

KEEPS

KEEPS, with the support from London School of Economics (LSE), DESTIN, UNICEF Society, and Herbert Smith, is giving Londoners a unique opportunity to glimpse into the minds of children all over the world.

An exhibition of more than 150 paintings by 6 – 10 year old children from over 20 countries (Botswana, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India, Nicaragua, Norway, Sierra Leone and Thailand to name but a few) commissioned on the theme *the most important thing in your life* is currently showing in the Atrium of the London School of Economics' Old Building, between the hours of 9am -6pm from 16th May – 15th June.

KEEPS is an artistic project facilitated and documented by students from the LSE's Development Studies Institute. Over 20 students who went home to visit their families over Christmas and Easter 2006-07 each spent time at a local school, refuge or social organization where they simply asked children to paint the most important things in their lives.

Paintings were created on a range of themes from houses, cars and pets, to love, Jesus, the environment, air and the Gambian flag. Each child was also given the opportunity to write down something about themselves, their family, friends, loves, hopes or fears. This commentary, together with the artwork and the child's photograph, has formed the basis of the KEEPS project.

The KEEPS Project was launched on Tuesday night (15th May) to over 150 guests. Peter Townsend (Professor of International Social Policy, LSE) addressed the audience. "We must remember, when confronted with the 'dark' paintings of our present world, that there are 'light' paintings as well, signs of hope amongst the many failings. That hope is expressed magically in particular by children when they love and put trust in those around them."

Adam Hyde, Director of KEEPS said, "KEEPS is not about money, protest or high profiles, and it is certainly no project of profound social change. It is merely a simple project of questioning and understanding." Adam's and co-director Mary-Kathryn Wyle's core motivation for embarking on the KEEPS Project is that, "one day all children will have equal opportunity to fulfil their ambitions."

So what do children consider most important in their lives? If they had to choose something or someone as the most important, what or whom would they select? This is the goal of the KEEPS Exhibition - to spend time with children from all parts of the globe, to learn from them, to hear their stories, if briefly, and then to bring these diverse experiences and outlooks together.

"KEEPS is a voice for the children, expressed through the creativity of art and communicated through their writing. What is our common humanity? Finding out is KEEPS purpose," he said.