

10CHILDREN

In 1989, 194 countries ratified the convention on the rights of the child out of the conviction and belief that all children possess an equal right to grow up healthy, strong, well-educated and capable of contributing to their societies. Since then, the circumstances under which children live, have improved and there is greater attention to children's health and primary education, restrictions on child employment, female genital mutilation and corporal punishment have been implemented. Nevertheless, those children who at that time were the most vulnerable are still the most vulnerable. Relatively speaking their situation has not changed, in fact it has even become worse. The disadvantage and discrimination against their communities and families increased and will determine whether they live or die, whether they have a chance to learn and later earn a decent living. Conflicts, crisis and climate-related disasters deepen their deprivation and diminish their potential.

In their yearly report of 2017 UNICEF is very concerned about this development. Together with NGO's, private organizations, government institutions, scientists and others they are committed to draw attention to and improve the circumstances of these most disadvantaged and vulnerable children, to save their lives, to defend their rights, and to help them fulfil and reach their potential. If the world does not tackle this inequality today, by 2030 – the deadline set by the United Nations for attaining sustainable development goals - 167 million children will live in extreme poverty, 69 million children under the age of 5 will die and 60 million children of primary school age will not be in school.

Although everyone in general agrees that the most vulnerable children in our society should be protected, the attention to the fate of these children easily disappears in the turmoil of the daily news of 'adult' problems and issues. If we really want to take a serious attempt to improve the lives of these children, we have to describe the circumstances they live in continuously and tell their stories intrusive and inescapable. Art and artists can play a significant role in this endeavour. Alongside the analyses, statistics and politics, artists are capable to depict the stories of these children on a personal and emotional level. Art touches the heart and is capable of making tangible the lives and the obstacles these children encounter day by day. Not to raise pity, but in the contrary to show the potential and the strength of these children. The aim is to create involvement and awareness by a general audience, by regional and international leaders and by non-governmental organizations and political institutions, to evoke necessary and concrete actions to give these children a fair chance in life.

10CHILDREN

10CHILDREN is an international art project that gives these poor and excluded children and youngsters a voice and a face. A growing international community of professional artists, scientists and local non-governmental and humanitarian organizations will execute the project in close collaboration with the children. Their stories will be at the centre of the project. We will talk extensively with them about their perspective on their lives, their families and the society they live in. Children are perfectly capable to analyse and describe the positive and negative forces in their existence. We will join their lives for a short period

of time and take them completely serious. How do they experience and value their daily life? What hurts them and where do they see obstructions for their goals? What gives them power and energy? How do they see their future and which solutions and ideas do they have for a better life? The encounters with the children will be the starting point of every project and during the development they stay closely involved: they are the experts of their life.

10CHILDREN is a global project and takes place in 10 different countries all over the world. In each country a core group of local and international artists, scientists, journalists and representatives of local NGO's will be formed. The local artists and organizations are of great importance. They know the circumstances the children are living in, they speak the language and can make meaningful contact. These children are not used to be listened to and communicate with people outside their own community. The core group develops together with the children and the people around them several art projects that make them visible and invalidates misconceptions and existing prejudices. The true stories of the children combined with the capability of the artists will turn their stories into strong and touching art and will create a powerful message.

10CHILDREN focuses in each country on a subject that specifically touches the life's of the children and is part of the circumstances that undermine the change of a healthy and meaningful life. We will focus on the following topics: poverty, hunger, health, obesity as a phenomenon of poverty, lack of education, no house or parents, living in and with war, female suppression (child brides, rape, underaged mothers, mutilation), child labour, statelessness, drugs related violence, discrimination and exclusion. Although we will not underestimate the heaviness and seriousness of these topics, at the end we will focus on the strength of the children, their power to survive, their hopes and their dreams. In every country a different story of a child will be developed, with a different personal, social and political background. Together the art projects of all the 10 countries represent the stories of the most disadvantaged children of our time and will break the silence that surrounds the circumstances under which so many children are growing up.

INITIATORS

In every country the core-groups are formed and supported by the initiators of this project: Liesbeth Coltof and Dennis Meyer. Liesbeth Coltof is a highly acclaimed international theatre director and teacher. For 30 years she has been the artistic leader of an important theatre company for children and young people in the Netherlands: the Toneelmakerij in Amsterdam. Her work influenced directors, producers and artists all over the world. She won several international and national prizes, such as the Amsterdam Price of the Art 2018 and the Assitej Excellence Award of the international community for Youth Theatre. She has a lot of experience working and teaching in warzones and in countries of conflict or poverty, like Palestine (Gaza), Nigeria, Russia and Iran. Dennis Meyer is dramaturge, teacher and has been the artistic leader of a theatre house for young professional artists who made art for children and young people. He curated several art-festivals. Together they have initiated and delivered numerous (performing) international art projects. They are both strongly motivated to take the perspective of a child as the starting point of professional art; art with

a strong commitment to social issues. They have the conviction that children are mostly overseen and overheard, while they should be in fact in the centre of attention.

They are supported by the business manager Margreet Huizing. She is a well acclaimed business manager in the field of the Theatre of the Netherlands.

WORKING METHOD

10CHILDREN will set up 10 art projects in the period of 2019-2023 in 10 different countries all over the world. Every project gets the name of a child, which symbolizes all the children living under the same circumstances. The choice of the countries depends, amongst others, on the report of UNICEF 2017. It also depends on the international network of art-organisations all over the world that have been established by the initiators. Every year three art-projects will take place in three countries. In 2023 10CHILDREN will bring as many of these art projects as possible together in a closing festival, preferably in New York in cooperation with UNICEF and the UN.

In every country **10CHILDREN**, during a period of three to four months, will create in cooperation with a local arts/theatre centre a 'cultural hub'. Here children and a core group of artists and others work together and develop several diverse art-projects:

- **A performance** - A group of professional actors, dancers and/or musicians will create and perform in close collaboration with the children a performance based on the stories of the children. We aim to touch the hearts and the heads of the viewers with a high quality and meaningful performance. The performance will be presented in the local language and played as much as possible. The children and their families will be the guests of honour.
- **A documentary (20 min)** – In this documentary we will go deep into the daily life of a child. We will see the struggle and the courage. We will hear the voice of the children and share their concerns and dreams. Off course the family and the society will also be present, but the main focus is the child. The Dutch producer DOXY will produce the documentary in close collaboration with talented local professionals.
- **A photo-exhibition** - International well known photographers will work together with local talent and the children to portray the daily life of the children and their families. A view into their real world, based on what the children like to show. The photographers will try to follow the leads and the perspective of the children.
- **A visual art exhibition** with artistic impressions based on the dreams and the expectations of the children. The exhibition can contain all kinds of visual work: Video, painting, sculpture, installations and more. We are aiming for well known international artists working together with local artists and children. The quality of the artists and the raw sincerity of the children will create exciting and powerful work.
- **An educational program** aimed at the local situation and in close cooperation with the local NGO-s. These programmes will be part of the general educational project the 10CHILDRENbox.
- **A context program:** meetings with experts, discussions, lectures, workshops. Here the collaboration with the different NGO's and universities will be crucial.

- **A big opening night** where all the art-projects are presented to a general audience, to local and national politicians, NGO's, influential members of the community, press and of course to the children and their families. The goal is to generate lots of publicity for the stories of the children and hopefully create some change in how their lives are perceived.

Each country develops its own style concerning the content and the form of the project. Much depends on the cooperation with the local art/theatre centres, the local children and the artists involved. We will work together with art and social organizations. They have the expertise of their country and the contacts with the children and their families. The initiators Coltof and Meyer support the work and work alongside. Sometimes, if wanted, they will work as director and dramaturge. Sometimes they are consulting and supporting. They guarantee a common starting point of the project: the children's perspective will always be the base. They also take care of the external contacts, work on sponsoring, establish the cooperation with the international artists and the worldwide communication during the project.

DOCUMENTARY

In every country a documentary of 20 minutes will be made from the perspective of a child and directed by a local/international filmmaker. In the documentaries we will enter the world of a child and will be part of their daily life and struggles. We will hear them talk about their future and the way they see a solution for the circumstances they live in. We are contemplating the idea to invite a child from another country and background to be the narrator and include his/her reaction on the life of their peers.

The Dutch producer DOXY in close cooperation with local professionals will produce the documentaries. They will be broadcasted locally and internationally, hopefully in collaboration with Netflix or Vice.

Every documentary has its own style and dynamics, dependant on the subject and the country. Every documentary premieres during the presentation of the art projects. Together these 10 documentaries give an intrusive and diverse introspective on the life's of these children. The documentaries are also part of the educational project, the 10CHILDRENbox.

EDUCATION

During **10CHILDREN** an educational project will be developed, which can be used in schools all over the world. It will connect children from different countries and backgrounds with their peers. It will create understanding of the different cultures and circumstances children grow up and have opportunities in this world. Schools can order the 10CHILDRENbox. In the box there will be 10 lessons based on the stories of the children in the 10 different countries. The box contains the 10 documentaries, a photo-album, information on the different countries and the position of the children. The important tools in the box are the creative and social assignments. A guideline for teachers will give them information how to use the box. The development of the box will be initiated in the Netherlands and will include all the local knowledge and creativity from each country. After the 10CHILDREN project is

completed, the box will remain available. For the distribution of the box we hope to work in collaboration with UNICEF.

10CHILDREN FESTIVAL

The whole project will end in a big **10CHILDREN FESTIVAL** hopefully in partnership with UNICEF and the UN. All the art projects from the 10 different countries will be brought together in a festival in 2023, under the direction of the initiators. The festival will include several theatre and museum venues. It will be a full week concentrated on the deprived children of the world, their burden and their strengths. The week will contain the 10 different performances, all played by actors from different countries and in different languages. Translation will be provided. The documentaries will be shown and there will be exhibitions of the photo work and the visual art projects. Together the work will provide an undeniable and deeply moving image of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children of our time. It will show the conditions they have had to overcome, but it will also be a tribute to their courage and the solutions they propose. An extensive context-program will be organized with lectures, conferences and workshops. We aim at a broad audience, sponsors, policymakers and politicians and lots of publicity. But more importantly, we will, by placing the children at the forefront of attention, create the necessary awareness to evoke change in their daily lives. This is a matter of political commitment, of resources and of collective will – joining forces to tackle inequity and inequality head-on by focusing greater investment and effort on reaching the children who are being left behind.

COMMUNICATION

All activities of **10CHILDREN** will be collected via film and text material and published at the website 10CHILDREN.org, combined with Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The website will be multilingual and will connect the growing community that will be formed during the project. Combining film, blogs and interactive chats **10CHILDREN** will be accessible for everybody all over the world.

ORGANIZATION

The major part of **10CHILDREN** takes place in 10 different countries and will be executed by local institutions together with the initiators and the different international artists. The organization of **10CHILDREN**, situated in the Netherlands, is, together with partners, responsible for the overall mission of the project, supportive in content and production of the projects, raising funds, overall communication, documentaries, educational project and the closing festival. The **10CHILDREN** foundation is established and the members of the board are Valentijn Ouwens, Lucien Kembel and Cobie de Vos. We are in the process of forming an international board of advisers. In 2019/2020 the project planning will be initiated, sponsors of our extensive international network will be secured and connected with **10CHILDREN**. The initiators will select the partners in each country in close collaboration with the advisory board.

UNICEF

The starting point of **10CHILDREN** is the yearly report of UNICEF in 2017 ***A FAIR CHANGE FOR EVERY CHILD. The state of the world's children 2016***. Due to our common goals to improve the position of the most vulnerable children in the world, we investigate, together with

UNICEF NETHERLANDS, Mrs. Suzanne Laszlo and UNICEF INTERNATIONAL, in which area's we could cooperate.