

Conference

Speaker: Mrs. Caroline Bakker

Association: UNICEF

Topic: UN Convention of the Right of the Child Article 20.

Children without parental care.

Situation	Recommended approach	Agent
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation Article 20: Accommodation child temporarily/ permanently deprived of family environment • These children are entitled to special protection 	Foster Care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professional training - Registered by law - Should not prevent return to parents - Supervision competent authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The State has an obligation toward children deprived of family environment; ▪ Regulated by national Law.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular monitoring of care providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision refers to family not parents Hierarchy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Family relatives -Substitute family -Appropriate institution
Caribbean Numbers of children in institutions are very low	State parties should provide periodic report	State parties
There are concerns regarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Legislation -Insufficient mechanisms with regard to complaints -Lack of trained professionals - Regarding measuring the situation: it is difficult to get data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapt and implement UN Guidelines concerning appropriate use and conditions of Alternative Care for Children - Improve data collection, harmonization of indicators and measurement of children without parental care. 	

Speaker: Mrs. Maria Buncamper-Molanus

Association: Commissioner of Youth Affairs; Sint Maarten Government

Topic: Building a Foster Care Community: Children in foster care not just a responsibility of Government.

Government's position	Current situation	Regional
<p>The Foster Care Environment: Government's goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure stable care environment for children - Improve coordination - Department of Youth is actively engaged in preparations on Foster Care <p>The new constitutional structure for Country Sint Maarten will bring change to current structure.</p> <p>Ultimate goal: That the child in Foster Care find its way back into a home.</p>	<p>* There are 2 established Foster Homes on the island; * There is also a lack of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - professional training - proper facilities. <p>- In the current constitutional structure the responsibility for Foster Care is shared by the Central Government and the Islands Government</p> <p>The Competence on Foster Care is fragmented: Island – Central Government; there is no clarity with regard to who must take care of what and this leads to inefficiency.</p> <p>Needed: a clear division of tasks and coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently there is no island ordinance regarding Foster Care. <p>Need for formulation of island policy regarding financing and monitoring Foster Care providers. This requires preliminary research.</p>	<p>CARICOM and regional organs need to design a regional strategy to address Foster Care.</p>

Speaker: Ms. Collette Coombs

Association: Foster child of Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin

Topic: "You raise me up" The foster child's perspective of foster care.

Situation/Problem/Challenge

16 years old. 4 years in foster home: the Benjamin family. Living happily with other foster children in foster home with the Benjamins

Speaker: Mr. Benjamin

Association: Foster parent

Topic: "Another place at the table"

The foster parent's perspective of foster care.

The Benjamin household evolved naturally into foster care: children of friends consistently frequented the home. The parents felt comfortable with their children being in a safe environment. Word got around.

From Mr. Benjamin's perspective:

- The difficulties that foster children experience can be overwhelming from the foster parent's perspective.
- Anecdote recalling foster child who suddenly longed for her mother.

The table:

The large table acquired by Mrs. accommodated 7 children at one point.

Recommendations:

- Always treat foster children as your own; introduce them as ***your*** children.
- It is a rewarding experience; you will derive great satisfaction.

Speaker: Dr. Judith Arndell

Association: Psychologist

Topic: "The absent mother" The psychological and emotional consequences of childhood abandonment and neglect.

A Psychological Parent may be:

- Biological mother
- Adoptive mother
- Foster mother
- Care giver

A crucial factor in parenting is: bonding

The woman is often the main Psychological Parent (PP)

- The child feels secure, shares experiences with the PP
- The PP helps child control aggression, tolerate frustrations
- The PP establishes a healthy relationship with child.

Very often deviant behavior can be traced to an absent mother or the mother's inability to provide basic needs/care as well as the mother's lack of emotional involvement.

Quite often the mother herself had been neglected: vicious cycle.

Regardless of neglect, the child still longs for mother; this longing creates a deep-rooted void/aching which is the root of many problems, namely:

Abandonment trauma

Abandonment depression

Abandonment fears

- These problems are long-lasting: the emotional void can follow you into adulthood.
- This void/wound becomes the hub of the individual's behavior and is inductive to:

Suppressed psyche; insecurity; anger; indifference; insensitivity; emotional distance; psychiatric disorders.

Conditions:

Borderline personality disorder

Antisocial personality

Anxiety disorder

Drugs and addiction

Eating disorder

Schizoid

Dissociative disorder

Obsessive compulsive disorder

Reactive attachment disorder

Conditions (continued):

Mistrust
Hostility (as a defense mechanism)
Dominating, controlling personality traits
Mood swings
Alienation from friends, community, etc.
Blocked passion
Insecurity, feeling unwanted
Emotional numbness
Fear of rejection (need to please others)
Self-mutilation
Promiscuity: pornography (especially males)
Impulsive behavior
Difficulty with relationships (marital)
Low self-esteem
Co-dependency
Confusion
Inability to give and receive love
Sexual problems
Emotional helplessness
Emotional neediness (unusual attachment to others)

Treatment (recommendations)

- Therapy (encourage strongly)
- Focus on abandonment issues
- Provide corrective learning experiences
- Social worker and or psychologist trained in dealing with abandonment issues in school system

It is important to develop a sense of belonging in a child in foster care.

Speaker: Mrs. Myrna McNitt

Association: International Foster Care Organization (IFCO)

Topic: Who is minding the child – Who is minding the care giver?

Children in foster care should be seen as a treasure of the entire community. "Toanga": treasure/spiritual force

Child maltreatment

Neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse; the failure to provide adequate food and clothing; abandon, physical beating.

USA

- 700,000 children are in foster care
- Only 2% enter due to their own physical handicap.
- On average they spend 30 months in foster care
- Ages: 6 -15 years 50%
- 20,000 annually released due to adulthood (18).
They do better when a link is maintained with a trusted person from the care environment.
- Over 10,000 classified as runaway from Foster Care.
- Many are lured into prostitution each year: average age: 12

Sharp contrast with situation in Eastern Europe

Statistics in UK

- Estimated 200,000 grandparents function as foster care givers in UK
- There is dire need for Foster Care Centers
- Lack of professional training also a problem
- The use of kinship care has increased.

The main systemic problem in the UK and the USA is appropriate placement;

The main risk for children in Institutional Care include: their brains, emotions not developed

Recommendation:

Make use of:

- Research
- Case studies
 - Anecdote: of foster parents who murdered their foster child and were allowed to adopt another child before the truth came out.
This was due to negligence social workers: failure to comply with policies and communicate with professional team.
 - Anecdote: Case of malnutrition and physical abuse: Victoria.
Again, this was due to negligence/lack of intervention by competent authorities.

Safeguards: - Review recommendations Lord Laming and similar US acts as well as other safeguards.

Laws and policies alone will not protect children; it takes a whole community.

Comparison Windward Islands with US.

- Unemployment is higher in Windward Islands
- Children of undocumented parents estimated at 500

Set standards for appointing foster care givers

Good moral character

Evidence-based practice

Documents to support their integrity

Raising a child in a community is a community and cultural issue, not a private issue.

Solutions:

- Systemic training of social workers
- Provision of proper constraints
- Partnership: teamwork approach, respect for diversity, child-centered approach.

“If you cannot find the beloved community, create it”.

Speaker: Mrs. Bep van Sloten

Association: Better Care Network (BCN), the Netherlands

Topic: Measurement of indicators for children in formal care.

“Meten is weten”: Measuring enables you to decide on how to proceed.

State of affairs

- Data on children living in formal care worldwide is at its best incomplete.
- Available data not always comprehensive and varies qualitatively;

Lack of systematic and comparable data affects policy in many ways:

Effects:

- difficult for individual child care and government agencies to address childcare issues;
- monitoring of progress and state of affairs impeded
- difficult to identify the needs of children in formal care
- difficult to improve related systems and services
- impossible to assess regional and global trends/make comparisons between countries/identify common barriers.

Action taken:

Manual for the Measurement of Indicators for Children in Formal Care produced by UNICEF and BCN.

Objective: assist countries in designing a national information system to monitor child protection and well-being in formal care.

Content manual:

- 15 global indicators;
- practical guidance regarding data collection;
- a common measurement approach to monitor childcare practices better, improve policy and program development as well as facilitate comparison between countries.

(Detailed amplification in manual which has been distributed to participants)