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Welcome to the Defence for Children International (DCI) Newsletter

Foreword from the President of the Movement, Rifat Kassis

Dear friends,

First of all, happy new year! As seems to happen every year, I am amazed that 2010 has passed so quickly and that we are already moving forward into 2011. For DCI, of course, our work is off to a busy start, and I look forward to hearing about the plans and projects you're carrying out in your own sections.

There are many stories from the past few months that will be discussed in this newsletter. One of the major events I want to highlight, both from the perspective of the IEC and of DCI-Palestine, was the international DCI conference, "Protective Environment - Active Participation," held in Bethlehem, Palestine, in early November. The conference was preceded by the annual meeting of the IEC.

Both events were not only productive but also inspiring, especially in light of the struggles we face as an international movement. Some of these struggles are constant: the human rights field, and particularly that of children's rights and juvenile justice, is not an easy one, and we all know how much more work is left to be done. Some of these struggles are more recent: the global financial crisis heavily impacts our work, our resources, and the kind of economic support we can rely on.

But both the IEC meeting and the DCI conference served as reminders of the resources we do have: the participation, the commitment, the expertise, and the collaborations that exist within the DCI movement, all of which will surely

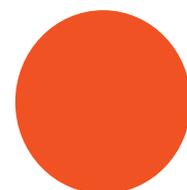
strengthen and grow.

I also want to share some exciting news on two events: this year, we in the DCI/IS organize two regional meetings: one for DCI sections on "*juvenile justice in Europe and the Middle East: present situation challenges and prospects*" and another for organizations in the Arab world to encourage their participation in the DCI movement.

In addition to reading more about the meeting and the conference in this newsletter - as well as about the arrival of our new communications officer with the IS, Robin Myers - you will also read articles on the state of children's rights in Nigeria; on child-sensitive counseling, complaint, and reporting mechanisms; on closing the protection gap for separated children in the European region; and on key methods of involvement practiced by DCI-Bolivia.

Best wishes to the whole movement for the new year!

Sincerely,
Rifat Kassis





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Robin (our new communications and media officer) introduces herself

Dear colleagues,
I'm happy for this chance to introduce myself to the DCI community - and I'm eager to be introduced to more of you!

I was born and raised in the US, although I spent several periods of time living in different parts of Latin America, particularly Mexico and Argentina. I attended university in the US as well, where I studied literature and Spanish. Since then, my goal has been to combine my love of writing with my interest in and commitment to the field of human rights.

As of January 2009, I've been living in Palestine, where I have worked as a communications assistant with DCI-Palestine Section. This opportunity has helped me to learn both about the state of children's rights in the Palestinian context and about the work, principles, and priorities of the DCI movement at the global level.

In November, I attended the annual meeting of the IEC, in addition to the DCI conference "Protective Environment - Active Participation" (both held in Bethlehem, Palestine), and was thrilled to meet the DCI sections represented there. Discussions held during the meeting re-

peatedly emphasized the need for communication not only on an external level - increasing publicity, news, and media from and about DCI initiatives - but also for communication within the movement itself. I hope to help with these matters in any way I can.

Please feel free to email me at communications@dcி-is.org.

I look forward to being in touch with you, and to working together in the shared struggle for children's rights.

Thanks and greetings,
Robin Myers



The IEC Meets in Palestine by Robin Myers

From November 7-9, three days before the DCI conference "Protective Environment - Active Participation," the International Executive Council (IEC) held its annual meeting in Bethlehem, Palestine. The gathering was truly productive and positive, allowing the IEC not only to share primary events, accomplishments, and concerns of the last year, but also to thoroughly and concretely discuss different visions for the future of the global movement.

The meeting was attended by the following IEC members: Rifat Kassis (DCI Pres-

ident and DCI-Palestine), Ileana Bello (DCI Executive Director at the IS), Benoit van Keirsbilck (DCI-Belgium and DCI Treasurer), Juan Pedro Fumeiro (DCI-Uruguay), Marcos Guillén (DCI-Argentina and Vice President for the Latin American region), Jean-Luc Rongé (DCI-France and Vice President of the European region), Laurencio Akohin (DCI-Togo), and Aisha Rahamatali (Advocacy Officer at the IS). Unfortunately, Abdul Manaff Kemokai (DCI-Sierra Leone and Vice President of the African region) was denied a visa and could not attend.

The IEC heard presentations by Rifat,



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The IEC meets in Palestine (continued from page 2)

Ileana, Benoit, and the regional vice presidents, all of which were followed by detailed discussions. Given the current economic challenges facing NGOs all over the world, many of these discussions focused on ways to expand and strengthen DCI's sources of funding while simultaneously improving the unity, sustainability, and quality of our work.

The movement, the IEC agreed, needs to know itself better from within, and there are many opportunities for strengthening it internally. Among them are: realizing more joint projects within regions (such as recent initiatives successfully undertaken within Latin America); reinforcing communication among the sections, as well as between the sections and the IS; rethinking more potential focuses and priorities within the broad field of juvenile justice; formulating a more consistent and coherent procedure for paying sectional fees; refining the "No Kids Behind Bars" campaign in conjunction with a targeted media and fundraising strategy; and improving the DCI website.

In other important news, the IEC continued strategizing for the upcoming International General Assembly (IGA) to be held in Uganda in 2011. It also provisionally approved two new DCI sections, Zimbabwe and Russia.

To conclude its session, the IEC held an informal meeting with the DCI sections attending the conference. In attendance were Fernando López (DCI-Ecuador), Ingrid Porras (DCI-Costa Rica), Khaled Quzmar (DCI-Palestine), Mahendranath Busgopaul (DCI-Mauritius), and the IEC members. The participants engaged in an open and positive conversation about their hopes for exchanging insights, concerns, inspirations, and experiences during the conference. Following the IEC meeting itself, which had repeatedly stressed the importance of direct communication between the sections and with the IS, this gathering was both an apt conclusion and a positive beginning.



A Success! Children's International Conference "Protective Environment – Active Participation" Held in Bethlehem, Palestine by Robin Myers

For two full days (10-11 November), the Shepherd's Hotel in Bethlehem, Palestine was full of conversation, activity, and energy: full of people devoted to the field of children's rights as they shared their experience, expertise, concerns, successes, and visions.

Hosted by DCI-Palestine Section (DCI-PS) the conference was attended by DCI sections from Latin America, Africa, and Europe, as by the International Secretariat; many partners, colleagues, and inter-

ested individuals from around the world were also present. Despite the wide range of subjects and contexts covered by the diverse talks and question-and-answer sessions, many themes recurred; perhaps most significantly was the theme of the child's right - fully realized and fully defended - to true participation.

As DCI-PS wrote in their program materials, this conference "stresses that it is possible for children to play an active role in solving [the problems they face] if the



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A success! children's International Conf. (continued from page 3)

community believes in their abilities and potential and finds space for children to express their concerns and change their reality. This change is thus brought about by a shift in the way the community views its children: not only as bearers of rights, but also as a group that is able to defend those rights.”

As a clear demonstration of this crucial philosophy, children played an important role in the conference itself: a child spoke in every panel, sharing his/her own experiences and analyses. Participating children also frequently spoke up with particular strength and eloquence during the discussions after the panels.

The conference's opening ceremony on 10 November included speeches by Zeina al-Nather, a child from Palestine; Mrs. Majida Al-Masri, the Palestinian Minister of Social Affairs; Prof. Yanghee Lee, Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child; Prof. Jaap E. Doek, former Chairperson of the same committee; Dr. Victor Batarsah, the mayor of Bethlehem; Mr. Rifat Kassis, the President of DCI's International Executive Council (IEC); and Ms. Randa Siniora, the President of DCI-PS's Board of Directors. A wonderful musical performance was also provided by Jadal Group, a band from Beit Sahour, Palestine.

The two days of the conference consisted of six panel discussions in total. Below are summaries of the papers presented by representatives of DCI sections.

Bolivia: Rose Marie Acha - Bolivia: Children and adolescents exercising their right to participation. This paper presents several case studies of innovative and successful initiatives in Bolivia, some driven by children themselves, that seek to achieve recognition of children's right to participation. Among them are the Acción Andina-Bolivia sports initiative to move children out social isolation and into more broadly connected spheres, as well as the Association of Youth for Change, an autonomous organization of indigenous children and adolescents 12 years old and up, half of which are women.

DCI-Palestine: Riad Arar - Child-led data collection: Another vision for participation and advocacy. This paper focus-

es on the role of children in the collection of information related to their daily lives, needs, priorities, and problems. The information comes from a practical experience within the joint project “Civil Society for Child Rights,” aiming at improving skills of children (14-17 years) in regularly collecting detailed data on the status and lives of children in five countries in the Middle East and North Africa. The participation of children in improving realities ultimately helps governments, institutions and NGOs to carry out advocacy campaigns and promote child protection to create a society fit for children.

DCI-Palestine: Hani Awwad - The role of youth institutions in protecting children and youth. This paper raises the issue of the role of youth organizations in the protection of children and youth from a cultural perspective and concludes that youth organizations must take into account the formation of a free public space in which debates are conducted without any monitoring or political/social controls. It argues that the empowerment of children and young people from the beginning of their lives, such as participation in clubs, trade unions, and student movements, is an important step for the formation of future leadership.

DCI-Palestine: Samah Brawesh (child) - Qurdoba School initiative: political violence and protection & participation measures. This paper describes the procedures followed to ensure a protective environment for the children of the Qurdoba School in Hebron, Palestine. The students in this school, mostly girls, live in dangerous environments (marked by military restrictions and threats from settlers) that negatively affect their participation as well as their daily lives and aspirations. The Qurdoba School initiative was realized by DCI-Palestine with the active participation of students from the school.

DCI-Mauritius: Mahendraneth Busgopaul - Teaching children's rights to marginalized children in rural areas in Mauritius. The author addresses the situation of marginalized children in Mauritius, as well as presenting DCI-Mauritius's work with these children: the programme cur-



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riculum, the process of recruitment and training, the benefits that children derive, obstacles faced by the programme, etc. The paper also addresses strategies for replicating DCI-Mauritius's successes and how to implement advocacy strategies for bringing child rights to rural regions.

REINTEGRA (DCI Associated Member, Mexico): Francisco Castellanos García - Animating processes of participation via play and the formation of competences: Rally for child participation. This paper explains the "rally for child participation," a strategy designed to develop children's analytical skills and their ability to reflect on matters affecting their lives. The concept goes further than just physical participation; it ultimately focuses on establishing relationships that enrich children's active presence in community processes.

DCI-Palestine: Anne-Marie Hearne - Settlements and settler violence: Challenges to creating a protective environment for Palestinian children. This paper relays research conducted by DCI-Palestine over a two-year period (March 2008 to July 2010) on 38 cases of settler violence directed at children. These incidents resulted in the injury or death of at least 45 children. The paper also details legal challenges to child protection under such circumstances: the Israeli authorities have consistently neglected to prevent settler attacks against Palestinians and to take adequate law enforcement measures against settlers who commit these crimes.

DCI-Palestine: Gerard Horton - Ill-treatment of children in the Israeli military court system. Since 1967, Palestinian children as young as 12 years have been prosecuted in Israeli military courts and imprisoned inside Israel. Reports of ill-treatment during arrest are commonplace, tactics that lead to the provision of confessions and convictions by military court in the overwhelming majority of cases. This paper gives an overview of the situation facing children in the Israeli military courts, and considers what place basic principles of juvenile justice have, and could possibly ever have, during a prolonged military occupation.

DCI-Netherlands: Nanneke Nix - Youth

participation in the Netherlands. This paper focuses on the concept of youth participation: a process by which youth express their opinions and those opinions are heard and acted upon. Youth participation in the Netherlands is reflected in care facilities, judicial systems, and policy-making, but it is advancing slowly and more improvements can be made. The author discusses priorities for youth participation in various contexts, and how this goal can be realized.

DCI-Palestine: Narmeen Odeh (child) - Palestinian child rights network initiative: Protection policies. This paper describes the assessments made of the protection policies paper that was developed by the Palestinian Network for Children's Rights (PNCR). Protection policies and procedures are being updated in Bethlehem with the participation of children from institutions that created protection teams. However, the paper discusses ways in which children's participation was insufficient, and given inadequate space to be implemented. Thus, the paper urges child participation in developing this initiative, which aims to deepen understanding and raise awareness among PNCR institutions.

DCI-Costa Rica: Ingrid Porras Jiménez - Art as an educational tool in exercising the active participation of children and adolescents. The author advocates for art (visual art, theater, music, dance, etc.) as an essential means of both learning and instruction, both activating communities of young people and activating their individual abilities to process information, narrate their experiences, and participate in their surroundings. The paper emphasizes this philosophy in the work of DCI-Costa Rica, enriching children's expressions of their rights and identities.

DCI-Palestine: Mona Salem - DCI-Palestine: Child protection network and its role in enhancing child protection environment and child participation. The author describes the formation and work of the Child Protection Network (CPN), a specialized body that protects children, which works in an integrated matter with various institutions concerned with legal and social issues related to children. Initiated by DCI-



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Palestine in collaboration with UNICEF and later handed over to the Ministry of Social Affairs, the CPN facilitates coordination and networking between institutions so that each plays its role and comes up with referral systems to serve the child's best interest.

The papers were varied, rigorous, and informative; discussions were lively, substantive, and respectful. It was both instructive and inspiring to participate in such a productive exchange of work experience and insight, and one taking place across so many contexts and continents. This kind of collaboration is what strengthens us all in our shared work for the protection and par-

ticipation of children, both within our own communities and around the world.

To read the papers in their entirety, please contact Ayed Abu Eqtaish (ayed@dci-pal.org) or Riad Arar (riad@dci-pal.org) from DCI-Palestine.



Expert Consultation: Child-Sensitive Counseling, Complaint and Reporting Mechanisms by Kate Bertino

On 30 September 2010, Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children; Naja Maala M'jid, Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights organized an expert consultation on effective and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms. The DCI IS attended and listened to a diverse panel of children's rights advocates, including ombudspersons for children from Mauritius, Greece and Ireland. The consultation will be used by Ms. Pais and Ms. M'jid to gather information for their joint report on the same topic. The goal of the report is to create a tool for governments and institutions that interact with children. This tool will give them the guidelines to create counseling and reporting mechanisms to which children can safely report incidents of violence, including sexual violence and exploitation.

The discussion brought up several problem areas that call for further focus before being addressed in the report. Among them was confidentiality between the reporting mechanism and the child. It is extremely important that children trust the person to whom they are reporting; otherwise they will not report abuse. Mechanisms must be available for all children, regardless of class, race or

gender, and must be made easily accessible to them. Young victims are less likely than adults to seek out institutions for help; thus, the complaint and counseling mechanisms need to seek out the child victims.

Two other important topics discussed were visibility and data collection. Information regarding these mechanisms must be available to the public: if adults and children do not know about them, they will not be utilized. In order for governments and children's rights advocates to help child victims, more data should be collected in the first place. Further, it must be transparent, so that all parties can use and learn from it.

The consultation involved success stories as well as criticisms. One of the accomplishments occurred in the field of juvenile justice by David Mugawe, the Director of the African Child Policy Forum. There is a Children's Legal Protection Center in Ethiopia that provides legal and psychological support for children in conflict with the law. The center is an example of a successful complaint and counseling mechanism, and it has helped over 5,000 children since its inception. Besides giving legal advice, children and adults can call the center for free to report abuse, and the center follows up on all calls.



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From the Sections...

Brief on the rights of the child in Nigeria since the independence by Jeph Ighodaro

Since gaining independence in 1960, Nigeria has ratified several international conventions that codify children's rights, as well as the obligations of state parties to uphold universal principles of child rights and protection. Not only has Nigeria signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC), but it has also enacted a national instrument on children's rights, the Child Rights Act (CRA) 2003, to incorporate international standards on child rights into national legislation. States within the Nigerian federation have been encouraged to domesticate the Child Rights Law. Presently about 22 states of 36 have passed it into state law.

In spite of this extant legal framework, Nigerian children still face egregious human right violations on a daily basis. The recent Jos crisis in the central-northern state of Plateau readily comes to mind. During the several-day fracas, many hundreds of women and children were left maimed and homeless, and they accounted for more than a hundred on the death toll. Security of lives, especially for children, is poor and still lacking.

A cholera outbreak in the month of August has left a number of children dead in some northern states of Nigeria, a result of lip service paid to health-care delivery in Nigeria.

Legislation on child rights has continually faced opposition from religious, cultural and traditional groups. Even in states where legislation has been adopted, implementation has not followed suit, since children's rights are not deemed a priority in either governance or public affairs.

Our greatest resource as a nation - children - are resources as a nation - children - are subjected on a daily basis to exploitative labour, trafficking, forced marriage, physical and sexual abuse, and harmful traditional/cultural practices. The recognition that children are humans with agency and inherent rights is nearly absent throughout the country, and the very notion of children's rights is rarely acknowledged. Consequently, the systematic abuse, neglect and exploitation of children is facilitated and further enforced.

Closing a protection gap: 'If I were a guardian...' by Martine Goeman

Separated children and guardians speak up

Separated children and guardians voice their opinion in the project 'Closing a protection gap for separated children in Europe. In eight national reports, they talk about the qualifications and responsibilities of the guardian with respect to reception, return, legal procedures and a durable solution for the child. Separated children state what they would do if they were guardians themselves. In 2011, the input from the national reports will contribute to the development of core standards for guardians of separated children in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

EU Directives and the Quality4Children standards for children in out of home care.

The recommendations in the national reports, as well as the core standards for guardians, will provide an instrument to strengthen guardians' qualifications for taking the special needs and rights of separated children into account. The current differences in the level of protection received by separated children in European countries is not acceptable. All European countries have signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child and have the obligation to take into account the special needs of separated children. Proper guardianship systems are essential in helping to deter-



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mine a durable solution for separated children, whether that means being returned to their country of origin, being transferred to another country (for example, in situations of family reunification), or being integrated into the host country.

When all guardians are sufficiently qualified to work in the best interest of the child, the level of protection received by children in the various European countries will be delivered accordingly.

DCI-Bolivia and its Service to Childhood and Adolescence by Francisco Pifarré

As of the year 2010, 25 years have passed since DCI-Bolivia initiated its services. At that point, four thematic areas were gradually faced that are considered to be struggles or challenges of high sensitivity and importance in the world of childhood: a) domestic abuse; b) sexual abuse; c) adolescents in conflict with the law; and d) child labour. These were realities that already existed, that were present, that floated about in the atmosphere, but they had never come to be situations of particular worry or resonance for the political or social community.

To that end, DCI-Bolivia applied two elemental routes of involvement: on the one hand, promotion and direct relation with organizations working with children and adolescents; and on the other hand, direct attention to cases linked with the thematic areas being faced.

This permitted firsthand knowledge of child/youth reality, which provided a base for the systematisation of that knowledge, as well as for exercising an important influence in the field of communication, awareness-raising, and legislation - until ensuring that important sectors of both state and society were becoming more involved in the above subjects.

Today, DCI-Bolivia continues to believe that the thematic areas of involvement in the world of childhood are basically the same, although with the intention of arriving at defined systems of legislation and intervention on the part of the state and society.



Francisco, Mario and Pifa

a) Child abuse is considered to be not only a family problem, but also an element of the struggle against general problems of safety and security and against violence in the schools;

b) Sexual abuse and its most current risks are tackled from the most integral perspective on the awareness and participation of the social community, as well as from the effective response of state institutions;

c) Adolescents in conflict with the law present us with the need for special juvenile justice system in operation and with its own human resources adequately formed and capacitated; and

d) Child labour, considered a social and political phenomenon, requires appropriate processes of protection and legal defence with the very responsibility that makes society and the corresponding state entities accountable.

It must be added that in the current political process experienced by Bolivia, another important thematic area of institutional action appears: the attention and centrality

of of childhood and adolescence in the political and cultural framework of the autonomous municipal territories of indigenous societies.



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Please note that the articles contained in this newsletter are the individual contributions of DCI's national sections and the International Secretariat, and as such do not constitute the official position of the IEC members or the movement as a whole.