

WAIMH Connectors and Collaborators Column: Celebrating Dr Niels Rygaard

By Maree Foley, Switzerland and Deborah Weatherston, USA

This column features WAIMH members who are contributing to the fabric and virtues of WAIMH in their region and or community. It especially celebrates their tireless efforts to build working relationships across disciplines and sectors for the benefit of infant and family mental health and development. In this column we introduce and celebrate Dr Niels Rygaard (DPA) (Authorized Clinical Psychologist), from Denmark. Dr. Rygaard has contributed articles to WAIMH Perspectives and presented at past WAIMH Conferences. He has a commitment to relationship health. The WAIMH Perspectives Editorial team would like to congratulate Dr Niels Rygaard who has recently been recognised by the American Psychological Association (APA) Committee on International Relations in Psychology (CIRP) as the recipient of the *2020 APA International Humanitarian Award*. He has been presented this award "in recognition of your sustained and enduring humanitarian services to underserved populations" (APA Committee) especially for services to children without parental care.

Niels Rygaard is the cofounder of Fairstart Foundation, with Morten Jac. In learning about this award Niels was quick to acknowledge the shared work of the Fairstart team. The organisation was "founded based on an increasing interest in the [online training programmes](https://www.fairstartfoundation.com) developed by Niels Peter Rygaard in collaboration with a team of international researchers" (www.fairstartfoundation.com).

Niels is an:

Author, researcher and consultant for organisations, NGOs, and governments in the development of care monitoring systems and education of caregivers. CEO and co-founder of the Danish registered Fairstart Foundation, www.fairstartfoundation.com.



The mission of the Fairstart Foundation is to:

The mission of www.fairstartfoundation.com is to unite researchers, organizations and daily caregivers, in a joint effort to improve the mental health of world children without parental care. In 20 close partnerships with NGOs and governments, we provided their staff with educations in how to train local groups of foster families and group homes. 600 staff around the globe graduated and trained the caregivers of some 40.000 children, in how to practice attachment-based care. Currently, SOS Children's Village staff in four East African countries apply our Swahili and Kinyarwanda trainings. With the Greenland government we implement educations in Inuit. I thank WAIMH and all partners for sharing their knowledge and experiences, constantly adding to further developments. (Rygaard, N.P.)

If you are interested to know more about the Fairstart Foundation, here are some links to papers in various languages:

<https://independent.academia.edu/NielsRygaard>

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Niels_Rygaard2

In addition, the following link provides a two-minute video with examples from trainings in various countries:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIW3eMXCJc4&list=PLZ8krePBR-seBtq8zjoB2ayNEvIA-ha7K&index=8&t=2s>

For further information about the Fairstart Foundation and/or to contact Niels:

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