My impression is very good, the atmosphere is really positive and so many things are coming up.”* (Representative of funder)

**„I am impressed of the diversity of cultures and opinions. And of the fact, that so many women from all around the world are here, in Slovakia, Bratislava, even maybe they have never heard anything about Bratislava.“**

(Organizer from Slovakia)



# Impressions of the First International Mother Center Conference: „How do we want to raise our Children“

17 – 20 November 2006 in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. Organized by the Union of Slovak Mother Centers UMC and **mine**

***“We are all on the same page, as I hear the others and I realize world wide we have the same issues.”***

**(Participant from Jamaica)**



*“I’ve seen a presentation I’ve never seen before. I say this because I could see that it was made from the heart.”*



*“What we learned in our work is that many parents operate out of fear and anger. The most powerful parent education is sharing”*

**(Participant from Trinidad)**

*It wasn’t artificial. We are interested in children –they are the center of the universe in the family. It’s important to make this the center of the public universe as well. **I am fascinated by Mother Centers because they are a connection between the private and the public realm.”***

**(Mayor of Bratislava)**



*“We are often asked in Mother Centers, where are the fathers?”*



*“Family life expertise is not validated in our educational system. Child rearing is regarded as something that only highly professional people can deal with. **This needs to be demystified.”***

**(Participant from Turkey)**



*Research shows that when a child has problems, the best outcomes come from working with other parties, either parents or teachers, not necessarily the child itself.”*

**(Panelist from Slovakia)**

*I can give an answer right here and now. They are at home, taking care of our children, so that we can participate in this conference!”*

**(Participant from Bulgaria)**



*“The freedom of expressing emotions is definitely incredible here. I have never been on such a conference with openness and freedom of laughing, singing and emotions.”*

**(Conference facilitator)**



*I was surprised by the fact, that women from different countries wanted to follow exactly what I want.”*

**(Slovak organizer)**

*“It is useful to see how mothers in different countries are able to share the experiences of dealing with children, even they are from different parts of the world.”*

**(Participant from Uganda)**



## On raising children

*“From the campaign we have learned that families need more acknowledgment in society. Families should be looked upon more highly.*

*Child rearing work should be revalorized. Our children are our future, support their families!”*

**(Presentation of Italian Mother Centers)**



*“During communist times the state had the responsibility of raising the children. That has changed now, but the institutions have not changed yet. After the uniformity of the communist times, meeting with such diversity is a value in itself. Meetings such as this one show new perspectives for your own place.”*

**(Participant from Poland)**



- More info can be found on the websites of the organisers of the conference: •
- [www.materskecentra.sk](http://www.materskecentra.sk) •
- [www.mine.cc](http://www.mine.cc) •

**Mothers Centers International  
Network for Empowerment**



# Impressions of the First International Mother Center Conference: „How do we want to raise our Children“

17 – 20 November 2006 in Bratislava, Slovak Republic. Organized by the Union of Slovak Mother Centers UMC and mine

*Children are being taken out of homes by social services in what they call risk families. In the Mother Center the moms will take care of children of another mom who are going through a hard time with drugs or alcohol. Children are between worlds when raised in non-aboriginal homes. Indigenous populations have a “village” model for caring for children. The social service model is hostile to that. It is a racist notion that aboriginal families are not as capable of raising a child.”*

(Participant from Aboriginal Mother Center, Canada)



## On Mother Centers

**“Mother Centers are pioneers They are paving the way for caring communities.”**

(Participant from Germany)

*“In the Mother Centers children find new toys and they also learn how to share them.”*

(Presentation of Slovak Mother Centers)

**“The three generation model has broken down, but now the Mother Centers fill the gap. Mother Centers are like a big family for the mother and the child”**

(Participant from Italy)



Lenka basically feels at home in all Mother Centers.

*“Everybody knows what a kindergarten is. Our goal is that everybody also knows what a Mother Center is.”*

(Participant from the Czech Republic)



**“Mother Centers are often ahead of their time”.**

(Mother Center presentation, Germany)



*“Women coming together is vital. Physical space is strategic.*

**There should be a Mother Center in every community.”**

(Participant from USA)



*“The biggest strength of the Mother Centers is that they have created an accelerated movement of women who are committed to **raising the future generation**”*

(Slovak Participant)



*“People need to feel that they belong, that if they are not there, they will be missed. Mother Centers seem to be that kind of place for women and children.”*

(Panelist from Slovakia)



**“Mother Centers are like sun and rain and together they result in growth”**

(Participant from Guatemala)

*“Mother Centers are a unique prevention tool against social pathology.”*

(Panelist from Poland)



## On Motherhood

*“Parenthood is like a road into the unknown which still we should follow.”*

(Slovak participants)



**“Motherhood is not just something private, but it is something that is public.”**

(Ms. Radicova, former Minister of Family and Social Affairs, Slovakia)

*"The first teacher of compassion towards me was my mother, my mother took fullest care of me and I survived from my mother's milk. This old body still feels the impact of that care and affection today. Some forget this and that is a mistake."*

(The Dalai Lama)



*"The attention paid to children is an indicator for the civilization and progress of society"*  
(Slovak Participant)

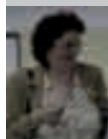


*"In our country there is much racism, the only language to use is Spanish, it is compulsory from the first day in school where the only white person is the teacher. In our Mother Center we want to use the local languages and keep the culture of the people. That way the children see their mother as a person who can teach something"*

Presentation of  
Mother Center  
Guatemala



***"Beautiful, interesting, clever women met here".***



(Slovak organizer)



### On the Mother Centers movement



*"There is so much connecting us. We are moving out of isolation, we are strengthening our self esteem, we are moving into development and creating employment, we are building new partnerships. Because of this international movement, we feel stronger."*  
(Participant from Argentina)



***"Don't worry, be active!"***

(Slogan from the Association of Czech Mother Centers)

***"Mother Centers are the drops that move the ocean"***

(Participant from Slovakia)



### New Mother Center initiatives

*"I am going to mix a (non-alcoholic) cocktail of all the solutions I hear here and take it home."*

(Participant from Argentina)



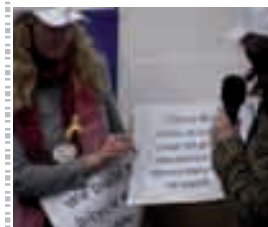
*"We do not have a Mother Center yet, but we used the campaign questionnaires as a tool for organizing and starting discussions. Mother Centers would be a great contribution to spreading a culture of peace. The situation in Burundi is very unstable, people have been violated and hurt by armed groups. Hygienic conditions are very bad and we try to help them with just the most basic necessities for survival. Our intention is to support them to have their own Mother Center as a base for security and survival. Now when the women go to the market to sell things they lock up their kids at home and they are in constant fear that the kids are raped in their absence. It would be wonderful if there is a place where the children are safe and can learn something and where the*



*women can find support and trust."*  
(Presentation of Mother Center Initiative, Burundi)

*"Mother Centers are a new concept for our country; I think it will work very well. The groups in the rural areas would be able to find space to make a Mother Center and there is definitely a need for it; the women who do not have jobs do barely come out of the house now. I think my work in health and education will be easier too, when there are Mother Centers."*  
(Participant from Guatemala)

***"The word mine means mother in my language. I feel pregnant with the soon to be born Mother Center in my home town of Kisumu. It will be born as soon as I get back home."***  
(Participant from Kenya)



*"I was deeply impressed by the stories of the African women and I will remember my happy life daily"*  
(Slovak Participant)



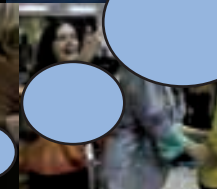
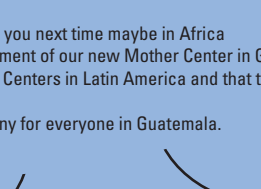
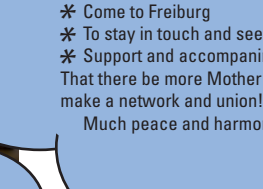
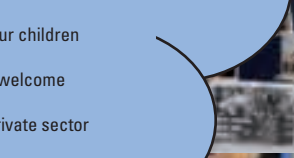
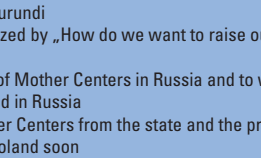
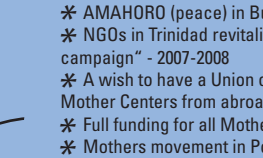
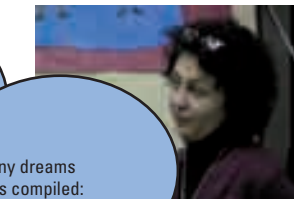
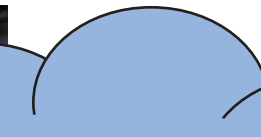
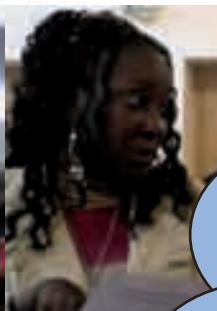
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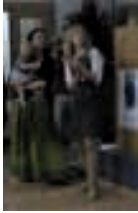
\* Participants of the conference were asked to write down any dreams they had of what could be done together. The following list was compiled:

- \* A conference in 2 years in Bulgaria
- \* A conference in 4 years in Argentina
- \* A Caribbean network of Mother Centers and conference by 2010
- \* Recognition of Mother Centers as a peace promoting entity by the UN
- \* Exchange visits to Uganda next year
- \* AMAHORO (peace) in Burundi
- \* NGOs in Trinidad revitalized by „How do we want to raise our children campaign“ - 2007-2008
- \* A wish to have a Union of Mother Centers in Russia and to welcome Mother Centers from abroad in Russia
- \* Full funding for all Mother Centers from the state and the private sector
- \* Mothers movement in Poland soon
- \* Come to Freiburg
- \* To stay in touch and see you next time maybe in Africa
- \* Support and accompaniment of our new Mother Center in Guatemala.

That there be more Mother Centers in Latin America and that they also make a network and union!

Much peace and harmony for everyone in Guatemala.

## Why not have a special celebration of Mother's Day?



Dear Friends,

Thanks for the opportunity to meet some of you at our conference "How do we want to raise our children" in Bratislava.

At one of the workshops, focusing on possible joint work in the future, we came to an interesting idea: to have a world wide celebration of Mother's Day.

Actually, something similar we had this year on May 13th in 7 countries – only in Europe.

It was a simultaneous attempt to set up a new Guinness World Record in a category: Pram pushing – mass participation; simply the most number of people pushing their prams within one mile and one hour. The whole event under the name: **"Move the pram, move the world"** was successful - altogether we had more than 2 thousand prams with big media coverage and an excellent public response. Yes, the GWR was a good tool how to promote parenting issues. However, if we would like to include mothers all

around the world, we do have to forget about prams and look for more universal symbols of parenthood.

The idea to do something together is definitely more important than setting up any new records. We never forget the feeling of being as a part of a big movement from our May event. It was thrilling.

Thus we would like to invite you to join an idea from Bratislava's workshop – to have a joint celebration of Mother's Day - to **march a mile for mothers**, or for Mother Centers. To be able to join also far away countries, e.g. Canada, Jamaica, Argentina etc. we suggest to have it as something as "a relay race", when we will be doing that at the same time in different countries – let's say at **4.p.m. on Saturday, May, 12th** – just an evening before the Mother's Day in 2007. **Because of time zones, we can symbolically run/march around the whole Earth.**

We would like to know your opinion about that – yes, it is not much time to organize such a huge movement, but why not to try at least? When we forget about Guinness, we can have rules as we will create – very easy – people will walk a mile with children either in a pram, in arms,

in baby- scarves etc.; any way it is good for participants. Each participant can sign at the start just for registration. The whole event will last one hour at each place.

There are still a lot of questions and tasks – we do have to have a slogan, a logo and the **"higher idea"** – why we are going to do it. This we can never solve without you. Your ideas and experience have to be heard. Therefore let me invite you to join an e-mail discussion group, where we can create a whole background of the event.

If interested, don't hesitate to sign up at my e-mail address: elena@materskecentra.sk.

Looking forward very much for all your contributions! Everyone is welcomed! I hope that we will make a plan together.

**Because: "If we want to move the world, we have to move our minds first"** ☺

Elena Bakosova,  
Union of Mother Centers, Slovakia  
member of a preparation team  
elena@materskecentra.sk





Translation  
Municipal Council of the city of Freiburg  
Department III  
Rathausplatz 2-4  
D – 79098 Freiburg i.Br.  
Germany

16.11.2006

Word of Greeting to the International Conference of Mother Centers „How do we want to raise our children?“  
in Bratislava 17-20 November 2006-11-28

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that as representative of the municipality of Freiburg I can send you these words of greetings to your International Mother Center conference.

2006 has been a very eventful year for the Mother Centers in Freiburg, Germany. I like to look back at the action day “Move the pram – move the world – we walk a mile for children and families” on May 13th in our city. Without the 4 Mother Centers of our city we would not have been able to mobilise so many families in Freiburg to take part in the Guinness record in pram moving action. Many thanks to the four Freiburg Mother Centers for this.

We in Freiburg like in the other 24 cities that participated in this action wanted to take the opportunity to call attention to the role and situation of families in our society and we did this successfully.

The Mother Center action day on may 13th was a prelude to the campaign “How do we want to raise our children”. I would like to thank the Mother Center “Klara” for actively taking part in the dialogues of this campaign.

The four Mother Centers in our city achieve a great deal for families in Freiburg. They not only improve the quality of life in their neighbourhoods through their innovative and attractive programs and services that target the needs of families, they

also are a valuable contribution to the welfare of the city of Freiburg. The many awards that the Mother Centers have received give evidence of this:

- 1998: Accredited as “Best Practice” by UN Habitat for the improvement of the living conditions of families and for strengthening the capacity of civil society to revitalise local neighbourhoods and revive community life.
- 2004 the Mother Centers received the award of the Fritz-Munder-Foundation for their dedication to create family friendly conditions for contemporary families.

These awards show that also with the campaign “How do we want to raise our children” Mother Centers are expressing current needs of families and creating contemporary political debates about how to shape society in a children and family friendly way.

Through the active participation of the Mother Centers the main concerns of families, their daily conditions, their experiences, their wishes and values, their views on gender roles as well as on the kinds of societal support that families need are voiced and documented, as well as corresponding suggestions for new services and programs for families. This is a way to support parents in their parental capacities in a time, when goals and values are becoming increasingly significant. Mother Centers increase the quality of life for children and families.

In my function as the social mayor of the municipality of Freiburg, Germany, the support of the work of our Mother Centers is of special concern to me, because they are such a valuable contribution to making our city children and family friendly.

I wish you inspiring presentations and insightful discussions and a good success of the conference.

With kind regards

Ulrich von Kirchbach  
Mayor for Culture, Youth, Social Affairs and Integration  
Municipality of Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany



EUROPEAN  
MOTHER CENTER

**mine**  
MOTHERS' INITIATIVES NETWORK  
Network for Empowerment

## Mother Center Conference *How do we want to raise our Children?*

We, the political leaders at municipal and national level of Slovakia, have participated at the Mother Center conference *How do we want to raise our children?*

We recognise the important role that Mother Centers play, providing essential resources and support for families in our communities.

Mother Centers are a place where values are put into practice.

Therefore our government and municipalities support mother centers in these ways:

- We recognise the Mother Centers as places of enrichment where children develop in a supportive family-like environment, while the parents grow as well.
- We offer public space when possible and commit to helping Mother Centers to secure their own space elsewhere.
- We recently started to include Mother Centers in policy planning expecting that this will result in more family friendly communities.
- We have recognised the Mother Centers as the expert partners of the local governments.

Because we recognise the value of having Mother Centers in our communities we welcome authorities from other countries to support them too.

Andrej Dankovský

Jana Partlová

Vera Hanuláková

Mayor of Bratislava

Slovak Union of  
Towns and Villages

Slovak Ministry of Labour,  
Social affairs and Family

• MATERNAL CENTERS INTERNATIONAL: WEBSITE FOR EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES  
• DESK OF MOTHER CENTERS • 2010: 0042-6662 0000 • Bratislava • 010 00 000000  
• T: (42) 00422 2 244 279 00 • [www.mothercenters.sk](http://www.mothercenters.sk) • [www.mine.sk](http://www.mine.sk)

## Agreement on cooperation

between

### Association of Municipalities of Slovak Towns and Villages /ZMOS/

Bezrucova 9

811 09 Bratislava

Slovakia

On behalf of chair Michal Sýkora

and

### Union of Mother Centres /UMC/

Baštova 5

811 03 Bratislava

Slovakia

On behalf of chair Eva Fiedlerova

## Article I.

**The goal** of this agreement is to provide and improve conditions for real support of motherhood in our society, cooperate in providing complex support to mothers according to legal, social and political laws within legal, material and economical conditions of towns and villages.

**The purpose** of the agreement is to create a background for Mother Centres through the support of material, human and financial resources for activities focused on social prevention, and providing services for women – mothers, small children and families with small children.

The agreement is signed for the purpose to achieve a closer cooperation between municipalities of towns and villages, members of the Association of Municipalities of Slovak Towns and Villages (ZMOS) and Mother Centres, members of the Union of Mother Centres, at the local level.

## Article II.

### Association of Municipalities of Slovak Towns and Villages will:

- influence their members to create material support for needs of Mother Centres within their capacities,
- influence local authorities to involve Mother Centres

as partners in preparation and implementation of plans of industrial and social development of cities and villages especially in social and cultural field,

- influence municipalities to create conditions for the support of establishment and existence of Mother Centres in the most effective way
- influence their members to support functioning of Mother Centres in the social field,
- advise their members to support population policy of towns and villages (e.g. contribution to increase of childbirth),
- ZMOS will be supporting inclusion of Mother Centres to the system of social services within the framework of a new law in social services

## Article III.

### Union of Mother Centres will:

- cooperate closer through their members with ZMOS member towns and villages,
- motivate members of Mother Centres to delegate their representatives to professional commissions of municipalities for the purpose of participation on issues of public management,
- provide participation in organising cultural and social events in ZMOS member towns and villages through individual Mother Centres,
- create conditions for mutual cooperation on projects in social and educational areas.

## Article IV.

- any changes, adjustments, and termination of the agreement can be made only by written form with the approval of both agreement parties,
- the agreement is signed for an indefinite period,
- the agreement is effective from the day of signing by representatives of agreement parties,
- the agreement is an open document and will be evaluated annually according to possibilities,
- the agreement is made in four originals, each of the agreement parties will receive two copies.


Bratislava, November 9th , 2006

**Eva Fiedlerová**

Union of Mother Centres chair

**Michal Sýkora**

ZMOS chair



**We** the women from twenty countries gathered at the 1st International Conference of Mother Centers International Network for Empowerment (mine) in Slovak Bratislava from 17th – 20th November 2006 in support of the efforts of the Ugandan Women's Coalition for Peace

**Drawing from** our experiences as responsible mothers engaged in a year long campaign at local levels from Twenty Five Countries representing voices from Argentina, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Burundi, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, Italy, Jamaica, Kenya, Poland, Russia, Slovak Republic, The Netherlands, Trinidad & Tobago, Turkey, Uganda and the United States of America, representing over 45.000 families

**In recognition and appreciation of** the efforts of the Uganda Women's Coalition for Peace and the concerns raised by the said Coalition especially the unique and important role women play in peaceful resolution of conflict right from the family and micro level

**Recognizing** the role of the Government of Southern Sudan in the on-going peace process in Juba between the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lords Resistance Army

**Aware** that the on-going peace negotiations have not included women as equals at the negotiation table to address fully gender and family related issues that result because of wars

**In cognizance** of the fact that the 20 year war has had disproportionate effects on communities in the Greater North, especially the Northern parts of Uganda the most affected being women and children

**Add our voices to that of the Uganda Women's Coalition for Peace** by calling upon the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lords Resistance Army to be committed to finding a peaceful solution to resolving the 20 year conflict

**Support the Women's Coalition for Peace in their request to the Chief Mediator** to include women on the negotiation table and encourage both the Government of the Republic of Uganda and the Lords Resistance Army to ensure women's participation at all levels in the Juba Peace Process not only to confirm Security Council Resolution (SCR) but more to raise the voices of mothers on the Juba Peace Process.

**As mothers together with our sisters in Uganda we request the Lords Resistance Army** to unconditionally release children in their captivity into the safe custody of UNICEF and for the Government of Uganda to facilitate and provide help where necessary

**Support the Women's Coalition for Peace in their request to the Government of Uganda** to work at developing programmes that promote positive relations as a way of promoting peace in society

Signed in Bratislava

Mine  
Union of Slovak Mother Centers

Bratislava, Slovakia November 17-20, 2006



## *From the Diary of a Volunteer*

*The Mother Centers International Conference*

*“How do we want to raise our children”?*

*Bratislava, November 2006,*

*I think, there is no need to introduce the importance of love in ones life. It does not matter if you are a child, adult or 75 years old, man or woman. As a child you really need to be loved. If you're not, it can lead to huge problems. I took part in the first international conference of Mothers Centers from all over the world, which gave me the chance to get to know something pretty superb. That Mother Centers are the place where every mother with her child can find love, and which provides families with new inspirations, opportunities, and also something quite rare nowadays - real interest.*

*At first, I was confused a little. (I was a volunteer, so I wasn't supposed to look confused at all. I was to be a calm, smiling, helping person. So that's why I was so stressed out :) But then I looked around: everybody was so nice, helping and smiling to each other. (Hey! I thought this was my job!). Harmony, informality, a sort of cosy atmosphere was in the air. And I am really pleased to tell you this wasn't one of those „speaking-about-you-without-you-meeting“ events. All of the people here knew very well what they were talking about. It was quite an experience. This is how I experienced the event:*

*After the official part (speeches...) everybody was divided into groups, each group consisted of about 30 people. In each group there were us-the note takers. I can tell you it was then when I started enjoying myself and stopped being stressed out. Me and my friends - Nika and Natalia - found ourselves all of a sudden in the group with Joan, Barbra and Esme from Trinidad taking the lead. I must say they were really kind, and very patient when I consider the amount of questions we had been asking them constantly, and didn't understand at first so they had to say it again (and again and again).*

*We sat in a circle-it was a symbol of unity, that we had something in common, the same goals (despite the many different nationalities). The main theme was: Visions and values of parenting in contemporary society. At first, as we didn't know each other, they started with „getting-to-know- each-other“ games. It exactly meant that you had to speak at least to 5 strangers. Maybe we note-takers weren't supposed to join, but we did. I was quite surprised to find out there is no Mother Center in Jamaica (yet), although there are a lot of single moms, and as surprised to find out there aren't any Mother Centers in Istanbul either, yet there are special centers for mothers and children.*

*By the time we had finished the introduction round you could notice that a flipchart had been placed on the wall. It said:*

- 1 Context (the circumstances)
- 2 Values (visions/ideals)
- 3 Goals (challenges which parents experience)
- 4 Viewpoints (beliefs, feelings)
- 5 Environment (in which parenting is carried out)

Then everybody was given coloured sticking papers and wrote down something according to each theme. This, actually, made the wall, with orange, pink, yellow, green sticking papers on it look like a parrot. Then we were divided again into even smaller groups of 5-6 people. Our task was now to make our own flipchart. Each group was assigned one of the above themes. Our group was on the context and circumstances parents face in their parenting task. We sorted papers by headings: Drugs, Media, Lack of public support for parents... It was interesting and surprising to see that despite the different backgrounds the participants came from there are many issues parents have in common. By the time the groups were preparing their report of their work (we only had 45 minutes for it) the very active Trinidadians were making another flipchart on the wall. The new one said: commonalities versus cultural differences on it. And a common discussion started.

Because it has been a while now, I can't exactly say who said what, but I do know it made an impression then. It was so interesting to follow the groups: some members were sitting on chairs, some of them on the floor all over the room trying to express themselves mostly with their whole body. Body-language as form of communication happened there. And it was worth it because it worked. All of them were enjoying doing it, enjoying cooperation; it didn't seem like a task at all. You could notice a lot of creative persons. And this is my favourite quote of the meeting, which was said by the Trinidadian ladies:

"Everyone in this room is important. You are representing your country. By the end of the day all of you have imprinted your fingers and your voices into these reports."

Ladies and gentlemen I think they have succeeded.

Zuzana Bartova, 17 years,  
a student of Grammar school,  
Grooslingova street, Bratislava





## The Conference Anthem

### The colours

Summer is on my back  
Everyone is so **black**  
Anny's face seems too **green**  
because she is angry

Mary loves chocolate lies  
because of two **brown** eyes  
Peter has **yellow** skin  
**black**, **blue**, **red**, **white**, **pink**, **green**

The people are different  
what to say at the end  
We've got beautiful skin  
do you know what I mean?

**red** and **blue**, grey and **brown**,  
**yellow**, **pink** **black** and **white**,  
silver, gold, **violet**

