

Bernard van Leer Foundation supports UN global effort to stop violence against children

First private contribution for United Nations effort

The Hague, The Netherlands, 13 January 2010

The Bernard van Leer Foundation has announced it will commit €300,000 to support the United Nations' Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children. With this contribution, the Bernard van Leer Foundation is the first private foundation to commit financial support to this new UN effort.

Global homicide rates among children from 0 to 4 are only surpassed by 15 to 17 year olds. Even when young children are not direct targets of violence their lives are still profoundly affected. The Bernard van Leer Foundation funded local organization Caminos Posibles to study the experiences of young children in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, where there were more than 2000 homicides in 2009. Among the findings, 85% of 6 to 8 year olds expressed fear or mistrust of people in their community. When asked who, 76% reported gang members, drug addicts or drug traffickers followed by soldiers and police (8%).

Lisa Jordan, Executive Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation says: *"Evidence from our work in Mexico, Israel and Colombia suggests that fear is a critical impediment to development in young children. Its impact on the brain is hard-wired. For too long governments have neglected the impacts of violence on young children's development. We welcome the UN's attention to this critical issue and we hope that our support will be helpful in establishing a long term global effort to reduce violence in young children's lives."*

Violence against children remains widespread. Largely hidden and condoned by society, it has serious and lifelong impacts on children. However, these are not insurmountable problems and can be addressed through efforts both to prevent and protect young children from violence.

Marta Santos Pais, the Special Representative, has recently been appointed as the first UN global advocate to prevent and protect children from all forms of violence. Marta Santos Pais says: *Protecting children from violence is a matter of urgency. Young children are at greatest risk and least able to seek protection. With effective support for parenting skills and quality early childhood development programmes, a tangible difference can be made in violence prevention and in the safeguard of children's rights."*

For more information please contact Michael Feigelson, Programme Director: +31 (0) 70-331-2268.

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international grant making foundation based in The Hague. For 60 years the Bernard van Leer foundation has been investing in young children up to the age of 8 to develop their capacity to learn and provide equal opportunities in life.

www.bernardvanleer.org