

Featured Organization

Committee for Children: Taking Steps to Bring Social and Emotional Health to Children Around the World

By Carolyn Hubbard



Second Step being taught in Slovakia

When a country's president shows up at your conference to praise your program, you know you're doing something right. Such was the case at Committee for Children's International Consortium, when Lithuania's president, Valdas Adamkus, praised the Committee's violence prevention program for helping Lithuania's high-risk kids.

[Committee for Children](#) (CFC) is a leading provider of curricula and trainings focused on strengthening children's social and emotional health. Subjects for kids from preschool through middle school range from bullying prevention and personal safety to emotion management and empathy. Once a local volunteer-powered start-up, CFC is now a dynamic social entrepreneurship with partners around the world and the goal to bring their evidence-based programs to more children the world over.

CFC's origins are the result of research studies conducted by Drs. Jennifer James and Debra Boyer that showed that most youth involved in prostitution had been victims of at-home sexual abuse. With the goal to curb this trend and give children the necessary skills to prevent sexual abuse, the pair founded the group Judicial Advocates for Women, garnered some funding, borrowed some office space and developed the *Talking About Touching* program to teach children about personal safety and self-

assertion. Before they could even think about marketing their product, organizations and schools were calling and asking for more. CFC delivered, and later developed their *Second Step* and *Steps to Respect* programs focused on social and emotional health and bullying prevention. Soon, they were getting calls not just from other states but from other countries as well.



There's a reason for this success: the programs work. Executive Director Joan Cole Duffell explains that since day one they have developed programs from sound pedagogical and psychological research and practice. Not only that, the programs are evaluated and fine-tuned until there is, as Duffell says, “a nexus between rigorous research and simplicity of use. That sweet spot between the two is what brings the success.”

Today, the programs are taught in over seventy countries, including Lithuania, a country burdened with the highest teen suicide rate in the world. CFC's pilot program there showed that the most at-risk kids made the strongest gains in self-respect and emotional growth through the lessons. President Adamkus sang the program's praises with good reason.

Committee for Children's international success has taken the organization into a whole new playing field. At first, they simply licensed the use of the programs to interested parties, an easy step that brought in a bit of revenue for the quickly growing organization. “We had a light touch with international partners,” explains Duffell. Despite the light touch, the organization still oversaw all translations and cultural adaptations of the materials. Changes could be made to meet cultural needs (change a photo here, a scenario there), but as International Partnership Manager Paige MacLeod notes, the core lessons required little change across cultures.

Most of the schools and organizations interested in using the programs were in countries with a culture of purchasing classroom curricula, i.e. more developed countries, such as Scandinavian nations, Japan, Australia, Germany. They are also

places that can readily access CFC's online trainings and have the resources to pay for and produce the products. (Note that these programs are a far cry from a typical textbook. Program packages come with puppets, DVDs and large colorful laminated lesson cards, as well as teacher reference binders—plus an online activation key that gives teachers a robust array of digital tools.) Partnering with curriculum providers in these countries became CFC's main focus as they built their international presence. Taking success a notch higher, the governments of Greenland and the Philippines adopted programs, mandating that they be taught in all of the schools of their respective countries.



Second Step being taught in Japan

Now, as less-developed nations seek out access to the programs, CFC is intentionally looking for partners with whom they can strategize program implementation, in light of production costs, limited online access, and more intricate cultural nuances. They already have fledgling partnerships in Colombia and are forging a partnership with [Escuela Nueva](#), a non-governmental organization dedicated to improving the quality of basic education in developing countries. MacLeod explains that they are looking at both urbanized and rural/marginalized settings in resource-poor countries to determine what each setting needs and how to best fill those needs. Their first pilot project in a rural setting will be with the Anglican Diocese in the Upper Shire region of southern Malawi, an area where Duffell and her family regularly visit and volunteer. Other countries in which they are building a presence include El Salvador, Chile, Singapore, Turkey and the Kurdish region of Iraq.

There's a hitch to all of this growth and interest: how to fund it. While program sales are robust each year, that revenue just covers CFC's annual costs. There is little extra revenue to support meeting the demand of countries that simply can't pay for the programs in their current structure. For the first time since their grassroots days, CFC is building relationships with funders and looking at innovative partnership models to find ways to bring their programs to more of the world's children. With social and emotional health part and parcel of a child's health and development, opportunities are bound to emerge.

“We are thrilled Global Washington exists,” Duffell remarks. “It really is a great benefit. When you bring people together that have similar goals to reach out to people, you are going to make magic happen.” She has met with other Global WA members to look at partnerships and to learn strategies, including PATH, whose approach of using the country’s strengths and unique cultural qualities to introduce programs, rather than assume a U.S cultural model is a great example for Duffell. “PATH has done that so brilliantly, so elegantly,” she notes.



Second Step being taught in the Kurdish region of Iraq

As MacLeod strengthens CFC’s international presence, work continues throughout the organization to develop more programs to help vulnerable kids in the States. The [Raynier Foundation](#) granted the organization over \$500,000 for a landmark evaluation study of *Steps to Respect*, CFC’s bullying prevention program, and the [Raikes Foundation](#) awarded the organization a \$250,000 three-year grant to develop online training tools for *Second Step* in collaboration with three Washington State middle schools with at-risk (of substance abuse, bullying, peer pressure) populations. Recent research from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) showed that the use of intervention programs such as these increases students’ academic achievement. As the debate about how to improve schools continues to rage across the country, this study is sure to bring more attention to Committee for Children.

In April of 2013, CFC will host its biannual international partner’s conference in Seattle. Accolades are sure to be given, strategies developed, and reports of children’s improved emotional well-being broadcast. Chances are a few more extra chairs will need to be at the table for people, maybe even heads of state, to stop by and sing Committee for Children’s praises.

Changemaker: Bill Taylor

“All the Good You Can Do” for Children in Southeast Asia

By Megan Boucher



Bill Taylor is quick to point out that his work is all about how ordinary people with ordinary resources can make a difference. [The Bill & Pat Bali Fund](#) and the SE Asia Children’s Foundation, two initiatives started by Bill and his wife Pat, connect sponsors to children (especially girls) in Southeast Asia with a mission to break the cycle of poverty by educating children and making sure girls have an opportunity to succeed. Bill’s journey started in an ordinary way: with a vacation and then a simple gift from his wife.

When asked why he began this work, Bill laughed and said “we just showed up! It’s what the universe decided.” He and Pat went to Bali, Indonesia for a holiday in 2005 and sponsored a few girls at a local orphanage because it seemed like a nice gesture. “We dabbled with it for the first several years,” Bill recalled. They met the girls and fell in love with them. After finding out that many didn’t have sponsors, they took it upon themselves to get their friends involved. The first year they found eight sponsors. The next year, fifteen. Of these humble beginnings, Bill said “we would write checks, we’d go visit, but it was still a holiday.” Then one day Pat gave Bill an oval river rock about 5 inches long for his birthday. Engraved on it were the words, “you cannot do all the good the world needs, but the world needs all the good you can do.” That rock touched Bill and made him realize that he was *not* doing nearly all the work that could be done! He started asking himself what they could really do with the resources that they had. The work escalated from there.



The Bill & Pat Bali Fund is a self-directed fund within Give2Asia (a San Francisco-based nonprofit). Bill and Pat cover the administrative expenses themselves so that every dollar donated goes to the Widhya Asih Foundation, an organization that supports seven children's homes in Indonesia. Though the word for the children's home translates as "orphanage," most of these kids are not orphans—their parent or parents are simply too poor to send them to school. If a family can afford to educate only one child, it is usually the oldest boy, so girls are often left behind. Sponsorship through the Bill & Pat Bali fund helps pay for food, a safe place to live, and school fees for the girls. Bill calls it "an environment of achievement," giving young women a chance for a life that they wouldn't otherwise have.

Bill and the staff are clear on what success for these children means and careful to measure their progress. To be considered a full success a girl stays at the orphanage, finishes and passes high school, passes her national exams, and obtains self-sustaining employment. "Anything short of that is a failure," Bill said emphatically. This work is not simply about helping these girls get by—it is breaking the cycle of poverty so that they and their future families will all have a better life. In order to achieve this, they involve the girls, parents, and sponsors in the process.



“We’re not wealthy,” Bill insisted. “But we have a little money, and talents, and friends.” He puts all of these resources to good use in his work with the fund and the foundation. He has over 40 years of experience as a management consultant, with skills in strategic planning, human resources, and organization development. Though Bill is obviously in favor of donating to a worthy cause, he believes strongly in augmenting that money with coaching and guidance. Any organization that he funds, he also works with to achieve optimal management and sustainability. This personal involvement helps him assure his donors that the funds for Bali are being used effectively. “I know these people personally,” he said. “I know the leaders. I’ve seen their facilities. I’ve looked at their financial records.”

Unlike some sponsorship organizations, the Bill & Pat Bali Fund facilitates active and strong connections between sponsors and the girls they are sponsoring. Sponsors commit to supporting their girls through high school. And it is not merely about the money. “We believe strongly that it really matters to that girl to know that somebody some place in the world loves her and cares about her and encourages her to study hard and make something of her life,” said Bill. He travels to Indonesia himself 4 times a year and is happy to carry cards, letters, and small amounts of money from the sponsors to the girls, although he knows that this will probably not be scalable as the work expands. The kids have access to technology (facebook and email) and are able to communicate with their sponsors. Feedback from sponsors indicates that this personal relationship is meaningful for them as well.



Bill's newest project is called the SE Asia Children's Foundation and will be a big expansion of the work to fund orphanages in Thailand. He has been visiting different organizations to find the best partners. He described a visit to one home in northern Thailand where a picture of one rice bag and a few pumpkins stuck out in his mind. That was all that the children had to eat at the time—they weren't even receiving 3 meals a day. "We can't let that happen," Bill said. "We just can't."

Purchasing food is a simple, inexpensive, and effective way to help. Bill is encouraged and encourages donors with the fact that even small changes can make a significant difference. When asked about his biggest accomplishment, Bill said "just the fact that we're doing it! We're having a profound impact on the lives of many kids." They currently have sponsorships for around 140 girls but also support 400 children in the orphanage as a whole through other major projects like a vocational training center, a bus, a new dormitory, a well, water purification, and a new information system.

Bill commented that many things happening in the world are overwhelming to try and change. However, the theme of Bill's work is that ordinary people can find a way to make a difference if they find the right cause and use their resources effectively. "And these changes will ripple for generations," he emphasized. "The bottom line is to connect with something where you can actually make a difference in the world." And then, as Bill and Pat have done, just go out and do it!