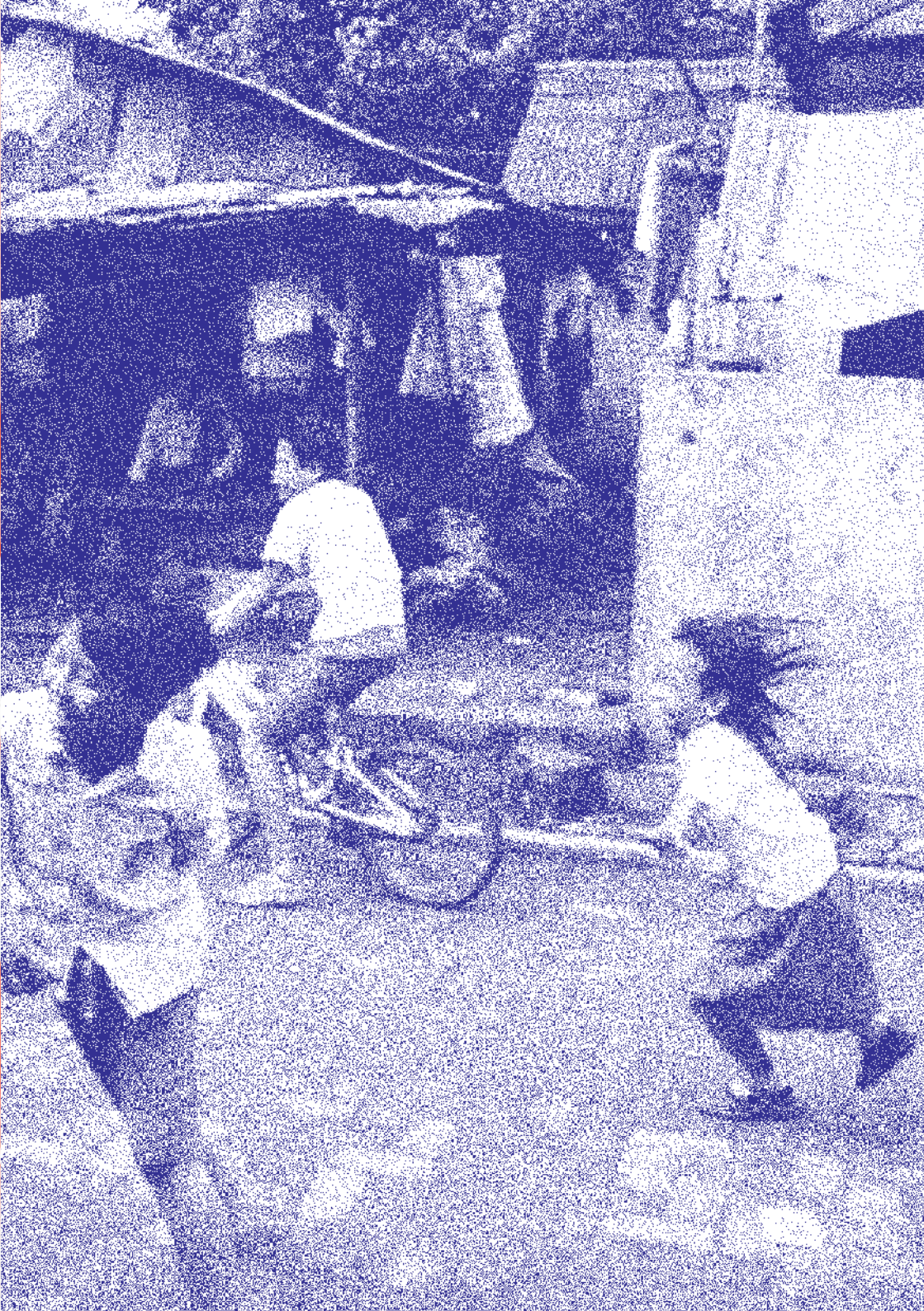


Defence for Children International 30 years
Convention on the Rights of the Child 20 years

A History of Child Rights in Action









Rifat Odeh Kassis
President

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It is with great honour and pride that I present this book to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the movement Defence for Children International – DCI. This book, outcome of the patient work of a worldwide team, contains within its folds our history as a movement. It highlights our actions, challenges, achievements and contributions to the struggle for the realisation of child rights. Above all, it is a testimony to our 30-year long dedication to the improvement of children’s lives around the world.

Inspired by a child-rights perspective and a deep concern over ill-treatment, exploitation and violence against children, DCI started in 1979, the first International Year of the Child, as a small organisation, determined to approach its strong commitment to child protection from a completely new angle, that of the child as a rights holder. In general, our organisation has helped develop the tenets laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on November 20, 1989.

The Convention confers children the full set of human rights from very basic ones such as the right to life and freedom of expression, to specific entitlements such as the right to be raised by one’s own parents and the right to education. DCI stands for a broad interpretation of these

rights. Thus, for instance, in our understanding, the right to education is not fulfilled by having a school: it also entails accessibility, proper infrastructure, adequately trained teachers, reasonable fees, and stationary, among other things. It means, above all, to provide a space for hope and optimism that eventually leads to a good future.

All documents that embed children's rights within their lines send vibrations of hope and faith in the creation and guarantee of a better future for children. However, words do not always match reality. We are faced with the constant challenges posed by globalisation, exploitation of children by multinational corporations, wars, internal conflicts, displacement, violence, economic crises, poverty, occupation *et alia*: all situations that increase the vulnerability of children and threaten their most basic rights. For this reason, we believe that the work of child rights organisations is vitally important in the light of the current state of the world. So is DCI's work.

Over the course of the years, and thanks to the full-time dedication, efforts and support of many altruistic and devoted individuals, DCI has grown in size and influence, becoming a leading child-rights organisation worldwide, with on the ground presence in five continents. DCI's history is not only one of successes, it is also one of challenges.

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But despite the difficulties, our struggle on behalf of the children who are still hindered from enjoying and exercising their most basic human rights will continue, in the hope that one day, all children will enjoy a life that preserves their rights to innocence, integrity and humanity.

My special thanks to all the people who have bestowed their time, efforts and capacity to the development of DCI, and whose invaluable input has made DCI the organisation it is today. An organisation is but a mere skeleton without its people, and DCI is blessed with an energetic body of members and employees that enriches and enhances the movement both by encouragement and, when needed, criticism. The progress that we undergo certifies their hard work. Also, I would like to express my deep gratitude to those who have believed in our movement and have supported its cause throughout the years. To those who chose to light a candle, rather than cursing the darkness, the movement is much obliged.

Finally, I would like to extend my appreciation and thanks to those who made this book a reality by way of their contributions, experiences, knowledge and hard work. I hope you enjoy reading about our journey as much as we have enjoyed making it, and that you find inspiration in our ideals as much as we strive to uphold them.

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Are

Defence for Children International

Defence for Children International (DCI) is an independent non-governmental organisation that has been promoting and protecting children's rights on a global, regional, national and local level for thirty years. DCI is represented through its national sections and associated members in forty countries worldwide as of 2009. Its International Secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

What DCI does

The DCI movement was founded in 1979, the International Year of the Child, at a time when few international structures were dedicated to a rights-based approach in addressing the many challenges facing the world's children.

This year, 2009, DCI celebrates its 30th anniversary, a birthday it shares with the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (henceforth referred to as "CRC" or "the Convention"). This connection highlights DCI's historical role as a leading drafter of the Convention and advocate for its adoption and as one of the first organisations to put children's rights in the human rights framework.

DCI has consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UNICEF, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

At the global level, the DCI movement is united in its commitment to working for children's rights in juvenile justice. DCI works to protect, defend and advocate for the rights of children and young people in conflict with the law.

DCI national sections develop and implement programmes in response to the needs of children in their countries. In addition to juvenile justice, some of these programmes concern:

- Child labour
- Violence against children
- Children in armed conflict
- Sexual abuse and exploitation
- Child trafficking
- Access to education
- Migration
- Child participation

DCI uses the following strategies to promote and protect child rights:

Direct intervention

DCI provides direct assistance and support to children in need. Many DCI national sections run Socio-Legal Defence Centres which represent children in conflict with the law and take on their legal defence. Other DCI sections provide support and rehabilitation services to child workers and victims of trafficking.

Advocacy and lobby

DCI advocates at a national and international level for the development of policies and practices which are in the best interests of the child. This involves lobbying states to adopt national policies that reflect the Convention on the Rights of the Child and urging the Human Rights Council and other UN bodies to take action against gross violations of children's rights.

Research and monitoring

DCI monitors the application of children's rights according to international standards and reports on abuses and violations. DCI researches pressing concerns in children's rights, offering recommendations and mobilising resources for further action.

Training and capacity building

The DCI International Secretariat provides training to its members on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in advocacy strategies to promote them. Depending on their national priorities, DCI sections train police officers, judges and other professionals in the rights of children in juvenile justice systems. Or when focusing on child labour, they train employers and teachers on ways to ensure that child workers have access to a quality education.

DCI structure

The DCI movement consists of the following bodies:

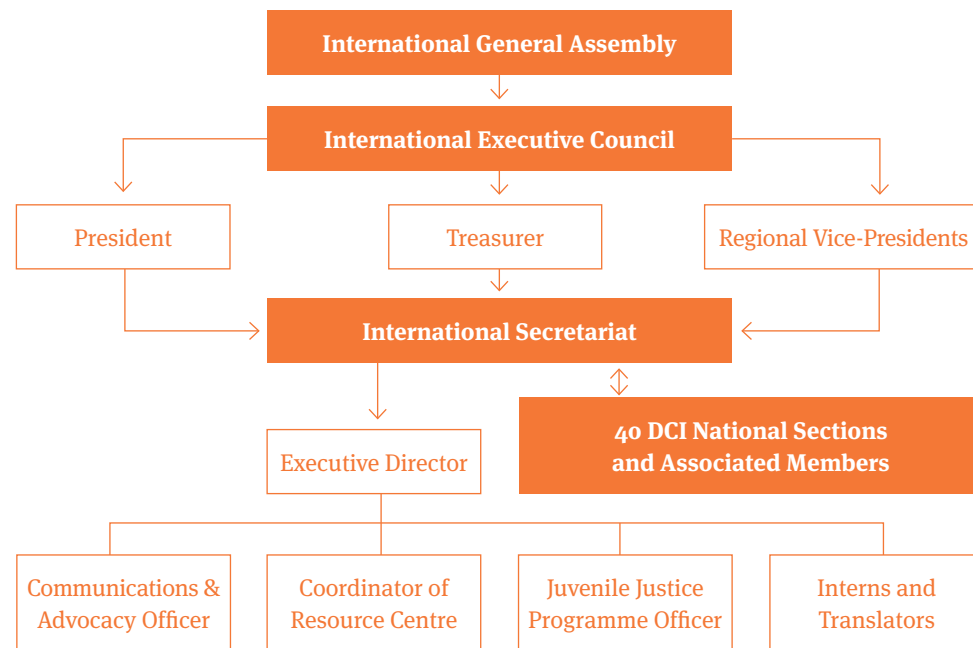
- International General Assembly (IGA)
- International Executive Council (IEC)
- International Secretariat (IS)
- Vice-presidencies (Europe, Asia-Pacific Middle East, Africa, Americas)
- National sections

International General Assembly

The International General Assembly (IGA) is DCI's highest governing body and is composed of each representative national section in the movement.

The IGA steers the policies, priorities and positions of the DCI movement. It also elects the President and other members of the International Executive Council, who are mandated to govern the DCI movement in the interim between General Assemblies.

The International General Assembly meeting takes place every three to five years and is hosted by a DCI national section. DCI's next International General Assembly is due to take place in Africa in 2011. Each IGA is combined with an international conference on a specific child rights topic.



Organisational Chart of Defence for Children International
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At the end of each International General Assembly, DCI adopts a declaration outlining its vision and priorities for the subsequent three years. The latest two declarations stressed DCI's commitment to juvenile justice as its priority for global action.

International Executive Council

DCI's International Executive Council (IEC) is the movement's governing authority in the interim between General Assemblies. Members of the International Executive Council are elected for a period of three years during DCI's International General Assembly. The IEC is composed of a minimum of seven to a maximum of thirteen people, each from a different country and representing the four regions in which DCI works.

Current members, elected during DCI's most recent International General Assembly in October 2008, are Rifat Odeh Kassis (DCI-Palestine), President; Benoit van Keirsbilck (DCI-Belgium), Treasurer; Abdul Manaff Kemokai (DCI-Sierra Leone), Vice-president Africa; Marcos Guillen (DCI-Argentina), Vice-president Americas; Jean-Luc Rongé (DCI-France), Vice-president Europe; and Juan Pedro Fumeiro (DCI-Uruguay) and Laurencio Akohin (DCI-Togo), Members at large.

International Secretariat

DCI's International Secretariat (DCI-IS or IS) is based in Geneva, Switzerland, and acts as the focal point for the movement at the international level, providing an invaluable link between DCI's national sections and between the movement and the United Nations.

DCI's International Secretariat's mandate is to bring pressing child rights concerns to the international agenda and to provide technical assistance and capacity building support to its forty national sections. Work

includes monitoring child rights, research, networking for lobbying and advocacy, information dissemination and development of communication tools, with children's rights in juvenile justice as its prime, though not exclusive, field of action. The International Secretariat is therefore in active communication with its members and partners regarding child rights issues. It seeks constant updates from DCI sections on the juvenile justice situation in their countries to better focus and inform its international child rights advocacy. The international debate and the best practices shared by partners are circulated back to the sections.

Through the years, publishing on child rights issues has become a major activity of the International Secretariat. Gradually this has shifted from high quality scholarly works to more practical training guides. Scholarly titles include: *Children in Adult Prisons* (1986), by Katarina Tomasevski (see chapter on juvenile justice further in this book); *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: A Guide* (1994), by Sharon Detrick; *Kids Behind Bars: A study on children in conflict with the law: towards investing in prevention, stopping incarceration and meeting international standards* (2003), by Stan Meuwese. The more recent training guides include the *Advocacy Strategies Training Manual* and the *General Comment No. 10 Factsheets*.

National sections and associated members

DCI believes in the importance of local action in producing positive change in the lives of children. DCI national sections are grassroots organisations that identify and develop programmes in direct response to the needs and priorities of children in their countries.

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As of 2009, DCI has forty national sections: in Angola, Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil (ANCED), Cameroon, Canada, Costa Rica, Chile, Colombia, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, France, Gambia, Ghana, Israel, Italy, Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Macedonia, Mauritius, Mauritania, Netherlands, Niger, Nigeria, Palestine, Paraguay, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Slovak Republic, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Togo, Uganda, Uruguay, Albania (CRCA), two provisional sections in Liberia and Kosovo and two "Associated Members" namely, SPARC in Pakistan and REINTEGRA in Mexico.

DCI-UN Representation in New York

From the time the Convention was ready for adoption in 1989 DCI has had a representative at the United Nations in New York, starting with Mercedes Roman, founder and former President of DCI-Ecuador. 'I moved to New York in the summer of 1989', Roman recalls. 'I started to work as the DCI Representative at the UN, with the support of DCI-USA (still in existence at that time) based in the city. It was a full time job and I was seconded to it by the organisation I worked with at the time: Maryknoll, the Catholic Foreign Mission Society of America. Maryknoll actually paid my salary. One of my first tasks was to join the CRC-NGO/UNICEF Committee, which at that time was promoting the Convention among NGOs and lobbying among UN State Representatives for its adoption. It really was the eve of the CRC adoption.'

Mercedes Roman worked as DCI Representative in New York until 1995, when she moved to Brazil. In 1998 she returned to New York with Maryknoll, and again took up the DCI Representation with the UN, until she was replaced in 2000 by Avis Sri-Jayantha, the present DCI representative.

Award for DCI

DCI's pioneering work did not go unnoticed. In 2003 DCI was awarded the Dutch Geuzen Medal, which is given every year to individuals or institutions that have in some special way devoted themselves to fighting for democracy or against dictatorship. The Geuzen were the first members of organised Dutch resistance in World War II against the German occupation. The Geuzen Resistance named itself after the historic Geuzen (beggars) of the War of Eighty Years (1568–1648). This award was intended as an encouragement and expression of gratitude for the movement, in recognition of the pioneering work performed in the then thirty sections in favour of children's rights.

International General Assemblies

1980 Geneva, Switzerland

1982 Paris, France

1986 Xalapa, Mexico

1989 Haikko, Finland

1992 Granada, Spain

1997 Dakar, Senegal

2002 Mar del Plata, Argentina

2005 Bethlehem, Palestine

2008 Brussels, Belgium

DCI International Executive Council Presidents

1979–1986 Canon Joseph Moerman
1986–1989 Martin Ennals
1989–1992 Martín Gárate (DCI-Chile)
1992–1997 Martín Gárate (DCI-Chile)
1997–2002 Philip Veerman (DCI-Israel)
2002–2005 Jorge Vila Despujol (DCI-Bolivia)
2005–2008 Rifat Odeh Kassis (DCI-Palestine)
2008–2011 Rifat Odeh Kassis (DCI-Palestine)

DCI Secretaries General

1979–1984 Nigel Cantwell (UK)
1984–May 1988 Per Tegmo (SE)
Sept 1989–Oct 1992 Trevor Davies (UK)
Ad int. Jan-June 1993 Robert Vyncke (CA)
July 1993–Oct 1994 Marc-Alain Berberat (CH)
Dec 1994–Dec 1998 Ricardo Dominicé (AR)
Dec 1998–Dec 2000 Maurice Graber (CH)
Ad int. 2000–2003 Position occupied by
representatives of the
DCI sections:
Helen Bayes (AU)
Nana Grey Johnson (GM)
Philip Veerman (IL)
Jorge Vila Despujol (BO)
2003–July 2005 Jorge Restrepo (ES)
Coordinator
May 2006–July 2008 Rebecca Morton (UK)
Executive Director
Aug 2008–Dec 2009 Laetitia van Haren (NL)
Executive Director

The Advocacy Committee

The overall goal of DCI's international advocacy is to improve the situation of children and young people by denouncing ongoing violations and identifying new challenges that directly or indirectly violate or threaten to violate children's civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The DCI Advocacy Committee, whose members are seasoned child rights experts belonging to sections from all over the world, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of DCI's advocacy goals and objectives.

As the monitoring body of DCI's international advocacy, the mandate of the Advocacy Committee is to develop a unified voice for the DCI movement's advocacy and to serve as a platform to which DCI bodies can bring issues of national concern to an international forum.

Its main task is to alert the movement to acute and serious child rights violations and raise awareness about new or hidden ones. It will then lead in the lobbying of governments and stake holders at regional and international levels to take action to implement international child rights standards, for example through press releases and position statements, interviews and public speaking.

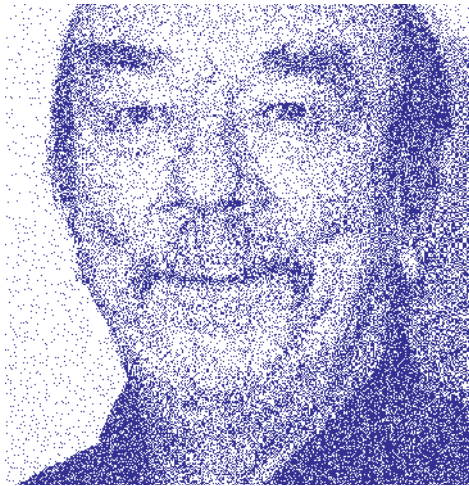
Leadership of the International Secretariat

The gaps visible in the box "DCI Secretaries General", sometimes filled by *ad interim* Secretaries General from the ranks of the IEC, were caused by severe financial shortfalls compounded by ideological divergencies between the sections as to the role of the International Secretariat (see also p.92).

Who we are

Nigel Cantwell A Dream of Child Rights

The impulse for the creation of Defence for Children International came from a courageous visionary who believed children had human rights, a passionate man who inspired numerous people: Nigel Cantwell.



Nigel Cantwell
Founder of DCI

1979–1984 Secretary General

1984–1994 Director of Programmes

1994–1998 Consultant to UNICEF

1998–2003 Staff member Innocenti

As of 2003 International consultant
on child protection policies

The idea

‘It was 1978. I had been working for five years at the International Union for Child Welfare (IUCW) in Geneva. This was an NGO umbrella organisation on children, the biggest at the time. I was trying to push it to be more active in terms of problems of child rights, although we didn’t call it child rights at the time. Before the Convention, we talked almost exclusively about the welfare and protection of children, but not really from a child rights perspective. Organisations were concentrating – as they still often are – on health and education, the traditional concerns about children. The delicate issues of exploitation and violence weren’t part of their vocabulary. They were considered too sensitive. So I tried to get the IUCW to move into that sphere, particularly as regards “child maltreatment” in the widest sense of the term, i.e., whoever the perpetrator might be, including the State and its agents. But the organisation chose not to go down that road. Since I didn’t want to abandon the idea, I was told that I couldn’t remain.

On leaving the IUCW, I decided to build on the many contacts I had made in both the human rights and the children’s sphere to see if there was a felt need for an organisation working on children’s issues from a human rights standpoint. Martin Ennals, then Secretary General of Amnesty International, was one of the people I consulted, and he proved to be especially helpful – indeed, seven years later he became President of DCI. He looked into how an organisation like DCI could supplement what Amnesty was doing and how we might be able to work together on certain issues. This was during the first months of the International Year of the Child (IYC), 1979. Scores of cases of “child maltreatment” were being referred to various organisations – the IUCW, but also the International Committee of the Red Cross, the UN Centre for Human Rights, the International Labour Organisation, Amnesty International and others.

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Invariably, reacting to such individual cases fell outside the mandate or priority of these organisations. In other words, when no redress could be found for violations at the local and national level, the children concerned or their representatives had no special organisation at the international level that they could approach in an attempt to bring about an appropriate solution. It became clear that some kind of action agency was necessary. Two major conceptual problems had to be overcome: on the basis of what arguments could international action be justified? And, given the different conceptions, over time and space, of what constitutes “child maltreatment”, what criteria should be used in deciding whether or not to take up a case?’

The start-off

‘The existence of these problems led to the founding of Defence for Children in 1979 and inspired an action-linked reflection process that has continued on the basis of experience ever since. DCI was constituted as a non-profit association under the Swiss Code on July 5, 1979. Its founding committee consisted of thirteen members from eleven countries, with its President being the “father of the International Year of the Child”, Canon Joseph Moerman. I held the position of Secretary General. DCI started off by taking up individual cases. Of course we had no money whatsoever. I nearly gave up after six months. But then came what was for us at the time a major funding success: 25,000 dollars from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, secured with the help of Anne-Marie van Boven, wife of the then Director of the UN Centre for Human Rights, Theo van Boven. This was our first institutional backing and helped enormously to build some credibility. Still, the grant wasn’t enough to pay a salary or rent.

At the start, DCI consisted simply of myself and a volunteer, Jeanne Schneuwley. I could only devote part of my time to DCI: I was also

working for the UN’s International Year of the Child Secretariat and doing translations to earn some money. My daughter was born in 1978 and my job at the IUCW ended in December that year. It’s fair to say that it was a difficult time. I don’t think I took a day off for eighteen months, trying to get DCI on the road and at the same time trying to earn enough money to pay the rent.

My late wife worked in the Education Department of the City of Geneva and her boss gave me office space there. I’m sure it was utterly illegal, but we started up there, in this little room with no window, just a skylight. We stayed there for a couple of years. Then the City of Geneva agreed to rent us a really odd place in the former Palais des Expositions for a very low price. It had a glass wall, but rather like you see in some public toilets, translucent, but really thick, so you couldn’t actually see what was happening outside. It was spacious, but hardly prepossessing. We moved into the present offices in 1984 – ironically taking over some of the offices of my former employer, the IUCW, which was by then winding down its operations before finally closing its doors in 1986. At that point we took over virtually all of its remaining office space and inherited some parts of its documentation centre.

Launching DCI wasn’t really an idea. To me, it was a self-evident need, because of this huge gap at the international level in relation to working for children. The individual cases which we started with represented a lot of work. Obviously, when you don’t yet have a reputation and recognition, you have to work very hard to get arguments through. And with every case we had to decide what the appropriate response was. Would it be background diplomacy, a campaign, denunciation, face-to-face talks? It was difficult to determine which line to follow.

But we quickly realised that we needed to develop a position based on our experiences. We needed to build on these individual situations as a back-up for a wider expression of concern over certain issues concerning children and their rights.'

The breakthrough

'A couple of years after we started, Per Tegmo, a Swede, came on board through a mutual friend. He started doing more strategising, more focused fundraising. He was more clinical in his approach. We began developing and submitting fully-fledged programmes for funding, trying to increase our financial basis. And it worked well. Then Per and I came to an arrangement whereby he became the Secretary General and I took on the role of Director of Programmes. It was a difficult decision for me to give up the "leadership", but it meant that Per took overall charge of management and fundraising, leaving me to focus on what I liked and did best: dealing with the substance.

The big breakthrough surely came with our involvement in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That made us far better known than we were. The NGO Group that was set up in 1983 asked DCI to be the coordinator. That also meant being general spokesman, a very full role that I took on and loved. It was all orchestrated quite well. Per was of course still dealing with fundraising, which he did very persuasively: UNICEF gave us money for the first time, as did a number of governmental aid agencies. It continued like that throughout the 1980s. DCI was developing fast. National sections were being set up around the world, the staff at the International Secretariat was growing and we were having considerable impact at the UN level.'

The limits

'As often happens with NGOs, we bit off more than we could chew. We had about twelve full-timers by that time and that cost a lot of money. If you don't have core funding to pay the salaries, you need programmes with an "overhead" component. DCI had no core funding. Most of our sections were in developing or emerging countries and had very little money. We couldn't expect them to contribute substantially to the central operation – the way it works at Amnesty International, for example. So we had to find other ways. One of these was to develop programmes, but there was a limit to that as well. You have to be very careful not to just set up programmes to get funding. DCI's basic and essential tasks were not the kind of thing that is easily "programmable". We didn't have nice little assistance projects that tend to attract donors; we were pioneering a very different approach to children's issues at the international level. And because it was so new, the funding was hard to find.

So in the end, we didn't have enough support for overheads to cover our operation, however objectively successful it was. One of the reasons was that when the Convention was finally adopted in 1989, our role became less clear and less unique, in that many NGOs had by then ostensibly taken on board the "children's rights" label. The potential for funding was therefore even more restricted. We had apparently over-reached ourselves on necessary expenditures without having the back-up. We had to cut the staff, even on programmes that were still ongoing and needed to be completed. It was difficult for the people who remained to carry on all these programmes.

Per left in 1989. I had to leave in October 1994. It was really only then that I realised just how long I had been there: fifteen years. It was certainly time to go. In fact,

objectively, I probably should have gone a long time before. The problem was that I was absolutely uninspired by anything outside of DCI. I wasn't being possessive about the organisation as such, but I simply found the work that we were able to do at DCI to be incredibly motivating and fruitful. When I looked at other, far bigger organisations like UNICEF or Save the Children, I felt that what we had managed to accomplish in our little team and by judicious partnerships was just amazing. We'd really made a mark, including at the UN. So to me it was just unbeatable as a job. I'd never bothered to think about doing anything else and I was utterly unimpressed by the alternatives that might have been on offer. So I stayed and stayed.'

The strategy

'DCI absolutely surpassed the idea that I had when I set up the organisation. In the late 1980s we were really well regarded. We had a good presence in the UN and we'd done a lot of work on juvenile justice that was giving excellent results, as well as in other spheres such as the protection of children's rights in inter-country adoption. When the Convention was being developed, DCI was the organisation pushing others to become involved. We were *the* children's rights organisation all through the 1980s. We were bringing human rights together with children's issues; we were bringing in professional organisations like the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates. We were building up the children's rights movement. But what we didn't know how to manage and didn't foresee, was the time after the Convention, when virtually every organisation claimed to be a children's rights organisation, rightly or wrongly. We allowed ourselves to be, in some ways, the victim of our own success in that we didn't have a post-Convention strategy.

'I was 20, had just gotten my secretary's diploma and was looking for work. I applied for a job, but the employer said I didn't have enough experience for the kind of work she needed me to do. But she knew these two men, "two animals you have to tame" she said. "They just set up a small NGO and could really use some help. You should go and see if you can work for them." The two "animals" were Nigel Cantwell and Per Tegmo; the NGO was DCI. I was hired as a secretary and found myself working with these two chain smoking and coffee drinking men and a few others. I spent twelve thrilling years at DCI. Working with such highly motivated people was truly inspiring. They were not only dedicated – they were professionals.'

Isabelle Angelot
Secretary at DCI International Secretariat
from 1984 to 1996

‘DCI is a very interesting kind of NGO whose primary characteristic is that it brings together people from different professional groups who are really interested in children’s rights. When I worked at DCI, some of us were lawyers, some of us were medical doctors, some of us were teachers. It was a very international and interdisciplinary group.’

Daniel O’Donnell

Senior Legal Officer at the International Secretariat from 1987 to 1992

In my view, the strategy with hindsight would have been to align ourselves with the human rights organisations, rather than with the children’s organisations, and to maintain the heaviest possible presence at the UN at all costs. To be in all the human rights meetings, recalling the human rights issues related to the child, making sure they kept the child on the agenda, pushing heavily for this, either alone or in concert with other NGOs, and backed up by the inputs from our sections. That’s the main role of the International Secretariat, in my view. I always thought the UN presence was vital for our credibility, mainly of course because of its potential impact on global policy but also partly because we’ve always had most of our funding from governmental sources. If you are present and active at those meetings where governments are, it gets known. People will say: “Oh yes, I know them. They make good contributions.” The missions in Geneva give their governments feedback about what’s happening at the human rights meetings. So you have to be there, actively and with solid, evidence-based arguments.

As far as I could see, many of the national sections tended to characterise that as a soft approach. “These people are sitting in Geneva and all they do is make statements at the UN.” When you’re far away from the headquarters and you are working with the reality of a developing country, it can certainly be difficult to understand the point of “sitting in Geneva”. It is, however, part of a strategy that helps national sections with the relative renown and credibility it gives to the organisation as a whole, sections included. Of course, there are organisations that seem to be entirely devoted to making statements at the UN, and they are not necessarily taken very seriously. There’s a balance to be made, obviously. You have to have the experience on which to base your statements. You need

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to justify them. But thanks in good part to the work of the sections, DCI has had that. Perhaps the reciprocal benefits of the work of the sections and that of the International Secretariat were not sufficiently recognised.’

The future

‘I think there is a continuing role for DCI, beyond a doubt, because it is still the only real “human rights of children” organisation. The fact that DCI is housing the Juvenile Justice Panel is excellent and something to build on. As for the work that is being done by sections, it is quite simply magnificent in many cases. DCI definitely has a role to play in the future. A lot of children’s organisations have got onto “the child’s rights bandwagon” but are not actually changing their approach at all. They have essentially kept a charity approach. Others place too much emphasis on somewhat peripheral things like the principle of child participation. They look to develop child participation as a kind of end in itself, not as an effective means of achieving the objective of better compliance with the human rights of children as a whole. Initiatives are not assessed in terms of appropriateness and impact, and the energy put into them often drains the forces and resources required to protect and defend some of the most egregious violations of children’s human rights, where you can frequently count the active presence of child-focused organisations, at the very best, on the fingers of one hand.

The collaboration between child-focused NGOs and the human rights organisations that took place during the development of the Convention was absolutely vital, but in my view it is fading quite rapidly. The human rights organisations are, practically, no longer in touch with the children’s organisations. DCI should have a bridge function by developing relationships with the human rights organisations and by being very clear

on certain mistakes that are made within the children’s community. We used to say in the 1970s that children were put on a pedestal, for example. So when we worked on the Convention, we tried to make them “special” only in that they needed certain rights as human beings that were not necessarily applicable to other human beings, i.e., adults.

Remember that most rights in the CRC are in fact already granted to human beings in general, particularly through the Covenants, but simply had to be reiterated to make certain that everyone realised that children too were covered. But it was not about saying “children first”, or “the best interests of the child should always be more important than the interests of any adult”. That was not the point. The point was that we wanted to bring children’s rights up to the level of those of other human beings, not put them onto a higher level. Doing that is, precisely, not a human rights approach, which emphasises the fact that *everyone* automatically and equally must benefit from them. That message is being lost. I think human rights organisations now are a little leery of the children’s organisations, because they don’t see them taking a true human rights approach.

That reason for getting a human rights convention for children has been increasingly forgotten of late. The CRC is too often looked upon as something separate rather than as one of the eight core treaties of the UN on human rights. There are three types of rights in the Convention. One type recalls the human rights that exist for everybody – such as “fundamental freedoms” and protection from torture. The second type is where you strengthen or reinforce an existing human right as it concerns children. In juvenile justice for example, there are higher standards for children, or a different approach, than for adults. And then there is

a third group which consists of child-specific rights, like those on adoption, alternative care for children without family, education, breast-feeding, etc. There are many rights of the third type, but they are specific to children not because children are “special” as such, but simply because adults, for example, generally can’t be adopted and don’t need to be breastfed. Too often the CRC is put over as something much more than that. But it’s not.’

The mission

‘I really think it’s important to keep away from sentimentalism, along the lines of: “Children need our help, children are the most vulnerable”. There are vulnerable men, vulnerable women and vulnerable children, whether because of their status or the circumstances in which they find themselves, temporarily or permanently. It’s true that in some situations children are particularly vulnerable. But sentimentalism can lead to the wrong conclusions. For example, programmes catering to situations of emergency are frequently directed towards those who seem to be the most vulnerable, i.e., small children and their mothers. But generally, in an emergency, the community itself already gives priority to babies and their mothers. The ones who are forgotten are the adolescents, who are nonetheless well known to be extraordinarily vulnerable in general, and the men, who seem to get left out of absolutely everything.

In most societies, a man feels ultimate responsibility for his family, so if you take away his means of being responsible by implementing programmes to help his wife and very small children, is that acting in favour of children’s rights? No. It is the child’s right, wherever possible, to be in a family where parents can jointly assume their responsibility towards their child. Yet it’s amazing how this paternalism

continues to exist on the basis of children’s rights, with all the negative side effects and repercussions it can have.

I would like DCI to start this kind of debate. There are so many issues where no one else is taking a lead in compiling and analysing hard data to challenge some of the wrong-headed notions that continue to be peddled in the name of children’s rights. By doing that, DCI would align itself more clearly with the human rights cause, and that should be the real basis of its approach to children’s issues.’

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Why We Are



Why we are

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Convention on the Rights of the Child

Under Nigel Cantwell's inspired guidance, DCI was at the forefront in the drafting process and international lobby for the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and its work continues to be embedded in these fundamental principles. But what is this convention exactly and where does it come from?



James Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF, presents a medal to Nigel Cantwell, DCI Director of Programmes, for his contribution to the Convention, in the presence of DCI International President Martín Gárate (left) and Secretary General Trevor Davies (right).

The origins

The concept of children's rights was first formulated almost a century ago when Dorothy Buxton and Eglantine Jebb, two British women, moved by their deep Christian faith, started to do charitable relief work in Macedonia. This experience made them determined to help refugees and, after the First World War, Buxton and Jebb set up the Save the Children Fund to work for the starving children in defeated Germany and Austria. Jebb's crowning work was the League of Nations' Declaration of the Rights of Children (1924). She died in 1928 and is buried in Geneva.

The Second World War abruptly stopped all actions of the League of Nations, including welfare activities in favour of children. But action picked up again after the war was over and the United Nations, the League's successor, were founded. The original text of Jebb's Declaration was

revised as of 1948 and a new Declaration on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1959 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, incorporating and adding to all the principles of the 1924 Declaration.

In January 1978, the government of Poland proposed to use the 1959 Declaration as a basis for a Convention on the Rights of the Child. Since Poland wanted to have the Convention ready for the International Year of the Child (IYC) in 1979, it made almost no changes to the original text, which the international community had already taken on board. Other governments and international organisations rejected the proposal, saying *inter alia* that it was too narrow and did not take account of developments in thinking and experience since 1959. The UN Secretary General nonetheless asked the Commission on Human Rights to make the drafting of the Convention one of its priorities, with a view to it being adopted during the IYC.

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The Commission, however, decided to set up a Working Group on the issue, where government delegates and NGOs came together to review the draft. Progress was initially slow and the NGO input was uncoordinated. NGOs were therefore not taken seriously by the government delegates. In response, in 1983, a number of NGOs, including DCI, decided to look into setting up an NGO Ad Hoc Group for the Convention to ensure a more coherent approach to the exercise.

The drafting

Through close collaboration among the International Catholic Child Bureau, Save the Children Sweden, Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists and DCI, and with financial and logistical assistance from UNICEF, all non-governmental organisations in consultative status with UNICEF were invited to participate in a two-day informal consultation in Geneva in May 1983. The primary aim was to ensure that concerned NGOs might participate in the formulation of the draft Convention to a degree that correctly reflected their combined knowledge and interest on child-related issues. The major outcomes were the decision to prepare joint proposals for the text of the Convention, reflecting the consensus of the participating NGOs, as well as agreement on the need for a focal point for all ongoing NGO activities in this sphere. DCI was elected as Secretariat and Coordinator of the NGO Group. From then on, things started moving more quickly, and the Convention began to take shape, with unprecedented input from civil society as represented by the NGO Group.

Given its special interest in this domain, DCI's role as the Secretariat was necessarily wider and more active than purely carrying out general information activities. It naturally involved monitoring developments and disseminating information and analytical comment on them. It also entailed animating

Week for Children's Rights

Following the previous meetings in Florence, Italy, in 1984 and Xalapa, Mexico, in 1986, the city of Haikko, Finland, was the setting of the 3rd "Week for Children's Rights". The June 1989 event consisted of a three-day international conference on children's rights, followed by the 5th DCI International General Assembly. These meetings, marking the 10th anniversary of Defence for Children International, were co-organised by DCI and the Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland, in collaboration with the new Forum for Child Welfare. The meetings constituted important stepping-stones in the development of the DCI movement, not only in terms of recognition of new sections, but also strengthening cooperation with the many organisations that participated. An indication of the key nature of this conference is that James Grant, then Executive Director of UNICEF, travelled to Finland in order to be able to address the meeting.

The Week for Children's Rights brought together 250 participants from some sixty countries. The aim was to provide an opportunity for the exchange of views and experiences regarding effective and ineffective methods at local, national and international levels of protecting and promoting children's rights. A series of panels and workshops broached a wide range of themes covering preventive, promotional and protective action. The topics included exploitation, physical and mental health, discrimination, juvenile justice, education and armed conflict. The respective roles of the media, popular education, the law and national child welfare organisations in the protection of children were also examined.

Education on the Convention

As part of a DCI programme on education on children's rights in the region, DCI organised workshops on the rights of the child with particular attention to the situation of children in conflict with the law, in Sofia, Bulgaria, from May to June 1994. The meeting was held with the financial support of the Swiss government and under the auspices of the Bulgarian national teachers union. In Budapest, DCI organised a workshop titled "Education for citizenship and participation in civic life".

The programme had been prepared by DCI's Secretary General in cooperation with the UNESCO Commission of Hungary. DCI's Secretary General had the opportunity to launch activities and contacts for DCI in the countries represented at the meeting. In October, a conference on children at risk was organised in Bratislava, Slovakia, by DCI and the Children's Fund of the Slovak Republic. The meeting received financial support from UNICEF and local sponsors. With the title "Central European Family on the Horizon of the Third Millennium", it was attended by some 150 participants.

As a follow-up to these meetings, the International Secretariat started preparations for a DCI programme for the Central European region on education and children's rights. The Secretariat obtained financial support from the European Union for a regional meeting to be held in Slovakia in May 1995. This activity paid special attention to the situation of children in conflict with the law and the promotion of children's rights in formal and informal education.

To the same purpose of firmly placing child rights education in school curriculae, DCI sought to reach out to teachers and social workers in Europe. This initiative was financially supported by the Swiss government and the European Economic Council.

and providing a service to a network of organisations, keeping governments both informed and interested, organising encounters, fostering national-level debates (whose recommendations would filter up to the international level) and foreseeing and meeting special needs with regards to advocacy for a strong and appropriate Convention, as well as preparing the way for effective advocacy efforts to ensure the proper implementation of the principles of the Convention once it was signed and ratified.

In its capacity of secretariat to the NGO Group, DCI undertook the preparation, translation and printing of the "Report on Consultations among International Non-Governmental Organisations", which was distributed to international NGOs as well as to governments and their permanent representatives in Geneva. The text was also communicated to the UN Centre for Human Rights for submission to the 1984 session of the UN Working Group. Many of the NGO proposals were incorporated into the draft texts adopted. As a result of this, DCI was asked to call a further series of consultations in the same year.

In December 1984, DCI organised an International Congress on the Rights of the Child, which took place in Florence, Italy. At the end of the Congress, the participants summarized their debates in the Florence Declaration of 1984, in which they expressed their will to work towards the defence of the rights of the child and to support the work of DCI and of other organisations focused on the protection of children and their rights.

In 1985, to structure civil society input in the drafting process, DCI created an embryo network of correspondents in developing countries to obtain continuous and professional input on the articles that had been adopted, as well as on the articles which were still to be discussed.

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In January 1987, DCI organised a briefing session for representatives of Permanent Missions in Geneva to inform them about NGO standpoints on remaining substantive articles and implementation provisions. Several of the more than twenty countries represented had not previously demonstrated particular interest in the drafting process. An NGO Ad Hoc Group meeting was organised in May. At the meeting a comprehensive review was made of all outstanding proposals, NGO standpoints and future strategy. A further meeting organised by DCI took place in October, which was designed to finalise the proposals that the NGO Ad Hoc Group wished to submit to the 1988 meeting of the UN Working Group. DCI forwarded these proposals to the UN Centre for Human Rights in November. DCI organised further briefing sessions the next month for representatives of Permanent Missions in Geneva.

During the first half of 1987, DCI considerably developed its contacts and its exchanges with UNICEF, regarding the draft Convention on the Rights of the Child. DCI was invited to prepare a full overview of the current status of the draft Convention and of major needs in this regard for the 1987 reunion of national committees for UNICEF, and was also asked to make an oral presentation to the NGO Committee with UNICEF. The Committee adopted a resolution supporting many of the proposals.

A major aspect of the work with UNICEF was the production of a joint DCI/UNICEF Briefing Kit on the future convention. DCI was responsible for the conception and preparation of this kit in three languages, which was distributed widely to governmental and non-governmental bodies alike. DCI's activities for the promotion of this information kit continued at a high level of intensity throughout 1989.

'UNICEF did not show active support for the Convention until the last two years of its drafting process. James Grant, then Executive Director of UNICEF, did not believe that the it could become a reality and therefore did not even take the time to read the draft. The story goes that his colleague Alegra Morella put the draft in Grant's suitcase when he was leaving on vacation, requesting him to look at it. After reading it, he started to change his views on the subject. After the adoption of the CRC, UNICEF gave great support especially to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. And in his last days as UNICEF's Director, James Grant requested US President Bill Clinton to do his best for the US adoption of the Convention.'

Mercedes Roman

Founder and former President of DCI-Ecuador, former DCI-UN Representative in New York

'I've known DCI since 1987 or 1988. With fellow juvenile justice judges, I observed the work on the drafting of the Convention, which was reaching its climax. DCI was very active at the time, just like the International Catholic Child Bureau. Both organisations were aiming for the crystallising of the efforts of the Convention. 110 countries signed it within a month. That was a first. Normally it takes a lot longer for countries to sign these kinds of documents. The Convention really exploded. It is quite rare that in such a process, a small organisation like DCI plays such a major role.'

Jean Zermatten

Founder and director of the International Institute of the Rights of the Child in Sion, Switzerland, member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates

In September 1987, an international meeting entitled "For an International Convention on the Rights of the Child" was held in Lugano, Italy, in which DCI played a prominent organisational role. It was to mark the start of a veritable avalanche of international, regional and national meetings devoted to the future Convention, as well as an ever-growing flood of requests for information about this instrument-in-the-making. DCI was called upon to play a major role in the campaign to arouse interest in and support for the Convention as the reference point for all future efforts on behalf of the child. In 1988 this resulted in DCI being asked to address and/or serve as resource body at more than twenty Convention-focused meetings. DCI also made the Convention known in other ways, such as interviews with the press and with articles in the International Children's Rights Monitor (see p.80). Many DCI sections were particularly active in this.

The run up to the adoption of the Convention

Activity related to the draft Convention on the Rights of the Child reached an unprecedented level of intensity during 1988. Meetings of the UN Working Group responsible for the drafting of the text led to ensuring that the first reading of the entire draft was completed by the time these meetings ended. As a result, the unofficial target – set by UNICEF and the NGOs – of achieving adoption of the Convention by the UN General Assembly at the end of 1989 became a feasible proposition and became known as "Target '89". This prospect had a significant influence on all Convention-related activity during the rest of the year and on many aspects of DCI's work in 1988. The second reading of the draft text was completed in December and the text was set on its way through the Commission on Human Rights, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the UN General Assembly.

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DCI closely followed developments concerning the Convention throughout the year, especially in order to identify and, if necessary, help to resolve any obstacles that might arise to jeopardize the achievement of Target '89 for the Convention's adoption by the UN General Assembly. DCI was called upon on many occasions to explain and urge support for the way in which the definition of the child had been formulated in article 1 of the Convention. DCI was also involved in trying to secure an appropriate response to criticism voiced over the wording of the provisions on adoption.

Perhaps most important of all was the controversy resulting from the decision of the UN Working Group to retain 15 as the minimum age for participation in armed conflict, at the insistence, in particular, of the United States. DCI drafted and distributed a memorandum summarising the history of the article concerned and advocating increasing the age limit to 18. During the year, the International Secretariat, with forceful support from DCI-USA, together with a number of other NGOs including, significantly, the International Committee of the Red Cross, devoted considerable energy to the struggle to amend this provision. Although this effort was unsuccessful at the time, many States notified on ratification that they would apply the minimum age of 18. The overwhelming adherence to this principle of course finally found expression in the 2000 Optional Protocol, which, ironically, the USA has now ratified.

In 1988 DCI organised two major meetings where special attention was paid to the need for balance between [1] advocating the NGO standpoint and [2] not proposing so many amendments and additions that their due consideration by the UN Working Group would jeopardize the achievement of the target fixed for 1989.

'I went to New York with Nigel Cantwell for the adoption of the Convention at the UN General Assembly. That was a memorable moment. It is one of DCI's greatest achievements. The CRC is the most successful UN treaty, with 193 countries now having ratified it. While we were in New York, Nigel and Mike Jupp, Executive Director of DCI-USA, received an award from UNICEF's Executive Director for their work. Tragically, Mike Jupp received this award posthumously. After working tirelessly for many years to promote the future Convention in the USA and within UN circles in New York, Mike died suddenly, just two days before the treaty was adopted at the General Assembly.'

Trevor Davies

Secretary General from 1989 to 1992

‘When it comes to child rights, there is a tendency to think that we’ve “been there, done that”. Now that we have the Convention, we’re done. Let’s move on to the next treaty. But there is still a need to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is still a lack of comprehension concerning children’s rights, what they really are.’

Geert Cappelaere
Co-founder of DCI-Belgium

At the end of October 1989, DCI organised a briefing for representatives of Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva, at which it presented the report of the NGOs’ deliberations. A record 29 governments were represented. During the year, several government representatives requested DCI to provide information on specific questions related to the Convention.

The Great Moment: the Convention’s adoption

In December 1989, DCI was present en force at the United Nations General Assembly meeting that adopted the Convention and the celebrations to mark that event. It was announced that the Convention would be open for signature at a special ceremony at the UN in New York on January 26, 1990. That day, 61 States signed. By the beginning of August, the Convention had been ratified by the requisite twenty States and entered into force on September 2. In March a significant step was taken in furthering the rights of the child with the appointment by the UN Commission on Human Rights of a Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. This was the culmination of much work by NGOs, especially DCI, on the attention that needs to be given to children in particularly difficult circumstances. The drafting of the Convention had taken ten years of hard work by the NGO Group, led by Nigel Cantwell. Of the 42 substantive articles of the Convention, two-thirds were either suggested, modified or supplemented by the NGO Group.

Assessing the global child rights situation

The year 1993 marked the 10th successive year during which DCI served as Secretariat to the NGO Group. The NGO Group consolidated its position as the privileged NGO partner of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Dutch section of DCI, in cooperation with

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DCI’s International Secretariat, published the pilot edition of the International Yearbook on Children’s Rights covering 1993. This was the first attempt to provide a global picture of the variety of violations of children’s rights worldwide over a year as reported by the media or independent human rights organisations. (DCI’s International Secretariat later assisted the Dutch section in the preparation of the 2004 edition.)

In 1994, proclaimed the International Year of the Family by the UN, DCI set in motion the drafting of two optional protocols to the Convention: on children in armed conflict and on the sale and sexual exploitation of children. The International Secretariat worked intensively on developing written materials to explain its concern. A position paper for distribution to ECOSOC participants and a discussion paper developing the supportive arguments were submitted by DCI and the International Catholic Child Bureau to the UN Centre for Human Rights for consideration. The same year, DCI-IS staff gave a number of lectures and seminars on various aspects of the Convention in the United Kingdom and the Baltic States, and in Austria on juveniles in conflict with the law.

DCI continued to serve as the Secretariat to the NGO Group during this period. A plenary meeting was convened in Geneva, attended by representatives of 29 member NGOs as well as several observers, including the International Labour Organisation and UNICEF. As the Secretariat DCI was responsible for preparation of this meeting and follow up, as well as organising regular sessions of the Coordinating Committee of the NGO Group. The recruitment of a dedicated Coordinator for the Group, based at DCI, greatly enhanced the Group’s capacity to play a leading role in facilitating contacts and information flow between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and NGOs.

A regional workshop on monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was organised by DCI and Save the Children Sweden in November 1994, in Dakar, Senegal. The participants representing eight African countries focused their attention specifically on the monitoring process and the enhancement of the NGO contributions to the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the most efficient way to draft alternative national reports.

National campaigns in specific countries were also developed, the national sections being assisted by stronger members and the International Secretariat. An example is the international campaign to denounce child rights violations in Guatemala, an initiative of the Dutch section, in consultation with the International Secretariat and DCI-Guatemala, to urge the Guatemalan authorities to put an end to the gross violations of child rights of which they were guilty.

The monitoring

The Convention drafted, adopted and ratified by the vast majority of countries, DCI’s main objective for 1996 became to strengthen the organisation’s effectiveness in promoting children’s rights. The International Secretariat continued its efforts to promote monitoring and implementation of the Convention at the national level through its national sections. This was to be done by ensuring greater support and technical assistance to DCI national sections in terms of their creation, functioning and coordination, and by increasing support to national coalitions and NGOs working for the rights of the child.

In 1998, the International Secretariat continued to monitor compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international standards by evaluating alleged violations and organising

International Children's Rights Monitoring Unit

In August 1987 preparations began for setting up a new DCI service called the International Children's Rights Monitoring Unit, as a result of a decision adopted in March of the same year by the International Executive Council in London. The purpose of the Unit was to evaluate the respect for children's rights throughout the world on an on-going basis.

Among the specific tasks was the assessment of cases referred to DCI in order to determine the correct steps to be taken, the coordination of reports submitted to the international organisations, the coordination of investigations sponsored by the International Secretariat nationally or locally and the development of instruments and mechanisms for programmes for the gathering and exchange of information. All these activities were to be carried out in close collaboration with national sections and other non-governmental organisations.

The International Children's Rights Monitoring Unit started to carry out its specific work in the last three months of 1987. The Unit today no longer exists in this form for lack of resources, but since early 2006 the monitoring, training and advocacy role has been transferred to the post of Communications and Advocacy Officer.

investigations and actions with DCI sections as appropriate. Fostering international NGO cooperation for children's rights remained a high priority of the DCI International Secretariat.

DCI organised two international forums on children's rights in 1998: the DCI Forum on Sexual Exploitation and the DCI International Forum on Juvenile Justice. The latter took place at the International Institute of Graduate Studies in Geneva with the participation of some thirty experts from academic institutions, national and international NGOs and UN representatives.

Meanwhile the International Secretariat continued to assist DCI's national sections and their partners in holding campaigns to sensitise the general public and especially its children and adolescents, e.g. in Switzerland, Ecuador and Paraguay.

In November 2004, DCI celebrated the 25th anniversary of its foundation with the International Symposium "The Rights-Based Approach to International Cooperation: a Child Rights Perspective". A group of around 100 delegates attended a series of round tables and a panel presentation on different topics. The symposium permitted a frank exchange of views among practitioners, donor countries and international agencies on the application of a rights-based approach to children's issues ranging from juvenile justice to child labour, sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, violence against children, child soldiers, State resource allocation, budget monitoring and the protection of child rights and child participation.

Over the last five years, following the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child has become the core activity of the International Secretariat. To this has gradually been added following the work of the Special Rapporteurs

and certain Sub-Commissions, such as the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, the Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict, or the latest appointment, the Independent Expert for the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children.

Though its core mission remains to promote a holistic, comprehensive approach to the Child Rights Convention, maintaining efficacy in the face of resource restrictions forced the DCI to make choices for its international work as led and implemented by its Secretariat in Geneva. This focus became more and more juvenile justice, a specialised niche where children are most in need of defence. The juvenile justice advocacy and lobbying work of the International Secretariat on behalf of the movement has been focused on the dissemination of General Comment No. 10 (the guidelines of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for States about juvenile justice reform) since the Comment came out in late 2007 (see p 77).

'What makes DCI unique is its adherence to the principles of the Convention and the holistic path the organisation took regarding it. Other organisations focus on some areas of the Convention; they don't take it as a holistic document. I'm not criticizing that, but DCI is different. DCI retains its historic origin that the document as a whole was and is important.'

Helen Bayes
Founder and former Executive Director
of DCI-Australia

Children's Rights Protection Unit

The Children's Rights Protection Unit was created in 1988. It was first called "Child Watch" and the set-up was the result of extensive consultations. The draft plan for it had been examined in detail and amended at the second Latin American Regional Meeting of DCI in Quito, Ecuador, in April 1988. The revised plan stressed the role of the community to which the children belonged as the first line of defence.

The Unit was responsible for monitoring compliance with international standards, evaluating alleged violations, organising investigations where required and developing strategies (with DCI sections as appropriate) to ensure effective response to the situation concerned. The Unit also coordinated DCI's input concerning the violation of children's rights into international human rights monitoring bodies, particularly in the areas of juvenile justice and the trafficking and sale of children.

DCI played a very active role in the mid 1990s in the proceedings of the UN Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. DCI made a concerted effort, with the support of other NGOs, to widen the usefulness of these bodies for addressing issues related to the trafficking of children, the death penalty for juvenile offenders and the violation of the rights of children who are deprived of their liberty. Written and oral statements were drafted and presented on these issues jointly with the International Federation of Terre des Hommes, SOS Torture and Antenna International.

DCI was also active in the NGO Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. Two DCI documents were distributed there: "Protecting Child Rights in International Adoptions," produced by the International

Secretariat, and "Investigation into the Sale and Trafficking of Children in Argentina", a study prepared by an international group of experts working under the auspices of DCI-Argentina. Additionally, DCI invited experts from Thailand and Argentina to give testimony based on their first-hand experience on the subject.

These efforts met with considerable success. The Working Group on Contemporary Forms of Slavery adopted a resolution (Res.1989/42) which expresses "deep concern about [...] evidence of the sale and trafficking of children for adoption [...]", and a draft decision, subsequently approved by the UN Commission on Human Rights during its 1990 session, that authorised the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention took the unusual step of including in its report the full text of both DCI's oral intervention concerning the situation of children in detention, and another on the application of the death penalty to persons under the age of 18 [E/C N.4/Sub.2/1989/29/Rev.1]. On the basis of this report, the Sub-Commission authorised one of its members to prepare a report on the implementation of international standards concerning the rights of juveniles deprived of their liberty. It further adopted a resolution urgently appealing to States that apply the death penalty to juvenile to "stop forthwith" [Res.1989/32 and 1989/33].

The Children's Rights Protection Unit today no longer exists in this form for lack of resources. DCI remains a member of various of the thematic working groups of the NGO Group for the CRC but lacks the human resources at the International Secretariat to play a strong role in them at present.

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What We Do



What we do

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Children and Armed Conflict

DCI has always been deeply concerned with the participation of children in armed conflict and the consequences of child displacement in a time of emergency. Several DCI sections in countries affected by war, such as Colombia, Israel and Palestine, developed specific programmes for child victims of armed conflicts. But the International Secretariat did not sit idle either. One of the first cases it got involved in was the Iranian child soldiers imprisoned in Iraq.

Iranian child soldiers

In May 1982, Iraqi authorities announced that among the Iranian combatants they had made prisoner of war in the armed confrontation between Iran and Iraq, there were also children. By mid 1983, DCI had to conclude that there were no concrete moves to ensure that the rights of these children were being respected.

In December 1983, as a result of several months of contact with the Iraqi authorities, DCI was invited to participate in a mission together with representatives of two other organisations, with the two-fold aim of [1] determining the needs and wishes of the Iranian children and [2] negotiating with the Iraqi authorities with a view toward implementing a programme responding as far as possible to the needs and wishes of the children.

The mission spent several days at the Al-Ramadi camp, 100 kilometers east of Baghdad, where 350 of these children aged 13 to 17 were housed. DCI and Terre des Hommes were able to carry out individual interviews with 78 children, some of whom had been in the camp for more than two years. One of the main findings was that the children would be in favour of having an educational or vocational training programme.

Immediately following discussions with officials from the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DCI submitted a programme proposal to the country's authorities. Despite assiduous follow-up over the following months, no definite response to this proposal was received. Working with Terre des Hommes, an urgent communication was submitted to the Iraqi authorities, and two organisations were asked to send a further mission to Baghdad for in-depth discussions. This they did, but no official agreement was made by July 31, 1984.

The educational and vocational training programme for Iranian child-soldiers in prisoner-of-war camps in Iraq nonetheless finally started in the autumn of 1984. A school building was made available by the Iraqi authorities and teachers were recruited. The official inauguration of the school took place in January 1985.

The courses started immediately under the responsibility of a permanent delegate of DCI and Terre des Hommes, ensuring the organisation's daily presence at Al Ramadi. The courses covered the following disciplines: Arabic, Farsi, English, French, mathematics, typing, carpet weaving and sports.

Unfortunately, Iraqi authorities asked the delegate to leave in December 1985. Thus the programme restarted in 1986 without a permanent representative on the spot. A new delegate of DCI and Terre des Hommes was able to take up his post late in 1986 and gave a new burst of energy to the programme.

In 1987 administrative difficulties and the war situation kept plaguing the programme. For example, a shoe-making class was permitted, but then a regulation came out that forbade prisoners-of-war to wear leather shoes. As the trainees intended to make shoes for their fellow prisoners of war, this discouraged participation in the class. In another case, in order to motivate the young prisoners of war, an agreement was reached that the carpets made in the carpet-making class would be exported to Western Europe or elsewhere. The delegate was later informed that an export licence could not be granted as it applied only to *bona fide* manufacturers.

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In spite of such difficulties the programme was expanded and consolidated in 1987. Unfortunately, it was not possible to increase the number of children attending the courses beyond 150. Many of these detainees spent their youth in the camp.

When the war between Iran and Iraq ended in August 1988, the prisoners of war who were still there went back home. The war had lasted eight years and killed and wounded over a million soldiers in all, thousands of them under 18 years old.

Orphaned and abandoned children in El Salvador and Guatemala

In 1984, the prolonged armed conflict in El Salvador created hundreds of orphaned children as a result of the fighting still ongoing in the country. For many of them the only existing refuge was to be found in the framework of the churches in El Salvador. DCI was requested to undertake an investigation into and evaluation of establishing a comprehensive programme of assistance to these children.

Dr. Roger Plant, Head of the International Labour Organisation's Special Action Programme to Combat Forced Labour since 2002, was appointed as a consultant at the end of 1985 to undertake an investigation mission to El Salvador and Guatemala in July-August 1986. He presented a final report in November in which he recommended that DCI should immediately establish contact with national and non-governmental organisations working for and with displaced persons in El Salvador and Guatemala and inform them of DCI resources and work on the rights of the child, offering to give international publicity on any case of abuse that may arise with regard to displaced children.

'Many of the Iranian child prisoners of war, though they had said they would like to receive education during the preliminary discussions, were reluctant to participate in the programme. They were angry rather than glad. These boys aged 15 to 18 had taken part in this war to die as martyrs and find their 72 maidens in heaven. And there they were, alive, in a prisoners of war camp, with some Western – heathen – "saviours" trying to make them go to school. It couldn't have been worse. We thought we had discussed it properly, listened to them, but as is so often the case in this type of situation, those we were doing it for had a completely different idea. In this particular case, DCI was acting in line with the draft Convention on the Rights of the Child, but many of the children concerned didn't appreciate it at all.'

Laetitia van Haren

Executive Director of the International Secretariat and Programme Officer at the time of the project

“Sarajevo Olympic City” Action

The question of children’s rights in the former Yugoslavian territories led DCI to look at the technical aspects of these rights, when participating in the elaboration of guidelines for child evacuations in 1992 and in a joint mission by UNICEF and UNHCR in 1993. The dramatic situation of the children in Sarajevo also incited DCI to look for a new line of action to mobilize public opinion. This resulted in the elaboration of the “Sarajevo Olympic City” Appeal with the support and logistic help of International Olympic Committee.

Through the intervention of the DCI sections and numerous National Olympic Committees, the athletes who had participated in the Sarajevo Olympic Winter Games of 1984 were requested to sign the appeal for peace and the respect of children’s rights in the region. The first 240 signatures were presented to the press at the end of June 1993. The total number of signatures reached 517. The signatures were kept in Geneva until the situation was restored and allowed them to be officially offered to the population of Sarajevo.

Code of ethics

In 1987, during a conference in Africa, DCI presented a preliminary proposal to the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) and to UNICEF. DCI’s proposal was that the threshold for recognition of armed conflict be lowered whenever the rights of the child were in danger of being violated. Parties involved in the conflict should thus allow neutral persons and organisations to reach children and provide them with such relief and protection as they needed but that the armed conflict denied them access to.

DCI recommended that a code of ethics be drafted, which parties to the armed conflict would recognise and respect. DCI specifically recommended that, together with ANPPCAN, a seminar be organised with the African Union (then Organisation of African Unity) to prepare a code of ethics in the form of an African Declaration or Convention on Children’s Rights in Armed Conflict, as well as a training programme on the need for the participation of African governments in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, then still ongoing.

Children and armed conflict remains such a grave preoccupation internationally that there is a Special Representative of the Secretary General appointed for it whose work the International Secretariat follows. Half of DCI’s sections are in countries with some form of armed conflict and for several, such as DCI-Palestine and DCI-Colombia, child rights violations connected to armed conflict are their main orientation.

What we do

Inter-country Adoption

Inter-country adoption has mushroomed over the past thirty years, a combination of increased “supply” of orphans and abandoned children from armed conflicts, and increased “demand” through the use of contraception in the west leading to a sharp drop in the number of “unwanted” children put up for adoption. But DCI soon discovered that the “right to parenthood” at all costs led to a whole scale of child rights violations, including child trafficking on an unprecedented scale. The protection of children’s rights in inter-country adoption is therefore of the utmost importance.

Children of the war

At the end of the Second World War many children in several parts of the world had no home. Some were orphans, and others were children who had been abandoned for reasons that were imperative at that time; in many countries the ramifications of the war had by no means been confined to the battlefields. The presence of foreign troops brought with it an increase in the number of children born out of wedlock, who were then abandoned due to a strong prejudice against unmarried mothers. In the early fifties, a considerable number of transnational adoptions took place from Greece, Italy and Japan, predominately to the USA. Similarly, following the Korean and Vietnam wars, thousands of children, many of mixed blood, were placed for adoption abroad – all too often, it later transpired, under highly questionable conditions.

During the 1960s and 1970s, childless couples in Europe and the USA were increasingly interested in adopting a foreign child. The Western media was influencing interest in other, “less fortunate” regions of the world, and international adoption was seen as a form of assistance and solidarity with former colonies or countries which suffered natural or man-made disasters. By this time, however, contraception, legalised abortion and a more favourable status for unmarried mothers had diminished the number of abandoned children.

International adoption developed to such an extent that some countries tried to limit the departure of children through regulations and laws (different in each country), whereas other states suffering economic problems authorized new departures. The variety of laws and regulations made it difficult to separate “good” from “bad” adoptions and “good”

from “bad” intents. Although the United Nations had begun showing some interest in the question as early as 1950, no steps were taken toward the elaboration of a convention on the subject.

In May 1982, Swiss newspapers reported on the practice of “breeding newborn babies” in Sri Lanka. The April/June 1982 issue of Human Rights in Thailand revealed that hundreds of Thai children were being kidnapped and sold in Malaysia for 800 dollars or more to couples without children. Others of these children were bought directly from their parents.

At the beginning of 1983, DCI was asked by a French adoption agency to obtain information on two men with addresses in El Salvador who contacted the agency to offer children from Central America for adoption against payments of some 1,300 dollars.

The first fully-fledged edition of DCI’s International Children’s Rights Monitor (Vol. 1 No. 1 in 1983) devoted its main article to examining the issue of inter-country adoption, and the question was regularly taken up in succeeding issues, as DCI – both its International Secretariat and its sections – became increasingly active in the sphere.

Lobbying for international regulation

Respect for the best interests and other rights of the child in matters of adoption is of course primordial, and DCI advocated strongly for international regulations in adoption procedures. DCI therefore welcomed one step in that direction: after fully ten years of negotiation, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted, on December 3, 1986, the Declaration on the Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection

Argentina’s disappeared children

One of DCI’s first cases dealt with the “disappeared” children of Argentina. DCI’s goal was to locate the children who disappeared in Argentina during the *Guerra Sucia*, or Dirty War, the violence carried out by Jorge Rafael Videla’s military government against Argentinians from roughly 1976 to 1983. Kidnapping, torture and assassinations took place and thousands of Argentinians were “disappeared.” Among them were an estimated 500 children, including babies, many of whom were adopted by members of the dictatorship or their colleagues elsewhere in Latin America. After the country’s return to democracy, the grandmothers of the disappeared children formed an organisation called *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*, or Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (referring to the square in Buenos Aires where they always gathered to demonstrate). The group set out to learn whether their grandchildren were still alive, find them, and return them to their biological families.

The Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo became a member of DCI and soon enough it became clear that DCI could not approach this question from an individual case standpoint. The organisation had to approach it as the violation of the rights of a specific group of children. The International Secretariat contacted every DCI member and asked them to write to one of the scores of children’s institutions in the Buenos Aires area, enclosing a leaflet with the photographs of the “disappeared” children and requesting that these institutions get in touch with DCI-Argentina or the International Secretariat in Geneva if they recognized any of the children. Two replies were received, expressing concern and stating that none of the children pictured had been placed in the institution. Within four months of the campaign,

however, six children were found, a number which eventually climbed to twenty. The International Children’s Rights Monitor gave up-dated reports on the situation.

DCI also wrote to the president of Argentina, expressing its refusal to accept the document published by the Argentinian authorities. This document considered, for all legal and administrative purposes, the “disappeared” children to be dead.

‘DCI was a pioneer in stirring the debate on adoption, looking at it from the child’s point of view. That had never been done before: looking at the interest of the child first, instead of the prospective parents, turning the problem around.’

Dominique Leveillé

Information Officer at the International Secretariat from 1985 to 1989

and Welfare of Children, with special reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally.

Non-governmental organisations are particularly aware that such a text can have an effect only if it becomes the object of constant promotion, especially in the country of origin and the ultimate destination of the child. In this regard, DCI participated in a meeting of experts concerned with the implementation of the Declaration at the national level. The meeting took place at the UN in Vienna in June 1987, where DCI presented two reports on the rights of children as laid out in the Declaration, and on the struggle against child kidnapping and illegal placement in international adoption.

Furthermore, DCI focused its efforts on bringing another angle of this issue to the forefront: the protection of children’s rights, the absolute necessity of making a prior examination of the possibilities of placement in the child’s country and the strict observance of the child’s interest in inter-country adoption procedures. In 1988 DCI finalised a document bringing together various unpublished or hitherto little-known articles on inter-country adoption.

That same year, DCI contacted the Permanent Bureau of The Hague Conference on Private International Law concerning inter-country adoption, with the dual purpose of ascertaining the Conference’s proposed programme of work in this area and of making known DCI concerns in terms of protecting children’s rights with respect to the practice. The Secretariat learned that the drafting of a new international convention would begin in 1990, and DCI expressed its intention of becoming closely involved in this undertaking.

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The Hague Convention

Marie-Françoise Lückner-Babel worked at the International Secretariat for ten years as a Programme Officer, mainly on the issues of international adoption and related child trafficking and sale, as well as on sexual exploitation. ‘At some point, due to my legal background and my knowledge in the field of inter-country adoption related to the CRC, I became a bit of reference on the topic’, she says. Lückner-Babel was one of the DCI international adoption experts involved in the drafting of The Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption.

‘It was almost the same amount of work as the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and DCI had even more influence on the contents’, she says. ‘We were really a partner of The Hague Conference. There was a lot of interaction and mutual respect. We had excellent relations with Professor Bucher, who was the Swiss delegate at The Hague Conference at the time. He told Nigel Cantwell and me, “you are dreamers, this will never work”. But in the end we convinced him, and he did a good job during the negotiations. I didn’t go myself because I had little children to take care of at the time. But much of the preparation of The Hague Convention was done in Geneva. The rising of the dough happened here.’

The finalisation of The Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption took place during a three-week diplomatic conference in May 1993. DCI had been a systematic and very active participant at the drafting meetings from the start in 1990, and was able to secure many modifications to the text right up to the end. The Hague Convention is seen as a vital tool in the fight against abuses in the adoption sphere, including sale and

Romanian “orphans”

Following the demise of the communist regime in Romania, at the very end of 1989, a veritable tidal wave of individuals and agencies converged on the country in a bid to adopt children from the hundreds of “orphanages” whose existence had suddenly come to light. An investigation and technical assistance project in Romania, designed to ensure implementation of the inter-country adoption provisions of the CRC, was launched jointly with International Social Service (ISS) in 1990 and resulted in a major programme as of 1991 supported by UNICEF, the Canton of Geneva, the Swiss and Belgian governments, The Hague Conference on Private International Law and the Romanian Orphanage Trust. As a result of the investigation, the Romanian authorities set in place a total moratorium on inter-country adoptions for around nine months. The technical assistance programme was then activated to provide training for civil servants who would be in charge of the process once such adoptions were again permitted.

The Romania exercise was so fruitful that UNICEF requested DCI and the ISS, again in cooperation with The Hague Conference, to carry out a similar assessment in Albania in 1992. In turn, the Albanian authorities also proceeded to revise their adoption system completely as a result of the mission report.

trafficking, and now has almost eighty States parties. In 1994, however, it had just fifteen signatories (it only came into force in 1996). The International Secretariat of DCI was then in the final stages of preparing a brochure explaining the very technical private international law treaty.

In 1994 Cantwell and Lücker-Babel left DCI. With their departure, the International Secretariat lost two experts on inter-country adoption. The activities in this area therefore slowed down. Still, DCI continued to focus efforts on the dissemination of the content and aims as well as the ratification of The Hague Convention on Inter-Country Adoption. This remained an important goal for the organisation at the end of the 1990s.

What we do

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Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children

DCI came to take up sexual exploitation and abuse of children as an issue in itself in the wake of its work on inter-country adoption. Over the years, DCI's involvement in the fight against sexual abuse and exploitation has taken various forms and degrees. At present, this action point is embedded in the comprehensive campaign to end all forms of violence against children in closed institutions and more generally in the juvenile justice system.

Study

Between 1981 and 1982, DCI undertook a preliminary study on the sexual exploitation of children. Substantial documentation was collected and a draft report prepared. DCI entered into an agreement with the Anti-Slavery Society and Save the Children Sweden to cooperate on a wider study for which considerably greater financial resources were assured. The investigation phase of the study was undertaken throughout 1983. DCI put all the material on the subject at the disposal of the study coordinator. The first results demonstrated the difficulty that exists in obtaining concrete information on this subject, but the final report constituted a basis for more systematic and appropriate action against this problem.

Programme

In the course of 1986, DCI and the Central Union for Child Welfare in Finland prepared a report entitled “Child Prostitution, Trafficking and Pornography”. The International Secretariat also decided to establish a programme with regard to sexual exploitation of children. The central idea of the programme was to establish a basic documentation centre on the work undertaken so far in order to prepare interventions with governments, the media and professional groups and other social organisations.

In March 1987 the DCI International Executive Council decided that the programme on sexual exploitation of children should, in part, be carried out by DCI-Netherlands. As a result, the principal task of this section was to gather all available documentation on this question and to evaluate the present situation with regard to decisions and reports published by the inter-governmental organisations. The International Secretariat, for its part, had overall responsibility for the programme, and in particular for cooperation with other international organisations, the preparation

of international programmes of action and advocacy with specific government organisations. Consultations were held with the International Catholic Child Bureau, Save the Children Sweden and Save the Children Norway regarding initiatives in the sphere of sexual exploitation of children.

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The issue remained a concern for DCI in 1988. Although a lack of financial resources meant that in-depth work could not be undertaken in this area, the International Secretariat constantly received inquiries from researchers, journalists and NGOs, especially after the Conference of the European Ministers of Justice in Lisbon in June that year, during which the Norwegian delegation filed a report on this subject. This report contained extensive references to information provided by DCI. Several DCI sections looked into the issue. The Bolivian section forwarded a report on child prostitution in Cochabamba, Bolivia and the Ecuadorian section put forward a project outline of a study on the incidence of sexual abuse of children.

Publication

In October 1993, DCI published an article in the International Children’s Rights Monitor, its quarterly publication, denouncing the sexual exploitation of children by UN troops and field personnel stationed in Cambodia. In February 1994, together with the International Save the Children Alliance, DCI published similar information concerning UN troops in Mozambique. The UN Centre for Human Rights used this information as background for their training programme for staff involved in United Nations operations in Mozambique and later in Guatemala.

Test trial

In 1994, DCI decided to play an active role in a trial in Belgium against a British citizen who was well known for the publication of a travel guide for gay men, “Spartacus”. The

reasons for DCI’s involvement was that this guide also offered information on places and conditions for meeting young people – meaning children and adolescents – for sexual purposes in many developing countries. In the end, the accused man died in 1995, before his trial was completed.

Using data gathered by DCI-Philippines and information from the Documentation Centre at the International Secretariat, DCI and two other NGOs raised the overall question of sexual exploitation of children in developing countries and its direct relationship to the attitude of tourists, encouraged or condoned by travel guides and agencies in the industrialised world that promote a false image of childhood and children’s rights in tourism areas.

Focal Point

The Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation was launched in 1997 under the auspices of DCI and a number of other NGOs participating in the Sub-Group on Sexual Exploitation. The Focal Point on Sexual Exploitation was designated as such at the request of the organisers of the First World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children held in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1996. The aim of the programme was to facilitate and coordinate the work of all partners of the Stockholm Congress: NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and the Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes), UNICEF and the government of Sweden.

A core group consisting of those initial partners, together with the International Labour Organisation, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, INTERPOL and other networks and groupings, agreed to meet regularly to assess the situation.

The first consultation took place in January 1998 in Geneva at the Henry Dunant Institute. DCI’s involvement in this project included fundraising and administration. Mid 1998, this programme became part of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Project

The year 2003 saw the dawn of a new project on sexual exploitation of children: “Creating a world free from sexual abuse committed by adults on children and by children on other children”. This new programme began in June that year with the assistance of the OAK Foundation. Ten sections were involved in the project: Ghana, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Nigeria, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Israel, Palestine, Colombia and Costa Rica. The aim of the project was to elaborate a model to be used in ten countries where DCI sections are active in order to establish a space free from sexual abuse against children.

This programme has meanwhile been closed. DCI is at present not focusing on sexual violence and exploitation but more on violence against children in juvenile justice. It has begun engaging actively with the Committee on the Rights of the Child on violence against children in institutions, in particular in juvenile justice institutions, as a follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children (2006), by Prof. Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, independent expert for the UN. This includes sexual violence. The International Secretariat is currently doing global research into pre-trial detention, also paying attention to sexual violence and exploitation in this context.

Trafficking and Sale of Children

What could be more against the human rights of children than their trafficking and sale as commodities or slaves? The work on inter-country adoption and on sexual exploitation and abuse led to the discovery of the enormity of the trade as a scourge to be attacked in its own right.

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The anti-trafficking and sale of children campaign

In 1985, the DCI International Secretariat started the development of an appeal campaign for information on trafficking and sale of children. A year later it was ready for implementation in a number of countries. The Secretariat circulated a number of documents as background information for those responsible on the local level for the preparation of the appeal campaign.

These documents dealt with the initial steps to be taken for the programme and the international legal instruments available for addressing the trafficking and sale of children. Some documents related as well to the Working Group on Slavery of the UN Sub-Commission for the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. Excellent contacts were also developed with the Centre for Human Rights of the United Nations in Geneva, which was preparing a special report on the trafficking of children.

Country reports

In Pakistan there seemed to be full awareness about the situation of children abducted in labour camps. The campaign was launched there in autumn 1986 and lasted until the end of March 1987. An interim report submitted during the course of the year cited some 485 known cases of abduction, the vast majority involving children.

In Botswana, the trafficking and sale of children was apparently a curious phenomenon to the local authorities and it was felt necessary to ensure an initial exchange of information with them and other non-governmental organisations. Consequently, seminars took place in the three major cities of Botswana in 1986. The follow-up to the seminars was the publication of a booklet entitled “Rights of children in a changing society: the case

of Botswana”, which for the first time set out the whole range of children’s rights issue in this country.

In Bolivia, trafficking and sale of children appeared to be a frequent occurrence in the framework of international adoptions, as well as in certain cases related to drug trafficking. In order to focus attention on specific situations, DCI-Bolivia undertook a study on model cases, which was to be presented publicly. This appeal campaign started in February 1987, but it did not give rise to expected results. It appeared that there existed considerable fear about revealing cases that might lead to the identification of illegal networks, which facilitated the departure of children abroad or the exploitation of children who were abducted or purchased as workers. DCI-Bolivia put together a publication made up of press cuttings and interview reports on instances of sale and trafficking of children. The report was presented to a DCI press conference in Geneva in March 1987.

DCI-Chile submitted a statement to the February/March 1987 session of the UN Commission on Human Rights regarding the problem of Chilean children sent abroad for adoption. The programme was also developed with much interest in Argentina under the direct responsibility of the DCI section there.

Final report

DCI provided the UN Centre for Human Rights with detailed documentation from the country reports mentioned above, which would be incorporated into the report regarding the sale of children that the Centre was preparing for the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. The resulting document, which finally appeared in May 1987, failed to meet the expectations of DCI. It had a vague,

over-cautious style and a complete lack of reference to specific situations in which children's rights had been or were being violated in relation to the practice of sale and trafficking. The negative reactions to this report led the Sub-Commission to demand that it be subjected to in-depth revision and re-submission in 1988.

Trafficking and sale of children was stressed during the whole of 1988 by virtue of the extensive coverage of this form of exploitation. One of DCI's main actions in this area was to give the information at its disposal to the press, IGOs (European Union, United Nations), NGOs and researchers.

Though trafficking and sale of children remains a huge problem, DCI does not pursue it as a main subject for international advocacy at present, for the issue is dealt with by a number of highly competent and powerful players such as the ILO. However, the debate has been reopened recently with an opinion piece in the DCI Newsletter on inter-country adoption, which is going underground and may thus become an even more powerful trigger of trafficking and sale of children.

What we do

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Child Labour and Access to Education

Child labour and access to education is a serious concern in a number of the countries in which DCI works. DCI believes that any initiatives to end child labour must address its root causes (such as poverty) and must emphasise the right to education.

DCI's position

The starting point of DCI's position on child labour is article 32 of the CRC. It recognises the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation as well as from performing any work which is likely to be hazardous, to interfere with the child's education or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Rights of working children

In 1986 the International General Assembly of DCI adopted guidelines on the rights of working children, and the International Secretariat then concentrated on carrying out wide-ranging consultations on this question throughout the year, meeting with many professionals involved in such efforts at all levels. Bearing in mind DCI's overall mandate, a programme proposal was drawn up for the establishment in 1987 of a Unit for the Rights and Protection of Working Children. The proposal was circulated to those potentially interested in providing the necessary support. The aim was to ensure that DCI played a systematic and specific role to combat exploitation of child labour.

On June 1, 1987, the preparatory phase of the DCI Exploitation of Children Programme was launched with the appointment of a full-time officer in charge of developing the basis for DCI specific action in support of the promotion and protection of the rights of child workers, as well as carrying out initial activities in this sphere.

The first task to be accomplished was to establish a core list of contacts and partners for the future work of the Unit for the Rights and Protection of Working Children. To this end, some 250 communications were sent out in the first few months of the operation. The result: 300 individuals and fifty organisations involved in direct action,

advocacy, investigation or information regarding the protection of child labour and its exploitation were added to DCI's address list. The constitution of this embryo network enabled DCI to participate actively in a project of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The existence of the Unit for the Rights and Protection of Working Children added an important dimension to DCI's global activities to arouse awareness about the situation of exploited children and, in particular, to serve as a back-up to national and local efforts on their behalf. The Unit however no longer exists in this form today due to lack of resources.

International Working Group on Child Labour

DCI maintained its concern for the problem of child labour and assured regular contacts with the ILO throughout 1994. It continued to be a member of the NGO Sub-Committee on Child Labour, for as long as it had a Child Labour Programme Officer at the International Secretariat (until 2007). The DCI/ISPCAN International Working Group on Child Labour, which was established by DCI and ISPCAN (International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect), also continued its activities in order to propose effective strategies leading to the eradication of child labour.

In 1995 members of the International Executive Council expressed interest in having DCI keep a leading role in the field of child labour, as the International Working Group on Child Labour was at the time considering forming a separate group. The Council thought the work of DCI and of the International Secretariat should be reinforced and made clearer.

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The issue of child labour was high on the DCI agenda during 1998. The organisation obtained consultative status at the ILO in March of that year and maintained regular contacts with ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). New international labour standards on extreme forms of child labour were discussed that June by the Committee on Child Labour at the 85th Session of the International Labour Conference, held in Geneva.

Child Labour Desk

In 1999 the Council agreed to develop a DCI position statement on child labour based on the standards in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The council also presented a project and budget proposal for a three-year programme (2000–2002) on the establishment of a Child Labour Desk at DCI International Secretariat.

The Child Labour Desk was launched in January 2001. It had three main objectives: [1] to act as facilitator in the field of child labour between DCI and national, regional and international actors (including donors) on the prevention, intervention and elimination of the high-risk forms of child labour as well as in the protection of adolescent labourers, [2] to reinforce and promote initiatives of DCI sections to develop programmes and action on child and adolescent labour within DCI as a movement and [3] to promote child participation in the processes of awareness-raising on child labour. Operated by a full-time Child Labour Officer, the Desk undertook the following activities:

- Information sharing with DCI sections and other active institutions in the field of child labour
- Technical advice and cooperation within sections of DCI and between DCI sections and external bodies

'I'm impressed with DCI's incredible survival strength. I have been long enough at DCI to know many moments where the financial situation was such that we thought the end of the International Secretariat was near. But we always got passed that. There's a strong will to survive. I think it comes from a very strong will to want to keep fighting for children's rights.'

Dannielle Plisson

Founder and Executive Director of DCI-Switzerland

Global March

DCI participated both at the international and national levels in the preparation and implementation of the Global March Against Child Labour, held in 1998. DCI-Costa Rica coordinated the march in the Central American region, and other sections or associated members were directly involved in the national action. Staff members of the International Secretariat were actively involved in the NGO coordination for the arrival of the marchers in Geneva.

The achievements of the Global March Against Child Labour have been described by some as the greatest mobilisation ever for an end to child labour. The march began in Manila on January 17 and went through 43 countries. Some 500 marchers from Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe arrived in Geneva on May 30 and walked to the ILO on the opening day of the Conference, carrying their banners and chanting their slogans. The Global March succeeded in its main objective of mobilising worldwide efforts to protect and promote children's rights.

Education campaign

In 2007, DCI launched a campaign for inclusive education under the title "No Kids Without Education: We Can All Make a Difference". The goal of the campaign is to guarantee that all school-aged working children and adolescents effectively exercise their right to a complete and quality education.

- Monitoring and advocacy for the implementation of international standards in relation to child labour
- Development of research and publications on child labour
- Implementation of activities through DCI sections

Child participation

In 2003 the Child Labour Desk examined the question of child participation. The purpose was to stimulate the participation of certain child labourers in the process of gathering information on the worst forms of exploitation. As a result, [1] 200 to 400 children aged 8 to 12 years were informed about their rights on child labour and on the dangers awaiting them, and [2] 200 to 400 hundred children aged 8 to 12 years in Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica and Ghana received the material and the necessary resources to promote their activities concerning information on child labour inside their own surroundings. These children have become actors and promoters of development in their own regions, and their communities were made aware of child rights and their violations.

Outsourcing of activities

Bearing in mind the unstable situation of the International Secretariat, in 2004 the President, Treasurer and a member of the International Executive Council decided in an ad hoc meeting that some activities of the Child Labour Desk would be outsourced to DCI-Costa Rica. After a detailed analysis of the activities projected for the year 2005, a contract was drawn establishing clearly the responsibilities of DCI-Costa Rica. The Child Labour Desk programme was completed in 2006.

What we do

Children in Conflict with the Law

DCI believes that no child belongs behind bars. In accordance with international standards, deprivation of liberty should be used only as the very last resort in dealing with children in conflict with the law. No kids behind bars!

Study on children in adult prisons

In 1982, the DCI General Assembly approved the principles of a world investigation on the situation of children imprisoned with adults. The Secretariat undertook the necessary steps. At the end of the same year it entrusted the functions of coordinator to Prof. Sanford J. Fox of the Boston College Law School. A consultative committee was composed of DCI advisor Martin Ennals, Alan Grounds of Amnesty International, Tina Dolgopol of the International Commission of Jurists, Dr. Arnulf Nusslein of Terre des Hommes Germany and Yvonne Tolman-Guillard of the DCI Executive Council. Representatives from UNICEF and Save the Children Sweden also participated. The consultative committee met on several occasions between late 1982, and mid 1984.

The International Secretariat was entrusted with all administrative tasks concerning the study. It contacted all permanent missions of governments to the United Nations in New York and followed the contacts with further letters to appropriate government departments in each country. Some fifteen governments responded to the initiative. In certain cases they provided statistical information and even specially written reports on the situation in their country.

As well as collecting all possible information on the phenomenon, DCI contacted over forty individuals in different countries with a view to their carrying out in-depth investigations and submitting “national reports” to DCI. The project coordinator took charge of the final synthesis of these reports.

Daniel O’Donnell, later to become Senior Legal Officer at the International Secretariat, was one of the individuals making a national report. As many others, he got into child

rights issues and DCI almost accidentally, but got completely hooked to both. He researched the detention of children in adult facilities in Costa Rica.

As a result of this report, which was presented at a large seminar organised by the Ministry of Justice of Costa Rica in 1984, the Director of Prisons adopted the following measures: a regulation prohibiting the detention of minors in the same cell as adults; a regulation limiting the detention of minors in such centres, when it cannot be avoided, to 64 hours; reduced use of pre-adjudication detention and temporary detention in juvenile homes. In the beginning of 1986 O’Donnell undertook a first mission to evaluate the effectiveness of the measures taken. At the start of 1987 he finished the final follow-up evaluation of the measures taken by the Costa Rican authorities.

In order to verify the reports of the individual investigators before including them in the final report, the International Secretariat prepared lists of relevant national organisations or persons with particular knowledge in this field in order to avoid mistakes in the reports. Special attention was given to the matter of preliminary discussions regarding which would be the most suitable follow-up by DCI or other organisations to the result of the study (in particular the kind of response to offer proposals for intervention by DCI to alleviate the situation of children in prison in different parts of the world).

Most of the activities of the Secretariat since the end of 1983 concerned the fulfilment of the project objectives, which may be considered as one of the major contributions of DCI to the promotion of children’s rights. The results of the study designed by Prof. Fox were analysed and written up by Katarina Tomasevski, and published in book form in 1986. The English version

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was entitled “Children In Adult Prisons”. The French version was received with considerable interest, with 2,000 copies sold in the first six weeks. The book was later translated into Spanish and German. The report by the late and deeply regretted Katarina Tomasevski is considered the baseline survey and pioneering study of children incarcerated with adults worldwide.

Almost a decade later, in 1994, DCI started a follow-up to the children in prison study. National studies were conducted in some sixty countries into the situation of children incarcerated in adult prisons. The results were published in the respective countries.

UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty

It is no exaggeration to say that the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty (now widely known as the Havana Rules) owe their existence to DCI and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

At the 7th UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (Milan, 1985), DCI organised an ancillary meeting to present the preliminary results of its ground-breaking study on children in prison. The presentation was exceptionally well attended by government delegates. On that basis, the DCI representatives Katarina Tomasevski and Nigel Cantwell and International Commission of Jurists’ Tina Dolgopol began lobbying selected delegations to present a resolution to the Congress asking that draft “rules for the protection of children deprived of their liberty” be prepared for consideration at the 8th UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders (Havana, 1990), as a necessary complement to the “Beijing Rules” for the Administration of Juvenile Justice that were being approved by that same Milan Congress. Although the issue

‘Every government in the world does something with juvenile justice. But not so much because they care about how to help juvenile delinquents, but rather because they worry about figures on juvenile delinquency in their country and how it looks. So there is a lot to be done there.’

Jaap Doek

Founder of DCI-Netherlands, former IEC member, former member and President of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

had not been on the Milan agenda, several governmental delegates in turn roused support among their colleagues to call for the development of such rules.

The resulting resolution passed unanimously, but with the reference to “children” in the title replaced by “juveniles”, and was subsequently endorsed by ECOSOC and the UN General Assembly.

In February 1986, the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Branch of the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs in Vienna wrote to DCI that: “[...] The Branch would be grateful to DCI if it could take the initiative to establish an inter-NGO Committee or task force on the development of the rules under reference (Standard Minimum [sic] Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty). It is also the wish of the Branch to work closely and expeditiously with DCI and other colleagues in the NGO community [...]”

DCI consequently contacted those organisations which had originally expressed interest in working on the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), with a view toward first forming a small working party to put together the initial draft of the proposed Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, which could then serve as a basis for discussion with far wider circles. The working party met in Geneva in May, June and July of 1986. Representatives of Amnesty International, DCI, the World Committee for Consultation, Human Rights Internet, the International Catholic Child Bureau, the International Commission of Jurists and the Save the Children Alliance participated in the meeting. DCI prepared a preliminary document setting out the issues that the working group felt should be covered in the final draft.

In 1987 DCI coordinated a non-governmental task force, which prepared a preliminary draft of the Rules. Daniel O’Donnell, DCI’s Senior Legal Officer, then took on principal responsibility for moving the project forward.

In 1988, DCI prepared a second draft, incorporating extensive modifications based on the views expressed by Latin American experts and correction personnel during a series of seminars on juvenile justice. DCI forwarded the revised draft to the UN and participated actively in the Interregional Preparatory Meeting of Experts, which took place in Vienna in March 1988. The revised draft prepared by DCI was almost entirely incorporated into the official draft approved by the Interregional Meeting of Experts for presentation to the 8th UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and Treatment of Offenders in 1990, and subsequently adopted by the UN General Assembly.

Juvenile justice in Africa

Since 1987 multidisciplinary teams had been set up by DCI sections in a number of countries to ensure the defence of children’s rights on an individual or group basis. The programme entitled “Legal and Social Defence Teams for Children in Africa” was aimed at providing assistance to children in conflict with the law or who were victims of abuse, neglect or exploitation. This assistance was given via the work of interdisciplinary teams/centres that included lawyers, social workers, psychologists and community workers. The programme received financial support from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from the European Commission. This programme is no longer funded, though some DCI sections in Africa still run Socio-Legal Defence Centres of some sort. Several regional encounters have been organised in Africa to exchange experience, draft proposals and train DCI national sections’

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staff in the field of juvenile justice: in Lomé, Togo in 2004 and in Nairobi, Kenya in 2006. A new regional juvenile justice programme is currently under preparation, and a first regional meeting to discuss the draft plan of action took place from 28 to 31 October this year in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Juvenile justice in Eastern Europe

The topic of children in conflict with the law was the subject of a seminar held in Bucharest, Romania, in April 1992. It was organised in cooperation with the Romanian Ministry of Justice, in association with the International Association of Juvenile and Family Court Magistrates, UNICEF and the Council of Europe. This seminar brought together participants from fourteen countries in the Eastern and Central European region. It was designed to make known the relevant provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the three basic UN texts concerning children in conflict with the law (the Riyadh Guidelines, the Beijing Rules and the Rules on Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty), as well as to examine how these could be implemented in the context of the so-called “transition” which the vast majority of the countries in the region were experiencing.

Juvenile justice in Latin America

In 1987 DCI and the UN Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD) began a two-year project concerning juvenile justice and the rights of the child. The project stemmed from DCI’s comparative survey on children in prison with adults, carried out in 1983 and 1984. Meetings between DCI and ILANUD in 1985 and 1986 led to the conclusion that the most appropriate way of approaching this problem in Latin America would be in the framework

No Kids Behind Bars

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has a total of 193 States parties. However, research has shown that, in most countries, the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child continue to be anything but “a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time”, in total contradiction with CRC and other UN standards. Different studies have estimated that over one million children are behind bars worldwide, too often in horrific, degrading, overcrowded and violent conditions.

In 2003, DCI launched the global campaign “No Kids Behind Bars!”. The objective is to reduce the number of children in detention, by promoting the development and implementation by governments of National Action Plans. In order to bring about a shift from the use of detention, the National Action Plans should focus on the necessary measures for the full implementation of articles 37 and 40 of the CRC, and other relevant international instruments. The “No Kids Behind Bars!” campaign was coordinated by DCI-Netherlands until 2008. Since then it has been put on hold, awaiting new funds.

Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice

Defence for Children International participates in a number of working groups and coalitions on the issue of juvenile justice. One of the most important of these is the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice.

This Panel was established by Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 1997/30 to act as a “coordination panel on technical advice and assistance in juvenile justice”. The work of the Panel is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, international standards and norms on juvenile justice and other relevant instruments. DCI is part of the steering committee of the Interagency Panel, and its Secretariat is hosted within DCI’s offices in Geneva. The Panel currently has fourteen members, half of them are UN bodies, the other half consists of NGOs.

The objective of the Interagency Panel is to facilitate and enhance country and global level coordination in juvenile justice by:

- Identifying panel member organisations working at the country level and their activities
- Encouraging respective field offices to work together towards a common approach at country level
- Promoting on-going dialogue with national partners in juvenile justice reform
- Identifying, developing and disseminating common tools and good practices
- Bringing protection of the rights of children in conflict with the law onto the agenda of the international community

of a broader analysis of the extent to which existing juvenile justice and correctional systems effectively protect the rights of the child, as defined by contemporary international law.

The programme consisted mainly of a series of seminars aimed [1] at raising participants’ awareness of modern concepts of the rights of the child, juvenile justice and juvenile correctional institutions and [2] on obtaining information from the participants as to the extent to which their national law and practice is in conformity with such concepts.

The San José Seminar

The programme began with a regional seminar held at ILANUD headquarters in San José, Costa Rica, in May 1987. The governments of the region were invited to nominate two participants: one a career professional in a policy-making position from the juvenile correctional system, and the other from the juvenile court system. Forty people from Central and South America participated in the seminar.

The two-week seminar covered the following topics:

- Structural and criminological aspects of juvenile delinquency in Latin America
- The rights of the child in international law: due process and human rights
- The psycho-social needs of the juvenile and systems of juvenile justice
- Institutional and non-institutional responses to juvenile delinquency
- Arrest and pre-judicial diversion; integrated policies for the prevention of juvenile delinquency
- Juveniles in special situations
- Mechanisms and procedures for the effective implementation of the UN Standard Minimum Rules on the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules)

Other seminars

Two sub-regional seminars were held in 1987 in Xalapa, Mexico and in Montevideo, Uruguay. The basic objectives were identical to those of the San José seminar. Working groups were formed to discuss the implementation of the Beijing Rules and to begin to develop national plans and strategies to this end. During 1988, an additional sub-regional seminar was held in Bogotá, Colombia.

The realisation of national seminars was seen as the next step of the DCI-ILANUD juvenile justice programme. One national seminar took place in 1987 for personnel of the Brazilian juvenile correctional system. In 1988, two national seminars were held, one in Buenos Aires, Argentina and the other in Cochabamba, Bolivia, in addition to a meeting in Quito, Ecuador. Following the regional and sub-regional seminars in Latin America, DCI co-sponsored a seminar on Human Rights and Juvenile Justice for the English-speaking countries of the Caribbean in 1989. The participants adopted a final document concerning needed improvements in the juvenile justice systems of the region.

Evaluation

The initial evaluation programme in Costa Rica in 1987 was the first comprehensive effort to evaluate the functioning of juvenile justice throughout Latin America in more than a decade. It was also the first ever to be undertaken by participants in the system together with representatives of children’s rights and human rights organisations.

Cooperation agreement

In 1989, DCI signed a three-year agreement with the UN Inter-Regional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI), ILANUD and the Inter-American Children’s Institute to promote the study of juvenile delinquency, focusing on the causes, consequences and prevention of delinquency.

DCI also participated in a meeting held in Costa Rica to coordinate research on the historical development of juvenile justice systems in Latin America.

Regional Project

In 2003, a financial agreement was reached between DCI and the Bureau for Europe and the Americas of the Department for Global Ministries of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (Kerkinactie, now merged with ICCO) to implement a regional project on juvenile justice in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile and Uruguay. The proposed implementing period was 2004 until 2006. In January 2005 the overall coordination and management of the project was transferred to DCI-Bolivia.

In Latin America, several processes to reform norms and standards relating to juvenile justice have taken place in order to adapt national legislations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Nevertheless, as was reported by the sections there, the situation differs from one country to another. Some sections encounter problems in the implementation of the activities due to cultural backgrounds as well as economic and social conflicts that surround the child and adolescent.

Another common problem is the lack of time to carry out all activities planned. Some sections underline the difficulties faced when they try to contact institutions, governmental authorities and members of parliament. Another important point raised refers to the difficulties encountered in forging a sustainable cooperation with the personnel of some institutions. Finally, difficulties are encountered in the achievement of the objectives due to limited human resources.

International Network on Juvenile Justice

The proposal for an International Network on Juvenile Justice (INJJ) was discussed in 1994 during the meeting of the International Executive Council in Ghent. The idea came from Geert Cappelaere, professor at the Centre for Children's Rights at Ghent University and one of the founders of DCI-Belgium. 'I wanted to encourage contact and exchanges of information between people and organisations working on juvenile justice worldwide', he says. 'It gives strength to anyone working locally on juvenile justice to be able to say: "I'm not alone in this. There are people on every continent concerned with juvenile justice."'

But while Geert Cappelaere was still playing with this idea, the Austrian government, in view of the lack of coordination in matters of juvenile justice between the Centre for Human Rights, INTERPOL, the Vienna based United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), as well as NGOs, took the initiative of proposing to set up an international network on juvenile justice. This left for DCI the choice between setting up its own network or to opt for a special role in the network proposed by Austria, by volunteering to coordinate it. That role would allow DCI to contribute its experience to this network and to incorporate its own juvenile justice programme into it.

The interested partners agreed that what they needed most was a focal point for information on juvenile justice for practical guidance in juvenile justice policy reform, with technical assistance programmes or social-legal defence teams. Establishing an international network of experts on juvenile justice seemed the best solution. DCI's strategy was to try and secure the coordination of this international network.

DCI programme areas to be developed within the INJJ included:

- Social and legal defence centres
- National studies on children in prison with adults
- Training
- Improving national and international legislation
- Dissemination of information on juvenile justice and children's rights
- Technical assistance to countries through cooperation with the UN Commission for Human Rights, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNODC

The then Secretary General of the DCI International Secretariat, Ricardo Dominicé, was requested to develop a more detailed proposal. The International Secretariat would become responsible for supervision and coordination. DCI received a grant from the Swedish International Development Agency for this role. It had to be spent on programmes that fell within the Network activities, giving priority to concrete actions.

The establishment of the Network was first announced in November 1995 at the Thematic Day on Juvenile Justice organised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It was officially launched in January 1997 on the occasion of the seminar "Children in Conflict with the Law: Challenges from a Children Rights Perspective", held in Dakar, Senegal. The seminar focused on the African perspective with a strong international input.

It was then concluded that two groups were at stake when speaking of juvenile justice: [1] children in conflict with the law and [2] children in contact with the justice system (juvenile justice, or justice for juveniles). There was a discussion on the scope of the approach that should be covered or prioritized by the Network in general and by the Seminar in particular. It was agreed that

the Network should emphasize the need for an early definition of the role of DCI and that of all the different actors.

Partners in the Network

Throughout 1998, particular emphasis was placed on developing the scope of the Network to different types of partners and different regions of the world. The number of partners (198) doubled since 1997, with a substantial increase in the number of partners from academic institutions, such as the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family.

Meetings of the Network were convened on the occasion of national and regional projects implemented in the field of juvenile justice. On each occasion a paper outlining the activities of the Network was presented to the participants. This helped considerably in developing the scope of partners in Europe and other regions of the world such as Latin America, North America.

Financial support towards the INJJ in 1998 was received from the European Commission, the Dutch organisation Kinderen in de Knel, the OAK Foundation and UNICEF.

Advisory Group

Also in 1998, DCI established an Advisory Group for the Network. This body offers a mechanism for regular consultation among partners of the Network aimed at increasing partner participation. It advises and assists in the implementation of specific programmes in the framework of the Network, as well as in establishing the policies and priorities of the Network. On a continuous basis throughout 1998, the Network received and satisfied hundreds of requests for information and advice. The requests came from NGOs, UN bodies, governments, academic institutions, individual experts and the media.

'I think DCI has done a great job regarding juvenile justice since 1991. I worked closely together with Ricardo Dominicé, of the International Secretariat, organising trainings for juvenile justice professionals in Africa. African DCI sections set up Socio-Legal Defence Centres where, for example, parents of juveniles in judicial trouble can get legal advice. These centres are great achievements of DCI and very useful for the local population. They should definitely be kept in place if possible.'

André Dunant

Member of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates, former member of DCI's International Executive Council

Socio-Legal Defence Centres

In order to prevent and address violence against children in conflict with the law, it is necessary to “arm” them with tools so that they can safeguard their rights. One of these tools is to ensure that each child receives proper and free legal assistance. Since this is not provided for in many countries, DCI sections have taken up this task already since the 1980s. One of the lessons learned is that children who are in need of legal assistance often manifest other needs as well, such as family therapy and social services. Therefore, DCI sections offer interdisciplinary services to these children and their families, in so-called ‘Social Legal Defence Centres’ (SLDCs).

SLDCs are maintained by DCI sections in Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Bolivia, Colombia, Ghana, Israel, Macedonia, Sri Lanka, Togo and Uganda. Legal assistance is also provided by DCI-Benin and DCI-Palestine. Target groups are children in conflict with the law, as well as other vulnerable and marginalised children.

Some of the services provided include:

- Social and legal assistance, including referrals when necessary
- Monitoring activities of police stations and closed institutions
- Awareness raising and lobbying, including seminars, the production and distribution of materials (brochures, websites, documentaries, stickers), meetings with officials, dissemination of guidelines for police, forums, workshops, visits to schools and proposals for law reform
- Policy-making training, seminars and workshops
- Possibilities for child participation, such as the ‘child rights clubs’ in Ghana and the ‘children’s parliament radio programme’ in Uganda
- Data collection and research

The Network provides advisory services by responding to requests from partners for information on issues concerning juvenile justice. Partners can seek information on a whole range of different issues, from legal queries on existing national legislation and the age of criminal responsibility in a specific country, to inquiries of a more technical nature.

UN Coordination Panel

Within the UN Coordination Panel on Technical Advice and Assistance to Juvenile Justice, the International Network on Juvenile Justice makes the link among NGOs, academic institutions, individual experts who are partners of the Network and the rest of the Panel. It informs the Network partners about the meetings of the Coordination Panel and informs the Panel about the concerns of its members.

Network Training Programmes

The Network received requests from DCI-Benin and DCI-Cameroon in 1998 for assistance in the implementation of training programmes on juvenile justice for all professionals dealing with children in conflict with the law. Official requests had been received from Benin’s Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs in Cameroon. The national sections asked DCI to identify, through the International Network on Juvenile Justice, regional and international experts to train participants. These programmes were implemented in 1999.

A national training seminar on juvenile justice was implemented in Dakar, Senegal, from June 30 to July 4, 1998. This seminar was recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its 10th session in 1995 and officially requested by the Senegalese Minister of Justice. Leading regional and international experts who participated in the seminar were identified through the

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Network. Participation in this seminar included high-level representatives from the Ministries of Justice, Interior, Child and Family, as well as magistrates, lawyers, superintendents, police officers and social workers from different regions of Senegal. The seminar received extensive media coverage and the recommendations adopted were further elaborated in sub-regional seminars in Senegal from 1999 to 2000.

Socio-Legal Defence Programme

The Swedish International Development Agency provided a grant for DCI’s Socio-Legal Defence Programme on three continents for the period 1995 to 1996. For Latin America, two activities were planned by the International Secretariat with the assistance of DCI-Costa Rica and in partnership with UNICEF, ILANUD and the Chilean Instituto Nacional de Normalización: training activities, and an information kit on juvenile justice in Central and South America. The programme in Asia, to be implemented with the assistance of DCI-Philippines, dealt mainly with children deprived of their liberty.

Supporting the NGO Group on the Convention

The Network on Juvenile Justice supports the NGO Group on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its permanent monitoring of the implementation of the Convention in the area of juvenile justice.

A meeting was convened in January 1998 with the Sub-Group on Juvenile Justice and the NGO Group in order to clarify the relationship between the Sub-Group and the International Network on Juvenile Justice. It was decided that the Network should offer services to the Sub-Group whenever both parts deem it relevant. An example of the services offered by the Network is the briefings organised for national NGOs

coming to Geneva for the Pre-session Working Group of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Network analyses the States’ reports which are submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, with particular attention to paragraphs relating to juvenile justice. The Network also analyses concluding observations of the Committee, taking into consideration recommendations concerning juvenile justice as well as the complementary information provided in particular by NGOs, academic institutions and individual experts.

Lobbying for international standards

In June and July of 1998, the International Network on Juvenile Justice participated in the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rome for the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, and lobbied there together with the Caucus on Children’s Rights to ensure that the concerns of children were properly addressed in the provisions of the statutes of the International Criminal Court.

The International Network on Juvenile Justice also prepared a paper containing specific recommendations. Negotiations were very contentious, and provisions pertaining to the rights of children and juvenile justice were debated at length. The designation of the age of criminal responsibility, the classification of the use of children in hostilities as a war crime, the classification of rape and other forms of sexual violence as crimes against humanity and the protection of child victims and child witnesses in the prosecution of war crimes were the key issues discussed relating to children.

Renewed commitment to juvenile justice

During its International General Assembly in 2008, DCI reaffirmed its longstanding commitment to juvenile justice as its priority issue at the international level. The overall goal of DCI's international strategic plan on juvenile justice is: 'To make the situation of juvenile justice known internationally, promoting actions that aim to include juvenile justice as a priority item on political agendas at the international, regional and national level, and to strengthen juvenile justice systems guaranteeing the rights of children in conflict with the law.'

DCI's work addresses a number of aspects of juvenile justice systems, including:

- The prevention of delinquency and attention to the root causes that bring children in conflict with the law
- The promotion of diversion and the use of alternatives to detention
- The training and professional development of actors in the justice system
- The monitoring and improvement of conditions of detention
- The right to education in places of detention
- The rehabilitation and reinsertion of children in conflict with the law

DCI uses a number of strategies to promote and defend the rights of children in juvenile justice, including advocacy and lobbying, direct intervention, monitoring and reporting, research and documentation, training and capacity building, as well as networking and information sharing.

Specifically, the International Secretariat is currently undertaking the following activities:

- Follow-up project to General Comment No. 10: Children's Rights in Juvenile Justice (see box)
- Annual Reports on juvenile justice
- International advocacy for children's rights in juvenile justice
- Technical support and capacity building with national sections

To celebrate DCI's 30th anniversary, the International Secretariat organises a symposium on the subject of child participation in juvenile justice, again bringing together practitioners, donor countries and international agencies. This time to focus on a very specific right, the right of the child to be heard, to participate in decisions that affect him or her, even when in conflict with the law, with the purpose of exploring this right in all its aspects and thus develop a truly comprehensive approach for the promotion of the realisation of this right.

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General Comment No. 10 Project

The Committee on the Rights of the Child drafted General Comment No. 10 in February 2007. The document addresses the specific obligations of States Parties under Articles 37 (children deprived of their liberty) and 40 (administration of juvenile justice) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is an important tool both in understanding these obligations and in promoting their implementation by governments.

In 2007, DCI was invited by the Committee on the Rights of the Child to develop a follow-up project to General Comment No. 10, with the goal of making it widely known, understood and used by States and other actors. Activities were launched both nationally and internationally with eight DCI national sections in 2008, including Albania, Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Activities at the national level included awareness raising, advocacy, information dissemination, training and capacity building, with a view toward widening the reach of technical support and assistance to State authorities and other justice professionals.

Activities at the international level included: the production of seven fact sheets on different themes in General Comment No. 10; the production of an Advocacy Strategies Training Manual about juvenile justice; the organisation of a pilot training with the Advocacy Manual; the hosting of a Panel Discussion on General Comment No. 10; lobby and advocacy work with the UN Human Rights Council and other international mechanisms.

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DCI is now fundraising for the launch of the second part of the project, with the continued participation of the pilot sections and the participation of eight more DCI national sections. This second phase will involve renewed and intensified awareness raising and advocacy at the international level as well as direct training and knowledge transfer with DCI national sections. Moreover, it will allow DCI the opportunity to respond and adapt to some of the recommendations and lessons learnt from Phase I of the project.

Information and Documentation

From its incipience the International Secretariat has been gathering and processing information on all aspects of children's rights. It has always produced and disseminated publications varying from scholarly works to training materials and communication tools for child rights advocacy. It seeks and maintains relations with the media and diligently responds to a steady stream of requests for advice and information emanating from concerned individuals, DCI sections, NGO partners and governments.

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Information requests

The number of information requests grew steadily over the years, but substantially after the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. By the end of 1990, the Secretariat had processed more than 700 individual requests for information and publications from university researchers, government officials and non-governmental specialists, high school students working on children's rights projects and primary school pupils expressing their interest in the Convention and their concern about the condition of children around the world.

DCI Newsletters

From 1980 to 1992 the International Secretariat published thrice yearly the "DCI Newsletter on UN activities concerning the Protection of the Rights of the Child". The Newsletter was aimed at keeping international NGOs and government agencies updated on work related to children's rights undertaken by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Sub-Commission on Human Rights and other human rights bodies.

The International Secretariat currently publishes two newsletters: the Juvenile Justice Newsletter and the DCI Newsletter. DCI also published the Child Labour Newsletter until 2007. The DCI Newsletter was launched in 1990. The newsletter was well received by the sections, which use it for their own information exchange. The newsletter is published on a bi-monthly basis and aims to make the movement more familiar with individual sections and their work and the context in which they work. It also aims to provide information to sections for their work in the field, especially concerning funding and training opportunities. Finally, it aims to inform sections and individual members about the work of the International Secretariat and the international activities and projects of DCI as approved by the IEC.

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Children's Rights Information Network

In November 1992, DCI and Save the Children Sweden together took the lead in the creation of an international NGO information system to improve the quality and flow of information concerning children's rights. The first objective of this wide project was to produce a directory of NGOs holding original information on children's rights. To achieve this goal, DCI and Save the Children Sweden mandated Human Rights Internet to carry out a survey of all potentially concerned NGOs around the world. The directory, software and a printed version were scheduled to be completed in 1994.

During a first working session in Geneva in May 1994, the members defined and elaborated different products which would be key tools for the future information system: a children's rights NGO Guide on existing information handling sources, a children's rights glossary, standard children's rights reference library, different data bases, training and more. Together with the International Children's Centre, DCI organised a second working session to advance the work on this project in Paris in July 1994. A third working session was held in the offices of Save the Children UK in London, at the end of 1994. The information system was launched in June 1995. It is today known as the Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN) and was hosted by Save the Children UK during many years, before becoming an independent NGO in 2008.

The International Children's Rights Monitor

The spring of 1983 – nearly sixty years after the first Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child – brought with it the first issue of the International Children's Rights Monitor: Volume 0, No. 0. This pilot issue marked the launching of the first regular publication exclusively devoted to children's rights on a worldwide scale and, through this, of a project that Defence for Children International had held at heart for many months. The first quarterly publication of the Information and Documentation Service of DCI appeared in English and French. As of 1986, it was also published in Spanish.

Informing

The Monitor set out to bring together in one place information from a wide range of sources on international children's rights issues, but without being the transmitter of little more than despairing and demotivating litanies of ways in which children are abused, neglected and exploited. On the contrary, it sought to provide independent and objective information and analysis, not only to raise awareness about the problems, but also to point out what had been done, what was being done and what could be done at all levels to combat and resolve them.

The Monitor, being a DCI publication, would reflect the organisation's concern over acts of child maltreatment and exploitation that take place outside the family. It was not, however, conceived as a medium for describing DCI's activities and action. Information on these was and is disseminated by other means, such as newsheets for members and articles and interviews in the media. The Monitor was to be an open forum on children's rights issues to which individuals and organisations alike were warmly invited to contribute.

Discussing

From its beginnings, the Monitor took an active part in fuelling and enlarging the debate on the rights of the child. As the only publication of its kind, it became over the years an information channel and a working instrument appreciated by people from different backgrounds (human rights, media, academic institutions, government and international institutions, the general public, etc.). Its ten years of existence saw the publishing of thirty issues and more than 650 original articles concerning scores of countries.

DCI unfortunately had to stop the publication of the Monitor in 1995, due to the enormous costs of regularly putting out such a publication. Many people approached DCI to re-launch the Monitor, which made it clear to the International Executive Council of DCI how much the Monitor was missed and how valuable it had been to the international children's rights community. No other organisation put out an international news magazine on children's rights from a human rights and non-governmental perspective.

Special issue

Restarting the production of the International Children's Rights Monitor was one of the main objectives of the International Secretariat in the following years. An agreement was signed with Kluwer International Law Publishers, in the Netherlands, to publish the Monitor.

A sample issue to re-launch the Monitor was published in the summer of 1999. The editorial was entitled: "We are back: The Return of the International Children's Rights Monitor". Unfortunately, though, the Monitor wasn't back for long. Again due to a lack of finances, sustaining a periodic publication with the standard of the Monitor was not possible. The last issue was published in September 2002. Volume 15, No. 3, was a special issue on child labour.

The DCI Documentation Centre

The International Secretariat by its very nature and the more so with a dreamer like Nigel Cantwell at its head, was doomed to become right from day one the depository of masses of interesting documents that no-one had the time or patience to sort properly. Until Camille Kryspin came along, the creator and keeper of the DCI Documentation Centre.

'I started to work at DCI as a volunteer at the beginning of 1986, after I was retired from UNHCR, where I had worked as a documentalist in the law library', Camille Kryspin recalls. 'I knew Nigel Cantwell and came to say hello and ask if I could do anything for him. He showed me the piles of papers on his desk and said: "you can help me with that!". That was the birth of the Documentation Centre.'

Shoebboxes and cardboard files

A few years into its existence, DCI had become aware of the need to build up an efficient information and documentation service on children's rights. This service became operational in 1986, through Camille Kryspin's efforts. The Documentation Centre answered requests for information from individuals and organisations and published the International Children's Monitor. It produced publications linked up with other international databases in the human rights and overall child welfare spheres (Human Rights Internet, Human Rights Information and Documentation System [HURIDOCS], UNICEF, International Union for Child Welfare). Desk research was also part of it: an exploratory study on the sexual exploitation of children, and a second one on children in prison were undertaken by the documentalist herself or by interns under her direction.

Camille Kryspin: 'I began to organise all the documents Nigel had started to accumulate on children's rights and related

'It would be fantastic if DCI could start publishing the International Children's Right Monitor again. The magazine was a major success in the field of human rights. This kind of information – in-depth articles on children's rights issues – is available nowhere now. There's a huge gap for DCI to fill. It's a working tool that's really missing, independent expert information on this subject.'

Paulo David

Information Officer at the International Secretariat from 1991 to 1994

‘We started working on computers at DCI in 1987. I had been pushing for that. I was an early adept of Macintosh and one of the first to use Macintosh Pagemaker, a layout programme. Before that, everything was done manually. Nigel Cantwell bought our first Macintosh in 1987, when he went to a meeting in New York. From then on DCI was computerised. I set up the whole computer system at DCI. At first our computers weren’t connected of course, let alone did we have Internet. We worked with floppy disks that we passed around. But that was already a great improvement for us.’

Dominique Leveillé
Information Officer at the International Secretariat from 1985 to 1989

topics. I had to read all the documents in the different languages, analyse them and catalogue them. It was a huge amount of work. We didn’t have computers at that time – too expensive – so I used shoeboxes and cardboard files to organise the documents. Mostly ladies shoes boxes, because the men’s shoes boxes weren’t big enough.’ The caretaker of the building assisted the documentalist by recuperating all the blank index cards that other offices in the building no longer needed because they had acquired computers. ‘These index cards became the basis of the system’, she recalls. ‘Colleagues at DCI provided the shoe boxes in which the cards were filed. Some of the shelves necessary for the filing of documents were also made by the caretaker and DCI staff.’

Expanding the collection

The DCI Documentation Centre expanded its collection to well over 4,000 indexed documents during 1989. The number of requests for information on children’s rights issues from individuals and organisations around the world increased sharply during the course of the year. The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in November 1989 resulted in an unprecedented demand by the media for DCI resource persons to answer general questions on the Convention as well as discuss issues concerning children’s rights, particularly trafficking in international adoptions and children in prison.

‘Filing all these document required expertise and knowledge on the Convention on the Rights of the Child’, Camille Kryspin explains. ‘You had to know all the articles to be able to note: “This document concerns this article of the Convention.” It was an enormous amount of work. I didn’t do it all by myself though. For a long time I worked together with Flora Duke, who later returned to England. She was working with me as a

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The ladies of the Documentation Centre: Camille Kryspin (left) and Flora Dukeand (Right), with DCI-IS secretary Mireille Brüderer (middle).

volunteer. We came to DCI every morning from 9 A.M. until 1 P.M. One thing I recall vividly is when we heard that the Red Cross would be getting rid of old folders. We took Flora’s car and drove to the Red Cross to go pick them up on the kerb.’

Modern times: the heydays

The long awaited computerisation of the Documentation Centre came true in 1990. A drive for sponsors to equip the Centre with computers was finally successful when in November DCI secured an in-kind grant from Digital Equipment Corporation. DEC offered to set up the Centre with two new 40 MB computers and printers that were to be delivered in early 1991. Database software was procured from the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO. Camille Kryspin: ‘It was great to have computers of course, but we had no idea how to use them. A friend of

mine who was working at UNESCO came over to teach us. She helped me set up a digital library according to the UNESCO library system.’ The Children’s Rights Database was set up in late summer 1991 and by the end of the year 700 entries had been made on the new system using standardised formats (HURIDOCS).

As part of the computerisation initiative, the Children’s Rights Thesaurus of key words for indexing was updated and published. Since then a number of other organisations working on children’s issues have requested the thesaurus and expressed interest in developing a system similar to or compatible with DCI’s indexation.

In 2003 contacts were established with the School for Librarians in Geneva in order to have students in their last year come to DCI

as volunteers to evaluate the Centre and propose improvements to the cataloguing system. The same year, a new cataloguing system was obtained from UNESCO and installed, permitting the cataloguing of the entire Documentation Centre. It enabled DCI to transfer the information onto the Internet.

Reorganising the DC

Towards the end of 2007, the International Secretariat experienced severe financial difficulties. Rebecca Morton, Executive Director at the time, explains: 'The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child suddenly underwent a financial crisis and had to cease subletting several offices from the IS. The Secretariat thus lost a major source of income. This came at a time when other funding sources were also coming to an end.' The IS was forced to immediately cut costs, and it sought to lower overhead costs by reducing office space.

At that time, the Documentation Centre was occupying two large offices. Many of the documents stored in the offices were by then available electronically. The decision was thus taken to sort through the documentation, dispose of documents that were available online (mostly Committee on the Rights of the Child reports and other UN documents) and to keep all documents pertaining to DCI and its history, and documents that were not available online. 'All the documents that we wished to keep were transported downstairs to a large room in the basement – all the time ensuring that we kept the same numbering and sorting system', Rebecca Morton recalls. 'Books and more precious documents were kept upstairs in the offices of the Coordinator, Juvenile Justice Officer and Executive Director for safety and easy reference.' This transfer of the remainder of the collection to the basement and the de facto closure of the Documentation Centre, which included the severing of the online link to the data base

as even the virtual link proved too costly to maintain, was a severe blow to Camille Kryspin who had built the collection up almost single-handedly. She nevertheless continues her professional data collection on the Internet and her cataloguing of incoming hard copy documents, in spite of difficulties encountered. All these data are safely stored on DCI's back up server, awaiting funds to restore the internet link to these incredible resources.

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Where We Are



Where we are

DCI Spreads Around the World

This history of DCI would not be complete without recalling the immense task of creating the DCI sections. The national sections and associated organisations are recognised as members of Defence for Children International by the International Executive Council.

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Network Development Unit

Within the International Secretariat, the Network Development Unit, created in 1989, was made responsible for developing and strengthening DCI sections and a network of individuals and organisations working for children's rights in all parts of the world.

The Network Development Unit actively coordinated programmes and activities of its growing network of sections as direct providers of vital information to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. It facilitated the exchange of ideas and experiences among the sections and provided the channels enabling them to have an effective input in the work for children's rights at the international level. The Unit no longer exists in this form today due to lack of resources.

The sections play a key role in determining and implementing policies and priorities within DCI and they ensure that the organisation is a grassroots movement. They pay a yearly fee to the International Secretariat which is in line with their annual budget to contribute to the work done at the international level.

DCI's network now counts forty sections and two Associated Members worldwide. As new DCI sections around the world continue to be created, the International Secretariat provides them with guidance on the requirements and orientation desired for the establishment of national branches, and assists them in accomplishing the legal and formal requirements for recognition as DCI sections.

Developing sections

The first section to be founded was DCI-Colombia in 1982. A section in the USA opened in 1983, followed by the Netherlands in 1984. The International General Assembly

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'DCI national sections are unique in their willingness and ability to speak out on difficult and sometimes controversial issues such as juvenile justice. Many other organisations shy away from these questions because they are not "donor friendly" or "fashionable", but throughout its history DCI has sought to engage local, national and international authorities and organisations on these difficult questions, stimulate debate and often bring about lasting change by influencing decision making and policy formulation.'

Rebecca Morton

Executive Director of the International Secretariat from 2006 to 2008

‘It is a great personal pride to belong to the founding group of DCI Latin America. Not because of the personal title that this implies, but because I’m convinced that Latin America as a collective group has constituted and constitutes one of the most active promoters in the development of the DCI movement. Therefore, this 30-year celebration is also a tribute to the coworkers from all over the world and particularly to the dear friends in Latin America.’

Norberto Liwski

Founder and President of DCI-Argentina

in Xalapa, Mexico, in April 1986 marked a turning point in the development of the international movement through the formal approval of new statutes and bylaws, which, amongst other things, formalised the creation of DCI sections. The faster the development and extension of DCI sections, the more effective and efficient DCI action worldwide would be for the promotion and protection of children rights.

With a view to securing as soon as possible a balanced network of DCI sections in all regions of the world, the International Secretariat undertook a number of measures for promoting their creation. These included the appointment within the Secretariat of staff member Ricardo Dominicé, responsible for all questions regarding sections. They also included support for national activities, participation of sections in the International Secretariat programmes, joint organisation of regional meetings and decentralisation of information output.

The Argentinian and Chilean sections were created in June 1986. DCI-Ecuador was established in 1987. Brazil, Costa Rica, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and Uruguay followed. Among the Latin American sections, Costa Rica took a leading role, developing programmes for the whole region. The creation of eighteen sections in Africa also gave the African region the possibility to develop its participation in the struggle for child rights. The recognition of DCI-Senegal brought the number of DCI sections to nineteen in 1988.

Although the movement remained strong in Latin America, it wasn’t expanding in other regions of the world to the degree expected. Five new sections were officially recognised in 1989: Brazil, Canada (English and French), Guatemala, Nepal and Spain. Efforts were undertaken in 1989 to begin the process of

establishing future DCI sections in Australia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Venezuela and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Network Development Unit also undertook initiatives in 1989 aimed at providing financial support to sections. The International Secretariat successfully approached donors on behalf of projects developed by DCI-Ecuador, DCI-Uruguay and DCI-Israel.

Developing programmes

During 1990 DCI launched two kinds of training programmes designed to support section development. One was established in collaboration with the International Institute of Education in Washington D.C., to enable members of DCI sections to further their training at the International Secretariat and attend meetings of the UN Human Rights bodies. The President of DCI-Chile was selected to benefit from the first internship starting in February 1991.

The South-to-South Exchange Programme is the second training initiative launched in 1990 and designed to benefit DCI sections from developing countries. This first experimental phase the programme, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, consisted of inter-regional exchanges among African, Asian and Latin American DCI sections. The first exchange involved members from DCI-Philippines and DCI-Ecuador. Three exchanges took place in 1996 by the coming to Geneva of Virginia Murillo Herrera (DCI-Costa Rica), Agnes Quitoriano (DCI-Philippines) and Sylvie Npono (DCI-Cameroon). The experience was very positive and the Secretariat sought additional funds for a three-year programme. The International Secretariat received 36 applications for the 1996 South-to-South Exchanges and selected four.

The DCI network by the end of 1992 comprised sections in a total of 39 countries. The revised statutes of DCI also provided for a new

category of membership, that of associate membership. Any organisation that is committed to the aims and objectives of DCI and is actively carrying out programmes that support and further their aims can become an Associate Member. In each country there can be only one national section, so if there is already a section, for others only associate membership is possible. This option is also attractive for organisations that have a wider mandate than children’s rights alone.

National meetings

DCI sections, with the support of the International Secretariat, concentrated on the organisation of national consultative meetings in six African countries which took place in April and October 1993. More than 400 participants gathered to establish the basis for legal and social defence teams and centres in their respective countries.

The national meetings represented a valid contribution to the promotion of children’s rights in each country and were part of the International Secretariat strategy aiming at supporting DCI sections’ action for the protection of children’s rights in cooperation with the existing NGO network at the national level. Following the orientation emanating from the national consultation, each section drafted a project proposal for the centres/ teams, including budgetary provisions. DCI sections and the International Secretariat intended to explore potential financial support for making the proposed centres/ teams fully operational during 1994.

In October 2002, all the African sections met in Ghana. The central theme of the meeting was child labour. In May 2003 all the Latin American sections met in Montevideo and focused on juvenile justice. The President of DCI attended both meetings in order to make use of the opinions expressed by the sections.

Sections coming and going

DCI is a decentralised movement with very independent sections, free to organise their work, from fundraising to employing people and choosing their field of specialisation. There is no permanent supranational body to impose coherent development of the international movement in all the sections. It is all a matter of movement wide discussion, with the IEC strategically leading the discussion, but what comes of it depends on the will, choice and capacity of the sections.

By 1998, DCI's international movement had extended substantially, with the number of its national sections and associate members around the world numbering 66 on all five continents. But sections differed wildly in capacity. Some sections may have started off with the best of intentions, but could not whip up the financial or intellectual resources to keep going. This affected the movement as a whole, for a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.

The Credentials Committee therefore proposed to suspend or exclude sections that did not live up to their commitments, i.e. had not submitted an annual report for three years in a row, had not paid their membership for three years, or had not been in communication at all with the International Secretariat: they simply seemed to have faded away. This was approved first by the sitting IEC, then by the next IGA. The Assembly decided that quality was more important than quantity. This explains why there are fewer (forty) sections now but, new applications have been submitted recently.

Moving the International Secretariat?

The rapid growth of the number of sections at the start of the 1990s led to a questioning of the desirability of keeping a strong International Secretariat in expensive Geneva. Most of the new sections were in the south,

in Latin America, and felt the coordination and facilitation was better and cheaper if done from a base in the south, with just a small outlook post and advocacy unit in Geneva.

But other sections held a different view. For them, DCI could not fulfil its mandate if the key role of its headquarters were to be reduced to internal information-sharing and efforts to secure financial and other means for sections to develop national programmes. DCI must undertake international investigations on new areas of concern, make available credible multi-country information and analysis at a global level, have an active and significant presence in the international community so as to advocate and mount pressure on children's rights issues. Geneva was the birthplace of the movement and the "international crossroads" for human rights activity, so they proposed to keep the International Secretariat there. After all, the sections were not financing the IS, they only paid a modest annual membership fee.

But reality acted as a brutal wake up call from this ongoing discussion. In the early 1990s it became clear that DCI's growth had not been handled optimally: the Secretariat's budget had reached a size that the traditional donors would not cover. Drastic staff cuts and scaling back of activities were the answer. Since then the Secretariat has never been able to recover fully the strong international profile to which it aspires in DCI's name, nor to provide the sections with the services desirable to promote unity in the movement and for optimal effectiveness of their vital action for children's rights in their respective countries.

The debate over what would be a realistic and desirable role for the International Secretariat has never been resolved, but its outcome is an essential element in any decision about the Secretariat's location.

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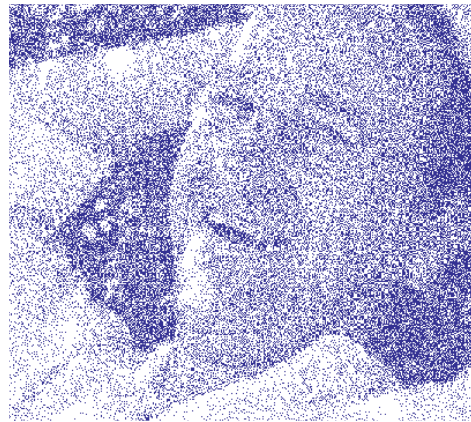
Where we are

Section Profiles: a Selection

The following section is composed of a series of portraits of DCI national sections from all continents that have stayed around throughout the years and thus contributed greatly to the accomplishment of DCI's mission. The size, means and activities of the current forty members varies widely, with some member associations well funded with large numbers of paid staff, and others basically individual volunteer efforts.



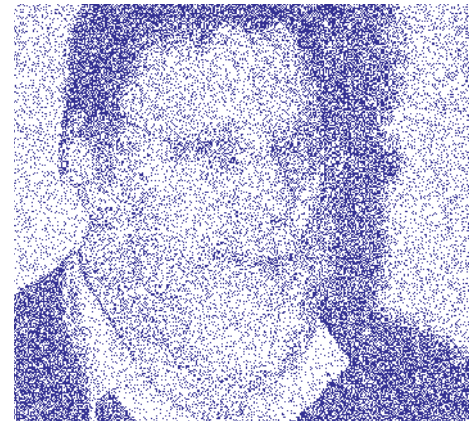
Helen Bayes
DCI-Australia



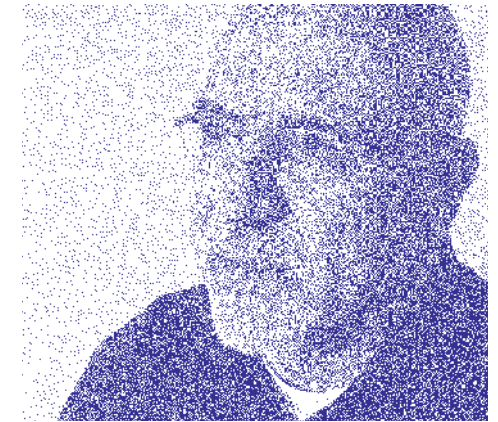
Geert Cappelaere
DCI-Belgium

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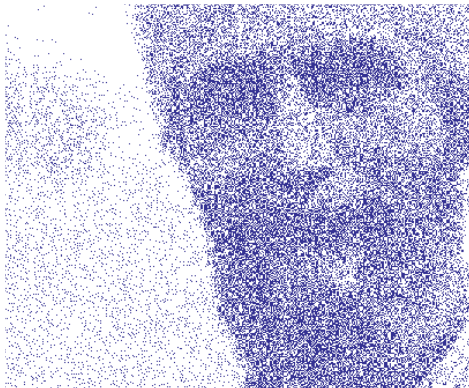
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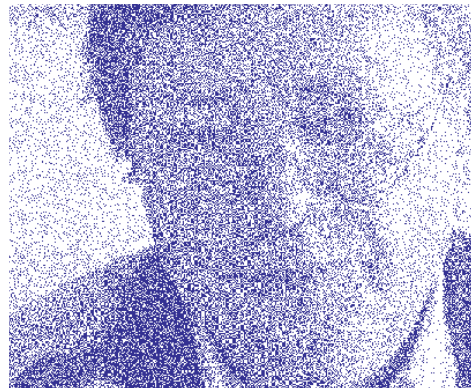
Philip Veerman
DCI-Israel



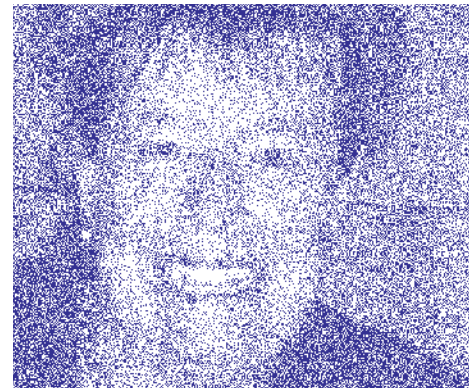
Rifat Odeh Kassis
DCI-Palestina



Jorge Vila Despujol
DCI-Bolivia



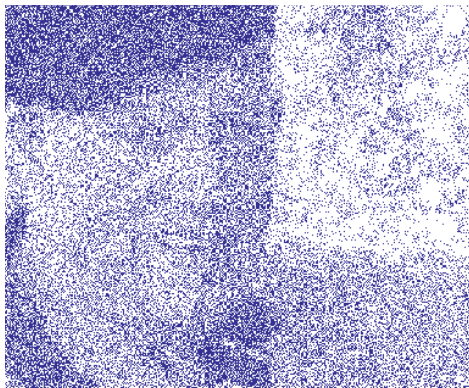
Jaap Doek
DCI-Netherlands



Dannielle Plisson
DCI-Switzerland



Ibrahima Diouf
DCI-Senegal



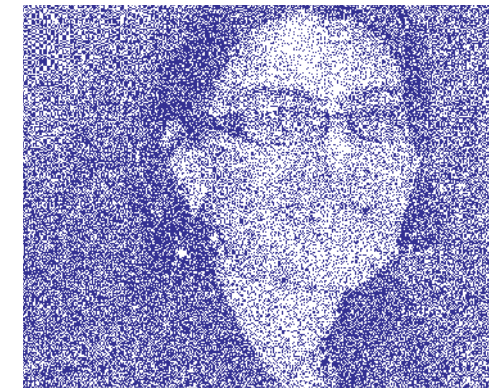
Les Horne
DCI-Canada



Rita-Félicité Sodjiédo
DCI-Benin



Norberto Liwski
DCI-Argentina



Virginia Murillo Herrera
DCI-Costa Rica

DCI-Argentina

City	Buenos Aires
Year founded	1986
Founder	Norberto Liwski
President	Norberto Liwski
Employees	25
Volunteers	20

Creation

Norberto Liwski: 'It all happened when the Argentinian Adolfo Pérez Esquivel obtained the Nobel Peace prize in 1980, during the military dictatorship in Argentina. Adolfo and I had been illegally imprisoned for a very long time. I was a school teacher and doctor, always in touch with the most humble sectors of society, and my professional and social activities always involved the defence of human rights. The creation of a body that defends children's rights was always a priority for me. Adolfo was aware of my involvement in the fight for human rights in general and in particular children's rights, and introduced me to DCI in 1984. At that time it was a new organisation. Soon afterwards a meeting was held in Colombia, where several people of different nationalities met to try and organise national DCI sections in Latin America. As the debate for the draft Convention on the Rights of the Child was still evolving, the air of our meeting in Colombia was full of passionate deliberation. Should we promote DCI in Geneva or start national sections of our own? We came to the conclusion that we should do the latter and that is how the DCI sections in Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Chile and Argentina were created almost simultaneously. It was a powerful moment.'

Programmes

'Through the years, DCI-Argentina has developed a strong advocacy strategy to fight on several fronts at once. We currently focus on four main areas to bring about

change. The first is increasing the impact of public policies to guarantee a rights-based approach, creating the conditions to make the State, the institutions, and society in general respect children's rights. This is a very important focus that includes the creation of national institutions that promote and protect children's rights, as well as the creation of the mechanisms for data collection and processing to allow monitoring child protection as stipulated in the Convention. Our second area of focus is violence against children, a worldwide problem and an important issue for DCI. The implementation of our juvenile justice programme led us to develop methods for the prevention of violence against children and the creation of a model for adolescent collective citizenship, a strategy that is implemented in the framework of our juvenile justice programme. Our juvenile justice programme forms part of a regional project that is implemented in ten Latin American countries. The main objective of this project is to reduce juvenile detention, and promote the use of alternative, educative punishments instead. The adolescent collective citizenship strategy plays an important role therein. Finally, a lot of time and energy is spent on everything related to the trafficking and sale of children. This is a big problem in our country, and different programmes to combat it are running simultaneously.'

Achievements

'In the last 26 years DCI-Argentina has accomplished several feats. First of all, it has influenced the social and institutional agenda for children's human rights in Argentina. Second, it uncovered taboo issues, forcing society to open its eyes to them. Think of the trafficking of children or the institutional violence against adolescents. Against these two grave violations DCI keeps undertaking strong

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actions in various parts of the country simultaneously. Thirdly, I think DCI-Argentina has had a strong influence on public policy development. DCI's voice has been considered and recognized when new laws and legal definitions were drafted, and when policies or programs were put into practice. We have also successfully contributed to the development of coalitions, networks and cooperation agreements of the civil society with public institutions characterised by respectful, autonomous, and productive coordination of joint programmes for the implementation of children's and adolescents' rights'

Challenges

'The difficulties DCI-Argentina has encountered were linked to the economic and social cycles of the country. In these 26 years of recovered democracy, we have been through situations of great economic and social commotion. Children were among the main victims of the economic crisis. In 2002, when the economic crisis was at its height, the number of children living below the poverty line was 70 percent. It is approximately 35 percent today. One of the problems deriving from the economic crisis is that the international community's analysis of Argentina's national economy concluded cooperation programmes should not be maintained. This has inevitably limited the operative capacity of the country's economy. In particular it put a brake on the programmes for development cooperation. Even if the implementation of the Convention is a step forward, it creates new obstacles. One of them is that in the Convention's name, many pre-Convention institutional practices may persist, hidden in the document's jargon. For that reason, one thing that worries us is the effective implementation of the Convention so that the rights it initiated can become reality.'

'Between 1987 and 1992, Martin Ennals was President of DCI. I was then Vice-President for the Americas. He was British and I am from Argentina, with this whole history of armed conflict in the South Atlantic between our countries over the Islas Malvinas (Falkland Islands) to divide us. But Martin and I were good friends. In 1992, DCI held its second International General Assembly in Granada, Spain. As DCI's president, Martin would have led the IGA, but sadly, he died a few months before the set date. At the start of the meeting Martin's wife and son came to Granada, to tell me in person that Martin's last wish had been that his friend Norberto Liwski should replace him as the President of the DCI Assembly. We both knew that in human rights in general and children's rights in particular, nothing or nobody could divide us.'

Norberto Liwski
DCI-Argentina

‘I will have been involved with DCI for 25 years next year. The people who work for DCI do it out of conviction for the rights of children and adolescents. Their vision is not blurred by any other interests. I think that is amazing and beautiful. I am grateful to be part of such a movement.’

Jorge Vila Despujol
DCI-Bolivia

DCI-Bolivia

City	La Paz
Year founded	1985
Founder	Jorge Vila Despujol
President	Jorge Vila Despujol
Employees	45
Volunteers	14

Creation

Jorge Vila Despujol: ‘In 1985, the International Secretariat invited representatives of several Latin American countries to a meeting to get to know DCI and incite us to create DCI national sections in our respective countries. The idea pleased me and as soon as I returned from the meeting, I went on to start up DCI-Bolivia. As I learned in DCI’s presentation at the meeting, DCI’s perspective from the beginning was one of children’s rights, even before the Convention was born. I attached great importance to this line of thought, which accounted for more political work and social involvement. This form of engagement meant not giving one particular right to one particular child but engaging ourselves to defend all the rights of all children. This meant the State and society had to go through a major mentality change. Setting up a DCI-Bolivia was a first step towards that change. Indeed, I really felt Bolivia was lacking an organisation that dedicated itself to children’s rights.’

Programmes

‘We started our work by focusing on the defence and dissemination of children’s rights, as well as the denunciation of the violation of these rights, in order to influence both government and society. In the past 25 years, we kept this focus by adapting our activities to the changing realities of the country. Today, we are focussing more on child and adolescent participation by strengthening our political strategy. As a country we are going through a process of big

change, visible in the New Constitution. This means that, at the request of the government, we are collaborating on the re-adjustment of all the laws referring to childhood in the new Political Constitution of the State.’

Achievements

‘I believe that all our actions have been very important in their own time. From the beginning, when we started with direct defence of children whose rights had been violated (we had more than 10,000 cases per year) to the lobby for several laws for children and adolescents which virtually all were accepted, until today, when we are focussing as much on the political aspects as on the involvement and participation of children and adolescents. Children and adolescents have participated in the drafting of the laws and have achieved full participation in grass-roots initiatives, indigenous organisations and so on. Today, their voices and votes are heard.’

DCI-Costa Rica

City	San José
Year founded	1994
Founder	Virginia Murillo Herrera
President	Virginia Murillo Herrera
Employees	15
Volunteers	4

Creation

Virginia Murillo Herrera: ‘I started working at DCI as a volunteer in 1991 in Geneva. I was studying in Geneva and working at the International Service of Human Rights (SIDH), coordinating a training programme for human rights activists and defenders from different parts of the world. The SIDH office was in the same building and next door to DCI. So, one day I knocked on DCI’s door and I received a nice welcome from Ricardo Dominicé and the rest of the staff. That’s how I got involved. It was just before

the 1992 International General Assembly in Granada, Spain. At the International Secretariat, I supported communications with the Latin American sections, helped on a child labour project and attended the UN meetings. When I returned to Costa Rica in 1994, I started a Costa Rican section. DCI was already in the country but with no projects, no structure and no staff.’

Programmes

‘DCI-Costa Rica has several key focuses but works under the vision of promoting and defending all the rights of children for all children. We work not only in Costa Rica, but also in Central America and we participate in several regional and international projects. We work on juvenile justice issues, juvenile violence, child labour, sexual commercial exploitation, violence against children, child participation, migration, right to education, HIV/Aids, early pregnancy, and recreation and expression. One of the issues we concentrate on is the prevention of violence against and by juveniles, and the role a child rights-inspired juvenile justice system could play in this. We do this through direct intervention in affected communities and youth groups, and through lobby and advocacy with the decision makers and public opinion for main-streaming an educative, restorative juvenile justice system.’

Activities

‘An example of direct action concerning the prevention of violence is the project “Youth and Human Rights” carried out in 2000 in the impoverished urban community of Rincón Grande de Pavas. Starting point of this intervention was an analysis of the situation of adolescents and youth and a mapping of all the interventions that had occurred or were ongoing in the community. This survey was undertaken by and involved the people of the community themselves. In 2001, a “Project for the Prevention of

Juvenile Violence” was carried out to reduce the levels of violence in “mara” (gangs or the bars where they hang out) in four marginalized urban communities of the metropolitan area of San José. In 2002 and 2003, the project activities were extended to two other communities, where a project to promote the rights to education, recreation and identity was implemented. This experience led to the Project “Disarming Violence” conducted between 2006 and 2008. All these social transformation experiences aim at the prevention of violence against and by adolescents and youths in vulnerable communities and the strengthening of a specialised Penal Juvenile Justice system.’

Challenges

‘Costa Rica is not a priority country for the funding agencies, even if numerous children are living in conditions that require immediate response, like poverty, violence, exclusion, exploitation, etc. It has been very challenging to look for funds. Costa Rica is also a country where the institutional structure has been quite strong for a long time. Even though this has changed, it is not easy to defend children’s rights when the Government is so inward looking and thinks it is doing the right thing when it is actually constantly violating children’s rights. Costa Rica has kept an international reputation of being a country that respects human rights and with a good standard of living; today this is no longer the case and it has been difficult to prove the contrary and show the real situation that is affecting many people.’

Achievements

‘Despite these circumstances, DCI-Costa Rica has influenced policies and legal reforms. We built methodologies that are now also used by others, we made key impacts in the communities we are working with and we have assisted many children. DCI-Costa Rica

is one of the sections that coordinates and communicates very easily and frequently with all the structures and regions of DCI. DCI-Costa Rica has coordinated regional and international projects within the DCI movement and has written many projects, some of which have been funded and implemented in the movement. As the Vice-president for the Americas from 2005 to 2008, I played an active role in this.’

DCI-Australia

City	Canberra
Year founded	1992
Founder	Helen Bayes
Former Executive Director	Helen Bayes
Executive Director	Judy Cashmore
Employees	1
Volunteers	1

Creation

Helen Bayes: ‘In the mid 1980s, my husband and I wanted to adopt children and were advised to do this as an inter-country adoption. It was quite controversial at that time and we wanted to be sure that what we did was ethical, so I started to research the controversies. I found the The Hague Convention in Inter-country Adoption and the draft Convention on the Rights of the Child. From there on, I became aware of the rights perspective on all my concerns about children, such as poverty, cruelty and rapid urbanisation. I started reading more widely and gained a broader perspective of the human rights of children. DCI at that point had enormous expertise in the area and they sent me a vast amount of inspiring and disturbing information. Through all this reading, I was transformed into a child rights activist. It was all new for me and when I went to the International General Assembly of DCI in Spain in 1992 and met Nigel Cantwell, I became convinced that respect for children’s rights is very important for the future of

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humanity. I knew compassion for children, but it made me aware of the importance of justice for children, of listening to them, of equal human rights with adults. It all seems natural now, but it wasn’t at the time. I became very active and met up with other Australians interested in these issues. Then the International Secretariat encouraged me to start an Australian section.’

Funding

‘When I started DCI-Australia, it was difficult. People said: “You’ll never get any money for it, why not do it through an established organisation?” But I was very impressed with DCI and the people involved in it and I wanted to be part of that movement. There was a growing interest in other NGOs and I just started doing what seemed necessary to start an organisation: a newsletter, a website. Membership grew but everything we did was voluntary work. We had no money and did not employ staff. When we were coordinating the first alternative children’s rights report, we received a grant from the Australian government which paid for the travel and editing. It was the only funding we received because we did not fit into existing categories and all human rights work in Australia then was terribly under-funded. We couldn’t even get tax deductibility for donations because we were an advocacy body, not a child welfare service. It was also important to remain an independent voice. When I explained the need for money to possible donors, the answer was: “We can see the value of your work, but we want to give to an established welfare organisation that gives real services to children.”’

Programmes

‘We focused on sexual exploitation of children, child labour, physical punishment, foster and adoptive care. In 1994, we organised a major conference to raise awareness about children’s rights. It was

attended by the government welfare services that at the time still had mixed feelings about children’s human rights. In the mid 1990s we campaigned against the mandatory detention of juvenile offenders. That law was especially harmful to Aboriginal children who committed minor offences from hunger, boredom or homelessness, but locking them up has been particularly damaging to Indigenous children and adolescents. We raised it as a child rights issue and the law was repealed. Our Vice-president and later, President, Danny Sandor, was a strong advocate for children, especially in relation to family law, juvenile justice and children’s legal representation.’

Cooperation

‘DCI-Australia today is surviving, but is not currently running any projects. DCI-Australia continues to be involved in the alternative or non-government report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2005, our President Judy Cashmore was part of the small team that presented the report in Geneva, and returned once more to Geneva with a member, Megan Davis, to hear the Government’s presentation, with financial support from UNICEF and Save the Children. The major issues then and now are the rights of Indigenous children and those of asylum seeking minors. We send a representative to national consultations on human rights and our members attend conferences on child and youth services and issues. We circulate child rights information and maintain our website which is used quite a bit. Recently DCI-Australia became the platform for a campaign for law reform to protect children from physical punishment. We have a committee made up of people who generally focus on Australian issues rather than international ones. Our contact with the International Secretariat is therefore less frequent, but is still very important to our efforts.’

DCI-Canada

City	Toronto
Year founded	1988
Founder	Les Horne
Executive Director	Les Horne
Employees	none
Volunteers	15

Creation

Les Horne: 'As a teenager in the UK, I worked with street kids and got my first experience of how the rights of some children could be seriously violated. As the Superintendent of a young offenders' facility in Canada, I saw a judicial system that often trampled children's rights. For ten years I was the Provincial Child Advocate in Ontario with a mandate to protect the rights of children in this province. As I learned about the work that DCI was doing internationally, and particularly DCI-USA Executive Director Mike Jupp's work in the United States and South Africa, I recognized a similar motivation to the movement that was working to develop child advocacy in Canada. I became a member of DCI-USA until Mike and I jointly founded the Canadian section in 1988.'

Programmes

'DCI-Canada is mandated to educate Canadians on all matters pertaining to children's rights and to encourage an awareness of and a commitment to children's rights, particularly among children and adolescents. While the methods of reaching the objectives may have grown and expanded over the years, the primary objectives have remained the same. Our commitment to include the voices of children in all of our work has become our trademark and sets us apart from many other organisations which purport to speak on behalf of children. Although we do not have joint projects with other sections, we regularly provide information to the International Secretariat on common issues

such as juvenile justice and the rights of child soldiers. We have worked closely with Roméo Dallaire, a Canadian senator and former Commander of the UN Peace force in Rwanda, who has taken a leadership role on the issue of child soldiers.'

Challenges

'The work of DCI-Canada has almost entirely been carried out by volunteers. We do not engage in significant fundraising as we do not want to compete with organisations that raise money for primary needs such as food, water and shelter. The exception to this is in our Canadian International Development Agency-funded projects where we do hire staff. This lack of funds has sometimes conflicted with our ambitious objectives. Another difficulty is the lack of understanding of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by elected officials at all levels of government. This issue has been described in considerable detail in a report by the Senate of Canada called "Children: the Silenced Citizens". In addition, because of Canada's size and the fact that Canada is a federation of provinces, it is difficult to find a consensus on some critical issues involving children. An example of this is our lack of progress in dealing with First Nations children. Yet another difficulty facing DCI-Canada is the lack of response on the part of the Government of Canada to concerns expressed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.'

DCI-Netherlands

City	Amsterdam
Year founded	1984
Founder	Jaap Doek
Executive Director	Sjoera Dikkers
Employees	20
Volunteers	3

Creation

Jaap Doek: 'It was 1979, the International Year of the Child. Somehow I got to know Nigel Cantwell, who was working at the International Union for Child Welfare in Geneva. A few years later, in 1984, I founded DCI-Netherlands. The beginnings were difficult, as elsewhere, due to a lack of money. The basement of the house of a colleague on the Nieuwe Achtergracht in Amsterdam functioned as the DCI-Netherlands office. Everybody was a volunteer. In the beginning we focused on sexual exploitation, especially child pornography, because it was a hot topic in the Netherlands at the time.'

Funding

'Stan Meuwese took over the chairmanship of the DCI-Netherlands board in 1988. He was working for the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports at the time and had experience in youth policy and juvenile justice. In 1991 the ministry was reorganising and gave him the opportunity to work full time for DCI-Netherlands. As of January 1992, he became the Executive Director of DCI-Netherlands. He stayed on until 2007. He was the first paid employee. In that way, the Dutch government, through the Ministry of Health, greatly contributed to the development of DCI-Netherlands. The subsidy of the Dutch ministry stopped in 1995 and the organisation had to look for other funds. It has been quite successful at that. DCI-Netherlands has grown slowly but steadily, with approximately one new paid employee per year over the last fifteen years.'

'In the celebration following the passage of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the United Nations, children from every country were asked to include their comments. When they began to make their speeches they were told that they must speak only in English. This rule bewildered and angered some of the children but the anger did not find a voice until a francophone child from Quebec insisted on his right to speak in French, to the delight of many in the audience.'

*Les Horne
DCI-Canada*

‘DCI was the voice on child rights in the 1980s. I felt it was important to become part of that global movement. It made me realise that everywhere in the world, people were working on the same issue. Being part of DCI unified these worldwide efforts, that all came together in the Convention. It was really amazing to participate in DCI conferences in the 1980s. There was such a good vibe about it. You really felt a connection with everyone in the room, despite all the differences.’

Geert Cappelaere
DCI-Belgium

Programmes

‘When Stan came on board, DCI-Netherlands’ work was restricted to the publication of a newsletter about children’s rights and a few other activities. We had organised a conference about the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and one on child labour. Stan immediately started to develop projects and programmes that could be financed by different ministries of the Dutch government and by organisations like Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland (SKN). Today DCI-Netherlands focuses on advocacy, awareness raising and information. It organises actions in schools and published a handbook on the Committee on the Rights of the Child with appendixes on other international laws and treaties related to children’s rights. Constant efforts are made to organise activities related to juvenile justice, like a training programme in the Caucasus. DCI-Netherlands often organises international activities, sometimes under the umbrella of the International Secretariat. The study on children behind bars is one example, or the child labour study. Sexual exploitation is of course still on the agenda but that’s mainly ECPAT’s terrain now – ECPAT stands for End Child Prostitution, child pornography And the Trafficking of children for sexual purposes. It’s a Dutch NGO that DCI-Netherlands works closely with.’

Achievements

‘DCI-Netherlands has done a lot of research on the rights of minor asylum seekers and refugees in the Netherlands. It managed to get political attention for the issue. Changes were introduced in the law to guarantee children a fitting treatment within the standard refugee procedures. Also, DCI-Netherlands undertook action to make sure that children of immigrants who are born here can stay in the Netherlands, with their parents. The situation today is not exactly how DCI-Netherlands wants it, but it has improved.’

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DCI-Netherlands is also the main initiator of RAAK (Reflection and Action Group on Child Maltreatment). The group was led by DCI-Netherlands for a long time. It first started as a pilot in several regions in the Netherlands and was so successful that it is now being introduced in the rest of the country. DCI functioned as a catalyst to put and keep the item on the agenda. All in all, DCI-Netherlands is an accomplished, well functioning organisation with a proven record of activities and achievements. It is treated with respect by governments and politicians and its authority is recognised in the field of children’s rights. It has managed to get a strong foothold in the Dutch development sector.’

Cooperation

‘DCI-Netherlands houses the secretariat of the Dutch National Coalition on the Rights of the Child, which reports to the UN Commission on the Rights of the Child and follows up on the recommendations. UNICEF, SKN, Save the Children Netherlands and a few other organisations are in this coalition. They constantly work on having the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the agenda. Their efforts come together in the alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The coalition also monitors whether the Dutch government respects the Convention on the Rights of the Child and pays special attention to the participation of children and adolescents. This is a continuing process. The Netherlands has recently presented its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Now it’s the coalition’s job to make sure that the Dutch government takes steps according to the recommendations it got from the Committee.’

DCI-Belgium

City	Brussels
Year founded	1991
Founders	Geert Cappelaere, Jean-Pierre Bartholome, Benoit Van Keirsbilck, Frans Spiesschaert, Eugeen Verhellen
Executive Director	Benoit van Keirsbilck
Employees	2
Volunteers	15

Creation

Geert Cappelaere and Benoit van Keirsbilck: ‘At the time we set up DCI-Belgium, there were quite a few NGOs and associations working on child rights’ related issues, but they were isolated from each other, there was no NGO coalition. DCI seemed the right forum to bring together all these efforts in one strong social movement. Following good Belgian tradition, we decided to create a Flemish and a Walloon sub-section. There is one section recognised by the international movement, divided in two branches; each of them is a separate legal entity. Not to emphasize our differences, but to give people the possibility to contribute to the children’s rights debate and work in their own language. Our independence did not stop us from working together of course. The Walloon section has also always been working closely with the French section and the Flemish section with the Dutch. For instance, DCI-Netherlands and the Flemish DCI-Belgium share a magazine on children’s rights. Most of the work for the magazine is done in the Netherlands because that section has a professional, paid staff. In Belgium we’ve always only had volunteers.’

Programmes

‘DCI-Belgium has always kept child protection and juvenile justice as a main focus. Other issues we took on from the beginning on were education, recreation,

migration and child participation. DCI-Belgium's main goal is to monitor that Belgium respects the engagements related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In recent years, DCI-Belgium has been publishing the "New International Tribune on the Rights of the Child", a French quarterly newsletter which is published internationally and treats of all questions concerning children's rights at the international level. DCI-Belgium has also successfully gone to court against the Belgian government on juvenile justice and on migration issues, the Constitutional Court and other national jurisdictions but also to the European Court on Human Rights. DCI-Belgium actively participates in the structuring of the Children's Rights coalitions – Flemish and French and the NGO platform "Minors in Exile" and in the work of the European network "Separated Children in Europe Programme". DCI-Belgium also always contributes to the NGO alternative report on children's rights in Belgium for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.'

Achievements

'In the past few years we realised training guides on children's rights for adults, social workers and teachers and published several books on the CRC, to make it accessible to children and professionals. We successfully fought against detention of children within the migration system in Belgium; in this frame, we organised an "opinion court" that has condemned the Belgian state for the use of detention of migrant children. Together with the Belgian Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, we set up an "Interdisciplinary Centre for Children's Rights" that gives training on children's rights and does research in the field of children's rights, especially on juvenile justice and alternative measures. We have prosecuted the Belgian Government each time a new law was against the

Convention on the Rights of the Child and won a few cases in the constitutional court. We have organised many trainings in Belgium but also in several African countries on children's rights and juvenile justice. In 2008, DCI-Belgium successfully organised, in narrow collaboration with the International Secretariat, an international conference entitled "Violence Against Children in Juvenile Justice Systems" with high level speakers, attended by 200 people coming from many countries from all parts of the world. At the same time, DCI-Belgium successfully organised, again in close collaboration with the International Secretariat, the 10th International General Assembly. Most of the sections were able to attend this IGA, which played an important role in strengthening and consolidating the international movement.

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DCI-Switzerland

City	Geneva
Year founded	1985
Founder	Dannielle Plisson
Executive Director	Dannielle Plisson
Employees	2
Volunteers	10

Creation

Dannielle Plisson: 'I was a teacher in Geneva and working in one of the less wealthy areas of the canton, with children from a poor socio-cultural background. Nigel Cantwell was a friend of mine and he told me about this organisation he founded, Defence for Children International. I thought it would really be complementary to my work as a teacher and I was keen on getting an international perspective, so I decided to become a member. Soon after, with a few other people, I decided to create a Swiss section. I was already active in the Swiss teacher's union and an international teacher's union. Giving children a voice was already a matter close to my heart. With DCI-Switzerland, I hoped to contribute to improving the situation of disadvantaged children in Switzerland. I always kept my job as a teacher and worked for DCI voluntarily. Now that I am retired, I have more time for DCI.'

Funding

'We get funding from Swiss private banks, the Loterie Romande and the Swiss Confederation. Our members pay a yearly fee. With that, we manage to pay our translator – Switzerland has three official languages – and produce some publications like our newsletter, "Bulletin suisse des droits de l'enfant", and the "Cahier des droits de l'enfant", a publication on themes related to child rights. I have also written a few illustrated children's book about children's rights and we once published a series of interviews with Swiss personalities

'I remember the time when, during one of our fundraising activities, some of my pupils had come to help sell DCI pens. It was close to Christmas and we were standing outside the Toys 'r Us. People were leaving the store with enormous packages, but when the children asked them to buy a pen for 3 Swiss Francs to support DCI, people turned them down. The children were outraged. They realised people were willing to spend lots of money on their own children, but just didn't care about other children.'

Dannielle Plisson
DCI-Switzerland

‘I remember the 10th anniversary of the Convention. The central theme was child participation. Nigel Cantwell had supervised the children attending the meeting of the Human Rights Committee in Geneva. The children immediately demanded to become member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and had a few other requests. During the plenary meeting, many children started to cry because, they said, none of their propositions had been adopted. All present felt a bit uneasy at this sight, because everybody in the room agreed on children’s rights, but not on the king child. The following day at DCI we laughed at Nigel, because he himself, as he told us, had suggested the idea of child participation in the implementation of their rights with the drafting of the Convention. And there he was, ten years later, personally and directly confronted to his idea put into practice, in a very large interpretation of his initial idea.’

Rita-Félicité Sodjiédo
DCI-Benin

who had been in a difficult situation as a child or teenager. A lot of our work focuses on informing children, parents and teachers about children’s rights. I regularly visit schools to talk about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, because children’s rights are still a vague term for many people. There is still a lot of confusion between the idea that “children can do anything they want” and the concept of children’s civil rights. People say: “Children have all the rights, they don’t stand up for us in the bus”, things like that. It’s difficult to explain what children’s rights are, what the concept means. We also focus on informing children themselves about their rights and how they can use them.’

Programmes

‘Our main programme at the moment is juvenile justice. Switzerland is currently working on its second and third report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, both to be handed in next year – the government is a bit behind. We are waiting for the reports to come out to read them, complete them where needed and perhaps add some recommendations about the situation of minors in Switzerland. We are making an inventory of practices and conditions in (preventive) incarceration to prepare a chapter with recommendations for the reports. It’s quite difficult because in the Swiss political system, juvenile justice is a cantonal matter. That means laws are different in each canton.’

Issues

‘The main problem in Switzerland is imprisonment of children. According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Switzerland ratified, minors cannot be imprisoned with adults. However, in some cantons, there are so few juvenile offenders that there is no separate prison for them. They end up in a separate section in an adult

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prison. But that area is not always properly sealed off from the adults’ quarters, which means that children still meet adults in prison, with all the possible consequences. One of the ideas to resolve this problem was to build special centres for children in a few cantons and send all the children there. But then some would end up too far away from their families and those could then not visit them anymore. So that’s not the solution either. It’s still a matter of discussion and quite complicated really.’

Achievements

‘One of the great successes of DCI-Switzerland was our contribution to the new Swiss Constitution in 1998. In the Constitution project, there was no mention whatsoever of children’s rights. We then suggested to add an article in two parts about children’s rights. The first part was about protection of children, the second about how they can exercise their rights. We approached some fifty Swiss children’s organisations to back up our proposition and article 11 was added to the Constitution. Another matter I am proud of is our successful lobby to push the Swiss government to quickly ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Switzerland is normally very slow in ratifying international documents because they first want all the laws to concord with the document. This time it was different and that was partly thanks to our work.’

DCI-Benin

City	Cotonou
Year founded	1990
Founder	Rita-Félicité Sodjiédo
Executive Director	Rita-Félicité Sodjiédo
Employees	1
Volunteers	4

Creation

Rita-Félicité Sodjiédo: ‘I got to know DCI in 1989, during my internship in human rights at the International Centre for Human Rights in Geneva. Towards the end of my internship, one of the modules was on child rights and was led by Trevor Davies, Secretary General of DCI at the time. After the course, I went to the International Secretariat to get more information on the creation of a section in Benin. As soon as I arrived in Benin, I talked about it to a colleague who was a children’s judge. We united our efforts with some fifteen friends to create DCI-Benin.’

My engagement in children’s rights has very personal reasons. You need a good reason to get involved like this in a movement. Otherwise I would have given up long ago. A short time before my internship in Geneva, I was Substitute of the Public Prosecutor in Porto-Novo, in charge of the hearing of minors. A case caught my attention in which a child was involved. He was the only one who had been arrested although about ten people were involved. It was a typical example of the voice of a child against an adult. The child had been used to commit a theft in house that was being renovated. At the end of the workday, his boss had instructed him to hide under the stairs and stay inside the house until night time, so as to open the gate from the inside for his superiors to come and steal from the owner of the house. The boy did as he was told. But his boss hadn’t told him what to do after the burglary. So the boy naively went back to

sleep under the stairs. In the morning, when the theft was discovered, the proprietor only found the boy and took him to the police station. At the hearing, the child clearly explained the course of events and all the adults denied their involvement. But the court wasn't fooled.'

Programmes

'DCI-Benin was the first organisation to work on the awareness raising about children's rights in Benin. With the support of UNICEF we formed the local NGO's and teachers on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We then worked on the creation of Socio-Legal Defence Centres, a project coming from DCI headquarters. Being a magistrate, I was the technical coordinator for the project in Africa. That was in 1993. Unfortunately, we never got proper funding to finance the project in Benin. The non-realisation of this project was quite de-motivating for the DCI-Benin members, especially since other organisations took over the idea. DCI as a movement today focuses on juvenile justice, but the weight of this issue is not the same everywhere. In my country for instance, the most pressing problem is child trafficking and all our programmes focus on that: Benin is considered to be a hub for child trafficking in Southern West-Africa.'

Achievements

'Today, DCI-Benin is recognised for its expertise in child rights. We have concentrated our work on public information on the topic. In 2004, with funding from the Dutch organisation Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland, we made posters with texts from the Convention that we adapted for pedagogical purposes. The texts come from a booklet we published. The first part contains adapted texts on the rights of children and women, the second part contains the complete text of the Convention and other international

instruments. This document is very much in demand. Unfortunately, since the funding stopped, we haven't been able to publish a new edition.

DCI-Benin is a member of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child in Benin. We are also members of the National Consultative Council on Human Rights, the National Coalition on Children's Rights and the National Observatory for the protection of children against trafficking and labour exploitation. All this assures us a constant presence in the field. We recently discussed a project with UNICEF about the dissemination of the children and women's rights. The idea is to create mobile legal assistance clinics offering services for women and young girls. We were allowed to run a small experiment in the commune of Adja Ouèrè on July 30 this year and the results were very satisfying. Therefore, we believe this partnership with UNICEF will be continued.'

Challenges

'What can one really do without the means to do it? For a long time, DCI-Benin was denied funding because potential donors argued that we are an international organisation that should get its funding from the International Secretariat in Geneva, when in fact DCI sections are supposed to pay membership fees to the Secretariat. On top of that, for every project prepared in partnership, partners ask a contribution, varying from 25 to 40 or 50 percent. Often we cannot meet these requirements. I think the International Secretariat should make better use of the expertise available in the movement worldwide. For example, I am magistrate in Benin. I have a degree from Lyon University in international human rights law. My thesis was on placement of children, child labour and trafficking of children. I think I am an available but un-used resource of DCI.'

DCI-Senegal

City	Dakar
Year founded	1989
Founder	Ibrahima Diouf
Former Executive Director	Ibrahima Diouf
Executive Director	Mohammed Laye
Employees	none
Volunteers	10

Creation

Ibrahima Diouf: 'In the 1980s I was a social worker in Dakar. I once came across DCI's newsletter, which I found very interesting. I became a member of DCI and awaited the newsletter eagerly. I also ordered some documents every once in a while. One day I got an invitation to visit a friend in Zurich. I decided to make a detour through Geneva to visit DCI. I met Nigel Cantwell, Per Tegmo, Ricardo Dominicé and Dominique Leveillé who encouraged me to set up a Senegalese section of DCI. I did so upon my return to Dakar. That was in 1988. I remained Director of DCI-Senegal until 2002. My work was basically strategic: planning, coordinating, fund-raising. My background in social work helped me a lot. It gave me insight in the work on the ground. Before setting up DCI-Senegal, I had been working as a specialised educator in the field of juvenile justice, providing psycho-social educational help to children, working with children in prison and their families confronted with contemptuous police and judicial authorities.'

Programmes

'DCI-Senegal's work concentrates on three levels. The first is juvenile justice. We were the first among NGO's in Senegal to talk about it. Working directly on issues regarding juvenile justice was a good way to gain quick visibility in the non-governmental sector. An important part of DCI-Senegal's work is on the training of professionals in the juvenile justice sector. The second issue DCI-Senegal has been working on is

'The day I went to Geneva to present the alternative report on children's rights in Senegal to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in 1995, was an important day for me. It was the very first time that I found myself standing in front of an international organisation of that size and authority. My job was to make a good presentation of the report in the name of DCI-Senegal and the organisations we had worked on the report with. It was a very enriching moment.'

*Ibrahima Diouf
DCI-Senegal*

‘DCI-Israel was the first to lobby in Israel for signing and later ratification of the CRC. It wasn’t that easy because the reaction of many there was: “These kind of documents are always used against us so why would we sign this one?” Once Israel had ratified the Convention, in 1991, I organised a meeting at the Goethe Institute in Tel Aviv and invited UN General Vatsset to attend and he came in his UN limousine. Funny was that being new in Israel I had asked a very famous Israeli singer, Yoram Gahon, to read a summary of the Convention at the ceremony. Only later did I hear that his wife was only 16 when he married her.’

Philip Veerman
DCI-Israel

child labour and the protection of working children. We have been working closely with the International Labour Organisation on this issue. We made a lot of progress on access to health and education for working children. A third area of work consists of training professionals who have to work with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. A fourth issue I could add is strategy. We did a lot of lobbying around the 2000 presidential elections in Senegal. We asked the candidates to state clearly in their campaign what they concretely would be doing for children. Also on the lobbying level, when there is a document to be ratified, DCI-Senegal takes up its pilgrim’s stick and goes knocking on doors to lobby for the cause. Such was the case for example when Costa Rica requested the Committee on the Rights of the Child to be upgraded from ten to eighteen members.’

Achievements

‘DCI Senegal has been successful on three levels. The first success was that, after only a few years of existence, we were able to surround ourselves with organisations like ENDA Tiers Monde and Espoir Sans Frontières to work together on the NGO alternative child report in 1995. DCI-Senegal played an important role in the presentation of that report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The second success was the creation of a coalition of children’s rights organisations in Senegal. This I did as a consultant for Save the Children Sweden, being that the Executive Director position of DCI-Senegal was never a paid job. The third great success was the opportunity of organising the International General Assembly in Senegal in 1997. Finally, we often got interns from abroad who considered DCI-Senegal a good learning field. That filled us with pride.’

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Cooperation

‘There has always been a good cooperation with the other African sections. That was facilitated by the fact that I served two terms from 1989 to 1997 as Vice-president for Africa while working for DCI. But I always felt the cooperation among the African sections could have been better. It only existed at the level of the Socio-Legal Defence Centres. The cooperation with the International Secretariat was always good. We participated faithfully in all the campaigns and the International General Assemblies organised at the international level and paid our yearly contribution. The work of DCI-Senegal has slowed down a bit now. It’s difficult to keep an organisation running properly with a structural lack of funds and only volunteers. But then again, that’s a common problem for small NGOs.’

DCI-Israel

City	Jerusalem
Year founded	1987
Founder	Philip Veerman
Former Executive Director	Philip Veerman
Executive Director	Hadeel Younis
Employees	1
Volunteers	10

Creation

Philip Veerman: ‘I have been involved with DCI for twenty years. In 1987 I went to Israel to do research for my PhD about children’s rights. I was doing research about Janusz Korczak, a Polish Jewish children’s writer and educator who died in Treblinka with the children of his orphanage. This man was a pioneer in children’s rights. I got in touch with Nigel Cantwell while I was doing this research and we started a correspondence. Per Tegmo was Secretary General at the time. I suggested starting a DCI section in Israel and they were thrilled with the idea. There were many human rights issues to address. When I first started DCI-Israel, I did it “on the side”. But then the International Executive Committee asked me to get more involved. And so I did. I really enjoyed working for DCI although it was often a financial struggle. I felt I was doing something very concrete for children, under the flag of an international organisation.’

Programmes

‘The first years, DCI-Israel’s work focused on promoting the idea of legal representation. In the Israeli juvenile courts there were probation officers but hardly any lawyers and the judges were against it. We were experimenting at first in different courts, paying lawyers a retainer and having cases referred to them. We sent lawyers abroad to train them in juvenile justice issues. Later, with money from Save the Children Sweden, we were able to represent also Palestinian minors in courts in East Jerusalem. These

were minors who had been throwing stones or were arrested for security offences. Other funding made it possible to hire full-time and part-time lawyers and a legal coordinator.

From the beginning, DCI-Israel initiated visits to jails, youth wings of the prison commissioner and military detention centres, monitoring the conditions. These activities we did with a small committee including an Arab speaking lawyer and often a retired Supreme Court Judge. The DCI staff members could personally interview the imprisoned minors without guards present in order to understand and later discuss their unique problems with the relevant authorities. Following each inspection, the association prepared a summary report of the visit that was sent to the prison authorities. They could add comments to the report, but the text of the report would not change, and we sent it to the press afterwards. DCI-Israel followed up on the treatment of problems and the implementation of constructive solutions both by the prison authorities and other organisations in the rehabilitation process. Often the reports were followed up by questions from parliament members. The prison visits and reports are still one of the main activities of DCI-Israel today.'

Achievements

'DCI-Israel has influenced the Israeli legal system as it pertains to children. One example is lobbying efforts that contributed to a change in the Israeli legal system in 1998. This step revolutionized an outdated system that only provided legal representation to children if the crimes of which they were accused carried prison sentences greater than ten years (less than 10 percent of all cases). The Public Defender Law of 1995 was amended, in large part to DCI's efforts, to allow legal representation

to all children facing trials including criminal cases. DCI-Israel has provided legal aid and representation otherwise unavailable or too costly to children requiring such services.

By developing walk-in centres providing children's legal representation, DCI-Israel has brought the issue of children's legal rights to the attention of Israel's legal establishment. The organisation has become a resource that lawyers, social workers and other professionals turn to for information and consultation. Such counselling involves a unique model, which has been applied in various contexts. The most highly developed programme is located in the city of Ashdod. In this model a lawyer and social worker cooperate in their efforts to assist the child in planning a constructive life-path that is crime free.

DCI-Israel is the only children's organisation in Israel that has consistently worked on influencing both the Israeli and Palestinian security establishments to be accountable for their actions towards children on both sides of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict, exerting major efforts to protect and prevent harm to them. DCI-Israel is the coordinator for the Coalition for Children's Rights, a network that includes most of the organisations working for children's rights and welfare in Israel. In this framework, DCI-Israel submits a non-governmental report on children's rights to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.'

Cooperation

'At the time of the Oslo Agreements we looked around for people who would be willing to start a real Palestinian DCI section and for some years we had a joint office in Bethlehem, in the West Bank, from which the legal representation for Palestinian youngsters was organised. We also cooperated with other Palestinian NGOs, for instance Palestinian

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Lawyers for Human Rights in Gaza. And with the help of the European Union, we organised an ongoing training in juvenile justice for Palestinian lawyers from Gaza. At some point the Palestinian DCI thought it was not appropriate to cooperate with an Israeli organisation – political winds changed – and from then on the “big” development cooperation money went to DCI-Palestine. It was quite difficult for DCI-Israel to survive after that. Despite these difficulties, since its founding DCI-Israel has created a variety of pioneering programmes that have improved the lives of thousands of children and raised public consciousness regarding children's rights.'

DCI-Palestine

<u>City</u>	Jerusalem
<u>Year founded</u>	1991
<u>Founder</u>	Rifat Odeh Kassis
<u>Executive Director</u>	Rifat Odeh Kassis
<u>Employees</u>	38
<u>Volunteers</u>	7

Creation

Rifat Odeh Kassis: 'During the first Palestinian Intifada (or uprising) against the Israeli occupation in 1987, I was arrested several times by the Israeli Occupation Forces. I met many Palestinian children inside the Israeli prisons who were not represented by lawyers or visited by their families due to the movement restrictions imposed by the Israeli authorities on the Palestinians. This gave me the idea to form a movement to help these children. At that time I was introduced to DCI and became interested together with other colleagues in forming a Palestinian section.

Also, I worked as a social worker helping traumatized children affected by the political violence, and became a director of a rehabilitation programme for children

'I have many joyful memories, but the one I remember the most is the 9th International General Assembly in Bethlehem. On that occasion, we came into the IGA fragmented and split. The Assembly was very successful and after it we went out united, with clear directions for the future. Despite this success, we were saddened because most of our African sections could not manage to obtain visas from Israel to attend the meeting.'

*Rifat Odeh Kassis
DCI-Palestine*

injured by the Israeli forces. These events made me interested in children's rights. I founded the Palestinian section in 1991 and got recognition from DCI's International General Assembly in 1992 in Granada. In view of the critical situation during the first Intifada, DCI-Palestine was established to provide legal defence for Palestinian children who were being arrested *en-masse* by the Israeli army and brought before Israeli military courts or held without charge in administrative detention.'

Programmes

'DCI-Palestine was at first established to provide legal defence for children arrested by Israeli forces. With time, DCI-Palestine expanded its scope of intervention gradually adding advocacy, social support, monitoring and documentation of child rights violations to its programmes. It started to build up relations within the local communities, providing psycho-social support to children and promoting child rights through festivals, open days and training on children's rights for both children and adults. Later on it opened Socio-Legal Defence Centres in Hebron, Bethlehem, Nablus, and recently East Jerusalem, and hired field workers to report on children's rights violations in the Gaza Strip. Legal defence is still a major pillar of DCI-Palestine's work, in addition to lobbying for a Palestinian legislative framework in line with international child rights standards and monitoring and documenting violations of Palestinian children's rights in order to feed into international advocacy on the issue.

DCI-Palestine also plays a central role in shaping legislative processes regarding children, being part of the drafting committee of the Juvenile Justice Bill, and submitting recommendations for the Penal Code. Currently, DCI-Palestine carries out its work through a holistic and comprehensive approach embodied in its five programmes:

Child Justice, Accountability, Child Protection, Child Participation and Civil Society for Child Rights. These programmes are complementary and include many cross-cutting issues, allowing for synergy for a stronger overall impact.'

Achievements

'Throughout its history in the Palestinian arena, the organisation has gained both local and international recognition as an important child rights player. In 2002, DCI-Palestine presented a statement at the UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, in representation of the whole Middle East and North Africa region. The collective lobby achieved inclusion of a paragraph on the protection of children under foreign occupation in the outcome document "A World Fit for Children". From 2004 onwards, DCI-Palestine has organised a children's conference annually, with a different theme each year. In 2005, the first ever Girl Child Conference was held by DCI-Palestine in Hebron, bringing 150 girls from all over the West Bank and East Jerusalem to discuss girl child rights issues and draw up a national call to action. DCI-Palestine played a major role in the drafting and passing of the Palestinian Child Bill, enacted as a law in 2005.

The same year DCI-Palestine hosted a major international conference on juvenile justice, entitled "Kids Behind Bars - A child rights' perspective", bringing together representatives from UN agencies, international NGOs, DCI national sections and academics to discuss their experience and expertise on juvenile justice, with a special focus on Palestinian child prisoners. DCI-Palestine participated in the lobby for a UN Study on Violence against Children, and contributed to the study itself by assisting in the data collection and providing feedback to the independent expert Prof. Paulo Sérgio

Pinheiro during his country visit to Palestine in June-July 2005. DCI-Palestine continues to be involved in the follow-up to the study.'

Challenges

'DCI-Palestine faces numerous challenges to achieve the protection of children's rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. Due to the Israeli occupation and the adverse conditions in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, Palestinian children, who constitute 53 percent of the total population of the Palestinian Territory, have been forced to grow up in difficult conditions that hinder them from fully exercising their most basic human rights. To this situation, we must add the difficulties created by the multiple restrictions of movement and the separation wall erected by Israel, which hinder our work and create enormous complications for DCI-Palestine's staff to perform its work. In addition, our staff members are in constant threat of being detained by the Israeli Occupation Forces due to their human rights activism. For instance, our Media Officer is currently being held in an Israeli prison.

Besides Israel's constant abuses and violations, the Palestinian Authority's system and outdated legislation regarding child protection also pose obstacles for DCI's work towards the fulfilment of Palestinian children's rights. Furthermore, the instability of the political situation translates into structural and ad hoc obstacles on the Palestinian level. Frequently, the national institutional apparatus gets paralysed and this hampers DCI-Palestine's work on the internal level, especially our national advocacy and lobbying initiatives and plans. Despite all the challenges DCI-Palestine continues to believe and trust in the impact it can have to improve the lives of Palestinian Children.'

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DCI-Sri Lanka

City	Colombo
Year founded	1993
Founder	Ananda Senevirathne
Executive Director	Ananda Senevirathne
Employees	2
Volunteers	2

Creation

Ananda Senevirathne: 'In 1991, I was invited for a training workshop on children's rights organised by UNICEF in Colombo and a seminar on child labour organised by the International Falcon Movement - Socialist Educational International (IFM-SEI) in Brussels, Belgium. During the latter seminar, I came to know about Defence for Children International and its services in the field of children's rights. The concept of child rights was unknown in Sri Lanka. Therefore, I decided to set up a DCI section in my country to introduce it.'

Programmes

'Our main focus is juvenile justice. We started this as far back as 1998. Our first project was supported by AusAid, the Australian Agency for International Development. We organised a two day training workshop at the Intercontinental Hotel in Colombo for 35 lawyers selected from all the provinces in the country. The Attorney General was the keynote speaker. Among the other resource persons were two supreme court judges, one Superintendent of the Police, the Commissioner of Probation and Child Care Services and the Dean of the faculty of law of the University of Colombo. It was a highly successful workshop. Out of the 35 participants, we selected sixteen lawyers to serve on our panel of lawyers.

Later on, DCI-Sri Lanka successfully completed the Socio-Legal Defence Centre project initiated by the DCI International Secretariat with financial support from

the Government of the Netherlands. More recently we completed the pilot project on the General Comment No. 10 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. Thus, over the years, we have done a lot of work on juvenile justice. Even today, the lawyers on our panel help children who are in conflict with the law pro bono. And we provide free legal advice to any child, parent or guardian.'

Activities

'In addition to the above programme, DCI-Sri Lanka until recently published a magazine entitled Lama Anda (Voice of Children) in Sinhala language. Due to financial constraints we have suspended the magazine. We are now negotiating with some funding agencies to re-launch it next year. Since 1993 our members have participated in well over fifty national regional and international seminars, conferences and workshops on children's rights. They have made very valuable contributions to those forums. In 2006, our section conducted an island wide survey on children behind bars. For this purpose members and volunteers have visited prisons, remand homes and certified schools except in the North and East provinces where they could not reach due the civil war prevailing there.'

Achievements

'Throughout the years, we held a large number of awareness raising programmes for lawyers, police and probation officers, teachers, students, NGO officials, child rights activists and the like. We also helped to found the NGO forum on the CRC in Sri Lanka. I was the chairman of the forum from 1994 to 2004. Local fundraising after the tsunami disaster and the civil war between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam has become extremely difficult. Unlike in developed countries, the government institutions, cooperative

movements, companies, municipalities and the like do not have allocations for NGO's. Despite the challenges, we do our best to keep our section alive and functioning.'

Annexes

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Annex 1 Acknowledgements and disclaimer

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This book is a product of enthusiasm, perseverance and generosity by the DCI International Secretariat staff and a worldwide team of volunteers. We start with Camille Kryspin, our 90+ documentalist who wrote the first draft of this book, did all the preliminary research for it and assisted the editorial team to track contradictory information and fill gaps. Ghislaine van Drunen did the interviews, coordinated and wrote the book, assisted by two volunteers to overcome the language barrier in Spanish, Sinile Mihkelson and Mercedes Carnerero Rodriguez. Christopher McKay and Kate Stevenson were our flying assistant editors. A famous insider, Helen Bayes, generously accepted to be the final editor both for language and content. The attractive layout is the volunteer contribution of a young professional graphic designer, Irene van Nes.

The list of historical and contemporary figures of the movement who have been interviewed can be found in annex 3, I thank herewith all of them collectively, for want of space to mention them one by one. The very short spate of time in which this book was compiled unfortunately did not permit to interview all those we had intended to interview.

Finally a word of caveat. This DCI publication is, like all others, a communication tool that helps us move forward in understanding child rights advocacy and lobbying. We believe it provides enough highlights and ideas by some of its leading members past and present to really help us all take stock of what child rights activism has meant, means and will have to mean in the future to realise our dream of full enjoyment of their rights by all children everywhere.

In other words, reading the history of child rights in action through the prism of the highlights and pitfalls of DCI's story, as remembered by some of the nestors of the movement, hopefully gives one plenty of ideas for strategic planning for child rights advocacy.

We apologise for possible omissions that any attentive and knowledgeable reader may discover regarding his or her section or his or her specialist topic. DCI publications are collective processes, every book or document that comes out is just a snapshot of where we stood with our knowledge and insights at that point in time. Therefore, please be generous and clement for the shortcomings of this epic and most of all: keep helping us defend the rights of children!

Laetitia van Haren
Executive Director DCI-IS

Annex 2 Thanks to donors, partners and volunteers

Volunteers

Since its creation DCI has been benefitting immensely from the help an endless procession of volunteers has offered. Many have been present from the first day on, to assist Nigel Cantwell in the task of establishing the movement. In the course of the years a steady stream of volunteers, interns and translators gave their support to the International Secretariat. They made it possible for DCI to perform its huge task. The number of volunteers often exceeded the number of professionals in paid employ. DCI is grateful to all these dedicated volunteers without whom the movement would not have survived to this day.

Donors

DCI wishes to thank the institutions and individuals who have provided financial and technical support to the movement throughout the past thirty years. They are here placed in alphabetic order. The editors apologise if they have omitted anyone: they are none the less included in our thanks.

1% for Development (United Nations staff fund), Geneva; Arigatou Foundation, Geneva; Alternatief Adoptieplan, Netherlands; Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Jugendhilfe, Federal Republic of Germany; Banque Centrale Coopérative de Genève, Switzerland; Bureau for Europe and the Americas of the Department for Global Ministries of the Dutch Protestant Church, Netherlands; Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance, Geneva; Canadian International Development Agency, Canada; Central Union of Child Welfare, Finland; Council of Europe, Strasbourg; European Commission, Strasbourg; European Commission, Brussels; European Human Rights Foundation, Netherlands; Fondation

Migros, Switzerland; Geneva Lions Club, Switzerland; Hilfswerk der Evangelischen Kirchen Schweiz, Switzerland; ICCO/Kerkinactie, Netherlands; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Social Service Trust, United Kingdom; Loterie Romande, Switzerland; Ministry of Health, Argentina; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Germany; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finland; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands; Ministry of Justice, Netherlands; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Switzerland; National Council on Child Abuse and Family Violence, USA; OAK Foundation, Geneva; Oxfam/Novib, Netherlands; Paul Schiller Foundation, Switzerland; Rädda Barnen (Save the Children Sweden), Sweden; Stichting Kinderpostzegels Nederland, Netherlands; Terre des Hommes International, Geneva; Terre des Hommes Germany, Germany; United Kingdom Association for It's Your Choice, United Kingdom; United Nations Children's Fund, Geneva; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Vienna; Wilde Ganzen, Netherlands; Numerous individuals that we can't name since we have the names of only a few.

Partners

A large number of international bodies have lent their moral, technical and cooperative support to the movement throughout the years in words and action, mostly through joint activities or programmes. They are:

Amnesty International; Anti-Slavery Society; Association Internationale des Juges et Magistrats de la Jeunesse et de la Famille; Association Mondiale Ecole Instrument de Paix; ATD-Fourth World International Movement; Bureau International Catholique

de l'Enfance; Committee on the Rights of the Child; International Bureau on Children's Rights; International Centre for Family Studies; International Centre of Films for Children and Young People; International Children's Centre; International Commission of Jurists; International Council for Child Welfare; International Federation of Women in the Legal Professions; International Institute of Humanitarian Law; International Labour Organisation/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour; International League for Human Rights; International Observatory on Juvenile Justice; International Playground Association; International Social Service International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; International Union for Child Welfare; League of Red Cross Societies; Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture; Penal Reform International; Save the Children Alliance; Save the Children-UK; United Nations Children's Fund; United Nations Development Programme; United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research; United Nations Organisation for Drugs and Crime Control; Women's Christian Democratic World Union; World Council of Churches; World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organisations; World Alliance of YMCA.

With apologies to those who were omitted, in spite of our diligent tracking of the archives and consulting the nestors of the movement.

Annex 3 Sources

Publications

DCI Archives
DCI Annual Reports 1979-2008

Interviews

Isabelle Angelot, DCI-IS, former Secretary, interviewed in Geneva on July 15, 2009

Helen Bayes, DCI-Australia, founder former Executive Director, *ad interim* Secretary General, interviewed through Skype on July 10, 2009

Nigel Cantwell, DCI-IS, founder and former Secretary General and Director of Programmes, interviewed in Geneva on July 14, 2009

Geert Cappelaere, DCI-Belgium, founder, interviewed by telephone on August 27, 2009

Paulo David, DCI-IS, former Information Officer, interviewed by telephone on June 29, 2009

Trevor Davies, DCI-IS, former Secretary General, interviewed by telephone on August 26, 2009

Ibrahima Diouf, DCI-Senegal, founder and former Executive Director, former Vice-president for Africa, interviewed by telephone on July 16, 2009

Jaap Doek, DCI-Netherlands, founder, former IEC member, former member and President of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, interviewed in Amsterdam on July 9, 2009

André Dunant, former IEC member, interviewed by telephone on July 16, 2009

Laetitia van Haren, DCI-IS, Executive Director, interviewed in Leiden on September 4, 2009

Les Horne, DCI-Canada, founder and Executive Director, answered questions by e-mail on August 20, 2009

Rifat Odeh Kassis, DCI-Palestine, founder and Executive Director, IEC President, answered questions by e-mail on August 6, 2009

Camille Kryspin, DCI-IS, Documentalist, interviewed in Geneva on July 14, 2009

Dominique Leveillé, DCI-IS, former Information Officer, interviewed in Geneva on July 17, 2009

Norberto Liwski, DCI-Argentina, founder and President, interviewed by telephone on September 7, 2009

Marie-Françoise Lückner-Babel, DCI-IS, former Programme Officer, interviewed in Geneva on July 15, 2009

Stan Meuwese, DCI-Netherlands, former Executive Director, interviewed in Amsterdam on August 25, 2009

Virginia Murillo Herrera, DCI-Costa Rica, founder and President, Vice-president for the Americas, answered questions by e-mail on August 17, 2009

Rebecca Morton, DCI-IS, former Executive Director, answered questions by e-mail on July 28, 2009

Daniel O'Donnell, DCI-IS, former Senior Legal Officer, interviewed in Divonne-les-Bains on July 13, 2009

Danielle Plisson, DCI-Switzerland, founder and Executive Director, interviewed by telephone on August 18, 2009

Mercedes Roman, DCI-Ecuador, founder and former President, former DCI UN Representative in New York, answered questions by e-mail on July 2, 2009

Ananda Senevirathne, DCI-Sri Lanka, founder and Executive Director, answered questions by e-mail on August 17, 2009

Rita-Félicité Sodjiédo, DCI-Benin, founder, Executive Director, former Vice-president for Africa, answered questions by e-mail on August 13, 2009

Philip Veerman, DCI-Israel, founder en former Executive Director, former IEC President, interviewed in Den Bosch on July 2, 2009

Jorge Vila Despujol, DCI-Bolivia, founder and President, former IEC President, answered questions by e-mail on August 19, 2009

Jean Zermatten, founder and director of the International Institute of the Rights of the Child in Sion, Switzerland, member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and of the International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates, interviewed by telephone on July 17, 2009

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Annex 5 Colophon

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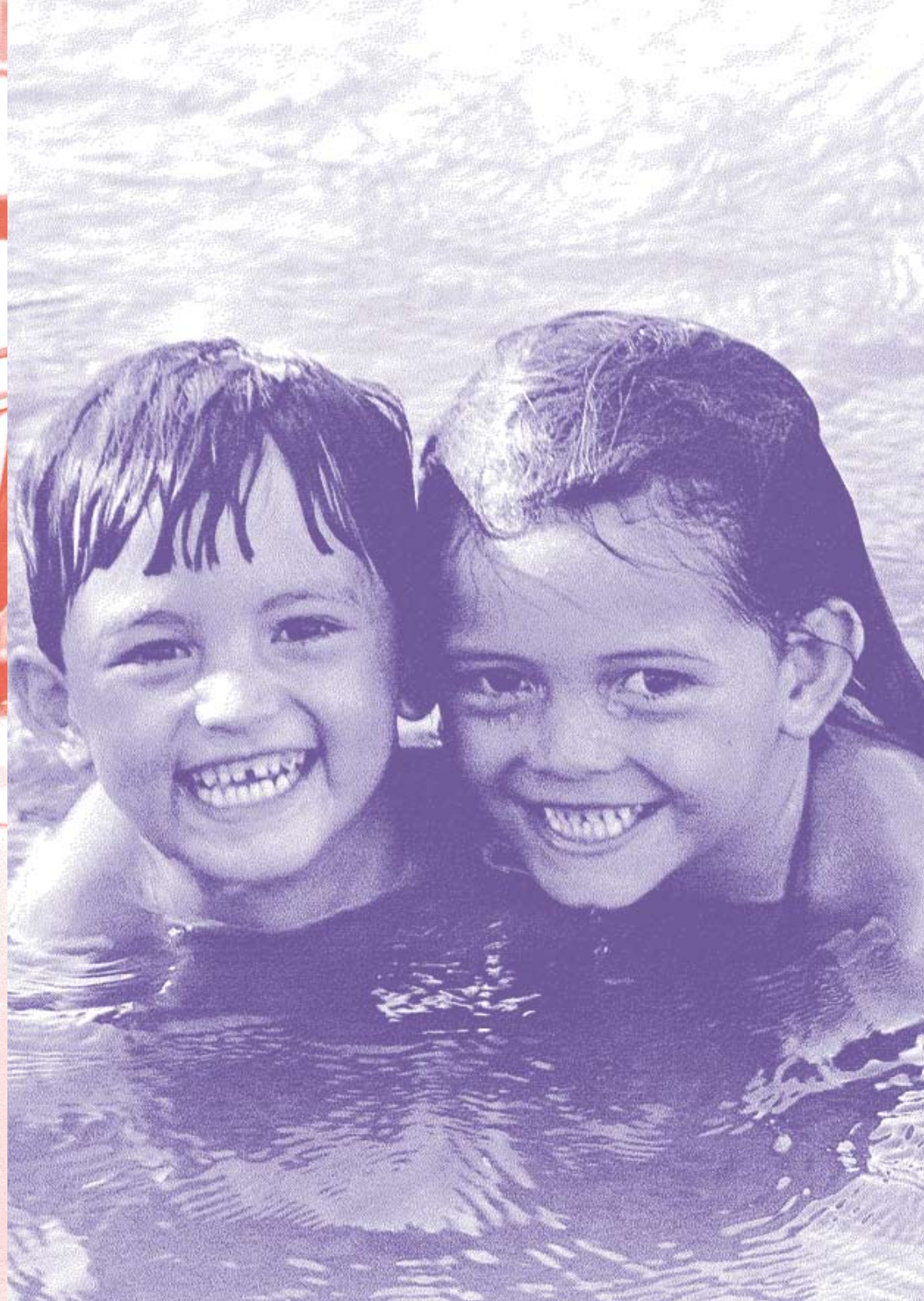
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'I think there is a continuing role for DCI, beyond a doubt, because it is still the only real "human rights of children" organisation.'

Nigel Cantwell
Founder of DCI

'I became convinced that respect for children's rights is very important for the future of humanity. I knew compassion for children, but DCI made me aware of the importance of justice for children, of listening to them, of equal human rights with adults. It all seems natural now, but it wasn't at the time.'

Helen Bayes
Founder of DCI-Australia

Child rights are for ever! A fascinating journey in history back to the roots of Defence for Children International, an international children's rights movement founded in 1979 that celebrates its 30th anniversary today. The visionary founder of the organisation and those who understood him and joined him, founding national sections everywhere, recall their dream and their heroic struggles to realise it. Understanding their visionary legacy better helps us to safeguard it and carry it far into the 21st century. As long as there are children, their rights will need our defence.



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