

# Working with Children and Families in Conflict

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Lessons from the World  
Forum in Belfast  
2009





# Background

## ■ The Troubles: 1960's to 1998



## ■ Officially ended with Good Friday Agreement



# The Setting



7500 Students



Gavilan College

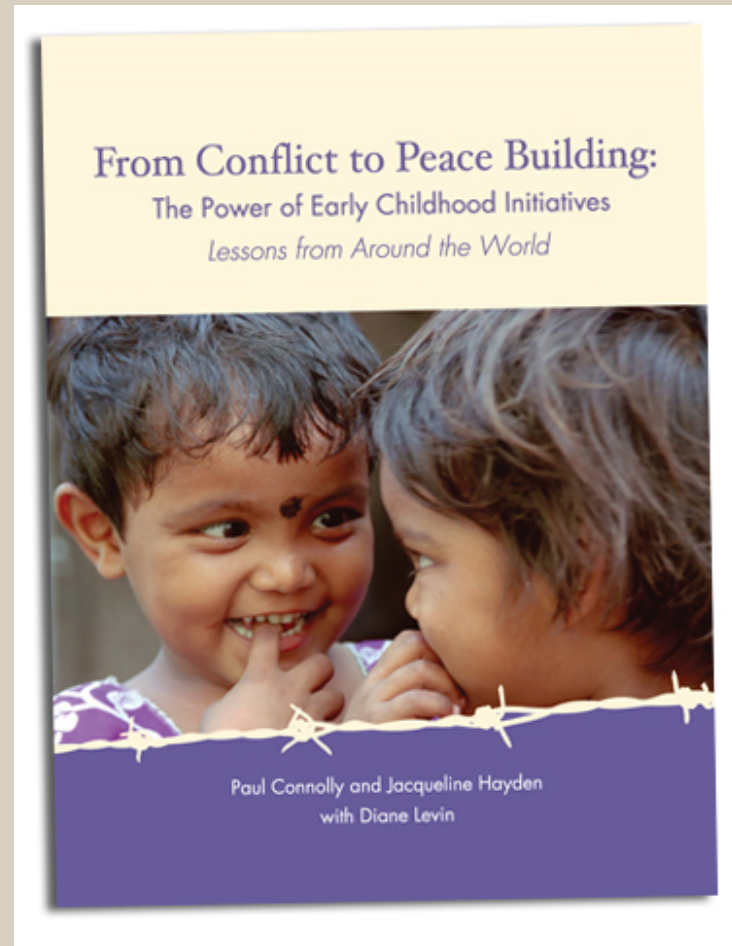


Gilroy, California



# The book that started it all . . .

- Chronicles the work of early childhood professionals in several countries affected by conflict
- Identified specific ways in which conflict hurts children.
- Suggested strategies to help children and families heal



# Working Forum Belfast 2004

## Building Bridges: Healing Communities Through Early Childhood Education

- How funded: Organized by NIPPA (now The Early Years Organization) and the World Forum Foundation
- Who came: Early childhood leaders from organizations involved in reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland, Croatia, Albania, Rwanda, Mali, South Africa, Israel, the Philippines, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Colombia, and the United States
- From Conflict to Peace Building was written to capture some of the shared experiences.



# What We Learned from the Book

- The effects of conflict on children and their families can be very severe and long-lasting
  - Threats to physical and emotional safety
  - Loss of homes & family members
  - Disruption of routines
  - Post-traumatic stress disorders
  - Delays in social and cognitive development
  - Violence becomes almost “normal”





# Impact on Social and Emotional Development

- Low self esteem
- Attachment issues
- Anxiety and insecurity
- Loss of language, identity, cultural integrity
- Arrests moral development
- Normalization of violence



# Strategies to Help

- Albania -- engaged elders & men in problem solving and planning
- Chad -- created child-friendly safe spaces
- Bosnia -- taught parents to run play sessions; model mutual respect
- Columbia -- developed strategies to modify violent imageries and negative behaviors; addressed psychosocial needs by scheduling therapy sessions for children and families.
- Palestine -- planned group activities that could relieve anxiety and stress -- art, music, etc.
- Nepal -- Children as a Zone of Peace



# CD7 The Cultural Context of Childhood

## Spring 2009 Gavilan College





# World Forum in Early Care & Education Belfast 2009

Hastings Europa Hotel  
Belfast, Northern Ireland

June 16 - 19, 2009



# First Day: Bus Tours to Children's Programs: Meeting the Persona Dolls





# The “New” Belfast





# Developing a Child-Friendly Society

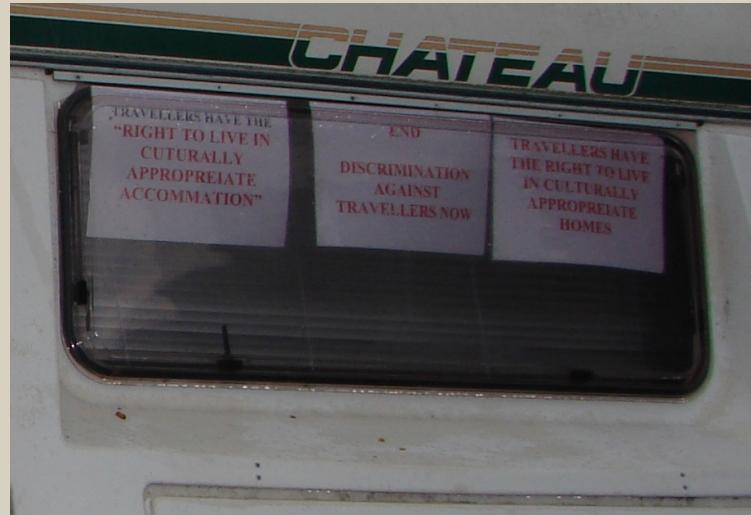




But all is not peaceful . . .



# Travellers speak out. . .





# Kathleen Makes New Friends

## Media Initiative for Children

The Media Initiative for Children (MIFC) Respecting Difference programme, developed by Early Years and Pii – the Peace Initiatives Institute (USA), combines a series of cartoon messages with an early years programme. Together they aim to build a better understanding among children, parents, practitioners and teachers, of physical, social and cultural differences. The programme also addresses bullying behaviours. Building on the philosophy of partnership with parents, parental support is also provided through information sessions and workshops to groups and schools implementing the MIFC.

The development and launch of the Traveller cartoon message has been an exciting introduction to the programme this year. The creation of this message was funded by the Commissioner for Children Northern Ireland Office and aims to tackle the exclusion of Traveller children. Research has shown Traveller children to



Launch of 'Kathleen makes new friends' with Patricia Lewsley, NI Children's Commissioner, Siobhan Fitzpatrick and David McKay, Chairman of the Peace Initiative Institute, USA

be most at risk in the education system with ninety two percent of Travellers having no GCSEs.

The message introduced a new character, 'Kathleen' and supports young children in understanding what it feels like to be excluded. The accompanying resources

and activities help children to learn more about the Traveller way of life as well as looking at the similarities all children have with each other.

# Back to the World Forum



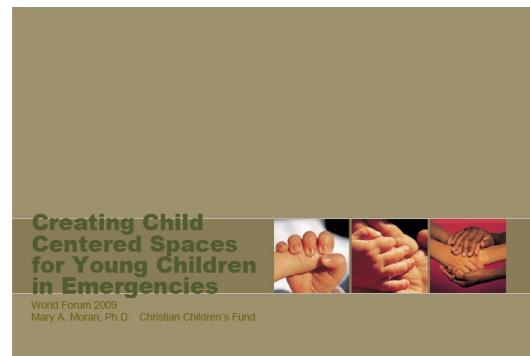


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people,  
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# Four Days of Workshops

- Culture of workshops was that of collaboration
- Presentations were short
- Discussion was thoughtful and insightful
- Every group was rich in experience







Selena Fox, New  
Zealand Tertiary  
College

Discussing Strategy:  
How do we  
encourage men to  
enter the profession  
of Early Childhood  
Education?



# Meeting the People in our Text



## ■ Ingrid Jones -- Albania

- used the skills and experience she had gained as a social worker in England to work in children's services in Albania, Ukraine, Serbia, Moldova and Belarus and later in the Sudan

## ■ Kishor Shrestha -- Nepal

- organized innovative training programs for early childhood policy makers and practitioners



## ■ Marta Arango -- Colombia

- Founded CINDE – the International Center for Education and Human Development to support the physical and psychological well being of young Columbians



# Some Lessons Learned

- One child at a time
- Address needs of the entire family
- Work with community leaders
- Apply research to local issues
- Develop high quality teacher and parent education programs
- Play -- Love -- Laugh
- [World Forum 2009 Closing Ceremonies](#)



# 2011 World Forum

## May 3 - 6, 2011

## Honolulu, Hawaii

- <http://worldforumfoundation.org/wf/wf2011/index.php>
- [From Conflict to Peace Building](#)  
by Paul Connolly and Jacqueline Hayden with Diane Levin,  
available from Child Care Exchange, ISBN 9780942702441
- [Danger, Danger Everywhere! Helping Children Feel Safe in a Culture of Fear](#) article by Diane Levin about Belfast  
Price: \$3.00 Issue: March/April 2010
- [www.gavilan.edu/child/](http://www.gavilan.edu/child/)
- [mbumgarner@gavilan.edu](mailto:mbumgarner@gavilan.edu)