



## **Technical Advisory Group Early Childhood Development (TAG ECD IPA)**

# **The Beirut Declaration for Early Childhood Peace**

## **Just peace is children's best interest**

**Beirut, 8 May 2015**

Under the Patronage of His Excellency Minister of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants Gebran Bassil, and as called on by TAG ECD IPA and the Social Affairs Ministry's Supreme Council for Childhood, the Lebanese Order of Physicians, the Lebanese Pediatric Society (LPS), and the Arab Programme for Early Childhood Development (APEGD), the "Early Childhood Peace" conference was held on 8 May 2015 at the House of Physicians in Beirut, Lebanon. Attending were 300 representatives of official, educational, health, law, academic, social, syndicated, and civil institutions, as well as family committees, media, child caretakers and educationists, and doctors and nurses. Here's the attendees' declaration:

Scientific and experimental knowledge of child development has been continuously progressing. It has been revealed that the first eight years of children's life are very decisive when it comes to health care, the development of intelligence and character, as well as educational achievements later on.

These first years are decisive as to influencing social behavior, too.

In the recent decades, biological research, especially the one concerning brain development during the first months or years, in addition to long-term field research regarding the influence of work programs that parents and children take part in, has led to a flow of knowledge. And that has contributed to enlarging the effectiveness of early childhood programs and gaining higher credibility for the policies supporting this sector.

Obvious amongst these policies is the evaluation of the role of developing early childhood and family relationships in the process of building up just peace and conflict resolution, as well as exploring new approaches that change scientifically-acquired knowledge into actual, long-lasting achievements, as the approaches are part of the peace-building initiatives. In fact, studies confirm that children and families have an altering capacity to reinforce peace and limit violence. That means they can promote change rather than fall victims to violence. Thus, it is a must that more effort is put to change more in support of just peace.

Work must be done to prevent violence against children and to start up evidence-backed programming during early childhood, which actually serves this kind of work. It is also necessary to acknowledge these programs altering power in the first years, when social composure and justice relish in wider social context that includes iterating children's rights and the inevitable communal constants. That is, integrating social justice and offering social services to achieve stability in fragile communities introduce dialogue, which conjoins making peace (as planned through family and community intervention programs) with building peace (which regards all social and political structures defining an inclusive environment for children \_ one that guards them against social, economic and political injustice, thus against violence.)

Government administrations, laws and policies must focus on securing community first to reach out to the weak classes of residents, especially children, to protect them in time of conflict. At the end of the day, children falling victims to conflict will experience different impacts, and they themselves might turn into tools that keep the violence going on.

Understanding these principals is crucial for a new generation of early-childhood-development programs, which seek achieving social justice and building just peace since early childhood.

Thereupon, the participants call for:

\*The government's endorsement of the vision and purposes of the post-2015 United Nations Development Program (UNDP), in collaboration with academic institutions, civil community and all interested partners,

\*The government's endorsement of an inclusive, complementary and integrating methodology to achieve health, psychological, social and cultural balance for children, thus guaranteeing their economic, social, environmental and joint rights,

\*The government's endorsement of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Children, by fulfilling children's rights to enjoy family and health care and secure life and protection, especially in time of conflict. Other rights to be fulfilled are those of education, expression, participation, information acquisition, playtime and cultural activity at leisure, in addition to protection against discrimination, exploitation and child labor, and to receiving special care in case of disability or accusation of criminal charges while underage,

\*The government's promotion of children's rights into national policies, thus devising strategic plans that ensure a balanced early childhood development,

\*Funding these national policies and plans through children-friendly government budgets, in accordance with the international agreements ratified,

\*Encouraging studies and research based on scientific evidence and conducted for the sake of early childhood.

\*Endorsing coordination amongst general and local administrations, family committees, community, in addition to health, educational and academic institutions, media, syndicates and the private sector to ensure better care and development during early childhood.

Peace does not just mean full protection against violence and conflicts. It is rather a state that enables every person to develop character and community positively, guaranteeing his/her humanity, improving his/her standards of living and providing him/her with comfort in community, away from any discrimination. Eventually, social balance and public stability will be created, making our world a better place for our children and for the following generations.