


**Arigatou International**

# Annual Report

April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021

f /ArigatouInternational

▶ ArigatouInternational

A black and white photograph of a group of about ten children running joyfully across a dirt path in a rural area. They are wearing matching white t-shirts with a logo and text. In the background, there are simple houses, trees, and a satellite dish on a roof.

Thank you very much for your interest in  
our annual report. We hope you will feel  
encouraged and inspired by what you see.

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# Arigatou International

## "ALL FOR CHILDREN"

Arigatou International is "All for Children" and works with people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to build a better world for children. Believing that every girl and boy is a precious treasure of humanity, Arigatou International draws on universal principles of common good found in religious and spiritual traditions and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. We employ interfaith and intercultural approaches to promote children's rights and well-being, seeking to bring about positive change at all levels—from the grassroots to the global. We value children for who they are and fully involve them in our work, ensuring their safe and meaningful participation while affirming their human dignity. Arigatou International collaborates with religious leaders and faith communities, international agencies, civil society organizations, governments—and most importantly, children and young people themselves—in more than 80 countries around the world.



# OUR GLOBAL INITIATIVES

Arigatou International's work for children is driven by our four global initiatives.

## GNRC

A global-scale interfaith network of organizations and individuals specifically dedicated to securing the rights and well-being of children everywhere, envisioning a world where every child survives and thrives.



## Prayer and Action for Children

Bringing together diverse religious leaders and faith communities to influence and advocate for the policy, social, and behavioral changes needed to end violence against children.



## Ethics Education for Children

Advancing values-based education for children with a transformative approach to interfaith and intercultural learning, placing children at the heart of all that we do and how we do it.



## End Child Poverty

Building a world free of child poverty by addressing both the human and structural root causes of poverty through theological reflection and action, advocacy and knowledge-sharing, and grassroots action to assist children in poverty.



# OUR REACH, BY THE NUMBERS

April 1, 2020 – March 31, 2021



**243** interfaith projects

in 61 countries



**59,134** children

empowered as active participants  
in transformative interfaith  
projects and campaigns



**7,682** people

equipped with educational approaches to ensure  
children's well-being based on Ethics Education  
for Children in 64 countries; and an additional  
274 children received education support, including  
scholarships, as part of End Child Poverty efforts



**3,110** families

and an additional 1,370 individuals supported  
with Sustainable Livelihoods projects



**364,830** people

joined campaigns to promote child rights,  
end violence against children and promote  
interfaith cooperation to end child poverty





# MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

## **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto**

President, Arigatou International

Thank you very much for your interest in Arigatou International, and welcome to our annual report covering April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021.

The year under review was an incredibly difficult one for the whole world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people lost their lives, and millions more have been changed forever. Children were dramatically impacted by the effects of the pandemic, and for some children that impact will be life-long. Children were hit by multi-dimensional crises in the critical areas of education, health, nutrition, economic security, and violence. Decades-long progress and gains in these areas were reversed.

At Arigatou International, we worked to address these impacts with an unwavering focus on children's rights and well-being. We sought to catalyze effective interfaith responses to the pandemic and empower children themselves to speak up about how the pandemic affected them and to take action to help their communities in these difficult times.

This report provides examples of how Arigatou International, with its many valued partners and GNRC members, worked to address these complex COVID-19 impacts on children by supporting education, defending child rights, promoting sustainable livelihoods, and working to end violence against children. It also covers our work to help achieve the SDGs and to foster spaces where children are empowered to help shape the world.

The year under review was a significant one for Arigatou International for another reason: we marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our establishment in Japan as a small foundation in 1990 by the late Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto.



His words capture the spirit of Arigatou International well:

*As a simple person of faith, cooperating with people of good will from all around the world, I vow to continue my prayer and practice for a bright future filled with peace for all. Let us pray for the children of the world, and then put our prayers into practice.*

We have done our best to live up to this commitment over these three decades. Thanks to the support of our many partners, collaborators, supporters, and volunteers, we have seen significant changes in the scale, scope, and nature of our work. We started by gathering small grassroots donations from everyday people in Japan, and reaching out to help children in humanitarian emergencies through organizations like UNICEF, UNHCR and Médecins Sans Frontières. Our work has now spread around the world, as many organizations and individuals have embraced the ideas behind the four global initiatives that we established and continue to support today. We are fortunate and grateful to be included in many diverse networks, partnerships, coalitions and consortiums that are changing the world for children; you will see some of these described within this report.

On behalf of everyone at Arigatou International, I would like to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who, over these 30 years, has come alongside us, encouraged us, and supported us. Special gratitude is due to the coordinators and members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), which also celebrated an anniversary in the year under review—its 20<sup>th</sup>.

It is thanks to you that we have been able to contribute in some small way to the greatest cause of our era—to build a world where every child can grow up safe and sound, where all children are empowered to reach their full human potential. I am convinced that this work for children is the surest path to the peaceful world every human being longs for, was made for, and deserves.

Let us all dream together. A world where every child thrives is within our reach. We just have to stretch out our arms, together.





# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF OUR ADVISORY GROUP

## **Kul Chandra Gautam**

Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group,  
Former Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, and  
Former Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations

The beginning of 2020 saw a bolt from the blue falling on the world's children in the form of the horrific COVID-19 pandemic. While its direct health impact was largely on vulnerable adults, millions of children became its collateral casualties. As schools were closed, parents lost their jobs and families were confined within homes, the psychological stress, the violence against women and children, and the deprivation of their basic needs made it the greatest catastrophe to fall on them in recent human history, worse than even the great World Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Governments, NGOs and many individuals and groups, including faith-based organizations, sprang to action to combat the COVID crisis and its fallout. Among the large constellation of such groups, Arigatou International stood out, as an interfaith organization dedicated exclusively to protecting the rights and promoting the well-being of children. In April 2020, it launched a worldwide campaign of Faith in Action for Children in partnership with other like-minded religious, secular, global, national and local organizations.

In November 2020, Arigatou spearheaded a Global Week of Faith in Action for Children that brought together—safely and virtually—children and young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, spiritual leaders, representatives from civil society and faith-inspired organizations, multilateral agencies and governments to catalyze joint-actions to address the underlying issues that impact children's health, education and well-being, with particular focus on protecting them from the vagaries of COVID-19.

Children are the priceless treasure of humanity and inheritors of the earth. We owe to them the very best that humanity has to offer. I commend this report to all people of goodwill with the hope that the examples of "faith in action for children" cited herein, especially the poignant "call to action" by children and young people themselves, will inspire us to redouble our efforts to protect their rights and promote their well-being.

# RESPONDING TO COVID-19: THE “FAITH IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN” CAMPAIGN

In April 2020, Arigatou International launched a global campaign titled “Faith in Action for Children,” calling on religious leaders and religious communities, as well as child protection organizations, civil society, educators, parents and caregivers to increase their actions in response to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on children. The campaign builds on the ethical imperative to come together in solidarity as one human community to protect the most vulnerable, particularly children. Faith in Action for Children seeks to provide resources to address concerns such as the increasing negative impact on children’s rights caused by school closures, negative socioeconomic impacts on families, and the increased risk of violence against children in the home, as well as the rapid propagation of online hate rhetoric against certain groups, and the sudden shrinking of the civic space for children to participate and make their voices heard. The full report on the campaign is available [here](#).



The pandemic has taught us to value the things we have. To value attending school and sharing with our teachers and classmates.

— Titi, child from Chile

## KEY ACTIONS THIS YEAR

- Developed and shared a suite of practical resources for religious leaders, parents and caregivers, and child protection and civil society organizations
- Convened online global Interfaith Prayer with Children and Religious Leaders
- Organized online Global Week of Faith in Action for Children
- Co-organized online High-Level Roundtable with key global partners on “Catalyzing Joint Actions To Address the Impact of COVID-19 on Children”
- Created virtual exhibition, “Faith in Action for Children,” for children to share their views about the pandemic
- Held global and regional webinar series, “Supporting, Protecting, and Empowering Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic”
- Together with 17 global partners, issued “Statement on Faith in Action for Children Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond”





## REFLECTING ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Dr. Kezevino Aram**

Vice-Chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group, and  
President, Shanti Ashram

During these past almost two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have often spoken about despair, disease and death. A virus invisible to the naked eye with the power to disrupt daily life and global affairs at such a scale—this is indeed a public health crisis, one that the global family has rarely experienced before. The data is there for us to gauge the extent of the pandemic. At once it seems that our lives, our minds and even our hearts are overwhelmed by the confluence of this collective human experience, something I have not seen in my lifetime. These times will be remembered in the annals of history as “unprecedented”; few parallels can be found.

However, during these times, in the quiet of the conscience, never before have we had to so honestly confront the ways we have lived our lives and cared for one another. When the wise elders of our families said to us, “there is more to life than chasing targets, take the time to understand it,” we were not the only ones saying, “this can wait!” When our children stood before us with hope, wanting our attention, wanting our care, individually and collectively, we were not the only ones who rushed our responses and often prioritized something “more important” than them. Yes, we are all equally human and this pandemic amidst the acuteness of the problem has also allowed us to understand our frailness, our pre-disposition to often prioritize “self” and to think of success in limited frameworks rather than a life lived well and with a purpose well understood. This pandemic has shaken our collective conscience at so many levels and encouraged us to be more in touch with our inner core—my mother “Ma” would refer to it as “being in touch with your inner friend.”

Two billion children are watching us today; they are not only asking us their questions but also bringing us their hope, because they know that if we are in touch with our conscience, with our greater human purpose, we can not only reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but also carry forward the values that make us truly human. May the luminous presence of our children move us from praying together with children to taking action for the well-being of children! I am confident that Arigatou International will be right in the middle of this global effort. *Loka Samastha Sukino Bhavanthu: May all beings be well!*

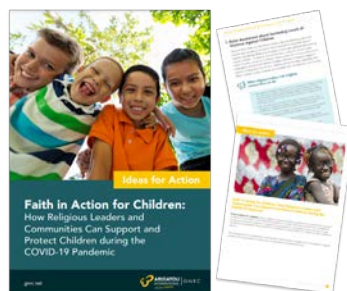


# RESOURCES DEVELOPED TO HELP FAMILIES, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AND OTHERS FACE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In the spring of 2020, Arigatou International developed and shared a variety of practical resources for religious leaders, parents and caregivers, child protection organizations and civil society to use to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children. Here are a few examples.

## Recommendations for religious leaders and communities to support and protect children during the pandemic

From raising awareness about the increasing levels of violence against children, to strengthening intra-faith and interfaith collaboration, supporting parents trying to strengthen values and spirituality in children, and building solidarity in response to the needs of the most vulnerable children—each recommendation is followed by concrete examples of actions that can be taken by religious leaders and communities.



Download the English version [here](#).

## Resources for parents and caregivers

Based on Arigatou International's *Learning to Live Together* programme, these new resources include the *Activity Booklet for Children during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, which presents 32 activities customized for children 4 to 18 years old. The aim is to give parents and caregivers tools they can use to support children's socio-emotional and spiritual needs during stay-at-home periods.



Download the English version [here](#).

## Messages and actions to ensure children's well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic

Actions recommended in this poster series include listening to children and youth, ensuring online safety, nurturing positive values within the family, fostering children's spiritual well-being, and teaching children healthy routines.



Download the English version [here](#).

## Recommendations for parents and caregivers to nurture children's spirituality and ethical reflection

These posters featured recommendations for nurturing children's spirituality and ethical reflection during the COVID-19 stay-at-home periods. They encourage parents to create moments for prayer or meditation and to nurture gratitude, connections and to listen to one another.



Download the English version [here](#).

# INTERFAITH PRAYER WITH CHILDREN AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS

On April 22, 2020, Arigatou International and partners convened a global, online Interfaith Prayer, bringing together children and religious leaders from the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and the Sikh Faith. Children and religious leaders led the group in reflection, unity and solidarity, and all joined in prayer for the most vulnerable, especially children, as COVID-19 started to sweep the globe. The event ended with a message of healing and with renewed hope to work together with children to create a more inclusive and just world. The Interfaith Prayer was viewed by 5,460 people from all around the world and 12 of the 25 speakers were children.

► [Watch the Video](#)



# GLOBAL WEEK OF FAITH IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN

In November 2020, Arigatou International organized the online Global Week of Faith in Action for Children, working closely with KAICIID International Dialogue Centre, Religions for Peace, Shanti Ashram, UNICEF, and World Vision International. The Global Week provided a unique opportunity for people from 86 countries to reflect on the multi-dimensional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and youth, and to listen to their views and recommendations. The full report on the Global Week is available [here](#).



**5 days**  
25 sessions

**5** different  
languages



**133 speakers**  
of which  
**60** were children



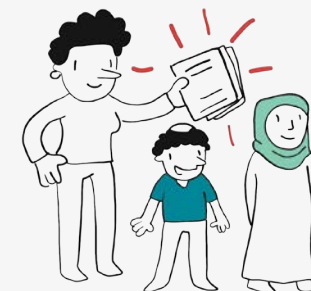
**1,720** participants  
**300** children involved<sup>1</sup>



**20+ hours**  
of streamed content



**11 proposals**  
**developed**  
by children and  
young people<sup>3</sup>



**86**  
countries

**64**  
organizations  
involved<sup>2</sup>



**6** Commitments to action<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Number of children involved either as panelists, audience members or by contributing to the virtual exhibition "Faith in Action for Children."

<sup>2</sup> International, national and grassroots organizations from all around the world were involved in the Global Week.

<sup>3</sup> The "Statement on Faith in Action for Children - Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond" included 11 proposals developed by children and young people and six joint commitments to action by Arigatou International and the 17 other organizations who endorsed or joined the statement.



**"Children are worried about the future, they're missing out on school, on health care and their families are suffering from the economic fallout of the pandemic. Now is the time for our generation to rally behind their needs, to reimagine a better, healthier world for every child and to write the next chapter in our collaboration together."**

— Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF



**"Spaces like the Global Week are necessary to create responses to address the most immediate needs of vulnerable children in the midst of this pandemic. This week will bring together not just organisations, leaders and governments but also children and young people—for we are the most fitting advocates for our own empowerment."**

— Akash, Viveha, and Satjvi, children from India who served as moderators of the Global Week opening ceremony



## Children's Participation:

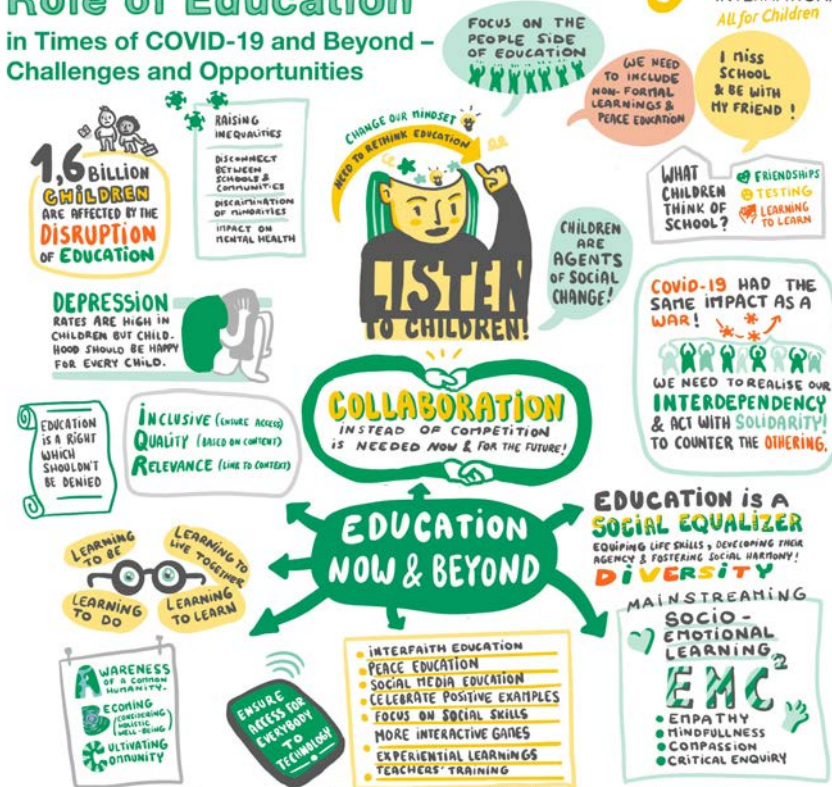
A turning point in the Covid-19 response in Europe and the Middle East



GRAPHIC RECORDING : COLINE.GRAPHICS (@colinegraphic)

## The Transformative Role of Education

in Times of COVID-19 and Beyond – Challenges and Opportunities



GRAPHIC RECORDING : COLINE.GRAPHICS (@colinegraphic)

The dynamic discussions during Global Week sessions were summarized in "graphic recordings" like the examples shown here, and then shared with participants and others.

**"Let us act in solidarity, seizing this critical moment to make the positive changes children need in our rapidly changing world."**

— Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International

## Children's Call to Action

The Global Week amplified the voices of children and highlighted their role in addressing COVID-19. The "Statement on Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond," which was endorsed or joined by 17 major global partners, included proposals from children to adults about how to address their needs during the pandemic, shown [here](#).

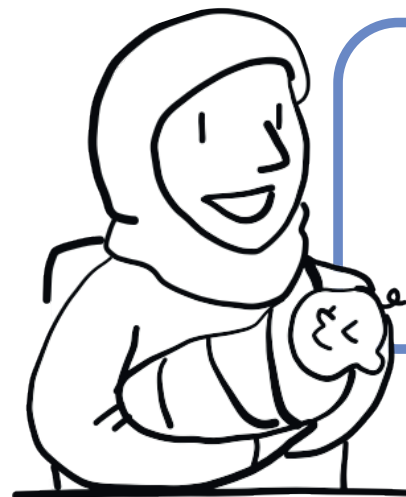
Provide access to education to all children, without discrimination of race or ethnicity.



Help us to find coping mechanisms, and find ways to foster our imagination and creativity even during the lockdown.

Let us explore the world peacefully because we are born to explore. While exploring the world we children can know what is wrong and what is right.

Create ways to continue to stay in contact with us despite the disruptions, be creative to ensure that none of us feels isolated or unsupported, even if we cannot connect using technology.

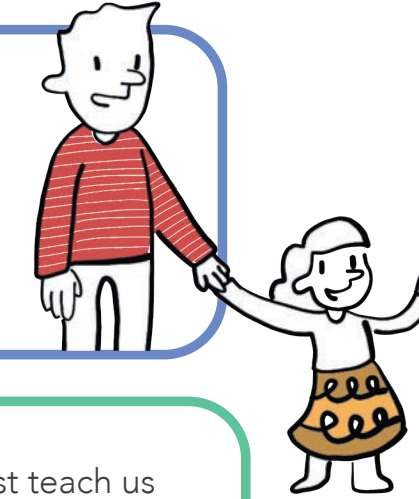


Since many of our brothers and sisters have no access to daily nutritious meals, support the most vulnerable families, including with financial support and nutrition.

Listen with an open heart to us, talk with us, support and motivate us in these challenging times.



Support parents and caregivers so they can cope with the "new normal," so they can better help us. We know that parents want to support us, but sometimes they do not know how.



Education must teach us to be good people and teach us about faith.



Offer support for distance learning, particularly for those who do not have computers or internet at home.

Provide support to children victims of violence.



Make more opportunities for dialogue with parents, but also within faith communities and schools. As children, we look up to adults and would like to share our feelings, fears and dreams with them, but there is a need to improve communication.

## High-Level Roundtable

During the Global Week in November 2020, Arigatou International, the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children, Religions for Peace, UNICEF and World Vision International co-organized a High-Level Roundtable with children's participation and a total of 20 organizations on "Catalyzing Joint Actions to Address the Impact of COVID-19 on Children." The co-organizers developed a framework of collaboration that aims to implement joint actions to address the exacerbation of violence against children, child poverty and the learning crisis due to the COVID-19 pandemic, together with faith communities at the grassroots level. The proposed areas of collaboration are based on the [INSPIRE evidence-based strategies to End Violence against Children](#) and are built particularly on the following four areas of work:

- (1) Supporting Parents and Caregivers;
- (2) Income and Economic Strengthening;
- (3) Education and Life Skills; and
- (4) Norms and Values.

The joint actions aim to strengthen interfaith collaborations for children at the national level, ensuring that children's voices and participation are at the core of the responses.



# VIRTUAL EXHIBITION— SHARING CHILDREN'S VOICES

Continuing to honor Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Arigatou International sought to create spaces for children to share how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted their lives, as well as their recommendations on how adults can support them during these difficult times.

As part of this effort, we unveiled the "Faith in Action for Children" virtual exhibition on November 16, 2020. The exhibit presents messages, artworks, and multimedia projects by more than 150 children from 33 countries around the world, in six different languages.

The exhibition is also a platform for intergenerational dialogue, allowing sharing among children, religious leaders, representatives of civil society and faith-based organizations, United Nations agencies, and governments, about their commitment to creating a better future for children and young people. Prominent contributors included the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Director of Communications at UNICEF, and the Secretaries-General of KAIICID, Religions for Peace, and the World Council of Churches, among others.

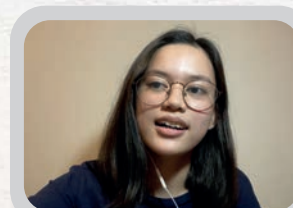


*"I am thankful for all things we still have even with pandemic"*  
— Jovana, Serbia



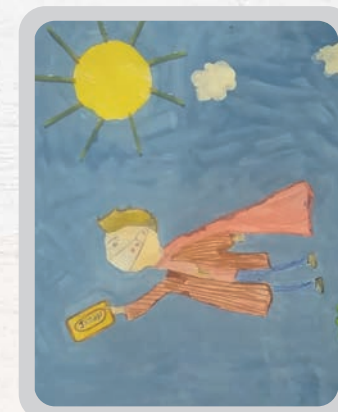
*"I believe that this is the time to be thinking more radically about the long-term future. Life should not return to the way it was"*

— Muskan, India



*"During lockdown, I was forced to slow down and take a look around and admire the nature"*

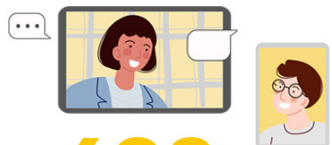
— Tiara, Sri Lanka



<https://arigatouinternational.org/virtualexhibition>

# GLOBAL AND REGIONAL WEBINAR SERIES ON SUPPORTING, PROTECTING, AND EMPOWERING CHILDREN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Arigatou International held a series of webinars to discuss with children and young people, child protection experts, religious leaders, educators, and representatives from faith-inspired organizations, civil society organizations and multilateral agencies the impact of COVID-19 on children's well-being. The webinars showcased initiatives from grassroots organizations, identified solutions and highlighted collaborative actions.



## 638 participants


joined the series a seven webinars organized together with 24 partners.

7 out of 26 speakers were

## children and youth

Coming from the Bahá'í Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism.



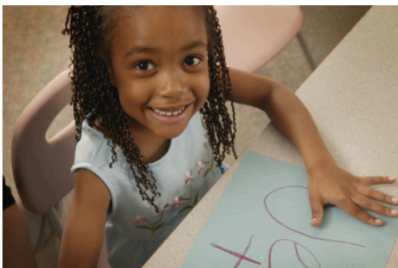


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WHO WE AREWHAT WE DOCOLLABORATORSLATEST NEWSALL WITH CHILDRENRESPONSE TO COVID-19

## Webinar Series on Supporting, Protecting and Empowering Children During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Arigatou International, through its different initiatives, is conducting a series of webinars to discuss with children and young people, child protection experts, religious leaders, educators, and representatives from faith-inspired organizations, civil society organisations and multilateral agencies the impact of COVID-19 on children's well-being. The webinars aim to discuss the multiple impacts on children, showcase initiatives from grass-roots organizations, and identify solutions and collaborative actions.



**LIBERTAD CREADORA: Un Conversatorio con Adolfo Pérez Esquivel y Francesco Tonucci**  
12 September 2020  
[VIEW WEBINAR](#)



**How Faith Inspired Organizations in Europe are Supporting & Protecting Children During COVID-19**  
28 July 2020  
[VIEW WEBINAR](#) [VIEW DETAILS](#)



# ADDRESSING COVID-19 IMPACT ON KEY AREAS OF CHILDREN'S LIVES

## SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Many individuals, families and children were plunged into poverty due to loss of their livelihoods as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures. Those already in vulnerable situations, such as children living on the streets, refugees or displaced persons, and children from communities experiencing violent conflicts, suffered the most. Furthermore, constricted supply chains and loss of income affected access to adequate food, thereby exacerbating hunger and malnutrition in children. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the dire need to scale up child-sensitive social protection measures, including direct cash transfers to mitigate such shocks and curb multidimensional poverty at local and global levels. Communities also emphasized the need for coming together for collective action using homegrown solutions, while being cognizant of global ripple effects.

Arigatou International recognizes the importance of faith actors and faith-inspired institutions in providing humanitarian or socioeconomic relief, psychosocial support, and developing community resilience, as well as building people's capacity to secure a sustainable livelihood. Their work will be fundamental in the better world we believe can be built as humanity overcomes the pandemic.

As such, we supported efforts by our local partners to meet these needs by cooperating with and providing seed funding for community mobilization efforts to donate foodstuffs, health and hygiene supplies (such as face masks, soap and hand sanitizers), and other essential products. These care-packages were

given to children and adults most affected by poverty and the COVID-19 pandemic. We also supported healthy nutrition and income-generating activities at a small-scale level across various communities, including supporting food gardens for subsistence use and sale of the surplus produce.



Members of the youth-led organization Action for Fundamental Change and Development (AFFCAD), part of the Regional Peace Programme Youth in Action network convened by Arigatou International, collected donations of foodstuffs, masks, soap, sanitizers and other essentials, and delivered them to the Bwaise informal settlement in Kampala, Uganda.

## Selected Highlights

The GNRC–Argentina Committee and its youth members mobilized the government, faith actors and other stakeholders to donate 12 tons of food and hygiene products, which they distributed to vulnerable families severely affected by the pandemic. They also distributed school kits for online learning.

*"We are very happy because many children have joined our dining (feeding) programme in the neighbourhood. Thank you very much to all that are helping us."*

— Shirley, GNRC youth volunteer, Argentina

In Nepal, GNRC member Shanti Sewa Ashram (Peace Service Centre), in collaboration with a local charity, Divine International, conducted food donations and distribution to more than 1,000 people. Additionally, as part of their *Nepal Poverty Solutions* programme, they donated hygiene supplies including facemasks, hand sanitizers and soap.

The Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) partnered with Arigatou International – End Child Poverty to strengthen the Nutrition+ Project in Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This Nutrition+ Project includes training of farmers, establishing seed banks and strengthening community learning centers.



Students during a peace session carried out previously by GNRC member Peace Service Centre in Nepal.



# AWARENESS AND PREVENTION OF COVID-19 AT THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS

Arigatou International continued to work with diverse stakeholders to support efforts to increase awareness and prevention of COVID-19 at the regional and local levels.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, video messages from 15 religious and spiritual leaders of 12 countries were collected and widely shared. The messages highlighted the importance of avoiding in-person gatherings and services and, instead, nurturing spirituality at home, and promoting self and mutual care. They all stressed the need to ensure compliance with the recommendations of the WHO and governments in order to contribute to the safety and health of the society. They called on other faith leaders and communities to increase their actions in solidarity, in response to the impact of COVID-19, especially on children and on the most vulnerable groups.

In Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda, we continued to convene and support the Regional Peace Programme (RPP) Youth in Action networks and their awareness campaigns in local communities, using various forms of media and word-of-mouth outreach including murals in public spaces painted in Kenya, support for health practitioners offered by youth groups in Somalia, social media campaigns in Tanzania, distribution of reusable facemasks in Somalia and distribution of food products to vulnerable families in Uganda.



*Regional Peace Programme participants with UNICEF Kenya Youth Advocate, Ms. Cynthia Nyongesa (center), taken during the participants' visit to UN Habitat, Nairobi, in September 2018.*



The End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre in Sri Lanka, which was established by Arigatou International in collaboration with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, worked together with UNICEF Sri Lanka to support COVID-19 awareness and risk prevention campaigns across the country, using posters and social media messages in Sinhala, Tamil and English. The campaigns, which reached 30,000 people, incorporated theological reflections from scriptures and words of encouragement from various faith communities.



Delivering masks to local communities.



In Syria, we collaborated with Kids Future Team, an NGO working with children in the Idlib refugee camp to facilitate children's dialogue sessions on ending child poverty and education. The sessions also addressed COVID-19 risk awareness and prevention, in addition to providing a safe space for children to speak about the effects of the pandemic to their well-being, particularly within the refugee camp.

I'd like to be like the other kids who have things available. I'd like to have a ball. I'd love to have a playground in the camp, to have a teacher to teach me. I'd love to have a classroom to study in. We've been displaced for seven years, and today we're still living in this camp.

— Bassam, child in the Idlib Refugee Camp, Syria



▶ Watch the Video

# SUPPORTING EDUCATION

Education was one of the hardest hit areas during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, with massive school closures and inequitable access to online learning resources, experienced all across the globe. It is estimated that more than 1.6 billion children and youth were out of school due to school closures imposed in 188 countries, according to UNICEF reports.<sup>4</sup>

To respond to the limited in-person learning and the digital learning divide, and to prevent children from permanently dropping out of school and prevent the erosion of education gains, communities came together to intervene in bridging the gap. Arigatou International partnered with various organizations to provide **scholarships** to students, donate books and **school supplies**, and provide access to mobile devices and the internet for **online learning**, as part of such necessary interventions as well as opportunities for strengthening the capacities of educators, particularly on transformative pedagogy.

We also organized opportunities for **intergenerational dialogue** to enable children to identify their education needs, speak about the challenges they face due to the COVID-19 pandemic and give recommendations for action.



“Listening to children provides an opportunity to understand the kind of solutions needed to address their problems.”

— Shazmin Rafeeq, I CAN Malaysia, GNRC–Malaysia

In Latin America and the Caribbean, a virtual conversation between GNRC members and two thought leaders, the Argentinian Nobel Peace Prize laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel and the Italian psychopedagogue Francesco Tonucci, was organized by GNRC–Argentina. The inspiring virtual conversation explored ways to unlock children’s innate creativity to ensure they can express themselves to their fullest potential, contribute to achieving their ideals of justice, and shape their vision of the world.

*“Children must be active agents. That is why it seems to me absurd that the school has continued with its normal program in the midst of COVID-19, when the world is falling apart. The school should have paused the normal curriculum to help children understand what is happening!”*

— Francesco Tonucci, Psychopedagogue



<sup>4</sup> Data sourced from UNICEF website: <https://data.unicef.org/COVID-19-and-children/>



# HIGHLIGHTING CHILDREN'S ISSUES IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ADVOCACY PLATFORMS TO "BUILD BACK BETTER"

## Moral Imperative to End Extreme Poverty

The Moral Imperative to End Extreme Poverty brings together more than 60 religious and faith-based organizations, and the World Bank Group, to advance a faith-based action framework to end extreme poverty and realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Arigatou International's End Child Poverty initiative chairs the Moral Imperative's Advocacy Working Group. In this capacity, we helped to develop a statement by the Moral Imperative on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the most vulnerable, especially children and women. It included more than 20 specific policy recommendations.



"We the religious leaders and the faith-based organizations we represent, will champion the rights of the most vulnerable communities who have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and pledge to build on the work of religious actors responding to the COVID-19 pandemic including fostering greater collaboration among various faith actors, stakeholders, and decision makers towards addressing the pandemic and the overarching goal to end extreme poverty and realise the SDGs."

## Africa Faith Leaders Initiative on the Sustainable Development Goals

As part of its efforts to contribute to SDG 1 and end child poverty, Arigatou International is a co-convenor of the Africa Faith Leaders Initiative on the Sustainable Development Goals. In the year under review, we joined hands in the production of an open letter to African governments and faith actors, entitled "Accelerated Action towards Agenda 2030: A Call to 'Build Back Better' with African Faith Actors." The letter challenged the rejuvenation of collective purpose and encouraged greater responsibility, shared ownership of processes and outcomes, and joint action to achieve the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

## Global Coalition to End Child Poverty

In August 2020, Arigatou International joined its partners in the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty to call on governments to expand children's access to appropriate social protection in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. The Coalition statement decried shortcomings in the global response that stressed population-wide "short-term social protection measures" but gave little attention to "scale(d) up investments in child-focused and child-sensitive social protection to avoid failing an entire future generation."





Arigatou International's history began in 1990, when the leader of the Japanese Buddhist organization Myochikai, Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, established the Arigatou Foundation. Building upon his many years of work to contribute to world peace, he gave Arigatou the mission of creating a better environment for children, where they can all grow up safe and sound physically, mentally and spiritually. Beginning with providing humanitarian and educational assistance for suffering children around the world, Arigatou has over the years expanded its work significantly by promoting interfaith cooperation for children, working with United Nations agencies, NGOs, grassroots child rights workers, and children themselves.

# COMMEMORATING 30 YEARS OF GOOD WORK FOR CHILDREN

As we joined the rest of the world in responding to the global pandemic, focusing especially on its impact on children, we chose a quiet celebration of Arigatou International's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which took place on October 12, 2020. The year 2020 was also the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Global Network of Religions for Children, which was inaugurated by Arigatou in the year 2000. Here, we take a moment to reflect upon a few major milestones, in a spirit of deep gratitude to all the partners, collaborators, supporters, and volunteers who made this progress possible.

1990

Arigatou Foundation established by Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, Leader of Myochikai, with the mission of creating a better environment for children.

1990 ~ present

Arigatou has contributed to projects of UNICEF, UNHCR, Médecins Sans Frontières, Red Cross, and other such organizations to provide humanitarian aid, emergency assistance, educational support, and child protection in 52 countries.

2000



At the invitation of the Arigatou Foundation, 294 participants representing 7 major religions, from 33 countries and regions, gather in Tokyo to inaugurate the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC).

2002



Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, President of the Arigatou Foundation, addresses the United Nations General Assembly during the Special Session on Children, speaking on behalf of the religious leaders in attendance as well as the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC).

2003

Geneva Office established.

2004



Granted special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

GNRC 2<sup>nd</sup> Forum held in Geneva, Switzerland in May 2004, bringing together 359 people, including 38 children and young people, from 68 countries and 7 major religions.

2004

Arigatou establishes Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children, launching its second global initiative after the GNRC, Ethics Education for Children.

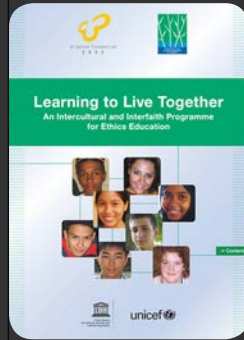
2007

Granted consultative status with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

2008



GNRC 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum held in Hiroshima, Japan, with 353 religious leaders and others from 63 countries and 8 major religions, including 42 children and young people. Also present were Ms. Asha-Rose Migiro, UN Deputy Secretary-General, Ms. Ann Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF, and other senior officials.



2008

*Learning to Live Together: An Intercultural and Interfaith Programme for Ethics Education* launched in collaboration with UNESCO and UNICEF. (Since 2008, Learning to Live Together has reached more than 435,230 children in 45 countries, thanks to our implementing partners. More than 3,698 programme facilitators have been trained, and 51 of them have gone on to become certified facilitator trainers.



2008

At GNRC 3<sup>rd</sup> Forum, Arigatou proposes the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, and launches its third global initiative, Prayer and Action for Children. (Celebrated each November 20, the annual World Day has now been commemorated in over 85 countries.)

2009

New York office established.



2012

GNRC 4<sup>th</sup> Forum held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, bringing together 470 participants, including President Jakaya M. Kikwete of Tanzania.

2012

At GNRC 4<sup>th</sup> Forum, Arigatou launches its fourth global initiative, the Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty (End Child Poverty).

Named changed to Arigatou International. Rev. Keishi Miyamoto becomes President of Arigatou International.



2013

Nairobi office established. GNRC Secretariat relocated from Tokyo to Nairobi.

2015

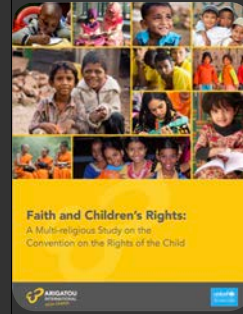
Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, founder of Arigatou International, passes away.



2017

GNRC 5<sup>th</sup> Forum held in Panama City, bringing together 526 people from 70 countries, and adopting the Panama Declaration of Ending Violence Against Children, including the 10 Panama Commitments to End Violence against Children. (From May 2017 to end 2019, 122 programs, activities and events to fulfill the Panama Commitments were held in 38 countries by 63 organizations.)

*"An Interfaith Guide to End Child Poverty: Inspire. Act. Change."* is published.



2019

*Faith and Children's Rights: A Multi-religious Study on the Convention on the Rights of the Child* carried out and published, to mark the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the CRC in 2019.



2020

SDGs Academy for Children launched (see page 49)

Global Week of Faith in Action for Children held (see page 15)



# CATALYZING INTERFAITH COOPERATION FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

In an era when interfaith cooperation has become increasingly essential, Arigatou International is honored to work with the members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and other partners to build a better world for children, and especially to tackle the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on children's lives at the grassroots level. Faith communities have been at the forefront of providing support to children and their families during the repeated lockdowns and disruption of social services, and are often the only groups able to reach the most marginalized and most in need.



## KEY ACTIONS THIS YEAR

- Published *Advocating for Children's Rights and Well-Being: An Interfaith Approach*
- Conducted comprehensive GNRC assessment and member survey
- Celebrated 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GNRC during the online Global Week of Faith in Action for Children



## GNRC 20<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

The year 2020 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the inauguration of the GNRC by religious leaders from around the world, who gathered at the invitation of Arigatou International in May 2000 in Tokyo, Japan to spark a new movement of interfaith cooperation specifically focused on improving children's lives. In celebrating all the growth of the GNRC over the last 20 years, even during the difficult year of the pandemic, Arigatou International sought to provide children, youth and GNRC members at the grassroots with a platform—during the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children—to share their progress working with and for children to build a better and peaceful world for all. Participants also shared their progress on fulfilling the Panama Declaration on Ending Violence Against Children adopted in May 2017 at the GNRC 5<sup>th</sup> Forum. A video was created to capture some of the key achievements of the GNRC's 20 years of interfaith cooperation for the well-being of children.

▶ Watch the Video



## GNRC's Presence in the World



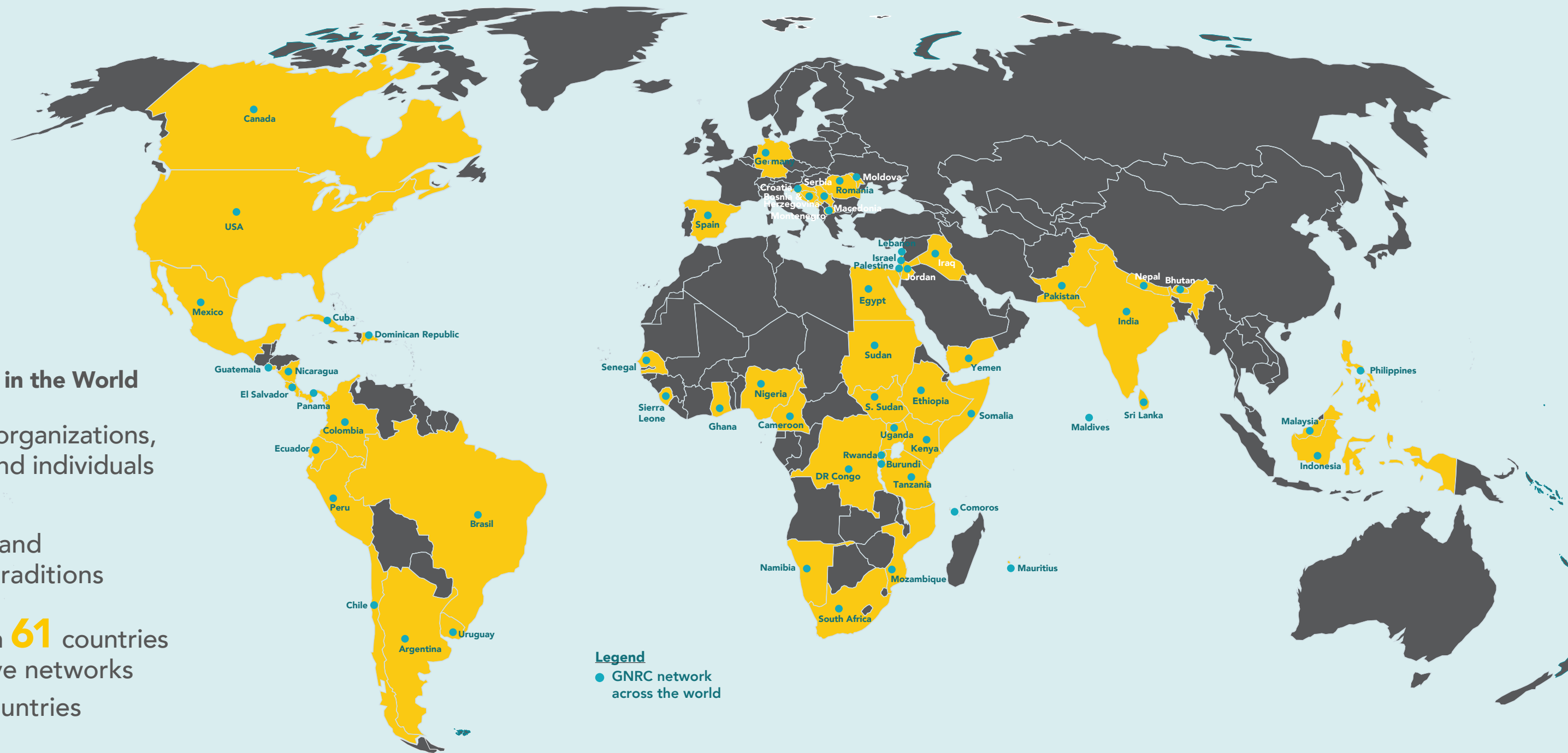
**1,200** organizations,  
entities and individuals



from  
**15** faith and  
spiritual traditions



located in **61** countries  
with active networks  
in **57** countries



## SUPPORTING THE GNRC

### How Arigatou International Works with GNRC Members

Arigatou International inaugurated the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in the year 2000 to promote interfaith cooperation for children. In the years since, the GNRC has continued to welcome new members, and it now includes 1,200 organizations, entities and individuals from 15 faith and spiritual traditions located in 61 countries with active networks in 57 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East and Northern Africa, and North America.

GNRC members share the determination to secure the rights and well-being of children, and they work toward this end at the local, national, sub-regional, regional and global levels. The GNRC membership includes religious leaders, faith-based organizations, development practitioners, grassroots child-rights workers, and other people of goodwill who wish to take a faith-based approach to working together for children.

Arigatou International's office in Nairobi, Kenya is home to the GNRC Secretariat. The GNRC Secretary General and dedicated staff promote cooperation and coordination among GNRC members, while also providing technical assistance and helping to connect members' efforts with the work of United Nations agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO and other interested stakeholders. The Secretariat assists members who wish to form regional and national GNRC committees, seeking to build platforms for ongoing dialogue, exchange and inspiration as well as to strengthen members' implementation capacity. The team regularly communicates with committee coordinators and contact persons, as well as individual GNRC members, to help them maximize their positive impacts for and with children.

The **GNRC** is one of Arigatou International's four global initiatives. The other three are **Ethics Education for Children**, **Prayer and Action for Children**, and **End Child Poverty**, launched in 2004, 2008, and 2012, respectively, at GNRC global forums. These initiatives, managed by Arigatou's offices in Geneva, New York, and Nairobi, respectively, also often cooperate with and assist GNRC members, directly or indirectly, and in coordination with the GNRC Secretariat. Among other things, they provide technical expertise, knowledge resources, and program or campaign materials to support and enrich the work of GNRC members in various ways. One or more of the four global Arigatou initiatives may be engaged with a given GNRC member at any particular time, as opportunity and need demand. In some cases, organizations or individuals who were originally participating in one of these other three initiatives subsequently also become GNRC members.

Arigatou International considers all GNRC members part of the "Arigatou family" and remains deeply committed to promoting interfaith cooperation for children. Arigatou International has always shared a common vision with GNRC members: a commitment to making the world a better place where every child can enjoy not only their right to survive, but also to thrive, making positive contributions of their own to a world of peace and dignity for all.

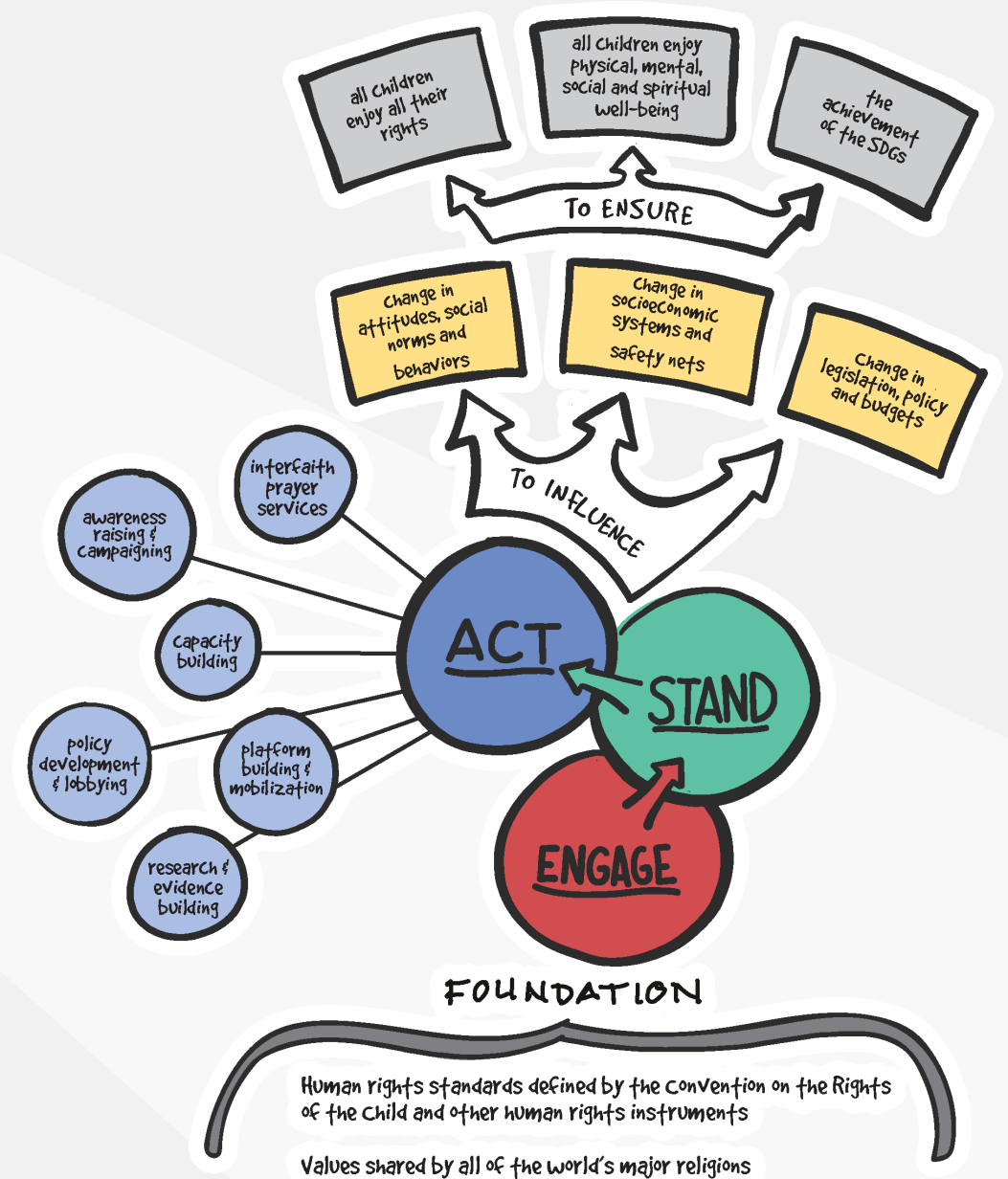
## SPOTLIGHT

### New Advocacy Guide

Supporting interfaith advocacy for children's rights and well-being

In autumn of 2020, Arigatou International developed and published *Advocating for Children's Rights and Well-Being: An Interfaith Approach*. The guide and its accompanying toolkit were developed in consultation with GNRC committees and members in various world regions. The guide and toolkit were designed not only to encourage more effective advocacy around children's needs during the pandemic and beyond, but also to help to end violence against children as well as contribute to achieving the SDGs. Specifically, they seek to support GNRC members in celebrating the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, which takes place on November 20 each year, by serving as a resource to help generate new experiences and share lessons learned from actions to influence laws and policies, socioeconomic systems and social safety nets, and to encourage changes in social norms and behaviors to better protect and care for children. The guide sets out the ethical principles that underlie its approach, and highlights the compatibility between child rights and religious writings and teachings, as well as the inter-connectedness of prayer and action.

The guide and toolkit build upon the GNRC experience advocating for children's rights and introduce an interfaith approach to advocacy as a way to create meaningful and collaborative advocacy that benefits from interfaith dialogue, shares a common vision of the child, and maximizes opportunities to take action for children's rights and well-being. The guide also introduces an advocacy cycle and practical tools that adults and children may use for strategic advocacy planning and implementation using an interfaith approach. The annexes include a summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the key UN human rights mechanisms which can be used to encourage States to better implement the commitments they made when they ratified the international treaty.





## Interfaith Cooperation in Action

### Child and Youth Empowerment, Croatia

GNRC members in Croatia promoted youth skills in filmmaking through the “Children’s Rights Festival,” a month-long event held in October 2020 to address mental health, the impact of the pandemic and ending child poverty during COVID-19. The festival was inclusive, providing full participation opportunities also to youth with disabilities.

Filmmaking gave children and young people an opportunity to express themselves. The festival’s “School Lens Program” featured films by primary school students, while the “I think, therefore I film” activity featured films developed by secondary school students.

The program was aired on Croatian Television (HRT), allowing the wider public to watch the students’ films. More than 18,000 students have participated in the filmmaking events, in 537 groups—400 groups from primary schools, 133 groups from secondary schools, 2 debate clubs, 1 association and 1 student dormitory.



### Child Rights Awareness Engaging Children and Youth for Peace in South Africa

Working under the Children and Youth Interfaith Network, GNRC–South Africa conducted a meeting in Durban, South Africa in March 2021. The purpose of the event was to increase participants’ awareness and knowledge of children’s rights and motivate them to network and connect with each other. The event presented a space for children to freely engage and share their ideas on building a better world for children. Some 35 children and 8 adults from the Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Zion African traditional faith communities participated in the project.



### A Call to End all Forms of Corruption, Ecuador

In 2020, several cases of corruption came to light in Ecuador, related to misappropriation of funds allocated to mitigate the effects of the pandemic. Faced with this situation, the children and young people in the GNRC network in Ecuador wrote a public letter to the government condemning all acts of corruption and demanding transparency and accountability.

The letter was endorsed by religious leaders and members of GNRC–Ecuador, and is highlighted in the [virtual exhibition](#) held as part of the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children. In December 2020, the children developed a short video to raise their voices against corruption and ask their leaders to break the silence around this topic. They advocated for a more just society in which the ethical values of empathy, respect, humility, responsibility, among others, are upheld and promoted. The video was widely disseminated on social media.

[▶ Watch the Video](#)

## SPOTLIGHT

### GNRC Concludes Network Assessment and Member Survey

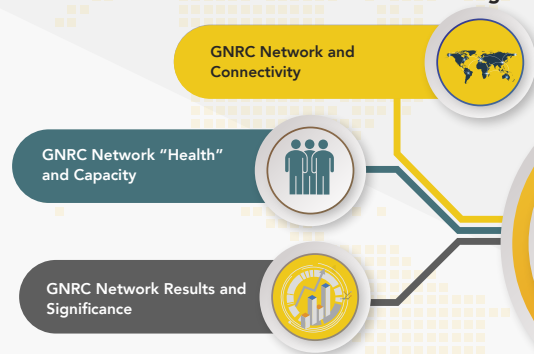
In the year under review, we concluded a comprehensive assessment of the GNRC network, finishing an extended 18-month process that ran from April 2020 to October 2021.

The goal of the assessment was, through a participatory process, to strengthen the GNRC network, building on the 20 years of extensive interfaith collaboration in shaping a better world for children. The exercise involved in-depth conversations and interviews with GNRC members, coordinators, and contact persons, faith leaders, partners, children, former GNRC coordinators, as well as directors and staff of Arigatou International.

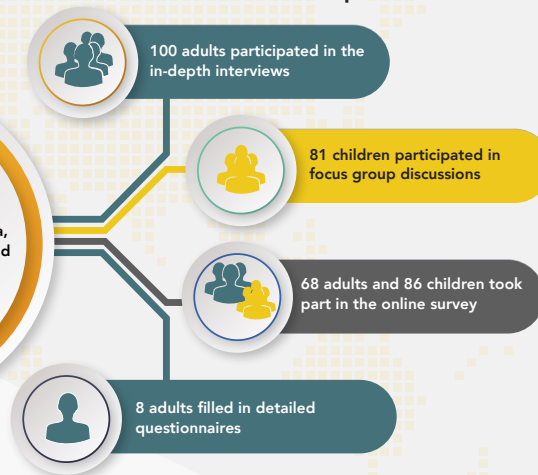
For a summary of the key findings and recommendations of the GNRC Assessment Report, contact the [GNRC Secretariat](#).

## Key Highlights of the GNRC Assessment

The assessment was based on three broad categories:



Interviewees and Respondents:



Respondents came from Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Middle East and North Africa (MENA), and North America regions

## The GNRC Assessment Process





# PROMOTING ETHICS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN

Arigatou International believes deeply in the power of education to change the world and continually strives to deliver creative and innovative ways for that to happen. We seek to bring together diverse stakeholders, focusing on the holistic development of the child and promoting children's rights, while also seeking to empower children to shape their own learning and become agents of positive change in their communities.

*Photo: Satish Kanna*

*Children during an interfaith visit in Coimbatore, India in August 2019.*



## KEY ACTIONS THIS YEAR

- Empowered educators to support the well-being of children during the pandemic with online course, "Ethics Education for Children: A Transformative Pedagogy for Learning to Live Together," and other resources
- Carried out the project, "Solidarity: An Ethical Imperative for Advancing the Role of Education In Migrant and Refugee Inclusion in Europe," in collaboration with SYNYPARXIS and the KAICIID International Dialogue Centre
- Co-developed the toolkit, "Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years," with other members of the Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence
- Collaborated with the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) in the training of higher education teachers and empowering of youth to use a transformative pedagogy for peace-building

# EMPOWERING EDUCATORS TO SUPPORT THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN DURING THE PANDEMIC

## Online Course on Transformative Pedagogy



749 educators registered to participate in an online learning program to support the social, emotional and spiritual well-being of children during the pandemic.

Under the title “Ethics Education for Children: A Transformative Pedagogy for Learning to Live Together,” the course included live webinars with experts, case studies, and forum discussions, and was based on Arigatou International’s Ethics Education Approach.

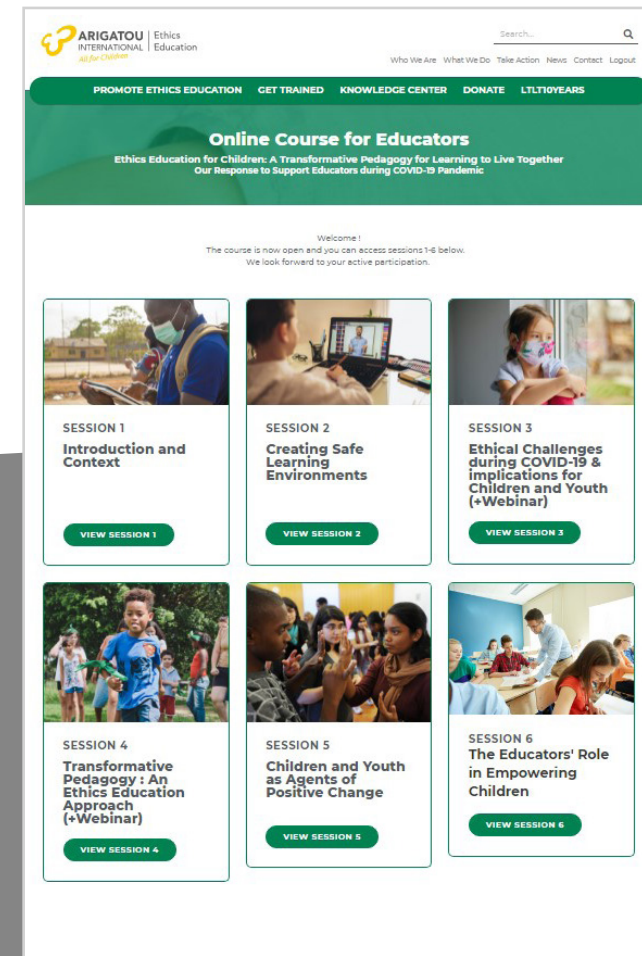
Course held **3** times:  
twice in English and once in Spanish



**729**  
participating educators



from  
**57** countries





During this two-week course, educators were introduced to a transformative pedagogy that supports teachers to create safe, positive, and empowering learning environments for children, while fostering interfaith and intercultural learning and collaboration. It focused on enhancing children's critical thinking and their sense of interconnectedness while providing spaces for them to reflect on and respond to the ethical challenges brought on by the pandemic.



“ I realized that learning should not only focus on the critical or intellectual side, but also on the different aspects of a child that equally contribute to his or her overall well-being and personhood. This holistic view of learning is something that should be given emphasis in all schools around the world. ”

— Rola Ombao, teacher, Philippines

## SPOTLIGHT

### Advancing Migrant and Refugee Inclusion in Europe by Equipping Educators to Use Intercultural and Interfaith Education

A series of three online sessions to create dialogue, raise awareness and build capacity on the transformative role of education in enabling children from migrant, refugee and host communities to learn to live together in solidarity was organized for educators in Europe.

The series, called “Solidarity: An ethical imperative for advancing the role of education in migrant and refugee inclusion in Europe,” gathered 192 educators from across Europe and beyond. The project is a collaboration between Arigatou International – Geneva and SYNYPARXIS, co-funded by the Network for Dialogue micro-grant and the KAICIID International Dialogue Centre.

With prominent speakers and break-out group sessions, the webinars aimed to empower and equip educators to promote intercultural and interfaith education using transformative pedagogical approaches that promote children's well-being, social transformation, and capacity to learn to live together.

“ We need to consider the needs of the different communities and how they can live together, rather than just asking migrants and refugees to integrate. ”

— Dr. Aleksandra Djuric Milovanovic, Project Manager, Network for Dialogue, KAICIID

Visit the Solidarity project website

# EDUCATING TO BUILD PEACEFUL, INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES

Arigatou International has partnered in several projects with the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) since 2017 to advance peace, resilience and the prevention of violent extremism throughout the continent.

In the year under review, we provided technical support to UNESCO IICBA for a series of advanced online workshops for higher education teachers in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia. For the first time, training workshops were held also in Southern Africa, reaching higher education teachers, and representatives from Ministries of Education, the UNESCO National Commissions and UNESCO offices in Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Participants were trained in using an innovative framework for ethics education that can respond to the ethical challenges their societies face, promoting new ways of learning to live together in an ever-changing world.

As part of our collaboration with UNESCO IICBA, we co-organized a series of four webinars on “How Transformative Pedagogy and Fostering Ethical Reflections Can Support Teachers during

COVID-19 for Resilience and Prevention of Violent Extremism.” The sessions helped to guide and encourage educators to ensure that quality learning reaches children in inclusive and meaningful ways, addressing not only the curricular areas but also their socio-emotional and spiritual well-being.

In addition, 34 participants from 17 countries participated in a series of three youth dialogues under the title, “Silencing the Guns in Africa by the Year 2020 through Investment in Youth and Peace Education.” This project aimed to enhance the voice and role of youth by addressing gaps hindering their meaningful contributions through youth awareness, advocacy, and training. The project, held under the leadership of UNESCO IICBA, was supported by Arigatou International – Geneva and developed in collaboration with the Youth for Peace (Y4P) program of the African Union.



Ms. Hadija Nakazibwe from Action For Fundamental Change And Development (AFFCAD) during a prize-giving day with children from the AFFCAD elementary school (2018).

**“ As a teacher educator, the role that we can play in influencing peace in our community, in our society, has taken center stage in this workshop. ”**

— Participant from Zambia



# ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

At Arigatou International, one of our very highest priorities is to keep children safe. That includes making sure that we safeguard their well-being in all of our own activities, but also doing all we can to heal and transform the root causes of all forms of violence against children around the world.

The focus has been on fighting the common enemy, COVID-19, thus attention to violent extremism and building peace as part of promoting SDG 16 has been twisted to survive against the pandemic. It's important to keep promoting peace even as we fight COVID-19 in our communities.

— Fredrick, youth, GNRC–Tanzania



## KEY ACTIONS THIS YEAR

- Increased grassroots capacity for safeguarding children, building on our Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct
- Commemorated the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children online during the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children, and with four online regional interfaith prayers in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America
- Launched *Guide for the Prevention of Violence Against Children* with other members of the Alliance for the Protection of Children in Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Mexico

# PROVIDING RESOURCES FOR PROTECTING CHILDREN

In the year under review, we continued to focus on increasing grassroots capacity for safeguarding children, building on our Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct. We conducted training workshops on the policy, and published a new Spanish-language version of it. We also created and shared new basic guidelines on how to protect children's dignity and privacy on social media channels and provided a new flowchart for field partners to use to raise a concern regarding any child safeguarding issue.



## How Arigatou International Works to Ensure Children's Safety



▶ Watch the Video

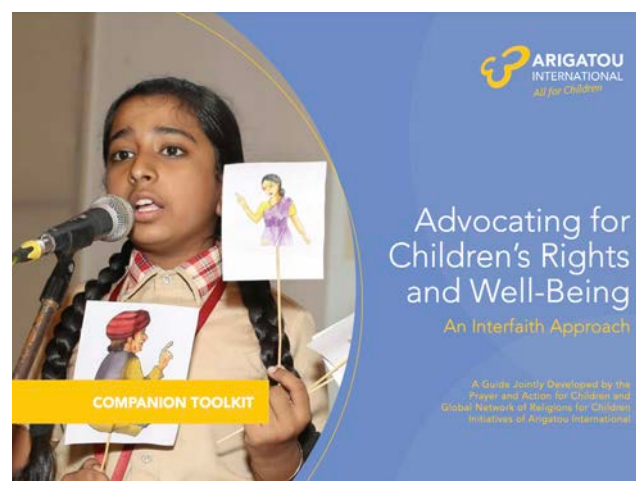


# WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Every year on or around November 20, Arigatou International supports observances of the World Day of Prayer and Action around the world. The World Day offers an opportunity for promoting meaningful actions that will help end violence against children. The overall goal is to help raise the status of all children by promoting all their rights, improving their well-being and encouraging further measurable actions that will lead to or influence national policies that are in the best interests of the child. The World Day is commemorated in a wide range of activities, celebrations, meetings, workshops, vigils, prayers, meditations and online events—many of them organized and implemented by numerous partners including the members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), children and youth and many others.

Important issues addressed by the World Day include child sexual abuse, child marriage, physical punishment, female genital mutilation, as well as rapidly growing problems that affect children worldwide such as online sexual exploitation, abuse and mistreatment of the increasing numbers of children on the move, and in the year under review, the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, the ability to gather face-to-face to pray and act for children was severely restricted by the pandemic. Accordingly, we sought to provide resources and create online opportunities for GNRC members and others to move forward with their work for children in other ways in the spirit of the World Day. We developed a comprehensive guide with a new approach entitled, *Advocating for Children's Rights and Well-Being: An Interfaith Approach* (see page 36) and launched it during the online celebration of World Day 2020 at the Arigatou-organized online Global Week of Faith in Action for Children (see page 15). We also organized four online regional interfaith prayers in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, reaching more than 460 people from 11 religious and spiritual traditions.



The online celebration of the World Day on November 20 engaged 522 people and included:

- a pre-recorded dialogue during the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children in which Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International, answered questions posed by child members of the GNRC;



- a live dialogue with children moderated by Ms. Muzoon Almellehan, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, focusing on children's perspectives on ending violence against children, promoting access to education, and taking action to end child poverty during and beyond COVID-19);
- a panel discussion on faith-inspired approaches to advocacy for children's rights and well-being; and
- launch and discussion of the Advocacy Guide and companion toolkit: *Advocating for Children's Rights and Well-Being: An Interfaith Approach*.

# TAKING A SPECIALIZED REGIONAL APPROACH

## Guide for the Prevention of Violence against Children Launched in the Northern Triangle

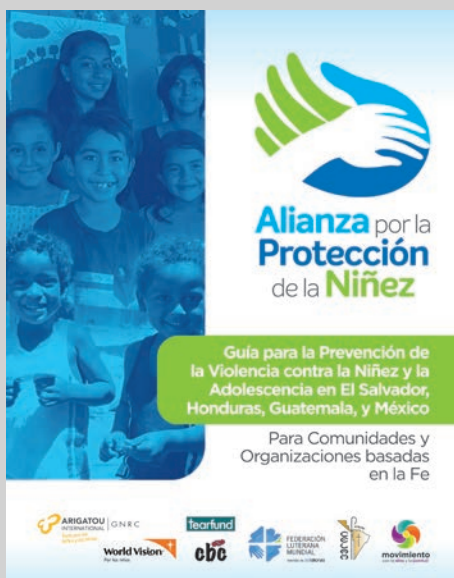
In April 2020, Arigatou International and partners Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC), CELAM, Church World Service (CWS), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Movimiento con la Niñez y Juventud, Tearfund, and World Vision International (WVI) launched the *Guía para la Prevención de la Violencia contra la Niñez y la Adolescencia en El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala y México* ("Guide for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico") developed by the

Alliance for the Protection of Children for its 55+ members, and then organized national presentations in Mexico (in October 2020) and in Guatemala (in March 2021).

The guide aims to reduce the risk factors that promote the development of violent behavior in children and adolescents, or that make it easier for them to become victims of criminal groups; to increase protective and resilience factors, such as healthy lifestyles and environments, psychosocial services and spiritual development; and to strengthen resilience in communities affected by violence.

## Latin America and the Caribbean: Raising Awareness about the Vulnerabilities of Children of Incarcerated Parents, in Relation to Violence

In partnership with the Regional Office of Church World Service, Arigatou International and GNRC members started fostering greater awareness within more than 50 faith-based organizations and faith communities in seven countries—Argentina, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, and Uruguay), on the vulnerabilities of children of incarcerated parents, particularly in relation to violence, on the unique role that faith actors can play to nurture spirituality as a protective factor and coping mechanism for children.



## Lifting up children's voices to end violence against children

As Co-Chair of the Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities' Ending Violence Against Children Hub, Arigatou International co-organized a three-part webinar series on child participation in faith communities called "Seen but Not Heard" to amplify children's voices within their communities about violence.



# A CHANGED LIFE

## Working with Young People through Deep Dialogue to Prevent Violent Extremism

The story of a changed life below comes from the Deep Dialogue Program of the Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE) movement supported by Arigatou International and the GNRC members in Kenya.

From the age of 17, Abdi (not his real name) was radicalized and recruited into violent extremism. A young boy from Kenya, he started his journey to join an extremist group active in Iraq and Syria, DAESH. His first attempt to join the group failed. Still determined to join what he misconstrued as “*Jihad*,” he embarked on a second expedition to a nearby country, Somalia. Authorities arrested him before he could participate in any terrorist activities.

His detention affected his family. His mother was stigmatized and discriminated against by her community after his arrest. Constantly accused of neglecting her son and allowing him to join a terrorist group, the situation forced her to relocate.

After spending four years in detention, Abdi was released to rejoin his family. Abdi and his recruiter, Juma (also not his real name), were immediately enrolled in the Deep Dialogue Program. There, they learned the true meaning of *Jihad* and related Islamic concepts and teachings.

**“ Had it not been for peer influence and idleness, I would not have joined the violent group. Because of my ignorance I misunderstood Islam. I now know better; I can discourage my fellow youth against joining violent extremist groups, and to rethink their actions. ”**

— Youth from Kenya

Abdi, now a reformed 23-year-old youth, appreciates the Deep Dialogue Program for helping him understand Islam better, and to discern the Islamic concepts misused by extremist groups to cause harm to others. He is now on a full university education scholarship secured by GNRC members in Kenya, pursuing a degree in Business and Information Technology at one of the leading universities in Kenya.

The [GNRC Panama Declaration on Ending Violence Against Children](#) includes prevention of violent extremism, gang violence and organized crime as a core part of what Arigatou International strives to accomplish. In partnership with the Kenyan Government and local GNRC networks, Arigatou International has helped to reach thousands of children vulnerable to following a path like Abdi's.



Young people attend the Deep Dialogue Program of the Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE)

# ENDING CHILD POVERTY

Poverty is one of the worst forms of violence affecting children, and putting an end to it worldwide is as urgent a task as it is daunting. Arigatou International seeks to provide creative solutions that spark new partnerships, engage diverse faith actors, and empower children themselves to improve their communities and build sustainable livelihoods.

Children are most affected by poverty in current times. Many of us have low levels of self-esteem and lack financial resources, and these things cause mental and physical issues. This is why we have come up with a solution to fight child poverty by conducting leadership programmes with children in the poverty stricken villages of Sri Lanka.

— Tiana and Sanara, children from Sri Lanka who participated in the Children's Solutions Lab and also spoke at the launch of the SDGs Academy for Children



## KEY ACTIONS THIS YEAR

- Launched SDGs Academy for Children
- Ran "Together We Can End Child Poverty" Campaign 2020
- Focused the Children's Solutions Lab on child poverty and educational solutions to address it



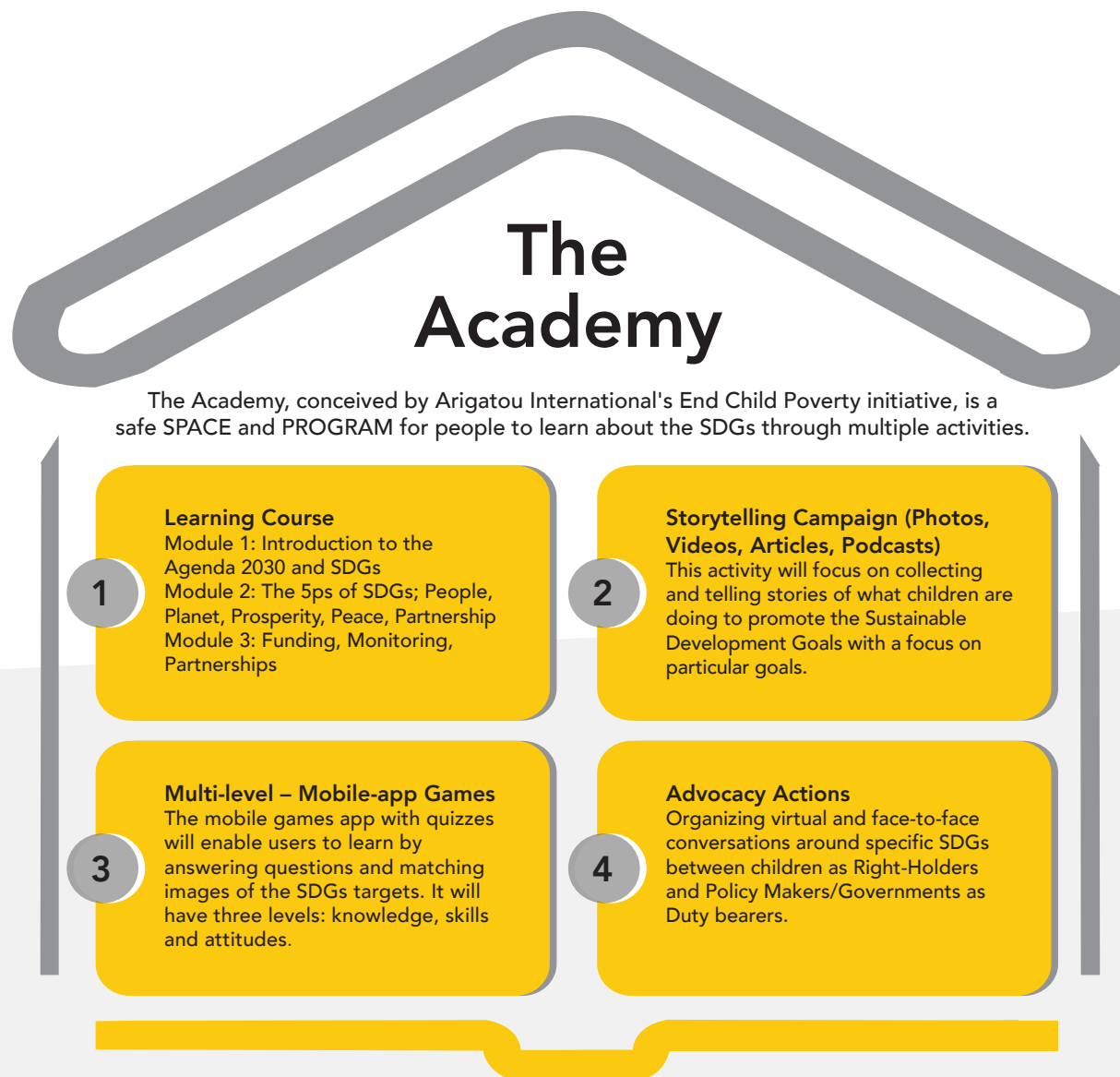
# LAUNCH OF NEW SDGs ACADEMY FOR CHILDREN

In the year under review, Arigatou International launched the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Academy for Children to provide children with simplified multifaith learning tools on the SDGs to enable them to help end poverty and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.

The SDGs Academy provides children with an in-depth understanding of the SDGs by offering them a learning course with three modules: story-telling campaigns, multi-level mobile app games, and advocacy actions. As a space, the SDGs Academy (both in virtual and physical spaces) has five hubs representing the 5P's of the SDGs—People, Planet, Peace, Prosperity and Partnerships. Each of these hubs includes Knowledge, Capacity, Innovations or Solutions, Dialogue, Faith and Fun centers. The SDGs Academy for Children was inaugurated at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary online celebration of the GNRC in November 2020.

While continuing to build out the Academy with partners, Arigatou is developing an SDGs mobile app game designed to teach children about the SDGs in a fun and engaging way, and to encourage them to take faith-inspired action to address child poverty.

Arigatou International developed a model physical space for the SDGs Academy in Kenya, equipped with the five hubs.



# "TOGETHER WE CAN END CHILD POVERTY" ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

The annual campaign by Arigatou International, "Together We Can End Child Poverty," is an opportunity to intensify awareness, social actions and community-driven advocacy to overcome child poverty. It is implemented from September to November, incorporating the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) October 17. The 2020 campaign included grassroots social activities; the 4<sup>th</sup> End Child Poverty Photo Contest, which solicited visual stories of what communities are doing to create a world free from poverty; the launch of the new Children's Solutions Lab (see page 52); and an online communication campaign under the banner #EndChildPoverty. Activities were guided by the global IDEP 2020 theme, "Acting Together to Achieve Social and Environmental Justice for All." Grassroots activities ranged from online and in-person dialogue sessions, to skill-building workshops, interfaith prayers, volunteer outreach, film festivals and art contests.

## Together We Can End Child Poverty Campaign 2020



**Grassroots actions**  
in **17** countries



**25**  
organizations



**21,947**  
participants



including more than  
**21,075** children

## 4<sup>th</sup> End Child Poverty IDEP Photo Contest



**19** photo  
entries



from  
**6** countries

#EndChildPoverty online  
communications campaign



**170,000** people  
reached online



Photo Contest Winner 2020

“There are many children struggling with poverty and I believe the best way to address this is by capturing images that show the actual situation, images that speak for themselves.”

— Denis Mureti, Kenya, one of the IDEP Photo Contest Winners



# EMPOWERING CHILDREN

The involvement of children and young people as full and equal partners is a core commitment of Arigatou International, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which establishes the right of children to participate in decisions that affect them. By meaningfully involving children and young people, Arigatou International seeks to foster inclusion, mutual understanding, respect, and social cohesion in societies. Across the work of its four global initiatives, Arigatou International offers numerous opportunities for engagement to children and young people.



## KEY ACTIONS THIS YEAR

- Ran Children's Solutions Lab inviting children worldwide to create education-based solutions to child-poverty
- Launched "Faith in Action for Children" virtual exhibition, showcasing children's messages, artworks and more about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and their recommendations for addressing those impacts
- Welcomed four new interns as members of the GRNC Children's Committee



# CHILDREN'S SOLUTIONS LAB 🧪🔬



In September 2020 as part of the “Together We Can End Child Poverty” campaign, Arigatou International launched the Children’s Solutions Lab, a new annual project to promote the meaningful participation of children at the local level by encouraging them to work together to initiate their own projects to help end child poverty, with solutions focused on education. The Lab will be held each year, going forward.

In 2020, an open call was launched for groups of children to submit solutions identified at the local level. More than 1,200 children participated in the 2020 Children’s Solutions Lab, assisted by 37 organizations from 23 countries. The five most significant child-led projects were selected to receive a micro grant from Arigatou International to support the implementation of their projects. The five projects came from Cuba, India, Kenya, Peru, and Serbia.

“ It is always good to invest in children, children have innovative and fresh ideas that we can learn from. Although they might sound difficult to implement, they learn lessons from their experiences, they adapt and when challenged their creativity will come out. ”

— Sister Esperanza Principio, supporting adult from Peru



## Solutions from Children: Featured 2020 Finalists

### Cuba

The group, Children of the Internet, developed a solution to offer education accompaniment to their peers facing technological disadvantages (e.g., lack of internet access), by printing education material, and providing recreational and educational tools to children affected by poverty and social vulnerabilities. 36 children benefited from this process. The children’s group was supported by the GNRC–Cuba member, *Centro Cristiano de Servicio y Capacitación B. G. Lavastida*.

### India

The Children’s Parliament in India engaged more than 300 children from nine villages in discussions to brainstorm what could be done to address issues related to education, health care and livelihoods. The mass school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic motivated the children to develop solutions to support access to education. The children decided on a project to support younger children with basic education and activities, ensuring the most vulnerable would not fall behind even amid the COVID-19 challenges.

### Kenya

Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated poverty leading to increased child marriages, 11 children from northern Kenya raised awareness on the need to educate children, especially girls, instead of marrying them off. They creatively conveyed this message via drama skits to parents, local leaders and religious leaders.

### Peru

Children from the **Expresarte** group supported by GNRC Peru implemented their solution to establish a community food garden and a mobile library for their peers. From the sale of the produce harvested, the children purchased school supplies, including books and stationery, which they then donated to their peers greatly affected by poverty. 30 children were reached through this initiative.

### Serbia

Santa’s Helpers, a group consisting of five children aged 13 to 18 years, has been collecting gift packs and donating them to vulnerable children during the holiday season for several years. But with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the children behind the project decided to make a change to the child poverty in their local community. The group put together 40 gift packs of schools supplies and equipment to be distributed to vulnerable children 7 to 16 years old.

#### Continuing Impact

Inspired by the Children’s Solutions Lab of the previous year, the **GNRC–Mexico Committee** organized a similar country-level lab from January to March 2021. Three groups were selected as finalists and their projects launched with support from GNRC–Mexico. **Tz’unun**, a group of 18 indigenous children aged 4 to 17 years, won 1st place. Their solution, called “From the garden to your table,” focused on setting up a small community garden. Through this, the children sought to respond to the need to improve the nutrition of indigenous children with healthy food produced by their families and the wider community.



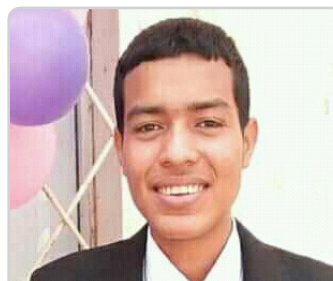
# GNRC CHILDREN'S COMMITTEE

Seeking to enhance the participation of children and youth, an international internship program was created in 2019 and continues today for children (ages 14 to 18) from the GNRC to become involved in the work of Arigatou International by joining what is called the **GNRC Children's Committee**. In 2020, 50 children and youth from 20 countries applied for this opportunity. After a thorough selection process, four children were selected, from India, Kenya, Nicaragua and Pakistan.



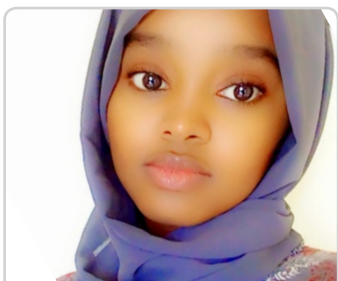
**Aarish**, India

This program helps children to know other parts of the world and express their opinions.



**Carlos**, Nicaragua

Children have to learn about child rights and look for support to become real agents of change.



**Ikran**, Kenya

This internship is honestly the best thing that has happened to me in 2020. It's very educative and gives you the chance to understand the issues children face not only in your community but also around the world.



**Sameer**, Pakistan

One right of the child is connected with another, so each right is important.

## National Child Empowerment Highlights

As part of Arigatou International's 2020 "Together We Can End Child Poverty" campaign, the Bureau d'Informations, Formations, Échanges et Recherches pour le Développement (BIFERD), an NGO in the Democratic Republic of Congo, conducted dialogue sessions with families, including

children, parents and other caregivers, focusing on the impacts of COVID-19 on the well-being of children, particularly on their education, as well as their recommendations and advocacy for children to "go back to school." More than 2,000 children from 20 schools participated.



Primary school children from Lusaka, Zambia during the "Together We Can End Child Poverty" campaign in 2020, at an event organized by the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa (FMSA).

Elementary school children in Macedonia participated in an online conference, where they discussed the state of children's rights in Macedonia, and also came up with suggestions to tackle challenges such as education in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This children's conference was facilitated by GNRC member First Children's Embassy in the World – Megjashi (FCEW-Megjashi).



GNRC members in Montenegro during a peace and awareness workshop with students (2021).



# SUPPORTING GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS

Arigatou International's advocacy efforts are wide-ranging, going far beyond the two major global advocacy campaigns we drive each year: the "Together We Can End Child Poverty" campaign (see page 50) on the International Day to Eradicate Poverty on October 17; and the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (see page 45) on Universal Children's Day on November 20. Highlighted in this section of the report are just a few of the ways we seek to advocate for the changes children need to see in the world.



## Advocacy Engagement by Directors of Arigatou International Initiatives

April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020



**32** international events where directors presented, spoke, contributed, organized, served on panels, etc.



**55,977** stakeholders reached including representatives of United Nations agencies and Permanent Missions in Geneva, as well as representatives of governments, ministries of education, and civil society and faith-based organizations, members of academia, educators, children and youth

## "Faith in the UN" – Celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations

Arigatou International supported the Multi-Faith Advisory Council to the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development (UN–MFAC), as co-organizers of a global online conference, "Faith in the UN: Commemorating the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations and Looking to the Future," held on September 8, 2020 to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations (UN). The conference celebrated key moments of interfaith cooperation in the 75 years of United Nations' existence. Arigatou International helped to produce a video with the Parliament of the World's Religions and other faith-based organizations on the contributions of faith communities to the mission of the United Nations. It was the first time the important historical and valuable role played by faith-based organizations during the 75 years of the United Nations was documented and publicly recognized.

*"The role of faith leaders extends beyond spiritual ministering, to peace making, social welfare, and advocating for social and environmental justice. All over the world, faith-based organizations provide significant grassroots contributions in the fields of shelter, education, health care, access to water and sanitation, food and other basic needs. There is increased recognition today of the important work and contributions that faith-based organizations and religious communities have carried out since the inception of the UN 75 years ago."*

—Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary General, GNRC, and Director, Arigatou International – Nairobi





### Putting an End to Physical and Humiliating Punishment of Children

We continued to support advocacy efforts worldwide for the prohibition of physical and humiliating punishment of children in all settings. In Central America, the Alliance for the Protection of Children, of which Arigatou International is a co-founder, issued a joint statement on the need to accelerate prohibition of corporal punishment in El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico, and implemented a social media campaign during the month of September to mobilize faith communities around this important issue. Similar activities were implemented by GNRC–Colombia, in partnership with the National NGO Coalition. Arigatou International and the GNRC celebrated that corporal punishment was finally banned in Colombia, an important step forward in the comprehensive protection of the rights of children in the country.

### Raising Awareness of the Multidimensional Impact of COVID-19 on Children

We collaborated widely to raise awareness of the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on children and support children's safety and well-being during the pandemic. This included joint efforts with: Faith and Positive Change for Children (FPCC), a UNICEF collaboration created with the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities; the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children; Harvard Divinity School; the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN); the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children; and Religions for Peace.

### Keeping the Focus on Children in Global Development Fora

Arigatou International continued to serve as an active member of the G20 Interfaith Summit Education Working Group, Child Rights Connect and the International Partnership for Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), always seeking to bring the well-being of children to the forefront and to catalyze joint actions and collaborations.



# COLLABORATION—THE VALUE OF WORKING TOGETHER

At Arigatou International, we recognize that collaboration is the key to securing children's rights and well-being worldwide. Early on in our history, we began participating in and supporting projects launched by UNICEF, UNHCR, and other organizations that share our commitment to children's survival and protection. Then, our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in the year 2000 saw a major expansion of our collaborative efforts in supporting faith communities, with the inauguration of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), a network of faith organizations working for the well-being of children. In convening the GNRC, it was the deep conviction of our founder, the late Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, that people of every faith have a special moral obligation to care for the most vulnerable, especially children. He believed that people from every religious tradition could amplify their efforts to make the world fit for children by working together, not just at the global level, but at the grassroots.

Today, Arigatou International is proud to work closely with a very diverse range of partners and collaborators at every level—global, regional, national, and local. We are also a member of a number of important coalitions, consortiums, global partnerships, and alliances. True to our "All for Children" mission, we envision a world where everyone is actively involved in helping children thrive, and we work hard to provide platforms where all sorts of organizations and people can work together to ensure every child can grow up safe and sound and reach for her or his highest potential. Many of these joint efforts are featured in this report.

## Partners

Here is a list of the organizations with which we have entered into agreements or other formal arrangements.

- Aga Khan Foundation Portugal
- Church World Service (CWS) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean
- Comunità di Sant'Egidio
- European Wergeland Centre (EWC)
- Fundación Universitaria San Pablo (UNISANPABLO)
- Geneva Peacebuilding Platform – Geneva Peace Week
- Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF)
- Globalethics.net
- Goldin Institute
- Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace Research Institute (GHFP)
- Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN-OAS)
- Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
- International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)
- Japan Committee for UNICEF
- KAICIID
- New Venture Fund
- Norwegian Church Aid
- Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement
- Scholas Occurrentes Pontifical Foundation
- Smart Peace Foundation
- UN ECOSOC (special consultative status)
- UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa
- UNESCO IICBA
- UNESCO's Multisectoral Regional Office for West Africa (Sahel)
- UNICEF (consultative status)
- United Religions Initiative (URI)
- World Vision International

### Partnership Highlight: Ending Violence Against Children

Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International, serves as a member of the End Violence Board, the highest decision-making body for the Global Partnership and Fund to End Violence Against Children. Arigatou International also works closely with the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children and is an active member of the Civil Society Forum to End Violence Against Children (CSO Forum), created to harness the collective power of civil society organizations to end violence against children.



## Collaborators

Here is a partial list of the many other collaborators we work with around the world. Unfortunately, space does not permit every organization and individual to be listed, but we deeply value them all.

- Act Alliance
- Aga Khan Foundation
- Catholic Relief Services
- Child Fund Alliance
- Church World Service — Latin American Regional Office
- Coalition Network of Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (NRTP)
- Cordoba Peace Institute
- Early Childhood Peace Consortium
- Focolare Movement
- Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
- Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace
- GNRC member organizations in 61 countries around the globe
- Initiatives of Change International – Caux Forum for Human Security
- International Society for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN)
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General on Violence against Children
- Parliament of the World's Religions
- Pastoral Da Criança Internacional
- Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID)
- Shanti Ashram
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- United Nations Multi-faith Council (MFAC)
- University of Montreal
- World Bank Group
- World Council of Churches

## Membership in coalitions, consortiums, global partnerships, and alliances

Arigatou International plays an active role in the following collaborative platforms.

- African Children and Youth Network for Human Rights
- Africa Interfaith Initiative on the Sustainable Development Goals
- Alliance for the Protection of Children (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico)
- Child Rights Connect
- CSO Forum to End Violence Against Children
- Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies
- Global Coalition to End Child Poverty
- Global Movement for Children in Latin America and the Caribbean (MMI-LAC)
- Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
- International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spiritual Development in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence (conceived and convened by Arigatou International)
- International Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Education (IFIIE)
- International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)
- Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities (JLI)
- KAICIID Network for Dialogue
- Moral Imperative to End Extreme Poverty
- Religions for Peace
- WePROTECT Global Alliance

**“ Supporting children as change-makers takes a village; only working together can we truly support children to develop and thrive. At Arigatou International, we strive to build long-term trusting relationships and strategic alliances with parents, teachers, faith leaders, faith communities, governments and multi-lateral organizations, always with children themselves engaged as key allies for transformation. Collaboration is the key to achieving the full vision of peace of our founder. ”**

— Eleonora Mura, Coordinator, Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, Arigatou International – Tokyo

# COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHT

## Convening a Unique Multi-year, Multi-stakeholder Effort to Address the Spiritual Well-Being of Children in the Early Years

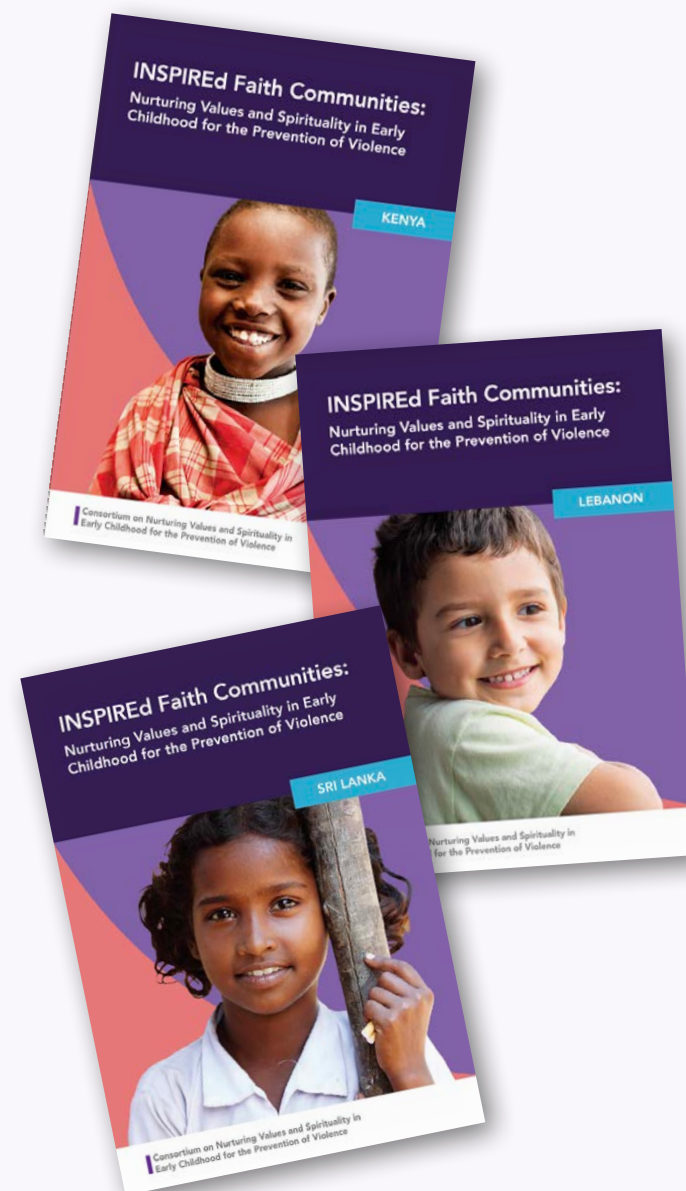
The Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence, convened by Arigatou International, brings together civil society and faith-based organizations, religious communities, multilateral organizations, academia and individual experts to foster collaboration, share good practices and develop evidence-based and innovative approaches to integrate values-based education and spirituality in early childhood for the prevention of violence and the holistic development of children.

In 2020, the Consortium commissioned a report from the Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities, entitled *Spirituality & Early Childhood: Resources for Prevention of Violence against Children—Selected Lessons from Practice*. The report draws on academic and grey literature to collect selected lessons emerging from five recent early childhood programs of faith-based organizations in Afghanistan, Brazil, East and Southern Africa, and Sri Lanka, which were focused on the spiritual well-being of children and use values-based approaches in their work on early childhood. It describes five common approaches used by these organizations with a focus on how they nurture spirituality around early childhood for the prevention of violence.

Based on the findings of the report as well as expertise from its member organizations, the Consortium worked together on a toolkit to help faith-based organizations and faith actors better support the spiritual development of children in the early years.

The toolkit, to be published in late 2021, includes concrete approaches to integrate the spiritual development of children as part of their holistic development in the early years. It focuses on fostering their well-being and preventing violence by promoting positive, nurturing and safe environments, and supporting children to develop positive relations with others.

The third annual meeting of the Consortium was held in December 2020 to review the draft toolkit on “Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years” and discuss the impact of COVID-19 on young children.

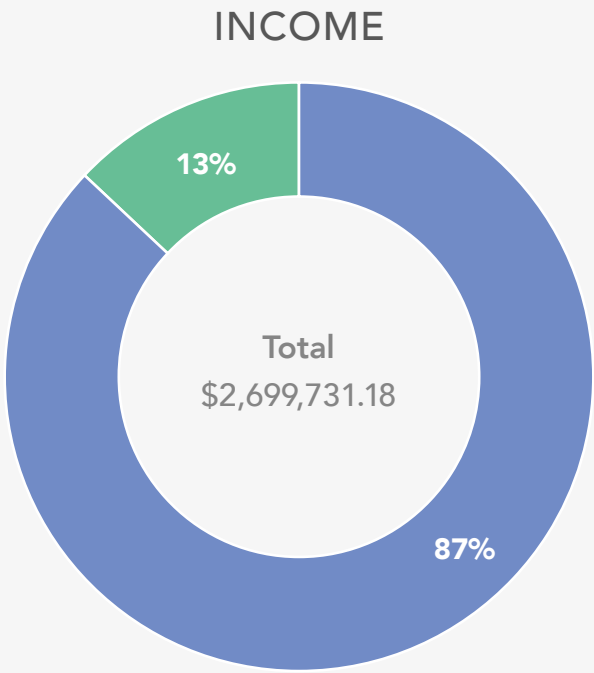




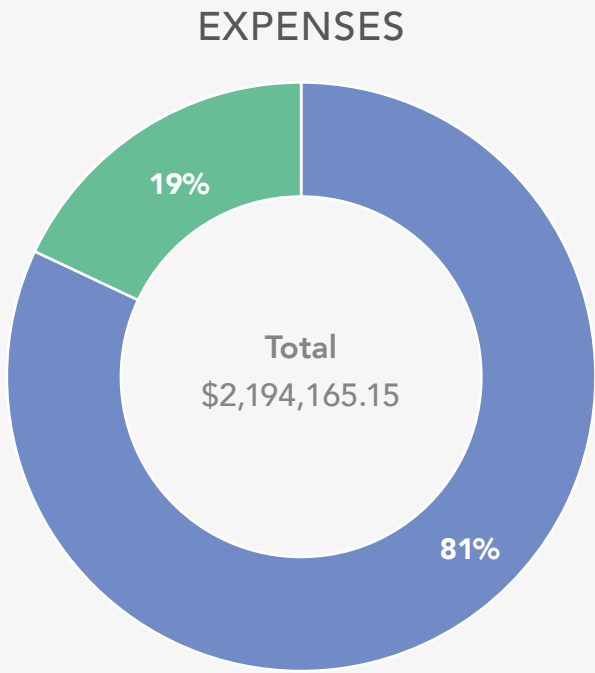
# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

The majority of Arigatou International’s funding comes from donations made by individual donors in Japan who support the organization’s mission. The work of the organization around the world is also supported by many volunteers, by in-kind and financial contributions from project collaborators, as well as by project- or partnership-based grants from foundations or other institutional donors.

Much of Arigatou International’s work involves catalyzing, mobilizing, equipping and inspiring other organizations and individuals. We participate in multi-stakeholder partnerships and apply our resources in a targeted manner that capitalizes on our globally unique core competencies in interfaith cooperation and children’s empowerment and participation. In this way, we seek to strategically expand the direct and indirect impact of every contribution and grant we receive. Arigatou International is profoundly grateful to all who support its efforts to build a better world for children.



- Donations from Individuals in Japan
- Donations from Organizations Outside Japan



- Four Global Initiatives
- Tokyo Headquarters

Japanese yen for individual donations in Japan were converted to US dollars at 110.71 yen to 1 dollar.

# GOVERNANCE

## Governance and Operating Structure

Arigatou International is a general incorporated foundation registered under Japan's public interest corporation system. It was established in 1990 as the Arigatou Foundation by the Japanese Buddhist organization, Myochikai, in order to help build a better world for children. In 2012, the name was changed to Arigatou International, accompanying its formal incorporation.

Arigatou International is governed by a Board of Directors and a Board of Councilors, in accordance with Japanese law. The Chairperson of the Board of Directors is Rev. Kenichiro Saito. The organization's operations are directed by the President of Arigatou International, Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, who also serves as the Chairperson of the Board of Councilors. The organization's day-to-day functioning is managed by a Secretary-General, who reports to the President. The Board of Directors has 6 members, 5 of which are outside directors. The Board of Councilors has 3 members.

The Board of Directors meets twice annually to deliberate upon and approve budgets and work programs, as well as other matters affecting the organization as a whole. Work plan and budget proposals are prepared and presented to the Board by the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The fiscal year of the organization is from April 1 to March 31.

Arigatou International is headquartered in Tokyo, Japan, and maintains offices in Geneva, Switzerland; Nairobi, Kenya; and New York, USA. Each office outside Japan is overseen by a director, who is appointed by and reports directly to the President of Arigatou International. Arigatou International operates four global initiatives from these offices outside Japan.

Arigatou International's work is significantly extended by all the volunteer members and committees of the Global Network of Religions for Children as well as the close cooperation of its partners and collaborators (see page 59). See page 62 for information on Arigatou International's funding sources.

### Members of the Board of Directors

**Rev. Kenichiro Saito** (Chair)  
Chairman of the Board, Myochikai

**Mr. Mitsuyoshi Banjyu**  
Tax Accountant

**Dr. Keishin Inaba**  
Professor, Osaka University

**Rev. Mitsuo Miyake**  
Chief Senior Minister, Konko Church of Izuo

**Rev. Kazuhiro Motoyama**  
Chief Priest, Tamamitsu Shrine

**Rev. Hidehito Okouchi**  
Chief Priest, Jukoin and Kenjuin Temples

### Members of the Board of Councilors

**Rev. Keishi Miyamoto** (Chair)  
President, Arigatou International,  
Leader of Myochikai

**Rev. Takashi Suzuki**  
Board Member, Myochikai

**Rev. Yuji Suzuki**  
Board Member, Myochikai



# DIRECTORS OF ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL'S GLOBAL INITIATIVES

"Violent extremism is a major threat to peace across the world. More and more young people are being recruited into violent gangs. Many have, unfortunately, been lured into terrorism. Intra- and inter-faith programs developed by GNRC members and partners are helping faith communities, and especially young people, to understand and effectively respond to the scourge of violent extremism and terrorism."

**Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**

Secretary General, GNRC, and  
Director, Arigatou International – Nairobi



"Education should be part of the solution, particularly today, when we are called, more than ever, to build on our interconnectedness as human beings, to work together, to activate a collective leadership and challenge the divisiveness, the increase in hate rhetoric about the other, and to build a new normal that is fairer, just, and helps build an ethical foundation for a new world."

**Maria Lucia Uribe**

Director, Ethics Education for Children, and  
Director, Arigatou International – Geneva



"Every year more and more like-minded groups and persons of goodwill are joining Arigatou International by engaging in the activities led by Prayer and Action for Children, beginning with the annual World Day commemorated on November 20. The need for and value of prayer and action is increasingly resonating with a growing number of people of all faiths and building solidarity for all children, particularly during this unprecedented time in recent history."

**Rebeca Rios-Kohn**

Director, Prayer and Action for Children, and  
Director, Arigatou International – New York



"Children bear the greatest brunt of poverty; and, globally, are twice as likely to live in extreme poverty than adults. Undeniably, children's precarious exposure to poverty has been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, with millions more falling into deeper poverty. Nonetheless, the pandemic presents us with an opportunity to address the underlying causes of child poverty and the policies that have contributed towards family poverty and widened inequalities over the years. To this end, we commit to strengthen collaboration with state actors and all stakeholders to advocate for the provision of social protection and safety nets for families and children living in poverty."

**Rev. Nyabera**

Director, Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty



# ADVISORY GROUP

The Arigatou International Advisory Group provides strategic advice on how Arigatou International can make the most of its unique initiatives to help build a world where every child gets to grow up safe and sound. Arigatou International is very grateful for the significant collaboration and contributions that the Advisory Group members are offering to its work.



**Mr. Kul Gautam**  
Former Deputy Executive Director, UNICEF, and Assistant Secretary-General, United Nations (Chair of the Advisory Group)



**Dr. Kezevino Aram**  
President, Shanti Ashram (Vice-Chair of the Advisory Group)



**Dr. Agnes Abuom**  
Moderator, World Council of Churches, Central Committee



**Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne**  
President, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement



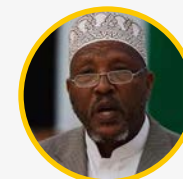
**Ms. Paloma Escudero**  
Director, Division of Communication, UNICEF



**Dr. Azza Karam**  
Secretary General, Religions for Peace



**Ms. Esther Lehmann-Sow**  
Global Director, Faith & Development, World Vision International



**Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome**  
Secretary General, Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution, and Legal Advisor, Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims



**The Most Reverend Felix Anthony Machado**  
Roman Catholic Archbishop of Vasai



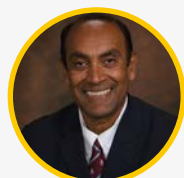
**Dr. Katherine Marshall**  
Senior Fellow, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, and Professor of the Practice of Development, Conflict, and Religion, Georgetown University



**The Right Reverend Dr. Barry Morgan**  
Former Archbishop, Church in Wales



**The Most Reverend Julio E. Murray**  
Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Central America, Bishop of Panama



**Prof. Anantanand Rambachan**  
Professor, Religion Department, Saint Olaf College



**Rabbi David Rosen, KSG, CBE**  
International Director for Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee



**Dr. Mohammad Sammak**  
Secretary General of the Christian-Muslim Committee for Dialogue, Secretary General of the Executive Committee of the Christian-Muslim Arab Group, and Secretary General of the Islamic Spiritual Summit



**Ms. Marta Santos Pais**  
Former UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children

"May every day  
find every one  
of us continually  
embraced in  
growing peace."

— Rev. Keishi Miyamoto,  
President, Arigatou International

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