



## Arigatou International World Day of Prayer and Action for Children Guidance on children's participation

Initiated in 2008 by Arigatou International, the **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children** celebrated on Universal Children's Day and the anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child – 20 November–, connects religious communities and secular organizations in a common endeavor to protect children's dignity. Through interfaith and advocacy actions inspired by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the opportunity to express hope and determination through prayer, the World Day serves as an interfaith and intercultural advocacy platform committed to end violence against children. Since 2008, members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and other partners have celebrated the World Day in over 97 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East and Oceania.

### Why does children's participation matter?

Children's participation is a priority for Arigatou International not only because children's wellbeing is at the core of our work, but also because we believe in what children's agency, expertise, and views bring to the realization of their right to be heard as well as to other rights.

Opportunities for children to express their views strengthens their ability to communicate with others and make informed decisions. It increases their self-confidence and empowers them to speak-up on issues that concern them. It also serves to protect themselves and others by allowing them to challenge situations of violence and abuse.

#### ***Convention on the Rights of the Child - Article 12***

"State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child."

Children's participation has a significant contribution to social development. Providing children with opportunities to express their views and being taken seriously as citizens builds a sense of belonging, responsibility, and caring with enormous impact on their individual and collective development.<sup>1</sup>

### How to include children's participation on my World Day actions?

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<sup>1</sup> See Every Child's Right to be Heard: A resource guide on the un committee on the rights of the child general comment no.12 available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/5259/pdf/5259.pdf>



There are multiple ways in which you can ensure children’s participation in your World Day planning and implementation. The following table provides you with some ideas depending on the level of engagement you can support:

<p><b>Consultative participation</b></p>	<p>If your programming work already involves children and you want to include them as beneficiaries of your World Day celebration, but you do not have the time nor capacity to engage them more actively, please consider the following options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invite children to give input on your World Day <b>topic</b> for this year by asking them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this issue (e.g. sexual abuse and exploitation) the main type of violence affecting children in our context? If not, what issue do you think we should prioritize?</li> <li>• How the World Day could help us doing it? (e.g. by mobilizing others around the issue, by bringing together people of different faith, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Consult children on the <b>actions</b> that could be done for the World Day by asking them: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who should we get involved?</li> <li>• What activities could help us to convey our message?</li> <li>• Where could we do it?</li> <li>• Would one activity be enough? Or should we think of more than one activity?</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Invite children to <b>attend</b> the World Day celebration and activities.</li> </ol> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>For example</b>, the GNRC-Tanzania has actively engaged children participating at the peace clubs from different schools by consulting them about the actions that could be carried out and the topics that are relevant to their context. This year, they will promote inter-generational dialogue to address child marriage on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child</p> </div>
<p><b>Collaborative participation</b></p>	<p>If your programming work already involves children and you would like to take their participation further on the World Day celebration by encouraging children-adult collaboration, please consider the following suggestions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Involve children in the planning of your World Day celebration by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inviting them to take part of the World Day planning <b>meetings</b>.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asking them for their <b>input</b> on the topic, actions, target audience, and evaluation form.</li> <li>• Involve them in the development of <b>advocacy pieces</b>.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Let them <b>choose a task</b> that they would like to be responsible for (e.g. campaigning, social media, facilitation, etc.)</li> <li>3. Encourage them to <b>lead a session or activity</b> during the celebration (e.g. moderator, panelist, facilitator, coordinator, etc.).</li> <li>4. Invite them to <b>share advocacy messages</b> on the selected topic and encourage them to use <b>creative ways</b> to present them (e.g. videos, songs, poems, stories, drawings, etc.).</li> <li>5. Invite them to <b>attend</b> the World Day celebration and activities.</li> </ol> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>For example</b>, the GNRC-Panama has consistently involved children in their committee, as well as on the planning and implementation of their World Day actions. This year, they will commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CRC and the children who participated in the consultations for the Arigatou International’s Study <i>Faith and Children’s Rights: A Multi-Religious Study on the Convention on the Rights of the Child</i> will be the ones introducing the Study to the audience attending the World Day celebration.</p> </div>
<p><b>Child-led participation</b></p>	<p>If you partner with child-led groups and initiatives for the World Day celebration make sure to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide them with the necessary <b>information</b> about the World Day objectives and scope.</li> <li>2. Invite them to take part of the World Day planning <b>meetings</b>.</li> <li>3. Ask them <b>how they would like to get involved</b> in the celebration and <b>how to make the topic suitable</b> to their agenda.</li> <li>4. Facilitate the necessary <b>materials</b> for them to carry out the actions related to the World Day.</li> <li>5. Ensure a <b>space</b> for them to share about their initiative and their contribution to the World Day celebration.</li> <li>6. Invite them to <b>attend</b> the World Day celebration and activities.</li> </ol>



	<p><b>For example,</b> Shanti Ashram (a GNRC member from India) has been actively creating meaningful spaces for children to participate. They have supported the creation of a children’s advisory committee that participates in their organizational governance. In addition, children have had the opportunity to exercise their right to association and design, launch and implement child-led initiatives in which Shanti Ashram has collaborated as a partner. This year, the World Day will mobilize children and adults around the anniversary of the CRC and dialogue to end violence against children.</p>
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### How to make children’s participation ethical and effective?

The Committee on the Rights of the Child in the General Comment on the Child’s Right to be Heard<sup>2</sup> included nine basic requirements for effective and ethical participation of children. We encourage you to use the following **checklist** on meaningful participation of children when planning and implementing the World Day celebration:

<b>Children’s participation is being...</b>	
<b>Transparent and informative</b> - children were provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely, and how this participation will take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact.	
<b>Voluntary</b> - children were never coerced into expressing views against their wishes, provided theirs and their parents’ informed consent, and were informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.	
<b>Respectful</b> - children’s views are treated with respect and children were provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Adults working for and with children also respect children’s views with regard to participation in public events and activities.	
<b>Relevant</b> - the issues on which children were consulted and invited to participate are of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills and abilities.	
<b>Child-friendly</b> - environments and working methods are adapted to children’s capacities. Consideration was given to the fact that children need differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to their age and evolving capacities.	
<b>Inclusive</b> - participation is being inclusive, avoids existing patterns of discrimination, and encourages opportunities for marginalized children, children from different religions, ethnic groups, and minority groups, including both girls and boys, to be involved.	

<sup>2</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard*, 20 July 2009, CRC/C/GC/12, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4ae562c52.html>



<p><b>Supported by training</b> - adults have the preparation, skills and support to facilitate children’s participation effectively, to provide them, for example, with skills in listening, working jointly with children and engaging children effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities.</p>	
<p><b>Safe and sensitive to risk</b> - in certain situations, expression of views may involve risks. Adults take a responsibility towards the children with whom they work and take every precaution to minimize the risk to children of violence, exploitation or any other negative consequence of their participation.</p>	
<p><b>Accountable</b> - a commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential. Children were informed as to how their views have been interpreted and used and provided with the opportunity to give feedback.</p>	

**IMPORTANT!** Please do not forget to review Arigatou International’s Child Safeguarding Policy, including the informed consent format and the Code of Conduct.

**Am I now ready to celebrate the World Day?**

You are more than ready! We encourage you to try these participation opportunities with children and experience a whole new world of creativity, perspective, and wisdom that they will bring to the **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2019**.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at:  
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