



GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR ADVANCING HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT

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The future of individuals and nations are shaped in childhood. Healthy physical, cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual growth is either established or stunted in childhood. Up to 85% of people in all cultures who make decisions to follow Christ do so as children and young people. This means that high-level training programs for those caring for children and young adults must be an essential part of the program mix for seminaries wanting their training to be on the cutting edge of ministry and mission.

Most seminaries and Bible Schools today have programs to minister to children in the church. But effective programs to equip leaders and practitioners for ministry to children outside the church, or to children at risk (CAR), are few. Equipping Christians for holistic ministry to children may be the “Great Omission” in Christian equipping today. This is a perilous oversight that needs urgent correction.

Equipping Christian workers to care for needy children may be the single greatest challenge and opportunity for seminaries and Bible schools in the coming decade. They must approach this, not as a new fad or diversion from other worthwhile training, but as the best way to achieve what we have already set out to do – equip the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.

NEED OF HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT

The Child in the Midst

Many people in seminaries today have a misconception that the Bible says very little about children. However, more and more people are now reading Scriptures with the child in

the midst¹ and finding not only that children are in fact very prominent in Scripture, but also that scholars and theologians may have misheard or neglected very important revealed truths about children and their significance. Children in fact very prominent in Scripture – more than 1600 references to children, sons, daughters, parental relationships or otherwise alluding to children.

Indeed, not only are children present and visible - they are at the very heart of what the Scriptures have to say about the Kingdom, about the Church and about Mission. “Reading Scripture with the child in the midst reveals both the presence and significance of the children. We may have missed many of the paradoxes and signs of the kingdom. We may have had our priorities mixed up in the church. We have underestimated the potential of child ministries and of children as both objects of and agents for mission.”²

The Next Generation:

A brief biblical word study will reveal that God is a God of the generations. He has a longing and passion that his people not only produce, but also care for the next generation.

Psalms 78:4-7 is indicative of God’s concern:

*‘We will tell the next generation
the praiseworthy deed of the Lord;
His power and the wonders He has done.
He decreed statutes for Jacob
And established the law...
Which He commanded our forefathers to teach their children;
So the next generation would know them,
Even the children yet to be born;
And they in turn will tell their children.
Then they would put their trust in God
And would not forget His deeds but would keep His commands.’*

¹ The “child in the midst” is also the inspiration and focal point of the emerging Child Theology Movement, headed by Dr. Keith White. Dr. White teaches the Child Theology course in the Penang program in Holistic Child Development.

² Keith White. “A Little Child Shall Lead Them. Rediscovering Children at the Heart of Mission.” Paper presented to the Cutting Edge conference, De Bron, Holland. 2001. p.1

Why the “Next Generation?”

- Because they are so many. Almost one-third of the world’s population – nearly 2 billion people – is under the age of eighteen. People under the age of 18 make up over 1/3 of the population of Asia. Never in history have there been so many children among us. And never have so many of them been at such great risk.
- Because the next generation is suffering. Over 27,000 children under the age of five will die today, and die every day – mostly from easily preventable causes.
- Because the next generation is unwanted. At least 100,000,000 children and youths live on the streets. Each one of those children represents a failure on the part of some adult to provide care, nurture and a safe haven.
- Because the next generation is exploited. Perhaps as many as 10,000,000 children and young people are caught up in the sex industry worldwide.

All Children are at Risk

Most of us are aware of these and many other telling statistics about the needs of poor children around the world. But the fact is that it is not just poor children who are at risk. In fact *all* children are at risk. Indeed millions are at risk from poverty. But millions more are at risk from prosperity! Many young people today have everything to live with, but nothing to live for.

The “4/14 Window”

Most people who will make a decision to follow Christ, will do so before the age of 18. Surveys in many countries and amongst many groups all over the world have consistently shown that most people who will ever come to Christ, will do so before their 18th birthday. Children and young people are receptive because “the clay is still soft.” The truth is that a very small percentage of people in any culture or background will decide to follow Christ after the “clay of their lives” has become dry and hardened.

The Church and Seminaries need to be serious about children and youth ---- because God surely is! Perhaps nothing upset Jesus more than “hindering” the children (Matthew 18:5, 6). Genesis 21: 17 – 20 says that God heard the boy Ishmael crying, and we can be sure that He is still hearing the children crying today.

FEATURES OF HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The following aspects mentioned briefly are the essential features of HCD programmes.

1. **The Scope: The needy inside -- and outside the Church.** Many seminaries provide courses or degrees in teaching and nurturing children and young people *already in the church*. However, for many, the idea that the Church has a responsibility to care for needy children *outside the Church*, and that seminaries have an obligation to prepare students for such ministries, is a very new idea.
2. **The Nature: Holism.** The HCD Programs are different from the course offerings some seminaries offer to improve Christian Education or Sunday Schools in the churches. The HCD program fosters a holistic view of ministry to children, and both influences and equips the church to holistically minister to needy children both inside and outside the church.
3. **The Approach: Academic Programs for both Practitioners and Church Leadership.** HCD Programs equip child care practitioners to improve and enhance their ministry to children both inside and outside the church. However, the programs are also for future Church leaders who may not be directly involved in care for needy children. Equipping future church leaders with the *mindset* of the prominence of children in Scripture and the strategic importance of ministry to children will enable them to provide better leadership and support to such ministries, and to be better advocates for children in all their future ministries.
4. **The Intent:** The intent of HCD programs is nothing less than to produce a whole new layer of Christian leadership – leadership which has a unique understanding of God’s heart for children, and of the relevance of holistic child ministries to the Ministry and Mission of the Church.
5. **The Foundation: Sound Theological Reflection.** As programs in HCD are Academic programs in seminary, they are characterized by careful theological reflection undergirding all of the courses and approaches to learning and equipping.
6. **Mission:** Mission is the purpose and activity of God in and for the whole universe. HCD programs understand children as both objects of and agents for mission. Mission with the child in focus requires understanding of matters of conversion, faith development, evangelism, social action, and outreach strategies in both local and cross-cultural contexts.

7. **Church Based** – An HCD program will focus on the primary role that the Church has in the transformation of society. Emphasis is given to helping the Church to understand its biblical mandate, and to equipping the church to fulfill that role. The contribution of the church may include short-term crisis intervention, but the emphasis is on long term holistic development

SEMINARIES AND HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

Why Should Seminaries include Courses in HCD in their Curriculum Mix?

There are many vital reasons for seminaries to consider programs to equip leaders and practitioners for CAR ministry. Children feature prominently in Scripture, always with a consistent message to protect and nurture them to become what God intends. Beyond the Scriptural mandate, it is clear that relevance in the “real world” demands that seminaries equip students to care for CAR.

Seminaries are the “production line” for developing the leaders for the next generation. Equipping Christian workers for work in HCD through seminaries and Bible colleges is a key way to develop the commitment and expertise of professionals who can extend Christian care to children.

Including programs in HCD will ensure that the seminary produces leaders who understand the significance of the Church’s ministry to children in poverty, and who can influence others at all levels in their countries on behalf of those children.

Equipping Christian workers for work in HCD through seminaries and Bible colleges is a key way to develop the commitment and expertise of professionals who can extend Christian care to children throughout Asia and the world.

In addition, establishing programs in HCD will:

- Help seminaries provide courses of studies for new groups of people, including many women and a growing cadre of young professionals.
- Help attract a new category of students called to holistic ministries.
- Ensure that the course offerings have a high level of relevance to the real world.

Experience shows that providing programs in HCD can have a revolutionary effect on students and on the seminary itself. Dr. Sunny Tan, the Academic Dean of MBTS says:

"Not only has this program transformed the lives of many students, but the seminary itself has changed. The key leaders in the seminary have a new vision for the strategic significance of children in their own equipping and mission strategies. "

The MA Program in Holistic Child Development

The MA Program in Holistic Child Development, (HCD) begun at the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary (MBTS) in Penang, Malaysia in 2001, was created in response to the biblical mandate to care for children. The program is becoming the foremost graduate level training in HCD in Asia.

The original HCD program was designed as a partnership in Asia between MBTS and Compassion International (CI) to provide graduate level training for strategic child development workers and practitioners from countries throughout Asia. The goal was that participants would be equipped to become competent leaders in all aspects of Holistic Child Development. The overall objective of HCD programs is to equip students with prior experience in child development with a wide range of competencies and understandings related to Holistic Child Development and to develop analytical and critical skills to relate the Bible to current child development theories and practice and evaluate their own experience in the light of the interactions.

Programs in HCD are now being developed in seminaries around the world. The hope is that seminaries will include such programs in their curricula in order to ensure that future church leaders are equipped to become leaders in all aspects of HCD in church and para-church organizations.

EMERGING GLOBAL MOVEMENTS TO ADVANCE ACADEMIC TRAINING

Over the last several years global initiatives have arisen to strengthen the Christian response to issues of children at risk, poverty, holistic mission and to challenge the role of the Church in world issues and concerns. In response to the Biblical mandate to care for children, Compassion International has been instrumental in establishing programs in Holistic Child Development (a.k.a. HCD).

The pilot program in Asia was a partnership with the Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary in Penang, Malaysia. To date, over 400 students who have taken courses in HCD from more than 20 countries around the world. HCD programs have also been established in

seminaries in South America, such as SEMISUD, and other Christian academic and theological institutions in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean region.

In February 2006, Compassion and Fuller Theological Seminary in the United States began discussions to jointly organize a consultation of theological schools to promote the development, expansion and strengthening of seminary training programs to build leaders and equip Christians for holistic ministries to children. Both organizations believe in the mandate and call to theological schools around the world to respond with excellent equipping programs to care for children and to esteem ministerial training to children as highly as their formal training programs.

The 2007 Chiang Mai Consultation

In May 2007, 58 leaders representing 19 countries, 26 seminaries and six international movements and Christian ministries for children gathered in Chiang Mai, Thailand for the first global consultation on academic training in holistic child development.

This consultation promoted the vision of producing the very best Christian ministries and child care workers in every country and region in the world. The hope was that this would be fulfilled as theological institutions in every country in the world would provide excellent programs at every level of equipping and training.

Among its major outcomes were:

1. A resource CD of current academic programs, syllabi, instructional materials, and profiles of training institutions were compiled and distributed to all participants.
2. A status report for each region on existing or planned HCD programs with annotations on priority needs and/or plans.
3. A second status report by academic level on current programs, research, and instructional resources on HCD programs.
 - a. Key areas of global collaboration were identified, namely:
 - b. Development and sharing of curriculum and instructional resources
 - c. Research
 - d. Training of trainers and training directory
 - e. Advocacy, Awareness-Building and Influencing Seminaries and Churches
 - f. Regional Collaboration

The highlight of the first consultation was the **establishment of a Global Alliance for Equipping Programs in HCD**. The goal of the Global Alliance is to establish HCD academic programs in seminaries and Christian academic institutions throughout the world to

equip and train practitioners, child advocates and leaders of organizations engaged in ministry with children.

The 2008 Pasadena Consultation

On 25-28 March, 2008 the Global Alliance Team convened at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, USA. The Team was composed of ten individuals, representing schools and training programs from various regions (Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America). Also participating was a group of resource persons and librarians who discussed action steps for using technology and informational systems to provide easy access to HCD program resources.

Through this consultation, the participants drafted the vision; mission, identity and working structure of the Global Alliance were discussed and agreed upon. A GA Steering Committee was formed and the General Secretary was commissioned in the person of Dr. Dan Brewster, who is the HCD Academic Programs Director of Compassion International. Working groups discussed outcomes for the next twelve months.

The Global Alliance

The Global Alliance for Advancing Academic Programmes in Holistic Child Development (a.k.a. HCD Global Alliance) is a voluntary partnership of Seminaries, Bible Colleges, and other Christian Academic Institutions working together with researchers, trainers, practitioners and other Christian leaders to create a global movement for the development of academic programs in Holistic Child Development.

Vision: In response to God's heart for children, programs in Holistic Child Development will be an integral part of the ethos and programs of a majority of Christian Educational Institutions around the world.

Mission: To encourage and enable Seminaries, Bible Schools, and other Christian academic institutions to implement contextually sensitive, academically rigorous, and developmentally sound HCD programs which motivate and train practitioners, and which inspire and equip church leaders, advocates and other Christians to increase and improve their ministry and advocacy on behalf of needy children.

Roles of the Global Alliance Partners:

1. *Encourage and mobilize Christian institutions* through advocacy, awareness building, sharing of expertise, equipping and resourcing, to understand and undertake programs in HCD.
2. *Contribute to the development of HCD resources*, including curricula, syllabi, books, articles, websites and other resources which enable and enhance HCD programs globally and in their respective regions.
3. *Participate with other like institutions to further HCD research*, share resources, offer joint courses, and provide mentoring and other mutual cooperation to further the cause of holistic care for needy children.
4. *Work collaboratively with like institutions* to raise standards, improve content, ensure accreditation, and develop administrative/governance guidelines, and undertake other initiatives which facilitate the implementation and improve the quality of HCD programs around the world.
5. *Contribute to the development of Child Resource Centers, HCD Institutes, and other resourcing/enabling structures* which facilitate the creation and advancement of HCD programs.
6. *Develop programs for the training of trainers, faculty development, guest lecturing, conduct seminars, workshops, institutes* which contribute to the development of HCD programs and programming.

Current Global, National and Regional HCD Initiatives

The 4/14 Window Movement

Christian leaders from around the globe are came together in September 2009 to make an urgent appeal to consider the strategic importance and potential of the children and youth in the 4/14 Window. At this summit a global initiative was launched to “ mobilize the body of Christ worldwide to prioritize their mission in reaching, equipping and empowering the 4/14 generation to maximize their transformational impact while they are young, and mobilize them for continuing impact for the rest of their lives.” The Summit provided a way to share challenge, related problems and unique opportunities of raising up a new generation. The vision was to see that this younger generation recognized by the body of Christ worldwide as one of the primary agents of holistic mission and transformation, and that they will make a difference in the societal spheres of their nations.

The ATT track was one of the original tracks within the 4/14 Window Global Framework. The Tracks serve as building blocks of the 4/14 Window Initiative. The tracks will be composed of regional representatives worldwide. Each track was to develop, carry out and commit to a 4-year plan of action. As each track fulfills its mission, the overall mission is fulfilled.

The ATT Track: The ATT track in the 4/14 Window Movement is a voluntary group of Seminaries, Bible Colleges, and other Christian Academic Institutions working together with researchers, trainers, practitioners and other Christian leaders to create a global movement of academic programs in Holistic Child Development (HCD) which will equip the future church to value the 4/14 Window, and empower the 4/14ers to transform their world.

Vision: In response to God's heart for children, programs in Holistic Child Development programs will be an integral component of the ethos and programs of a majority of Christian Educational Institutions in every country and region around the world.

Mission: To encourage and enable Seminaries, Bible Schools, and other Christian academic institutions to implement contextually sensitive, academically rigorous, and developmentally sound HCD programs which motivate and train practitioners, and which inspire and equip church leaders, advocates and other Christians to increase and improve their ministry and advocacy on behalf of the 4/14 generation.

Roles of the ATT Track Partners:

1. Through advocacy, awareness building, sharing of expertise, equipping and resourcing, **encourage and mobilize Christian institutions** to understand and value the 4/14 Generation, and undertake programs in HCD.
2. **Guide their respective seminaries to contribute to the development of HCD resources**, including curricula, syllabi, books, articles, websites and other resources which enable and enhance HCD programs globally and in their respective regions.
3. **Participate with other like institutions to further 4/14 research**, share resources, offer joint courses, provide mentoring and other mutual cooperation to further the cause of holistic care and empowerment of the 4/14 generation.
4. **Work collaboratively with like institutions to raise standards, improve content, train trainers, ensure accreditation, develop administrative/governance guidelines, and undertake other initiatives which facilitate the implementation and improve the quality of HCD programs, and transform the 4/14 generation.**

The HCD Movement

The HCD Movement is moving ahead, ‘slowly but surely.’ It is a daunting challenge to seminaries to reconsider their priorities and foundations for ministry. Questions are often asked: “If we start HCD programs, what do we leave out?” “How can we make room for HCD courses in our already very full programs?” “Where will we get the human and material resources to include such courses?” At the same time however, there is growing awareness of the strategic value of such courses, and how they can enhance the overall impact of the seminaries. To date, some 70 seminaries around the world have begun planning, or are now implementing courses, programs and curricula in some form of HCD.

Meanwhile, the HCD website (www.hcd-alliance.org) is becoming more of a global ‘go to’ resource for HCD information and resource sharing. It is regularly updated by our fine web manager, Mr. Kok Chik Bu. This year it was updated with 30 new content/resources. To date, 98 resources are available on the website. The most popular download is the digital version of *Child, Church and Mission*, with just under 1000 downloads.

As of May 2011, the Website had registered >25,000 hits and >7000 unique visitors since inception. A Facebook profile page for HCD Global Alliance was created in Sept 2010. To date, 80 people ‘liked’ the page.

THE WAY FORWARD

Also, various working groups of the Global Alliance are working to provide information that will enable new seminaries to deal with challenges in core curriculum development, instructional resource sharing and development, building a global pool of faculty, sensitizing the worldwide Church on the strategic role of children in missions, and mobilizing educational institutions to provide training in holistic ministries with children.

In S.E. Asia, the Holistic Child Development Institute (HCDI) is providing training and consultative services on HCD to seminaries throughout the region. A similar Institute is being developed in E. Africa. In S. Asia, the Christian Forum for Child Development (CFCD) founded and directed by Dr. Jesudason Jeyaraj is moving ahead quickly with resource development, faculty orientation and awareness building amongst seminary leadership all across India. More than 40 Indian seminaries now include or are planning to include HCD equipping as a core part of their curriculum. HCD programming is becoming a

part of the programmatic emphasis in many seminaries in S. America and the Caribbean, with the lead being taken in the extensive network of Nazarene and Church of God seminaries throughout the region. And finally, courses are now being planned or taught in seminaries in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and Russia, with several new initiatives planned for this coming year.

The above is being supported by recognition and encouragement from various accrediting bodies. The MBTS Master's program in Penang is ATA accredited. Similar recognition and support for other programs is being given by other accrediting agencies, and by the International Council for Evangelical Theological Education (ICETE), and elsewhere.

The movement is also supported by, and is the starting point for several related initiatives, including the Now and Next Theological Conference on Children in Nairobi, Kenya in March, 2011. Hosted by Daystar Christian University and the Compassion Kenya office, this conference was a follow-up of the 4/14 Global Summit, providing theological and missiological support for that movement and the Lausanne Congress at Cape Town, South Africa.

It is imperative that the theological schools revisit its fundamental purpose for being, to include children in its long-term strategic agenda. Seminaries should review and possibly overhaul their existing training programs to train current and future leaders and direct practitioners in the children's ministries to provide holistic development programs for children especially those from the most deprived and unreached populations.

Our prayer for the next three years is to see a rapid increase in the number of seminaries and Christian academic institutions that are providing HCD academic training programs.

And what would all these amount to?

Our faith is that in every country in the world, there will be flagship seminaries or Christian institutions that provide solid training in HCD and mentors other institutions to do the same.

Our faith is that as a result of these academic training programs, a vast army of Christians will arise as leaders of organizations, child advocates and spokespersons and grassroots practitioners in every area of the world.

We believe we will see committed and excellent Christian child care workers that make themselves available to children in the community. So that where there is any risk or need, the Lord's love and care will be provided **for all children wherever they are in the world.**

We believe we will see seminaries and Christian academic institutions taking their rightful place in the Kingdom, esteeming children's ministries as equally strategic and significant as other ministries, completing and fulfilling their unique mandate as equippers in the Body of Christ.

Our faith is that all Christian academic institutions will lead beyond their lifetimes as their contribution impacts generations to come.