Goals

• To assess the role of early child development and familial relationships in the process of peace-building and conflict resolution

• To explore novel approaches to translate science-based knowledge into concrete and sustainable actions within peace-building initiatives

Common Bio-behavioral Systems

Patterns of early caregiving matter

Across species similar bio-behavioral systems are involved parenting
The Crucial Importance of the Nature of Early Caregiving

Individual differences in maternal behavior matter and can be transmitted across generations

Parental signals as a source of phenotypic plasticity?

Parental care → Epigenetic marks → Gene expression → Phenotype of offspring
Common Bio-behavioral Systems

- Oxytocin and vasopressin, two neuropeptides that are synthesized and released from the hypothalamus, appear to be key elements in the neurobiology of affiliation.

Next Steps

What are the unanswered questions?
What are novel approaches to answer these questions and to translate new knowledge into concrete action?

41 scientists from diverse backgrounds (basic sciences, early child development, cross-cultural psychology, interfaith dialogue, and peace building) from 15 countries: South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ireland, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, US and the UK, Germany, Switzerland, Turkey, Israel and Palestine, and Australia
Next Steps - Lebanon

**Goal:** To reduce violence through the promotion of harmonious family relationships in refugee camps and other fragile settings

**Setting:** In Lebanon alone, nearly 230,000 Palestinians live in refugee camps. Conditions in the camps lead to increased harsh punishment, negative intra-family relationships and violence in homes and communities. Adverse effects of this environment are particularly profound for children.

**Partners:** In refugee camps, a local NGO, Arab Resource Collective is implementing an ACEV 25-week curriculum program for mothers of children (4-6 years of age) focusing on strengthening child well-being and family relationships.

Next Steps - Lebanon

**Outcomes:**
- For children: improvements in cognition, literacy and executive function; behavior; violence reduction
- For mothers: improved parenting; maternal wellbeing; increased social capital
- For families: improved parent-child interactions and bonding; reduced couple violence; supportive group dynamics & social processes
- From fidelity to intervention: improved engagement of participants & quality of program

**Need:**
- Funding (~$80,000) for implementing the program as part of a randomized clinical trial. Support is already in hand for the assessment.
Next Steps - Palestine

**ERICE**

**Goals:** To replicate the efforts of the Arab Resource Collective in Palestine in working with groups of mothers (and fathers) to reduce violence through the promotion of harmonious family relationships and to enhance early child development through the use of the ACEV parent-child curriculum in Palestine and Israel.

**Partners:** Efforts are underway to establish an ERICE NGO based in Italy. Once established, the plan is to pilot the implementation of the ACEV 25-week curriculum program for mothers of children (4-6 years of age) focusing on strengthening child well-being and family relationships. Discussions are underway with other potential partners in Palestine.

Next Steps - Palestine

**Outcomes:**
- For children: improvements in cognition, literacy and executive function; prosocial behavior; violence reduction; resilience
- For mothers: improved parenting; maternal wellbeing; increased social capital
- For families: improved parent-child interactions and bonding; reduced couple violence; supportive group dynamics & social processes
- For the Palestinian and Israeli communities: initiation of a sustainable joint project focused on the well-being of children and families

**Need:**
- Support to establish an ERICE NGO
- Support to convene planning meetings to adapt and pilot ACEV programs in Palestine
Next Steps - Brazil

National Initiative to Prevent Violence in Brazil through early Parent-Child Interventions and Programs for Street Children:
In 2009, Brazil witnessed 49,966 homicides, 37,225 traffic deaths and 9,328 suicides. Violence at home also poses significant danger to a developing child. A household survey carried out in low-income neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro found that about two-thirds of all parents used some sort of physical violence against their children, and around a third of the survey respondents reported violence between adults, much of which was witnessed by children.

In the Works
Take Home Message

We need to take action to make our world a better place for our children and for future generations. The academic community will be one of the partners in this important undertaking to refine and implement in a sustainable fashion ECD programs of proven value.

Thank you