

2016 Educateurs sans Frontières Assembly – NOTES

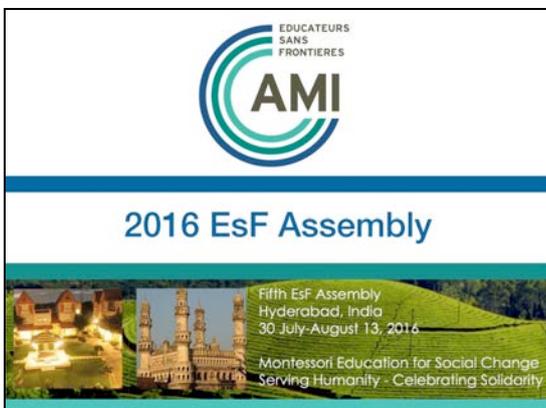
Date: 31 July 2016

Topic: Afternoon Session

Presenter: Lynne Lawrence

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The following are unedited notes from talks or discussions held at the 2016 AMI Educateurs sans Frontières (EsF) Assembly, India, 31 July to 12 August 2016. The notes have been prepared to enable EsF participants and other interested parties to reflect on and utilise some of the idea, principles and practices discussed. The notes are not in any form suitable for professional publishing and may include spelling, grammatical and other errors. The notes may not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). The notes have been distributed in this form to expedite availability. The copyright for the notes is held by AMI and the original author, if specified. The notes can be distributed on condition that this disclaimer and copyright notice is included. We thank the presenters, volunteers and translators for all their work in capturing the work of the 2016 EsF Assembly in written form.



AMI's three pillars. The idea of three is very important in AMI Montessori.

AMI'S THREE PILLARS

LEGACY

The Study of Childhood

CAPACITY

Montessori Education for All Children

OUTREACH

Montessori for Social Justice/Change

The Legacy – The Study of Childhood

AMI has a very large archive and there is a lot to be explored. The archival information is available. We can use the archives for the writings and knowledge that can come before us. You can always ask us for help in finding things that we have in the archives.

As part of our Legacy pillar, we need to start to talk, do more research, and deepen our understanding. The word Legacy is not just about “What was,” but “What are we doing for the next generation of developing Montessori.

Capacity – Montessori Education for All Children

I hope you will agree with me that it is not just Montessori for all children that we strive for, but that it should be one of the choices for all children. We can't expect everyone receives a Montessori education, but that it should be a choice for the parents to give to the child.

To reach all the children, we need to do something different about how we develop or capacity. It also means we need to develop our thinking. For example, the 0 to 3 is one of our youngest programs. The adolescent is new and on the horizon. We need to stretch what we think of in our development in capacity. Children are not the only human beings that can benefit from Montessori principals, but also those who are at the end of their life.

So in terms of AMI's capacity, the range of what we talk about in capacity is changing as we speak. The numbers that we need to develop more capacity has to be a big part of our conversation. People say that, “AMI does not change.” But it always has and we will continue to change for the needs of our community.

Montessori for all children? What do we mean and what is the implication? How do we build that capacity?

Outreach – Montessori for Social Justice/Change

We say Montessori for Social Change, but perhaps what we really mean is Social Justice. This is something interesting to talk about.

So much of our work is on equity, human rights, and on access.

Social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equity, and can be defined as the way in which human rights are manifested in the everyday lives of people at every level of society.

A number of movements are working to achieve social justice in society.

Montessori is one of them...

We began in the slums of Rome in the *casa de bambini*.



Let's remember where Maria Montessori began. Originally it was a response to health and hygiene in the slums in Rome. The goal was to help the children to live with the adults in this area of Italy. It was not enough to change just the hygiene for these children. It became obvious that unless your basic needs are met, you can't think about education. They needed to look at how people were living. They needed access to food and water.

Montessori is not just for children in the slums. We have people in all levels of society today that are not in conditions that are healthy and supportive for optimal development. How can we help to the child build to be an optimal person? What is crucial to support the development of the best for the child at that moment?

Maria Montessori began a nomadic life so that she could to train and bring Montessori to many people in many countries. She was not nomadic during her time in India. She lived in India and had the ability to think, clarify and reflect on Montessori education.



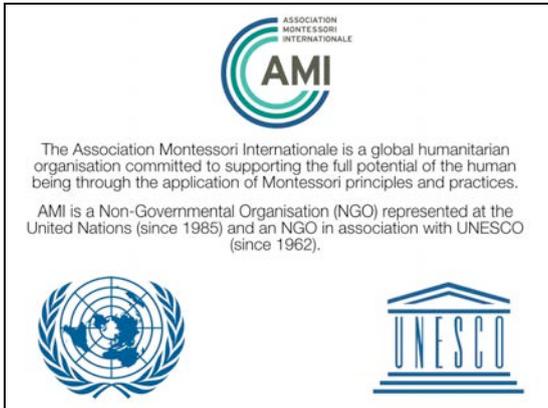
"Mankind can hope for a solution to its problems, among which the most urgent are those of peace and unity, only by turning its attention and energies to the discovery of the child and to the development of the great potentialities of the human personality in the course of its formation."

Maria Montessori, From the foreword to
The Discovery of the Child

What do we take from that? We are not trying to “do” to children but rather think about the “discovery” of the child. That is something we can turn our attention to and remember every time we work with children. Can’t assume that you are dictating the results you want to see.

We constantly have to understand “Who are you?” to help the child with that questions. Who are you when you interact with all the adults we work with? Who are we talking to?

The fundamental questions are, “Who are you, and What do You need?”



Association Montessori Internationale is an NGO and has been working with other NGO’s for a common goal of

In 2014 in Sarajevo, the largest peace event since the World War II took place. There were 300 youth and thousands of founding members. AMI was there and participating in this initiative.



Maria Montessori decided that there should be a “Social Party of the Child.” She wrote the following to all the government leaders of the world in the hopes of getting this party initiated.

“It is not good-will alone which will help us forward. Neither does it depend on agreement or on the problems. In my opinion there is only one remedy by which future generations can be protected against the woe which burdens us: let us forget the problems and concentrate on the person... the whole person, and this person begins at birth.”

Maria Montessori, speaking at UNESCO, 1951

If we want to solve the problems of war and discord, Maria Montessori believed it had to start with the children. Even today, have we decided this as a possibility for children? Not really.

We have ministries for children. We have organizations for children. We are beginning to have ways for children to be heard.

In 1950, there was talk of setting up a Convention on Human Rights. She read what was proposed and found that there was nothing about children in. In 1951, she wrote:



“Man must be cultivated from the beginning of life when the great powers of nature are at work. It is then that one can hope to plan for a better international understanding.”

Maria Montessori, Letter to All Governments, 1947

In 1959, there was the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. There is a difference between a Declaration and a Convention. The Declaration requires a signature and, once signed, the country is declaring that they will follow the treaty as described.

In 1989, there was Convention on the Rights of the Child. At this convention it changed the way that children were viewed and treated. They were now seen as distinct humans with a set of rights instead of human being with no rights.

In 2014, the UNESCO meeting discussed that education was still business as usual and stated that it is not enough for all the children of the world. We need new ideas and approaches. The convention must become a guiding document for all nations. If we don't know about this convention then we are not doing justice to our work.



AMI needs to work with other groups and organization to join with them to do our work.

Back to our timeline.

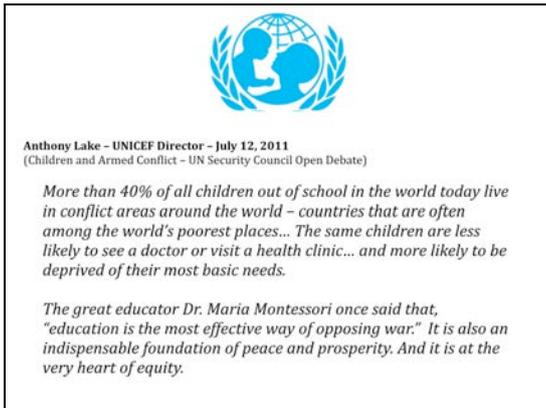


The First Assembly for EsF took place in 1999. We have Victoria Barres as the only one to attend all five EsF Assemblies.

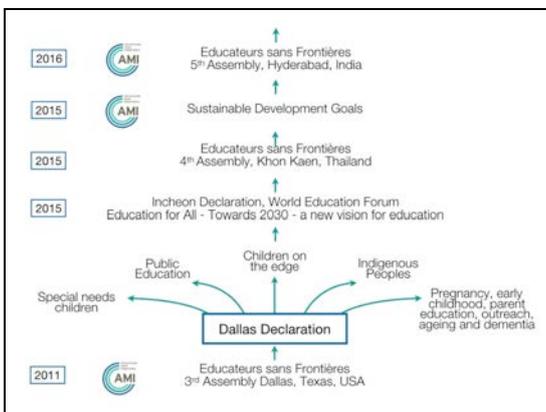
Then there was the eight Millennium Development Goals generated by the United Nations, which were to be implemented by 2015. There were specific measures that were to be reached as a way to assess the progress on the goals. Also in 2000, there was a meeting of many different groups at the World Education forum. They came up with a curriculum quality-based educational program for children and adults.

So how to move forward with far-reaching and quality education?

In 2004, was the Second EsF Assembly. (There were 4 or 5 that attended that assembly here.) Then the Third EsF Assembly was held in Dallas in 2011. In that same year, Anthony Lake, the UNICEF Director at the time, quoted Maria Montessori.



In Dallas we redefined ourselves and clarified what we want EsF to do.



In the Dallas Declaration it was identified that we should work with special needs children. That has happened and there have now been two nine-week courses to help people working with these children.

Public Education is another aspect and is one in which much work has begun.

It was identified that we want to try and work more with children “on the edge.” Children on the edge referred to what we might call children at risk. But this does not just mean children visibly at risk, but all those other children that appear fine, but maybe not so fine. We should think about whether we should stick with the “children on the edge” terminology or should we move to “children at risk.”

The EsF approach to Montessori education is critical for Indigenous Peoples as they must have a way to maintain their cultural autonomy and Montessori education embraces this. It not only allows people to be who they are and support all cultures, but also supports the development of the human being as they progress through the curriculum as it supports the development of each person’s full potential. To be effective in this, Montessorians need to wait to be asked from the peoples.

Then the Dallas Declaration identified the need to work with: women who are pregnant, early childhood, parent education, outreach, and ageing and dementia.

There has been progress with the some of these, including people who are ageing and dementia carers.

That was all done at the Dallas Assembly.

In 2015, Victoria Barres and one other Dallas Assembly attendee went to the Incheon Declaration assembly. We need to read that. We can’t say nobody will listen to us if we don’t listen to others.

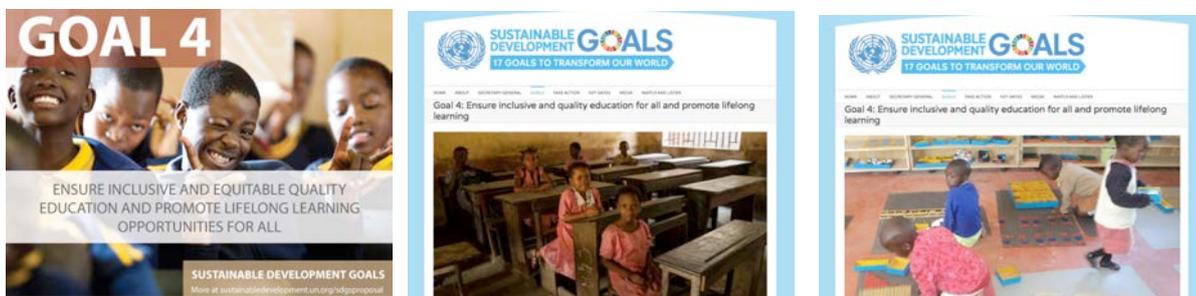


Would it not be great to see the Sustainable Development Goals to look like the children in a Montessori classroom as the outcome?

In 2015, we had the Fourth Assembly in Thailand. The goal there was to make EsF more visible. We were able to start a new website, and we developed a lot of stronger connections with those that we had met with before.

It is important to recognize that the The Millennium Development Goals are not the same as what was developed in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals. Philip will discuss this in his talk. I have seen a group of children recreate the Sustainable Development Goals out of sand. Would it not be great to have children create our AMI logo?

Goal 4 in the Sustainable Development Goals is what we need to focus on.



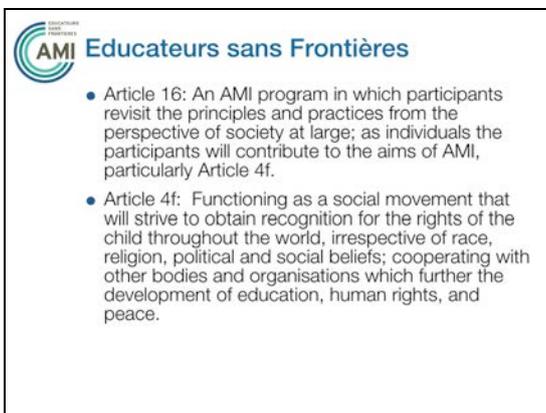
At the last assembly there was a huge energy and a willingness to go out and do. We decided that we should do another assembly more quickly since the 1918 is the next possibility for an assembly as next year the International Congress will be happening in Prague.

In 1917, Maria Montessori mentioned the idea she wanted to call the White Cross. She could see that in an emergency or disaster that the health and medical issues were taken care of by the Red Cross. She thought that there should be a White Cross to help in emergency educational relief at disaster locations. That seed did not come to fruition.

People were doing this type of work, it just was not name and recognized formally.

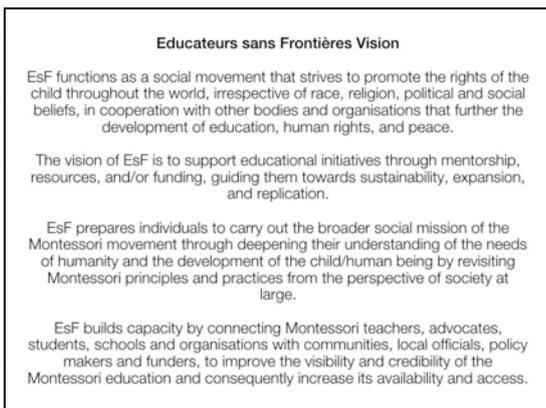
In 1999, Renilde Montessori wanted to change the vision for Montessori. She felt that Montessori was getting narrowed down to thinking about it as just for schools. We of course need the schools, but we also need a broader vision. We need to meet people where they are and do something about the conditions to create optimal environments for those people. So, in 1999 Renilde took the idea of Mèdecins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) as a concept and came up with Educateurs sans

Frontières (Teachers without Borders). EsF is in French because that is the official language for Doctors without Borders.



EsF has now been enshrined in the AMI Articles of Incorporation. It is in Article 16 and 4f.

There is your job description.



We also have a Vision Statement for EsF.

Moving forward, we are a social movement. As seen in our Vision statement, we need to move things to become sustainable. Sustainability is a key to this work.

As we move through the two weeks, we will be revisiting Montessori's principles and practices as seen from society at large.

We will also look at some EsF values that have been summarized in the past. We will revisit these and give them a really fresh look.

 **AMI EsF Values**

Educateurs sans Frontières values initiatives that:

- Promote a culture of peace, solidarity and equality
- Maintain a clear Montessori vision of the child's contribution to social reform
- Demonstrate understanding of Montessori principles and practices with the needs of the community in mind
- Embrace community involvement and engagement in the project design and implementation
- Focus on empowerment and long term sustainability
- Embody an inclusive approach to race, ethnicity, religion, gender, language, culture and socio-economic status

"When using the term Educateurs sans Frontières, we refer to borders that transcend the obvious ones to do with nation states.

The truly important ones are the psychological and spiritual frontiers - the ideological, religious, racial, social and economic, cultural and linguistic boundaries which artificially divide a humanity as yet largely unaware of its intrinsic unity and interconnectedness with the earth that brought it forth."

Renilde Montessori, Educateurs Sans Frontières

Perhaps skilled and knowledgeable educators could penetrate, neutrino-like, the universal tissue of human society - a scattered group of individuals, ambassadors for the child, minstrels who come when called upon and leave when the wisdom of their song has been heard.



These would be the *Educateurs sans Frontières*, the educators without boundaries, able and willing to go where their presence is required. Never to intrude, not to indoctrinate, but to help and encourage others to learn, to rediscover the wise and ancient plan for wholesome growth with which all humans are endowed.

This is the second bit to your job description.

A video was played of children from City of Hope talking about what they had learned from their Montessori education.



This was performed in celebration of the inauguration of the building that been built. They were no longer in plastic tents for school. They did it all in English.

A little bit later on, UNESCO asked children from all over the world to make a Peace video. They had children from the Corner of Hope produce their own play about peace. Most of the people who were asked to do it were adolescents.

I hope I have given a little insight as to EsF beginnings, and the work we have to do. This assembly has real work to do and real things to think about. We will be broken into groups to think, read, and talk. We will delve deeply and see what resonates and then extract what is essential.