

**Speaker:** Mrs. Bep van Sloten

**Association:** BCN, the Netherlands

**Topic:** Foster care around the world.

- Every child should live in a supportive and caring environment. When this is impossible through family, the State must provide this with proper supervision/monitoring.
- Foster Care is helping parents to cope in a difficult period in their lives. It should deprived children return to their parental home.
- Foster care is about giving love, sharing love, making children feel loved.
- The preferred option for children is in a family.
  
- In Namibia foster care providers are now trained professionally; they now have a network of 15000 foster care givers.
  
- It is also essential to educate parents to be parents.

Research shows that children placed in children's homes are not better off. They miss a significant person whom they can attach to: bonding.

Inability to love affects all parts of development, also the ability to learn.

Being a good parent doesn't necessarily mean being a good foster parent; training is essential.

**A must**

Well-organized support systems

Legal registration.

Monitoring of kinship care.

**Foster care is looking for a heart with some space.**

**Speaker:** Ms. Matilde Luna

**Association:** Latin American Foster Care Network

**Topic:** The current situation of Foster Care in Latin America

Slide 1

**Foster care: its importance as a practice that guarantees the right to community- and family- based care.**

- Programs for children deprived of parental care
- Special protection Programs for families
- Basic, universal, social inclusion public policies

Slide 2

**Foster care: its importance as a practice that guarantees the right to community- and family- based care.**

- International adoption,
- National adoption
- Unconnected/outside family foster care
- Kinship care
  
- Children's nurseries, day-care centers, family strengthening programs, etc. Support for families in raising children.
  
- Schools, access to recreation, culture, health programs, health insurance, etc.

## Slide 3

**Necessary articulation to:**

- Give every child the best response.
- The best response is related to the evaluation of their best interest.
  
- Family
- state
- society

## Slide 4

**Some information on the LA context: institutionalization as the main obstacle for the implementation of the CRC.**

- Countries that start to measure it and consider it to be a form of violation of rights
- Countries that start to measure it and set a wide response
- Countries that show effective advances

E.g. Argentina Report “Deprived of Freedom”

E.g. Brazil “National Plan for the right to community- and family- based care”

E.g. Chile “SENAME report”

E.g. ARGENTINA: How many children are institutionalized? There are some references of quantitative researches and little qualitative information. For instance, the report “Deprived of freedom” of the Human Rights Secretariat and UNICEF shows that almost 20.000 children and adolescents are institutionalized and only 12 % of them because of penal reasons. This means that these children’s rights are being violated. The State recognized this, as well as the fact that to modify public policies first it is necessary to measure the quantity of children in institutions.

In Brazil, a research of IPEA in 2004 showed, that there are around 80.000 children in institutions. In Uruguay according to the statistics of the Child and Adolescent institute in 2008 there were 4637 children in “full time” alternative care.

Brazil: The sanction of the CRC made governments review these practices and their childhood public policies in order to adequate them to the lineaments of the rights integral protection. The document “National Plan of Promotion and Defense of the Right of children and adolescents to family and community living” is the outcome of the intersectorial participation articulated by the Brazilian government, and represents the public policy in this issue.

Argentina has started to act towards the same objective with its “National Lineaments as regards Children and Adolescents deprived of parental care”, approved in the Childhood and Adolescence Federal Council of the country.

CHILE has a palette of options for different situations of children without parental care and has sited up a protective system for children in the territory, which has made it possible to reduce the institutionalisation of children and their separation from their family of origin.

Children in institutions according to the quantity of children followed by

SENAME:

1990..... 62%

2005 ..... 26.3 %.

(Less than half of children after fifteen years)

Slide 5

**Current developments in foster care: some characteristics.**

- Change of old programs based on the patronage paradigm in accordance with the new lineaments of the Convention.
- NGOs and governmental programs: sometimes they are articulated but generally they are not.
- Processes of de-institutionalization were started. Foster care as a tool for de-internment.
- Foster care has started to be considered in legislations, plans, projects and programs on a solid basis: the Law of the City of Buenos Aires.

Slide 6

**Issues & pending challenges:**

- Value foster care in extended family and community.
- Recognize the need to review practices taking into account gender equality, cultural diversity and ethnic diversity.
- Recognize NGOs as part of public policy: replace the concept of “per capita”, payment for every institutionalized child, with the support for those who work to preserve community and family living.
- Set stable, sustainable through time frameworks of practices.

We propose these pending challenges because we know that current public policies are unstable and fragile

**Speaker:** Mrs. Diana Pearl Hendrickson-Fleming

**Association:** Consultant (HPS), Sint Maarten

**Topic:** The status on Foster Care and Child Protection in St. Maarten

Scope and objective of the assignment:

- Assess situation on Sint Maarten
- Assess in the light of other regional models

Foster care on Sint Maarten is not a new trend; it has been addressed by some in the past

General overview of the youth population

- 32,4% of population under age of 20
- High percentage of at risk children in schools

The process of addressing the issue starts at many different instances; not one specific organ

Placing:

- Foster home
- Foster parents
- Own homes

Foster care also involves preparing troubled families to take the child back

Primary stakeholders

Court of Guardianship

Foundation Judiciary Institutes Windward Islands

There are 2 children's homes in Sint Maarten

Population: Ages; 0 - 18

Emphasis is placed on foster parents; preference: to place the child in a family environment.

**Challenges involving the human resource aspect.**

Court of Guardianship: 2 social workers for all cases under heavy increase of cases

Foundation: 1 part-time social worker to deal with over 40 cases.

Dept. of Social Welfare: 3 social workers to deal with all

Youth Affairs: 2 senior policy advisers to deal all youth cases

Foster homes; problem not quantity but quality: personnel need to be trained.

**Conclusion:**

Lack of professional and skilled work force on all levels.

A lot is being done in an informal way but nothing is formalized.

There is no mandatory reporting of illegal practices/child abuse/exploitation

Inadequate social welfare system

No systematic compilation of statistics

**Recommendations**

Restructure and redesign entire social system

Create an effective Protective Environment

No more fragmented services

Collaboration across agencies

Improvement of efficiency en equitability of services

**Speaker:** Mrs. Virgien Berkenveld

**Association:** Stichting Pleeggezinnen Centrale Suriname (SPCS)

**Topic:** The status of child protection and foster care in Suriname.

Objective of the foundation: placing children in temporary homes.  
SPCS has placed over 150 children with foster families.

Foster parents are not paid: labor of love, personal sacrifice, investment in child. For this reason, among others, return to the biological family is made difficult.

### **Who are placed?**

- Children affected by:
- Parents on drugs
- Parents in prison
- Handicapped
- Sexual abused
- Trouble with the law.

Children placed are registered by miscellaneous instances; facilitated by Ministry of Justice.

### **Types of foster families**

- Families for weekends and holidays (one weekend every month)
- Crisis families: accommodate urgent cases: professional knowledge required.  
Limit 2 months
- Financial parents: accommodate children for financial reasons
- Donors:

### **Procedure of appointment:**

- 3 interviews with at least 3 staff members present
- Screening
- Evaluation of suitability
- Regulated via the Court of Guardianship (lengthy procedure)
- Visit with parents at least once a month

Formation of the children is provided and paid for by the Foundation:

- Painting
- Music
- Swimming

**Speaker:** Mrs. Melissa Wongsodikromo

**Association:** Suriname (government, Social Affairs and Housing)

**Topic:** The status of child protection and foster care in Suriname.

Main key actors in foster care and child protection

Ministry of Social affairs and Housing

Ministry of Justice

Bureau of Family and Law Affairs

Draft legislation on foster care is currently being reviewed by the Ministry of Justice of Justice and Police Affairs. Various other ministries are busy planning strategies in anticipation of the approved bill.

Supervision is carried out by: the Bureau of Family and Law Affairs

Protocol:

Foster parents must apply for a license

Must operate according to set standards:

Monitored by BFLA

Activities must be in line with the policies of the Ministry of Social Affairs

Subsidy and financing

There is a subsidy policy in place.

The Ministry loans out staff to the institutions

Foster parents receive a medical guarantee (doctor card)

Ongoing activities

Child protection policies are implemented to guide the foster families.

The community is continually informed on the policies and feedback is processed into decision-making process

**Speaker:** Mrs. Cecillia Ann John

**Association:** Action for Children in Grenada

**Topic:** The status of child protection and foster care in Grenada.

Poverty rate in Grenada approximately 32,1 %

Organization: Action for Children in Grenada; in existence for 24 years.

Aim: Support and protect children at risk.

Addresses issues dealing with children affected by:

- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Delinquency
- HIV-related children at risk

There is also cases of informal foster care in Grenada.

Process of application for foster care function

Visit the office (screening via specific questions)

Informal discussion

Application form (2 references) (state age and gender of child you would like to care for)

Screening: police record

Home visit by officers of bureau

Training provided to prospective care givers (Eric Erickson model)

Letter of approval is provided

Child identified: medical check, background check

Home visit while child is at the home (weekend stay)

4 weeks review after placement followed by 6 months review

Over the past 3 years, 69 children were placed, 4 adopted and 5 reunited with parents.

Program has been operating for 21 years: 340 children have gone through program, currently 66 in care: 11 boys, 55 girls.

Policy regarding age Foster Care givers

Foster care givers: 35 – 60 years, single as well as married females; single males not allowed to function as foster parent.

## **Challenges**

- Limited financial means: it is a test of human sacrifice
- Insufficient human resources
- Lack of professional therapeutic services
- Absence of after-care support services
- Reluctance to parent older children; (preferences: female children and very young males).
- There are standards but no legislation.
- Inadequate documentation of cases due to lack of human resource.

Protocol procedures  
(see list of procedures)

**It is better to build children than to repair adults.**

**Speaker:** Ms. Farida Carr

**Association:** Antigua and Bermuda

**Topic:** The status of child protection and foster care in Antigua and Bermuda.

It is important to have a macro level working in collaboration with a micro level for a properly functioning foster care system.

Foster care is entirely government-regulated

Government (Ministry) is totally responsible for child protection and foster care.

Objective: promote social and psychological welfare

### **Statistics**

17 staff members

2 counselors

Currently 88 children registered in foster homes

2 children homes

42% in kin foster care

54% female 46% male

### **Challenges**

Limited human and financial resources

Inadequate legislation/policy

Lack of effective monitoring

Return to biological parent home difficult

Difficulties placing handicapped/diseased children

### **Way forward**

Networking (regional network)

Collection of data

Develop prevention strategies

