

# **FICE PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE VISIT AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE »CHILD AND YOUTH CARE IN A DEVELOPING WORLD- GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE«**

**Kisumu, Kenya, 25<sup>th</sup> March - 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2017**

FICE (International Federation of Educative Communities) International Federal Council (FC) and the Conference »Child and Youth Care in a Developing World – Global Perspective«, organised by FICE Kenya and supported by FICE International and FICE Austria, took place on March 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017 in Kisumu, Kenya. In-attendance there were professionals from: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Croatia, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya, Scotland, Serbia, South Africa and Zambia, representing 46 organisations.

Beside these two major events, FICE Kenya, offered participants an interesting additional professional, cultural and touristic programme. International activities started with a professional exchange which included visits to various local organisations. Participants joined the host organisations in their day to day activities, shared experiences and learned from various models. Night accommodation was provided by fellow colleagues in their homes. This part of the Kenyan experience was particularly interesting

as an opportunity to see programmes and activities in the field of child care. One of the projects that participants visited was »Safe Park« for children out of the Kisumu area organised by »Make me smile International« organisation. »Safe Park« is a place where children meet and spend the day in structured activities (workshops, games and debates). Children are taken off the streets and placed in a safe environment, ensuring food and volunteers to spend the day in a child friendly environment. »Safe Park« is a secure and supervised place for orphans and vulnerable children, where they can enjoy their childhood. The approach of the »Safe-Park-Programme« is based on theories of child and youth welfare and practical experience. Children are given the opportunity to open up, share their challenges, interact with each other and explore their talents and aspirations. »Safe Park«s are intended to increase the involvement of family and community participation (<http://makemesmile-kenya.org>).

Some of the participants had the opportunity to learn more about »Orongo Widows and Orphans programme« run by Mama Florence. Widows and families in Orongo currently take care of 46 orphans and vulnerable children. The mission of this programme is to eradicate all forms of vulnerability among orphans and other disadvantaged children and their households. The main activities of the »Orongo programme« are: health promotion (promoting hygiene and prevention of diseases), education (supporting orphans and poor children through school, helping victims of forced and early marriages to go back to school, training of vulnerable girls to make and use their own sanitary towels so that they remain in school and avoid embarrassment), promotion of the sustainable use of the environment, income generating activities (e.g. training on mushroom production for sale and consumption, different crafts).

Accommodation in volunteers' family houses or organisation facilities gave the participants an opportunity to experience local customs, eat local food and stay in the local environment together with colleagues from Kenya.

As a part of the professional exchange there were also workshops held by FICE International professionals and by local experts. Dr Jennifer Brooker from Australia held workshops »Job vs Career and Mentoring Workshop - Make Me Smile Kenya«. Gitta Griffioen and Hanne Peerenboon from the Netherlands held a workshop entitled »Prevention of sexual abuse in residential youth care«. Workshops gathered together 167 participants.

The next activity in the programme was the FICE »International Federal Council and International Executive Committee Meeting« where the review of the previous period was conducted as well as plans and announcements for the next period. Main activities for the next period are: creating an International Centre for Excellence in Child and Youth Care, reviewing and, if necessary, updating the existing

Code of Ethics of FICE International (set up in 1997), reviewing and updating the Quality4Children Standards. The most important part for Croatia was the acceptance of FICE Croatia (<http://fice.hr/>) into an associate membership together with FICE Bangladesh, FICE Denmark and SOS-Children's villages International. Next year is the year of celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FICE International and 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of FICE Europe which will be celebrated at the events in Trogen, Switzerland and Eztergom, Hungary. The international conference »Child and Youth Care in a Developing World – Global Perspective« included invited presentations from international experts as well as local presenters who provided in-depth understanding of national child care policies and practices. This event was important as an opportunity for mutual learning and networking for future joint projects. At the first panel about »General Global Perspective on Child and Youth Care«, speakers were Jennifer Davidson (»Centre for Excellence for Looked after Children In Scotland«, CELCIS), Matilde Luna (RELAF »Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar« [Latin American Foster Care Network]), Argentina), Tuhinul Islam (University of Edinburgh, Scotland) and Jennifer Brooker (FICE, Australia). Presentations included examples of good practices in child care and youth work.

Jennifer Davidson proposed ways to understand, assess and improve alternative care systems in developing and middle-income countries based on results of CELCIS research.

Matilde Luna presented the situation in alternative care in Latin America stressing the need to support families. Currently, about 240,000 children reside in orphanages, even while many of them do have a family that, with enough support, could provide them with the care they need.

Jennifer Brooker's presentation put focus on the discussion on how youth worker education and professional development pathways are vital for the health of a nation's youth.

Finally, Tuhinul Islam presented comparative research on »Residential Child and Youth Care in a Developing World«. He started from the definition of child and youth residential care which includes private boarding schools, madrasah and other religious learning centres which are expanding patterns of service, rarely faced with de-institutionalisation.

At the second panel presenters Robert Sihubwa, Donald Nghonyama and Hloniphile Ndhlovu shared the »African Perspective on Child and Youth care«. Robert Sihubwa put focus on the Post-Independence generation in contrast to the democratic dispensation generation as far as Child and Youth care is concerned. Hloniphile Ndhlovu gave an overview of a decade of research on the »Isibindi model« and Donald Nghonyama about Stewarding the development of the »Child and Youth Care Workforce in South Africa«. The following panel helped to deepen

understanding of the Kenyan Perspective on Child and Youth Care by interesting presentations and through a touching speech from Mama Florence Gundo about the »Orongo Widows and Orphans programme«.

The last panel started with a guest presentation about Croatian child and Youth care by Lucija Vejmelka from the University of Zagreb followed by the presentation of David Astiz Calatayud from FICE Spain about Realising children's rights through empowering parents and families. Lucija Vejmelka presented models of work with children and young people, examples of good practice as well as the actual process of de-institutionalisation of children's institutions in Croatia and David Astiz Calatayud put focus on the situation of children in risk of poverty in Spain and an example of prevention of their social exclusion through the programme of strengthening and support for their families.

The conference finished with a fruitful discussion and concluding remarks followed by a Cultural night dinner where participants had an opportunity to enjoy a mix of African traditional cuisine and Kenyan music.

Professional activities organised by FICE Kenya included study visits to local organisations and programmes. Participants could choose to visit Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programmes, Street Children Programmes, Residential Care Institutions, Community Based Care Models or Government Institutions for Children and had the opportunity to see the facilities and talk to employees about programmes and projects provided.

The beautiful Kenyan experience finished with a visit to the historic »Kit-Mikai Rocks and safari – Maasai Mara Game Reserve Tour« where participants met Maasai Mara tribes and saw and enjoyed one of the greatest wildernesses of the world with varied large mammals that are easy to be seen. FICE International organised an interesting, useful and significant event that contributed to mutual learning, sharing experiences and networking in finding new models and approaches to the child care system with the goal to raise the quality of child and youth care around the world.

**Prepared by: Lucija Vejmelka and Ljiljana Ban**