



## **Universal Education Foundation's contribution to the European Foundations Centre Annual General Meeting and Conference 2007:**

The 2007 Annual General Meeting and Conference of the European Foundations Centre was held in Madrid from the 31<sup>st</sup> May to 3<sup>rd</sup> June. In cooperation with Philanthropy Directions International, the Universal Education Foundation organised a networking dinner for foundations working on children's issues and well-being and a pre-conference meeting: "Building a platform for supporting children's well-being" which was held on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May. Both events were co-organised with the European Foundations Centre. The UEF team at the conference was: Daniel Kropf (Executive Vice-Chair), Raymond Georis (Chair), Basri Saleh (Director General of External and International Relations for the Palestinian Ministry of Education), Jean Gordon (Director of the EIESP, partner to UEF).

Throughout the world, funders are supporting initiatives to address the conditions affecting children and young people, and to ensure that each one of them is provided with what they need in order to fulfil their full potential. Collectively these efforts are impressive, and yet the opportunities to discuss the perspectives and leverage of various approaches are rare. While each philanthropic organization establishes its unique focus and expertise, there is a real opportunity to synchronize efforts towards creating a paradigm shift that puts the well-being of children and young people as a priority.

Through these two events we wanted to strengthen all our endeavours and in particular the Universal Education Foundation wished to propose the creation of a platform building on its vision of **Education by All for the Well-Being of Children**, which would enable knowledge and resource sharing, and would provide opportunities for joint initiatives. This vision demands that all of society works towards promoting the optimal conditions for the holistic development of children and young people in their learning environments.

The dinner was attended by colleagues from nine foundations and the EFC. We were joined the following morning for the meeting by a further three foundations. Discussion was intense and inspiring providing a unique opportunity to share experiences and goals. We went into depth in examining the concept of the well-being of children, young people and those who surround them, and came to agreement that well-being can be seen as the realisation of one's own physical, emotional, mental, social and spiritual potential in a harmonious engagement with one's own self, family and friends, the community and the world at large. By the end of the meeting the foundations and organisations present reached a consensus that we would like to create a global movement towards the well-being of children, young people and those who surround them. A further lunch and meeting on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> June made it possible for more foundations to express their interest.

[www.uef-eba.org](http://www.uef-eba.org)

Secretariat: P.O. Box 4605, Al-Bireh, Palestine Tel: + 972 2 296 79 67 Fax: + 972 2 298 46 86 e-mail: [info@uef-eba.org](mailto:info@uef-eba.org)

Operational Office: EIESP c/o Université de Paris Dauphine, F-75116 Paris, France

Tel: + 33 (0)1 4405 4001 Fax: + 33 (0)1 4405 4002 e-mail: [info@uef-eba.org](mailto:info@uef-eba.org)

Following on from our discussions, the first step will be to organise a meeting in the autumn for the foundations and organisations interested. At this meeting we will be able to exchange in depth on the visions, goals and concrete experiences of our organisations as inspiration for our work, and clarify in what way our work could develop into a project within the European Foundation Centre. For our mutual enrichment, the first stage will consist in sharing examples of the inspiring initiatives taken by the foundations in the group to support the holistic development of children and young people and the advocacy they undertake towards decision-makers. This mapping exercise will allow us to understand better the visions, practices and country contexts in which we are working. We feel that it could be valuable that the reflection on developing a common project be placed within the Youth and Education interest group of the EFC. A meeting will be prepared in order to report back to the 2008 EFC conference which will be held in Istanbul.

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