

# Mentoring Across the Globe



## Lessons learned from the Global Leaders for Young Children Mentoring Initiative

by Mark Elliott

A new initiative of the World Forum Foundation is connecting early childhood advocates from around the globe in mentoring relationships to support early childhood advocacy. This cross-cultural exchange of mentoring support has established partnerships between advocates in Egypt and the Netherlands, Fiji and Myanmar, Poland and Swaziland, India and Colombia, and many other countries. Lessons learned from this initiative underscore the power of intentional mentoring relationships that include a sincere, seasoned mentor paired with an open, engaged mentee.

### Mentoring within the Global Leaders for Young Children

Global Leaders for Young Children is a project of the World Forum Foundation that was first envisioned by Joan



Mark Elliott is Associate Director-Program Support at Community Development Institute (CDI). CDI operates the National Interim Management Program on behalf of the Office of Head Start and provides Head Start interim management support to communities

throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. Mark also serves as the Global Leader Program Director at the World Forum Foundation and launched the Global Leader mentoring initiative. He has worked for more than 15 years in early childhood programs at the local, regional, and national levels, including extensive work in Puerto Rico, and has worked with both Head Start and programs for children with special needs. Mark lives in the Washington DC area with his wife and two daughters.

Lombardi in 2003, and has been strengthened over the years with support from Joan, Roger and Bonnie Neugebauer, and other experienced early childhood advocates. Over the last 10 years, five cohorts of emerging early childhood advocates from around the world have engaged in a two-year commitment to initiate advocacy projects in their own communities while connecting with the broader World Forum and Global Leaders community.

The newest cohort of Global Leaders convened at the World Forum in San Juan, Puerto Rico in May 2014. These new members have been matched with Global Leader alumni for one-on-one mentoring relationships. Through this new initiative, experienced mentors provide encouragement and support as the Global Leaders engage in their own advocacy and their emerging leadership roles. More than 40 new Global Leaders from 23 different nations have been matched with mentors representing 19 different countries. This initiative energizes new Global Leaders with additional support from a colleague from another country and also provides a more active role for alumni to stay engaged in this global advocacy effort.

### USA to UAE

My own journey with the Global Leaders began in 2011. I benefitted from wonderful mentoring as I developed an advocacy project on local community emergency planning to support young children. Along with my Global Leader partners, Lucia Vicencio and Sheri Senter, I piloted a community planning model in both Puerto Rico and California. These experiences, coupled with generous mentoring from Bonnie, Roger, and Joan, have all expanded my view of the world's early childhood community and strengthened my own advocacy skills.

Now as the Global Leader Mentoring Coordinator, I have seen firsthand the excitement that flows from matching two committed early childhood leaders in a mentoring relationship. I also serve as a mentor to Global Leader Hanna Buchler-Eden who lives in Dubai, but who is originally from Finland. I met Hanna at the Arab Region meeting of Global Leaders in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in September 2013, which I attended to support the launch of the mentoring initiative. I was very impressed with the commitment of Hanna and the other Global Leaders from the region, and immediately felt a connection to



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them. I have found that the more I reach out to support others, the more I gain.

### Lessons Learned

From my experiences as both a mentee and a mentor, I have learned the following principles for meaningful mentoring relationships:

- **Be genuine.** Authenticity builds trust. Being ourselves when we engage with others leads to comfortable, safe relationships.
- **Be intentional.** When we intentionally reach out to give and receive support, something magical happens. Intentionality deepens the relationship and expands the impact of mentoring.
- **Be proactive.** You don't have to wait for a mentor to choose you. Actively seek a mentor by finding someone you admire and who has experienced something you have not.

■ **Stay connected.** Strong mentoring relationships build over time. Connecting periodically over a longer period of time sometimes has a bigger impact than a short, intense period of interaction.

■ **Wonder together.** You don't need to have all the answers. Successful mentoring is not based on an 'informational download' from expert to novice. The most successful mentor engages her mentee in asking questions for which there is no immediate answer.

Additional insights are shared by Global Leader alumni Patrick Makokoro, Nanditha Hettitantri, and Iván Galindo who now serve as mentors to new Global Leaders. They share some of their own experiences of being mentored and highlight key concepts for becoming a good mentor or a successful mentee.

“Above all, have a malleable heart. Be willing to learn new things and implement them.”

Patrick Makokoro, Zimbabwe

### Zimbabwe: Perspectives on Mentoring

Patrick Makokoro is the founder and director of the Nhaka Foundation, a non-profit organization in Goromonzi, Zimbabwe, that provides access to education and health care for vulnerable and orphaned children. Patrick served as a Global Leader with the World Forum from 2011 to 2013, and is now a mentor to Ana Oliva Marcillo, a new Global Leader from Salvador, Brazil.

### Patrick's experience being mentored:

“I have been in a mentoring relationship that dates back 14 years. My mentor has been a strong towering figure behind the



work that I have been doing for the past 12 years. My mentor is a humble, unassuming, and frank person who has been helping me navigate various waters in the world of nonprofit management. In addition, my mentor completely understands the importance of early childhood development and is a passionate advocate for ensuring that children get access to ECD programs.

"I am grateful for this relationship because it has managed to support my personal growth and development, but also through me it has affected hundreds of other lives: the children, youth, and other adults that I mentor. Being part of fulfilling relationships makes the journey even more exciting."

#### Patrick's keys to being a good mentor:

- Successful mentoring is the ability to impact one's life while yours is being impacted, too.
- Be a free person: one who is approachable and who conducts his own organizational or personal business in a manner that is admirable.
- Make time to mentor and live according to a high standard of values and norms.

- Be approachable, humble, and transparent.

#### Patrick's advice on being a successful mentee:

- In order to be a good mentee, you need to allow a mentor to speak to your life or work situation.
- Be accountable to your mentor on decisions and the path you take.
- Be transparent.
- Above all, have a malleable heart. Be willing to learn new things and implement them.

#### Sri Lanka: Perspectives on Mentoring

Nanditha Hettitantri served as the National Secretary for Early Childhood Care and Development Network in Sri Lanka, and is completing work on a Ph.D. at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. She currently serves as the National Representative for Sri Lanka for the World Forum Foundation, and was a Global Leader from 2011-2013. Nanditha now mentors Lourdes Guadalupe Herencia Carrasco, a new Global Leader from Lima, Peru.

#### Nanditha's experience being mentored:

"When I started my journey as one of the first six Global Leaders from the Asia Pacific Region in 2011, Sheldon Shaeffer became my mentor. The mentoring was very friendly, inviting, and, in a way, informal. Mentoring from Sheldon came with great maturity, patience towards the expected outcomes, and an honest interest in the projects. This approach helped to build my confidence and gave me the message that the mentor had trust towards me and what I was trying to do as a Global Leader."

#### Nanditha's keys to being a good mentor:

- Powerful mentoring is a process of helping someone to identify her own skills, competencies, and strengths in order to achieve her full potential in life.
- Be sincere, supportive, and honestly believe in the mentee.
- Protect confidentiality.
- Be available and allocate enough time for listening.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ELLIOTT



"A mentor needs to be sincere, supportive, and honestly believe in the mentee."

Nanditha Hettitantri, Sri Lanka

#### Nanditha's advice on being a successful mentee:

- Take the initiative; show a sincere interest and effort in achieving the level that you want.

Lourdes Guadalupe Herencia Carrasco of Peru and Nanditha Hettitantri of Sri Lanka

- Be intrinsically motivated to improve your skills and identify your goals for life.
- Be sincere, open-minded, and flexible — otherwise the whole effort of mentoring could be a waste of time and energy.
- Open yourself to mentoring by having the right attitudes towards the mentor and the mentoring process, by building a good relationship and trust between you both as partners for progress.

## México: Perspectives on Mentoring

Iván Galindo is the principal and owner of Infantes y Crayones and Colegio Erik Erikson, providing education services to young children and those in the primary and secondary grades in Queretaro, México. Iván was in the very first cohort of Global Leaders for Young Children in 2004–2005 and is the regional coordinator for new Global Leaders from North America.

### Iván's experience being mentored:

"My mentors were Joan Lombardi, Judith L. Evans, and Youseff Hajjar. They were the main presenters in my training in Belfast and Montreal. There was a formal impact in the sessions, but an informal contact in dinners and accidental conversations. These were very senior presenters who knew what they were talking about. Nevertheless, I deeply appreciate the informal moments at dinners and chance encounters when they showed their very human side. These are very intelligent, well-intentioned people who were very passionate about their mission and who could share in a very natural way.

"I felt like these were very long-time friends who I had just not met until

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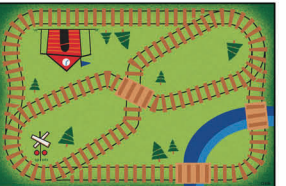
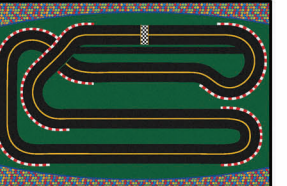
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then. Good mentoring is like saying hello to an old friend who you have just met. I saw a model in which you try to change the world without being a dramatic hero but a sensible, pragmatic, and down-to-earth human being. You do your best for the mission and afterwards you can still enjoy life.

"Over the years, it is such an important experience that you don't digest it immediately or in the calendar year. Like good wines, you keep it in your

cellar and it gets better with time. I have come back in my memory many times, year after year. I get new perspectives as I mature."

#### Iván's keys to being a good mentor:

- A good mentor knows he is imperfect and is not ashamed of it, and the mentee should not be ashamed of imperfection either. Everyone should have the will to be just a little better.

- Make sense and be a good listener.
- Set a good example and have a good sense of humor.
- Do not shrink in front of life's dilemmas, but face them with freedom and social meaning.

#### Iván's advice on being a successful mentee:

- Generosity is a journey: you live your life to achieve it, but you have to learn it from others. Do not forget to embrace a helping hand.
- Understand that you are living your life while you are trying to help others. You cannot help others until you allow others to help you.
- Get rid of useless arrogance.

- Listen, question, and, in the end, smile. Everything is done in good faith.

#### In Conclusion

Mentoring relationships expand our vision, deepen our experience, and create new opportunities. The Global Leaders mentoring initiative illustrates that these relationships can be established across borders and actively knit

together the global early childhood community. Intentional mentoring not only motivates, inspires, and strengthens the skills of emerging professionals, it is a critical component of building the next generation of early childhood leaders in communities throughout the world.

"A good mentor knows he or she is imperfect and is not ashamed of it, and the mentee should not be ashamed of imperfection either. Everyone should have the will to be just a little better."

Iván Galindo, México

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK ELLIOTT



Iván Galindo (second from left) working with North American Global Leaders.