

Children-at-risk networks organize to offer training, networking to local groups

By Kenneth D. MacHarg
LAM News Service

Children in the Philippines will have goat's milk, children in Russia will have food, and street children's workers in Latin America and the Caribbean will have training as a result of Cutting Edge 99, the second international conference for leaders of Christian Ministries to 'children at risk'. The meeting was held from September 13-17 in Ashburnham Place, Battle, England.

Those attending the conference said that the challenge of 'children at risk' is great as we approach the millennium. Today, it is estimated that 1.3 billion children live in inhumane situations of poverty, war, child labor, prostitution, etc. In the next 25 years, approximately five billion children will be born, around 95% of them in the less developed world and millions of them as 'children at risk'. Evangelical organizations and churches are making a difference, but much still needs to be done to increase their effectiveness, and reach more children.

198 leaders and senior staff of international and major national Christian organizations working with 'children at risk' attended Cutting Edge 99. "It was incredible to be with so many people who share the same vision," said Katharine Miles, Latin America coordinator for Viva Network, a world-wide consortium of Christian organizations working with 'children-at-risk'. "God reconfirmed my call to live my life doing all that I can to see His glory revealed and His kingdom come in the lives of these, the most vulnerable and most important for all our tomorrows."

Delegates from 42 countries who work with more than two million 'children at risk' world wide attended the conference. Over one hundred organizations were represented, with thousands of projects for 'children at risk' at the local level around the world.

Over forty representatives of Latin American and Caribbean projects attended, including Alfredo Mora, director of the Latin America Mission-related Robleato Children's Home in Costa Rica and staff from regional organizations such as Compassion International, Child Evangelism Fellowship and the Nazarene Compassionate Ministries in the Caribbean.

Cutting Edge '99 provided a forum for these organizations to network skills, needs and resources and thereby improve the effectiveness of their efforts. Delegates used nine plenary sessions, six professional tracks and formal and informal networking time to share, learn and discover how they could collaborate together, and increase the quality and quantity of their work with 'children at risk'.

"The conference was the first stage in the development of a formal regional networking process in Latin America and the Caribbean," Miles said. "Together with Viva Network Latin America, these groups will be organizing the children's track for CLADE IV, a massive conference on Latin American evangelism which will be held in Quito, Ecuador next September. The aim of this track is to gather a representation of all Latin Christians working with children at risk to discuss the major issues relevant to this field of ministry."

The conference was organized by Viva Network on behalf of the Council of International Children's Ministries, a network made up of major organizations working with children at risk, including the Latin America Mission.

The Latin America Mission currently has approximately 240 missionaries in 15 countries and is seeking to place 300 new missionaries in Latin America in the next three years. The U.S. headquarters can be reached at Latin America Mission, Box 52-7900, Miami Springs, FL 33152, by e-mail at info@lam.org, or by calling 1-800-275-8410. The mission's web site may be found at <http://www.lam.org>. LAM's Canadian office is at 3075 Ridgeway Drive, Unit 14, Mississauga, ON L5L 5M6.

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Deborah De Kock of CICM also contributed to this story.

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