

GLOBAL WEEK

OF FAITH IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN



REPORT

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

Enhancing Dialogue and Collaboration for Children's
Rights and Well-being

16 - 20 November 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



“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 of Arigatou International,
and Convenor of the Global Network of Religions for Children

More than 1,700 children, youth, and adults from diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds gathered at the [GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children](#), held online from 16 to 20 November 2020.

The GLOBAL WEEK was organized by Arigatou International, in collaboration with KAICIID Dialogue Center, Religions for Peace, Shanti Ashram, UNICEF and World Vision International; and with the support and participation of 64 global, regional, and local partners.

With 25 live sessions in five languages, the GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children was a unique opportunity for children, youth, and representatives from different sectors of society to come together to propose joint actions and compelling responses to address the underlying issues that impact children's well-being, and enhance their participation in matters that concern them, with particular focus on the impacts during and post COVID-19.

Throughout the week, participants were invited to join different activities in three different thematics: Education, Ending Child Poverty and

Ending Violence Against Children. Regional Interfaith Prayers for Children were also organized throughout the week.

The sessions included intergenerational dialogues, interactive workshops, and roundtable discussions. There were four grassroots-led sessions organized by members of the Global Network of Religions for Children, and three child-led sessions, under the title Children as Agents of Positive Change, organized by groups of children and youth, coming from GNRC member organizations and other partner organizations.

As part of the Global Week activities, the “Faith in Action for Children” virtual exhibition was unveiled on November 16, featuring messages, artworks, and multimedia projects by more than 150 children from 33 countries, produced in six different languages.

The week-long event culminated with the celebration of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, which marks Universal Children's Day on 20 November 2020.

On 9 December 2020, the participants of the GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children issued the Statement on Faith in Action for Children - Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond. The statement includes 11 proposals developed by children and young people after participating in the GLOBAL WEEK, as well as six joined Commitments to Action developed by children, young people and religious leaders from more than 53 countries, together with representatives of the United Nations, international, national and grassroots organizations, and diverse experts.

The GLOBAL WEEK is part of "Faith in Action for Children," a global campaign launched by Arigatou International in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, to mobilize and support religious leaders and communities, parents, caregivers and educators to protect and empower children, and ensuring their physical, socio-emotional and spiritual well-being.

There is an ethical demand for all of us, children, young people and adults alike, to help transforming the world into a world that is more compassionate, just, and peaceful. A world that promotes and respects human rights and affirms the dignity of each and every one. A world that responds to the needs, dreams and hopes of children and young people. A world that leaves no one behind.



5 days
25 sessions

1,720

participants

300

children involved¹



86
countries

5 different
languages



20+ hours
of streamed content



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

64
organizations
involved²



133 speakers
of which
60 were children



11 proposals developed
by children and
young people³



6 Commitments to action

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

³ Statement on Faith in Action for Children - Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond with 11 proposals developed by children and young people and six joined Commitments to Action.

OBJECTIVES



Foster Intergenerational Dialogue

Encourage dialogue between children and adults representing different sectors of society about the situation of children in times of COVID-19, with particular focus on the negative impact that COVID-19 is having on education, child poverty, and violence against children.



Affirm the Panama Commitments on Ending Violence Against Children

Highlight inspirational stories and interfaith actions carried out by children, young people, adults, religious communities and faith-based organizations working for the well-being of children and their communities, including actions that recall the Panama Commitments to End Violence Against Children.



Strengthen COVID-19 strategies to support children

Identify strategies that children, young people as well as adults are using to tackle the negative impact of the crisis and to transform them, while working to develop positive changes for the well-being of children and their communities.



Ignite joint actions for the wellbeing of Children

Identify recommendations and catalyze joint actions that can help to address the underlying issues that impact children's well-being; foster the physical, socio-emotional and spiritual well-being of children and their communities; and enhance their participation in matters that concern them.



SESSIONS

OPENING CEREMONY

- Monday 16, November 2020
- 315 attendees
- Language: English with subtitles in Spanish
- Pre-recorded session: Play recording in [English](#)

Masters of Ceremony

- Aakash, Sathvi and Vivehaa, children from Shanti Ashram – India

Speakers

- Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International,
- Mrs. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of UNICEF,
- Prof. Azza Karam, Secretary-General of Religions for Peace.

Description

Aakash, Sathvi and Vivehaa, three children from Shanti Ashram – India, led the launching of the GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children, welcoming the participants, and introducing the keynote speakers.

After a musical interlude from the Children's Symphony Orchestra Infanto Juvenil from North West Guayaquil, Ecuador, the children unveiled the virtual exhibition "Faith in Action for Children".

"[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 of UNICEF



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

- Monday 16, November 2020
- 437 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#)
- Language: English

Objectives

To deepen our understanding of radicalization and extremism and to provide practical solutions to it.

Moderator

- Sh. Ibrahim Lethome, Secretary-General, Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution (CSCR)

Speakers

- Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary-General, Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)
- Mr. Juma Salim, Testimony from a Victim of Radicalization in Kenya
- Sheikh Ramadhan Aula, GNRC Coordinator, Kenya, and Director, Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution (CSCR)
- Mr. Abubakar Kabwogi, Secretary-General, Friends of Zanzibar (FOZ)

- Ms. Joyce Mdachi, GNRC Coordinator, Tanzania
- Mr. Geoffrey Omony, GNRC Coordinator, Uganda,
- Ms. Riziki Ahmed, Clinical Psychiatrist, Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution (CSCR)

Main discussion points

The horn of Africa has seen an increase in violent extremism over the last few years with many children and young people becoming manipulated and enticed by recruiters. Extremist recruiters are present online, and with the increased exposure to online content due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, more and more children are susceptible to recruitment.

Messages of martyrdom can resonate with children when they live in extreme poverty and see no future in their local communities. Children are specifically targeted because they can be more easily controlled both physically and mentally.

Recommendations

Providing children the opportunity to return and reintegrate into society is essential in preventing the perpetuation of violence. Amnesties for former child combatants, such as the one implemented in Kenya, provide an opportunity for youth who have been radicalized to reintegrate into society and work towards deradicalizing other young people. For this to be fully effective deep dialogues and spiritual counseling must be undertaken to build the resilience of the returnees.

GRASSROOTS-LED SESSION

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION: A TURNING POINT IN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE IN EUROPE AND THE MIDDLE EAST

- Monday 16, November 2020
- 239 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#)
- Language: English
- This session was organized by members of GNRC Europe and the Middle East.

Objectives

Engage in dialogue between children from the GNRC and adults about the situation of children in times of COVID-19, with particular focus on its impact on education, child poverty, and violence against children.

Highlight inspirational stories and interfaith actions carried out by children, youth and NGOs – GNRC members, working for the well-being of children and their communities, including actions that recall the Panama Commitments to End Violence Against Children.

Moderator

- **Ms. Ornella Barros Carrasquilla**, Program Officer, Arigatou International New York Office

Speakers

- **Mr. Roger Salameh**, General Youth Projects Coordinator, Arab Educational Institute, Palestine; Member Organization of Pax Christi International Movement
- **Elias**, Youth from Palestine
- **Mr. Khaled Batarseh**, GNRC Coordinator, Jordan
- **Bashar**, Youth from Jordan
- **Ms. Ivana Barac**, Program Coordinator for Children and Youth, Sombor Educational Center, GNRC Serbia
- **Anja**, Youth from Serbia
- **Ms. Laura Molnar**, GNRC Romania Coordinator, President of Education for Change Association
- **Alexia**, Member of GNRC Romania Youth Committee

Main discussion points

Online learning has provided a medium for children to continue receiving education while adhering to health and safety measures. Online learning, however, has also served to highlight inequalities faced by many children, as many young people do not have internet access in their homes. Confinement within a household has also caused frustration, and hampered education efforts as children feel an increased sense of tension and unease by family members, particularly in families that have experienced unemployment. In some cases, domestic violence has also increased, putting children at risk and leaving them unprotected.

Recommendations

Education during the pandemic can be improved by providing underprivileged children with the resources to engage in online learning as well as coming up with alternative learning strategies that work to harness the power of informal actors to teach children.



EDUCATION

HOW EDUCATION CAN RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES THAT COVID-19 PRESENTS IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

- Monday, 16 November 2020
- 113 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [Spanish](#)
- Language: Spanish with interpretation into Italian

More than 40 children and youth from Latin America, Spain and Italy shared their experiences on how COVID-19 has affected their lives and came up with ideas on how education can help generate positive changes.

Objectives

This workshop aimed to create a joint space where children and adults could explore and analyze how the pandemic has affected education and spaces for young people to interact, their relationships, their safety and their emotional stability.

The objective was to identify how young people can respond to the challenges they face and to provide recommendations for an education that empowers, helping children to learn to live together in solidarity and to respond to the challenges in their own communities.

Moderators

- **Carlos**, Child, GNRC Yoituh Commetee
- **Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe**, Executive Director, Arigatou International Geneva

Panelists:

- **Magdalena**, Child, Argentina
- **Catherine**, Child, Chile
- **Ms. Maria Martha Barreneche**, International Coordinator of Educational Experiences with Young People, Scholas Occurrentes
- **Mr. Vincenzo Placco**, Education Specialist, UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean

Main discussion points

The closing of schools and shifting into online learning has affected children everywhere but in many different ways. Some children have struggled due to the lack of access to online classes, unfamiliarity with technology, and lack of proper support.

Children miss school, their normal activities, seeing their friends, and having a daily connection with their peers and teachers. The pandemic is scary for children, many have doubts, fears and suffer from depression due to the situation.

Children had learned new coping mechanisms, such as using social media and video calls to connect with their friends, and many saw their family as a positive factor pushing them forward through the difficulties.

Recommendations

- Rethink and build education systems that are more inclusive, resilient and relevant, that go beyond traditional subjects, and that allow children and adolescents to develop skills that serve them for life, helps them to connect with their reality and supports them in their personal growth.
- Rethink the school as a place that motivates children's curiosity and that provides a play environment. Education needs to be more dynamic in the process of teaching.
- Ensure that children in the most underprivileged areas with the least resources will also have the means to study online. The school of the future should be inclusive and ensure that all children have the same rights and the same possibilities.
- Education should be more comprehensive; should help educate but also support and teach how to be a better person. Values-based education should be a priority. The content of the subjects should not be the only thing that matters; education should make us feel we are not alone and that we can be helped with the problems that we have.
- Ensure that children's opinions are heard and they are taken seriously giving them an active role.



EDUCATION

THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN TIMES OF COVID-19 AND BEYOND – CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Tuesday, 17 November 2020
- 578 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#)
- Language: English

Objective

Discuss the current context amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education; reflect on the role of education in fostering interconnectedness, strengthening children's agency, and addressing inequalities and promoting social justice; and identify policies and approaches to drive the transformative role of education in the current context and beyond.

Moderator

- **Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe**, Executive Director, Arigatou International Geneva

Panelists

- **Steven**, child from GNRC Peace Clubs in Tanzania
- **Emira**, child from GNRC Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Ms. Ann Therese Ndong-Jatta**, Director and Representative, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa

- **Dr. Scherto Gill**, Senior Fellow and Executive Secretary, Guerrand-Hermès Foundation for Peace
- **Dr. Anantha Duraipah**, Director, UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development
- **Dr. Kezevino Aram**, President Shanti Ashram, India, and Co-chair, Arigatou International Advisory Group, and Co-moderator, Religions for Peace
- **Prof. Mohamed Abu-Nimer**, Professor, School of International Service, American University, and Senior Advisor, KAICIID Dialogue Centre

Main discussion points

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought isolation, education has the potential to foster interconnectedness and solidarity. The pandemic has negatively affected children's mental health as well as exacerbated the 'othering' narrative which leads to an aggressive discourse against diversity.

The education crisis, due to the closing of schools for more than 1.6 billion children at the peak of the pandemic, has also surfaced issues of inequalities. There is a need to foster socio-emotional learning for young people as part of an effort to reimagine education to respond to the needs of children and youth.

The role of the community in children's holistic development and learning should be stressed during these times. There is underutilisation of informal educational spaces and a gap in ensuring that education acts as a social equalizer, to ensure that divides can be crossed by working together. The role of religious

leaders and interreligious dialogue becomes even more important in preventing isolation and promoting diversity.

Recommendations

- We must listen to children, support them, and help them strengthen their agency.
- Policies must pay better attention to the accessibility, quality and relevance of education, and they must clearly articulate the type of education we want in our societies. They should be matched with budget and sufficient monitoring to ensure the aims and objectives are being realized.
- Education programs should respond to the needs of those left behind who have not access to the Internet or a computer, and those children with disabilities whose needs have not been prioritized during the pandemic.
- Curricula needs to be reviewed and complemented with ethics education for children, with a focus on inclusion and pluralism, and fostering critical thinking in children.
- Education should support the awareness of ourselves as spiritual beings and of our humanity to counteract discrimination against the other; and it should promote holistic well-being, contributing to a cohesive and harmonious world. It should involve the community to contribute to meaningful learning.
- Countries must invest in building teachers' capacities and bridge the gap between policy and implementation.
- Education policies need to address issues of mental well-being and disenchantment from education.



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

SEEN BUT NOT HEARD - A MULTI-RELIGIOUS INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON CHILD PARTICIPATION

- Tuesday, 17 November 2020
- 268 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- Language: English, with English-Spanish-English interpretation

Objective

To discuss how faith partners can increase child participation to end violence against children.

Introduction:

- **Dr. Carola Eyber**, Queen Margaret University and Co-Chair of the Ending Violence Against Children Hub of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI)

Moderator

- **Ms. Neelam Fida**, Child Protection & Inclusion Advisor, Islamic Relief Worldwide and JLI EVAC Hub Co-chair

Speakers

- **Children from Baha'í Community**, Chile (video)

- **Children from Muslim Community**, Pakistan (video)
- **Children from various faith communities**, South Africa (video)
- **Ms. Christina Nomdo**, Commissioner for Children, Western Cape, South Africa
- **Ms. Loreto Jara**, Bahá'í Community, Chile
- **Ms. Afshan Jamal**, Islamic Relief, Pakistan

Closing remarks:

- **Ms. Stacy Nam**, Sr. Programs and Knowledge Manager, JLI

Main discussion points

Children are, more often than not, left out when it comes to discussing issues that directly affect them; this is not the exception within faith communities. Members of faith communities should create spaces and opportunities for children to express themselves as this empowers them and makes them feel included and part of the live and decisions of the community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on faith communities and has prevented children from interacting with friends, loved ones, and other members of their religious communities. If religious leaders do not focus enough on engaging with young people within their communities they risk isolating them and making them feel ignored, which might have other repercussions in their social involvement.

When children's voices are heard within their community this increases their confidence and belief in themselves. This is also particularly important when dealing with the role of young women and girls in a society. COVID-19 has

drastically reduced the availability of platforms and spaces for children to express themselves.

Recommendations

There should be a more concerted effort by policymakers and religious leaders to harness the energy and spirit of children to better their communities. Children pose tremendous insights when it comes to tackling issues, they just require the space to articulate their ideas and recommendations. Facilitating this discourse between generations is paramount in tackling issues affecting children.

Faith leaders should seek to actively engage children and ensure that their voices and opinions are respected. Religious leaders should also strive to provide more interaction between members of their community, especially during the pandemic as it serves to bring people together to support one another.

Children's councils should be created in order to ensure that children are consulted when it comes to decisions that affect them and to ensure that children's rights are respected.

More investment should be made in the organization of sport activities to engage children, ensuring that girls are included during the process from the outset.

Faith leaders should seek to engage with members of their communities to espouse the importance of child rights and work to shift attitudes regarding the participation of children in faith communities.

Children should be allowed to take over certain religious services. Faith communities should also work to do more team building exercises; this establishes intergenerational bonds and makes children feel more included.



CHILD-LED SESSIONS: "CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE"

THE WORLD WE WANT TO LIVE IN: LISTENING TO CHILDREN'S STORIES, FEELINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Tuesday, 17 November 2020
- 24 children
- Closed session for children
- Language: English, with English-Spanish-English interpretation
- This session was organized by children from GNRC Indonesia

Objectives

The objective of the session was to have a forum for children to connect, bring forward their perspective, and see that they were not alone. Listening to children's feelings and stories will help them understand their situation, which can further encourage policies that take into account the special conditions and needs of children.

In this session, designed exclusively by and for children, the moderators Sophia, Abinaya and Aurel lead a conversation with other children from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Indonesia, Kenya, Romania, Sri Lanka and Tanzania on what they have experienced, felt and done during the pandemic, and how they had been coping with the situation.

Moderator

- **Ms. Lian Gogali**, Founder of Institute Mosintuwu

Speakers

- **Sophia, Abinaya and Aurel**, children from Institut Mosintuwu/GNRC Indonesia

Main discussion points

Children discussed the COVID-19 pandemic. They shared what they have been doing during the pandemic. Many had started new hobbies or were learning new skills. Even though fear, stress and anxiety had been very much present, children also shared different coping mechanisms and ways they had dealt with the situation. They also shared stories with each other during the session on how their lives have changed during this time.

Recommendations

Children shared some recommendations for other children to deal with physical isolation like becoming more curious and learn new things at home, and spending quality time with their families. Aurel introduced a simple coping mechanism of imagining a safe place by closing their eyes and focusing on a memory of a time when they felt safe.

Children concluded on the notion of how important it that adults listen to children so that they are not left out.

The World we Want to Live in:

Listening to children's stories, feelings and recommendations



GRAPHIC RECORDING : COLINE.GRAPHICS (@colinegraphic)

GRASSROOTS-LED SESSION

SOWING HOPE IN THE CHILDREN OF COLOMBIA

- Tuesday, 17 November 2020
- 101 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [Spanish](#)
- Language: Spanish
- This session was organized by GNRC Colombia

Objectives

This session was a dialogue with the President of the National Council of Peace and children from Colombia on the topics of violence and efforts for peace in Colombia.

Moderator

- **Rev. Luis Alberto Rubiano**, Coordinator, GNRC Colombia

Welcoming words

- **Ms. Silvia Mazzarelli**, GNRC Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean
- **Rev. Luis Alberto Rubiano**, Coordinator, GNRC Colombia

Speakers

- **Dr. Francia Márquez**, President of the National Peace Council, Colombia
- **Andrés, Ayalen, Francy, Janner, Junior, Luisa, Matías, Melany, Nikoll, Niny,**

Oriannys, Salomé, Saudi, Sara y Sekyu, children from GNRC Colombia

Main discussion points

Children have been largely affected by the long-lasting armed conflict that took place in Colombia for decades, and that has affected the rights of and lives of children.

The group discussed how the pandemic, confinement and studying from home had affected children as well as the impacts of violence in their communities. There have been a lot of insecurity and conflict in several communities, and acts of violence on the streets, making children vulnerable to recruitment into violent groups or drawn into territorial fights.

Many people, especially indigenous populations, have been forced to move to cities where they are not well received and end up living in exclusion.

Many children in the participants' communities are not receiving adequate attention or care from their parents as they have to work or are away, and children are having difficulties to attend online classes due to lack of resources and connectivity issues. Many areas don't have access to education or proper sanitation, and especially in the rural areas many children have no access to education at all.

The group discussed the meaning of peace as a right and an obligation, a social investment that gives opportunities and resilience, ensures the respect for the rights of everyone, and protects people. Many organizations are working to help make children's voices heard, but political will is also needed.

Recommendations

Children are fundamental in the road to peace and living together. It is important to help them build and reach their dreams and to cultivate hope.

There is a need to keep demanding the government to guarantee the well-being of people. Results can be reached through a collective effort, dialogue, cooperation with

communities, civil society and international organizations.

International support should continue in regards to incentives, projects and programs for children to foster inclusiveness, especially with marginal communities.



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER IN THE DIGITAL WORLD: A WORKSHOP FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS OF THE GLOBAL NETWORK OF RELIGIONS FOR CHILDREN

- Tuesday, 17 November 2020
- 65 adolescents from the GNRC
- This session was not live-streamed
- Language: Spanish

Objectives

This workshop focused on exploring the digital world as a relational space for coexistence. Adolescents analyzed the opportunities and risks of the digital world and reflected on the ethical values that can help them make the most of it, preventing possible risks and dangers.

Facilitators:

- **Ms. Silvia Mazzarelli**, GNRC Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean
- **Ms. Carmen Julia Gómez**, Learning to Live Together Trainer, República Dominicana
- **Mr. Marco Laguatasi**, Learning to Live Together Trainer, Ecuador
- **Mr. Marcelo Neira**, Learning to Live Together Trainer, Chile

- **Mr. Larry Madrigal**, Learning to Live Together Trainer, El Salvador
- **Ms. Esperanza Principio**, Learning to Live Together Trainer, Perú

Main discussion points

The participants discussed the risks and benefits of the online environment and the differences between the digital and the real world. The adolescents were presented with different dilemmas and situations that can happen online, related to anonymity, privacy, false information, bullying, excessive online gaming and the unrealistic pressure on one's self-image.

Recommendations

Children thought of recommendations for each of the situations they could face online. They found it important to be aware of the risks related to online activity. It was suggested to only interact with people they knew, using the "report" function in case of any suspicious activity, making their profile private and being careful not to share any private information with others.

Regarding the spread of false news, asking questions and forming one's own opinions was thought as an important tool. When it comes to cyberbullying, exercising was found important. Speaking with close adults and reaching out to people one could confide in was strongly recommended. Finally, being a positive influence to friends facing problems like excessive online gaming or self-esteem issues was recommended.

INTERFAITH PRAYER

REGIONAL INTERFAITH PRAYERS FOR CHILDREN

- 460 attendees
- Language: English and Spanish
- Recordings:
 - » [Africa](#)
 - » [Asia](#)
 - » [Europe and the Middle East](#)
 - » [Latin America and the Caribbean](#)

Four Regional Interfaith Prayers for Children were held throughout the week in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Regional Interfaith Prayers for Children brought together religious leaders and children in a moment of prayer for children and their communities amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was a time of encounter and communion, in which each religious and spiritual tradition had the opportunity to share a prayer for children at a time when hope and faith are key to help the world move forward.

We thank all the 19 children and 26 adults from the different religious traditions that offered their prayers. Please see the lists of participants here: [Africa](#), [Asia](#), [Europe and the Middle East](#), [Latin America and the Caribbean](#).



GRASSROOTS-LED SESSION

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND VOLUNTEERING DURING COVID-19 AND BEYOND

- Wednesday, 18 November 2020
- 322 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#)
- Language: English
- This session was organized by GNRC Bhutan and GNRC India

Objectives

To highlight and celebrate the achievements of young people and the work they have conducted at a grassroots level as members of GNRC Bhutan and GNRC India during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. To identify how the current COVID-19 crisis has changed the work conducted by these grassroots organizations.

Opening message

- **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary General, GNRC

Moderators

- **Ms. Ramya and Mr. Varun**, Volunteers, Shanti Ashram

Panelists

- **Aarish**, child from Shanti Ashram
- **Vivehaa**, child from Shanti Ashram
- **Mr. Daniel Selvan**, Shanti Ashram
- **Ms. Dhanyasree Selvaraj**, Shanti Ashram
- **Mr. Karma Wangda**, Bhutan
- **Ms. Karma Yangdon**, Bhutan
- **Ms. Saswatha Surthi**, India
- **Mr. Phurba Sonam Waiba**, Coordinator, GNRC Bhutan

Main discussion points

If children are to be fully empowered to make changes in their community we must first ensure their safety from all forms of violence. To build a better world for tomorrow, we must harness the leadership capacities of young people. Volunteering provides children an opportunity to get engaged, grow their skills, and form connections with others.

Recommendations

For a child to be able to benefit from their access to education they must be provided a safe space in which they may engage with their material.

Increased stress levels due to economic hardship and increased familial proximity do not make for a conducive learning environment. If we are to make distance learning effective there must be a more concerted effort to create safe

spaces within the home. Additionally, distance learning has negatively affected those from lower socio-economic sections and from rural areas who often lack access to the internet or technological devices.

Subsidizing data bundles or providing the technological hardware necessary to partake in online lessons has had to become a priority when dealing with the current crisis, and should continue to be a priority moving forward.



ENDING CHILD POVERTY

TOGETHER WE CAN END CHILD POVERTY WORLDWIDE

- Wednesday, 18 November 2020
- 319 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#), [French](#) and [Spanish](#)
- Language: English with interpretation into French and Spanish

Objectives

To highlight community solutions to overcoming child poverty, and to enable reflection based on the perspectives of various actors within the community – including children, faith actors, policy advocates and civil society – as stakeholders and duty bearers.

Moderator

- **Rev. Fred Nyabera**, Director, Arigatou International – End Child Poverty

Co-moderator

- **Ms. Shazmin Rafeeq**, Founder and Chief Executive, I CAN Malaysia

Speakers

- **Rev. Nicta M. Lubaale**, General Secretary, Organization of African Instituted Churches (OAIC)
- **Basam and Maream**, children from Kids Future Team, Syria
- **Mr. Jonas Habimana**, Executive Director and Founder, Bureau d'Informations,

Formations, Echanges et Recherches pour le Développement, Democratic Republic of Congo

- **Jigme**, child from Youth Society, Bhutan
- **Ms. Isabelle Perrin**, Director General for the World Day for Overcoming Poverty
- **Nouraine and Abadjamil**, youth from Association Conseil De La Paix, Comoros
- **Ms. Shazmin Rafeeq**, Founder and Chief Executive, I CAN Malaysia
- **Mr. David Stewart**, Child Poverty and Social Protection, UNICEF
- **Shirley and Maria**, Volunteers from GNRC Argentina
- **Mr. Michael Adikwu**, Arigatou International - End Child Poverty
- **Jana and Vuk**, youth from Sombor Education Centre, Serbia

Main discussion points

Factors such as poverty and displacement have a negative impact on children, particularly in their education and livelihoods. The prevalence of poverty has an inter-generational effect, as parents are unable to support their families, and thus children and young people are forced to leave school to work, impeding their development and hampering their life opportunities, perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

Recommendations

Seek to further engage young people in workshops and educational spaces. By providing these platforms for children we allow them to help one another and take initiative when it comes to problem solving.

Providing resources and support to adults and parents, particularly in rural communities, can help alleviate the burden imposed on children and allow them to further their education.

More grassroots initiatives should be launched to make incremental differences in the everyday lives of children affected by poverty. Due to the confinement of whole families in small spaces, and the burdens imposed by these conditions, contributions to alleviate problems regarding food availability, electricity, school, or Internet connection, can make a tremendous impact on the well-being of families and contribute to the mental health of children.

By introducing small interest-free loans, poverty stricken families are able to alleviate their immediate burdens and focus on establishing longer term, sustainable revenue-generating activities. These loans provide not only material support but also serve to improve mental health and self-esteem, as individuals are given the opportunity to become self-sufficient.

Universal child-sensitive social protection programs should be prioritized by governments. Governments can implement structured programs which cover the young members of society and then grow incrementally as the economy grows, this helps less developed economies to mitigate the costs of these programs.



ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

COMMEMORATING 20 YEARS OF INTERFAITH COOPERATION FOR CHILDREN - CATALYZING THE PANAMA COMMITMENTS INTO ACTION: ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

- Wednesday, 18 November 2020
- 559 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- Language: English and Spanish with interpretation into English and Spanish

Objectives

This session celebrated and commemorated the 20 years of work of the GNRC for the service of children, and provided an overview of the progress and achievements made since the Fifth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children, held in 2017.

Since then, the GNRC has focused on the follow-up of the ten commitments, of the Panama Declaration on Ending Violence against Children, that aim to promote and eradicate any form of violence against children, in partnership with United Nations Agencies, regional intergovernmental and multilateral bodies, and other faith-based and non-governmental organizations. During the session, speakers addressed the advancement towards the full implementation of the ten

Panama Commitments and discussed what is needed to accelerate their implementation.

Former GNRC Coordinators were recognized for their commitment to working for the wellbeing of children throughout the years. A special tribute was offered to the departed souls who contributed immensely to the work of the GNRC.

1ST PART:

Moderator

- **Ms. Silvia Mazzealli**, GNRC Coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean, Arigatou International

Introductory Remarks

- **Mr. Kul Gautam**, Chair Advisory Group, Arigatou International

Message from

- **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto: Read by Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary-General Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), Arigatou International

2ND PART:

Introduction to Panama Commitments

- **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary-General Global Network of Religions for Children, GNRC, Arigatou International

Moderators

- **The Most Revd. Julio Murray**, Bishop of Panama and Primate of the Anglican Church in the Central America Region

- **Rabbi Diana Gerson**, Associate Executive Vice President, The New York Board of Rabbis

Speakers

- **Rev. Harold Segura**, Director, Faith and Development, World Vision Latin America, on behalf of the Alliance for the Protection of Children in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico.
- **Mons. Guy Charbonneau**, Bishop Chaluteca, Honduras and Representative of the Latin American Episcopal Council (CELAM), on behalf of the Alliance for the Protection of Children in Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico.
- **Tamara**, child from Mexico
- **Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome**, Secretary General, Centre for Sustainable Conflict Resolution, Kenya
- **Mwanaidi**, child from GNRC Tanzania
- **Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne**, President, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Representing the International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood
- **Sanara**, child from GNRC Sri Lanka





“I believe that we [...] have a mission and responsibility not only to end violence against children but also to build an environment where each and every one of the children in the world can grow both physically and psychologically healthy and learn in peace, never losing their life in wars and other conflicts.”

- Rev. Keishi Miyamoto,
President of Arigatou International

- **Ms. Dana Humaid**, Chief Executive, Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
- **Bashar**, child from GNRC Jordan

Dialogue moderators

- **Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali**, Secretary General, Global Network of Religions for Children, GNRC
- **Dr. Dorcas Kiplagat**, GNRC Network and Programs Coordinator

Launch of SDGs Academy for Children:

- **Rev. Fred Nyabera**, Director End Child Poverty – Arigatou International

Closing remarks

- **Dr. Kezevino Aram**, President, Shanti Ashram and Vice-Chair, Advisory Group, Arigatou International

Main discussion points

Since the Fifth Forum, the GNRC has doubled its membership reaching 55 countries and being truly a global interfaith movement for children.

To achieve the 10 Panama commitments the GNRC has formulated five key areas of action and Flagship Programs have been launched to respond to the commitments.

Collaboration between the GNRC and the Arigatou International initiatives as well as with global and grassroots organizations has grown stronger and GNRC's grassroots work has reached over 6 million children since 2017.

The speakers, both adults and children, engaged in dialogue on four of the commitments and reflected on the challenges and ways forward. They discussed how to ensure the safety of religious places for children, the importance of educating leaders and communities on the different forms of violence against children and strategies to address them; educating children about sexuality and how they can keep themselves safe; as well as safeguarding children from harmful media content, identifying and challenging patriarchal structures and practices perpetuating a culture of sexual abuse and exploitation; they also discussed how to generate greater social and political will for better legislation and policies, and for

increasing funding for programs to protect children from violence.

The importance of listening to children with empathy and respect and working together in strengthened partnerships and cooperating to end violence against children was highlighted.

There is a need for children to learn about the Sustainable Development Goals, and for children to be empowered to contribute to their implementation, as a pathway to tackle child poverty and violence against them.



Recommendations

Partnerships must be strengthened and the cross-cutting areas of the commitments considered. Interreligious alliances must be further developed to safeguard children, the advocacy work by religious leaders strengthened, and the impact and scope of their actions enhanced.

Faith communities have significant political influence in Latin America, they are in most societal sectors, in the most remote places and urban cities, and are often engaged in politics. They can help develop a societal foundation to promote new policies and influence governments and develop a culture of peace through advocacy. Building bridges with societal movements, academia, political sectors and others is important. Governments should take the lead in eliminating all forms of violence.

It is important to prevent violence in the media, TV, radio, social networks. There is a need for stricter laws restricting violent content in programs for children, in ads, news and video games. Strategies might include organizing public campaigns on the consequences of violence, types of violence, identifying a case and using it as an example, and educating people regularly through national channels.

Children should be a priority. It is recommended that governments invest in spaces that are abandoned in neighborhoods, converting them in safe places for children to dance, do art, and engage in community activities. Governments should invest in constructing centers to help children affected by organized crime.

The existing child protection laws in the countries and knowledge of child's rights must be disseminated and built-in monitoring mechanisms must be embedded.

The capacity of religious leaders must be strengthened so they will prioritize the protection of children and train care-givers.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

HOW TO CREATE SPACES TO GIVE CHILDREN A VOICE AND STRENGTHEN THEIR SOCIO-EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?

- Wednesday, 18 November 2020
- 15 families with 18 children and 8 social workers
- Closed session
- Language: Spanish and Portuguese with interpretation into Portuguese and Spanish

Objectives

This session was organized for families with the purpose to explore how the pandemic affects children's lives, in particular the lives of young children.

The closed workshop was attended by families and their children from Brazil, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Peru and Venezuela, as well as social workers from Pastoral da Criança

Moderators

- **Dr. Nelson Arns Neumann**, Deputy National Coordinator, Pastoral da Criança
- **Ms. Vera Leal**, Senior Program Officer on Ethics Education for Children, Arigatou International Geneva



The workshop allowed children ages 3 to 8 to share their feelings and experiences through drawings, particularly on how they have been experiencing the pandemic in their lives, what they miss the most, what they enjoy doing, how is like to live during this time, and shared wishes with one another.

During the workshop, parents and caregivers as well as social workers also expressed the importance of these spaces and called for teachers and community leaders to continue supporting children through virtual visits so they feel accompanied and protected. They called for more synergies between organizations to respond to the exacerbation of poverty and violence affecting children.

CHILD-LED SESSIONS “CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE”

DIALOGUE WITH BOYS ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN THEIR EDUCATION, ON THE VIOLENCE AFFECTING CHILDREN AND HOW YOUNG PEOPLE CAN RESPOND TO IT

- Wednesday, 18 November 2020
- Pre-recorded session
- Language: English
- This session was organized by the children from Shanti Ashram, India

Objectives

“Dialogue with Boys” is an approach based on intergenerational dialogue and the active participation of boys, allowing for a deep reflection on the root causes of inequality and violence. It aims to mobilize boys to end gender-based violence in their families and within their communities.

During this session, organized by children from Shanti Ashram, GNRC India, adolescents shared how COVID-19 has affected children’s education, how it has increased violence and poverty in their families and communities, and what can be done to support and protect children during this period. The panelists discussed the causes and solutions to issues of child labor, domestic violence and violence against women and children.

Moderator

- **Mr. Siranjeevi Rangaraj**, Shanti Ashram

Speakers

- **Aarish, Senthil, Aakash, Pavithran and Adithya**, children from Shanti Ashram
- **Dr. Jayashree Ashwath**, Senior Pediatrician, Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP)
- **Dr. Kezevino Aram**, President, Shanti Ashram

Main discussion points

The pandemic has had an adverse impact on the Indian society as sexual harassment, mental health problems, domestic violence and child labor have increased. The closing of schools has had negative effects on the safety of girls, increasing gender-based violence.

During the pandemic, time spent with family has decreased as parents are working or seeking ways to support their family economically. Many children had fallen into poverty and were left out of education due to lack of access to online classes. Cast-based discrimination has worsened the situation for some children.

Periods of lockdown has made children feel trapped and caused anger and frustration in adolescents. Cyber-bullying and online harassment increased during the pandemic, as children spend more time online often unsupervised.

Recommendations

The panelists saw the changing of mindsets as important in ending violence against children. Women and girls need to be encouraged not to



fear and stay silent, but to act against abuse and report incidents. Parents need to strengthen and support girls' voices

The role of parents and the relationship they have with their children was seen as crucial in many ways. They should also supervise more efficiently the use of technology and their child's online activities.

People with authority, such as religious leaders, must take an active role in influencing a change in society. The culture of silence and taboo around violence against children and girls has to be broken.

Doctors, parents, teachers and society at large must understand the biological factors affecting children during adolescence, to be

better equipped to support, understand and empathize with them.

GRASSROOTS-LED SESSION

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN CHILDREN

- Thursday, 19 November 2020
- 69 attendees
- Live session: Play recording en [English](#) and [French](#)
- Language: French, with interpretation into English
- This session was organized by GNRC Comoros

Objectives

To examine the impact that COVID-19 has had on children in Africa. Provide a platform for children to share their experiences and identify issues as well as solutions for the problems they faced during the lockdown.

Moderator

- **Mr. Akim Said M'changama**, President of the NGO Conseil de la Paix (CAP) and Coordinator GNRC, Comoros

Speakers:

- **Mr. Jonas Habimana**, Coordinator GNRC, Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Mr. Abdoul Aziz Ba**, Coordinator GNRC, Senegal
- **Ms. Sandrine Nkurunziza**, Secretary-General for Peace Action for Children and Youth Dignity (Turushoboye) and Coordinator GNRC, Burundi

- **Aicha**, youth from Comoros
- **Amand**, youth from Burundi
- **Salif**, youth from Senegal
- **Ushindi**, youth from the Democratic Republic of Congo

Commentator

- **Cheik Safari Mohamed**, Religious Leader, Comoros

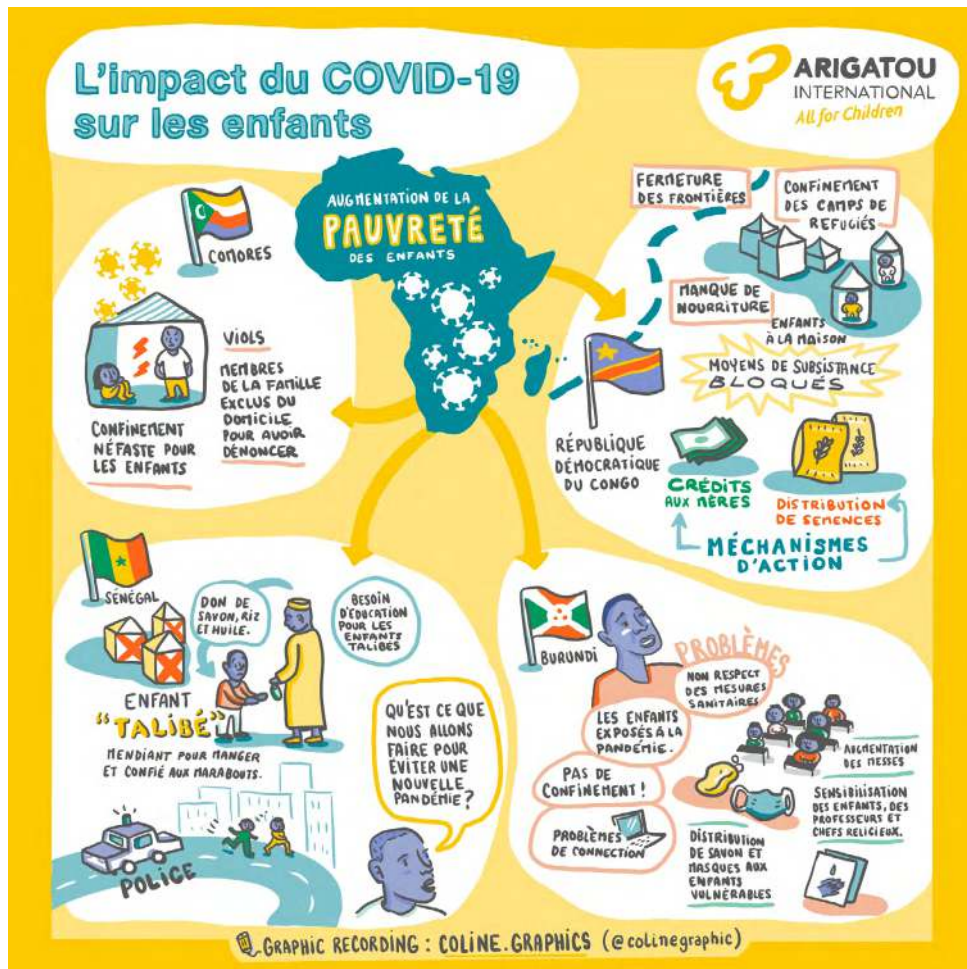
Main discussion points

Many people living in central African countries have been adversely affected by the imposition of COVID-19 restrictions such as the closing of borders and lockdowns. Transnational trade and small businesses account for a significant proportion of employment in the region all of which has been disrupted.

This crippling of the economic sector has left many children vulnerable. Schools, which for many children served as a refuge and a safe space, became hot spots for the virus as most schools lacked the resources to impose adequate safety regulations. This issue was compounded by a general lack of information given to children regarding regulations imposed as a result of the pandemic as well as the information regarding the virus itself. The lockdown has also negatively affected children's well-being as domestic violence has increased and children are exposed to violence, isolation and toxic stress from their parents and caregivers.

Recommendations

Children advocated for greater communication with State representatives to ensure that young people were kept up to date on restrictions and



regulations imposed as a result of COVID-19. It was also noted that a greater emphasis should have been made at the start of the pandemic to educate young people on the nature of the virus to ensure the adherence to safety protocols and thus minimizing transmission.

In order to mitigate the loss of income due to the closure of borders, a micro-credit system could be instituted to allow the most vulnerable of families to create sustainable means of income in order to support their families during and after the pandemic.

Children have a right to feel safe and secure when at home, in order to achieve this more effort should be made by faith leaders, government institutions, and community leaders to educate the public on children's rights.

Workshops should be conducted within local communities to provide a safe space in which issues pertaining to COVID-19 can be discussed freely. Moreover, these workshops can provide victims of abuse and sexual violence a chance to talk about their experiences and confront societal stigma surrounding these abuses.

Faith leaders should use this time to connect with their communities and educate them on the importance of maintaining spiritual resilience during these difficult times to overcome adversity. Faith leaders must also take it upon themselves to educate the public on the importance of hygiene and safety precautions particularly in the context of Africa where state institutions struggle to reach rural and impoverished communities.

ENDING CHILD POVERTY / EDUCATION

CHILDREN'S SOLUTIONS LAB

- Thursday, 19 November 2020
- 299 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- Language: English and Spanish with interpretation into English and Spanish

Arigatou International invited children from around the world to propose solutions on how to end child poverty through education. Thirty-seven groups of children from 23 countries sent their solutions. This webinar was an inter-generational dialogue with children from the five finalists groups selected for the Children's Solutions Lab.

During the webinar children and adults engaged in a dialogue about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and poverty on children, and how education and child-led initiatives can help to address these challenges. The five finalists will receive recognition, mentoring and micro-grants from Arigatou International to implement their solutions.

Speakers

- **Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe**, Executive Director, Arigatou International Geneva
- **Dr. Katherine Marshall**, Executive Director, World Faiths Development Dialogue
- **Rev. Fred Nyabera, Director**, End Child Poverty, Arigatou International

Moderators

- **Ms. Nyambura Gichuki**, Programs Officer, End Child Poverty, Arigatou International
- **Mr. Suchith Abeyewickreme**, Program Officer, Ethics Education for Children, Arigatou International

Presentation of the Children's Solutions

- Los niños y niñas de Internet (Cuba)
- Children's Parliament (India)
- Expresarte (Peru)
- Garissa Children's Lab (Kenya)
- Santa's Helpers (Serbia)

Main discussion points

It is important to create spaces where children can think of the solutions to some of the challenges they face. They understand the situation, have agency, and can propose solutions that respond to their needs.

Committed adults who enable, empower and help children bring forth their ideas are critical to ensure that children are empowered to propose ideas be co-creators of a better world.

The importance of giving children access to connect to online classes, to interact and have fun together, and offering them possibilities to develop their skills was highlighted.

Supporting and empowering children and helping them nurture positive relationships amongst themselves was also encouraged by children and youth.

Description of the Projects

The project proposed by Los niños y niñas de Internet from Cuba sought to tackle the lack of educational resources available to children due to financial restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Their solution was to reach out to children in their communities and neighbourhoods to write down lists of what they needed. These lists were then given to Los Niños y Niñas de Internet who then printed them out or procured the school supplies on the list.

The project proposed by Children's Parliament in India sought to fill the void which has been

left by the closure of schools. Their efforts aimed to provide Internet packages to families for children to be able to access online education. As part of the project, they would be organizing zoom classes for young people about important health and safety protocols pertaining to COVID-19 for those who lacked the means to access remote learning. They also aimed to recreate the social space which schools embodied by arranging activities such as singing, dancing, and basket weaving and give children a space where they feel safe.



The project put forth by Expresarte in Peru aimed to tackle issues surrounding poverty, malnutrition, and lack of education resources. Expresarte sought to tackle these issues by raising money through the sale of recycled objects and products cultivated in a bio garden. The proceeds are to be donated to vulnerable children so that they may purchase food and school materials; food from the bio garden is to be used by children involved in the project. With the micro-grant, the project will create a common space with a TV for children to receive education and hold meetings to learn together.

The project proposed by the Garissa Children's Lab in Kenya looked to create awareness campaigns about the right to education for all children. It was noted that schools are more than merely a space for education but also serve the community by providing daily meals for young children as well as supplying young girl hygiene products, all of which has been cutoff due to COVID-19. Through the creation of theatre productions and mass media campaigns the Garissa Children's Lab hopes to highlight the value that schools play in their local communities.

The project proposed by Santas Helpers from Serbia sought to provide impoverished children presents for Christmas. Their project aimed to not only provide presents but to also engage young people who may be feeling isolated during these difficult times. Their hope was to give these young people a chance to have their voices heard by the local community and to use their network of experts to encourage these young people to launch their own initiatives. The realization of this project could contribute to develop empathy, activism, and solidarity among children, young people, and adults.



HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE WITH PARTNERS

CATALYZING JOINT ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CHILDREN

- Thursday, 18 November 2020
- Closed session
- Language: English

During the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children, 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 on 19th November 2020.

The Roundtable focused on bringing organizations together to discuss the multi-dimensional impacts of COVID-19 on children and identify joint actions to address the challenges faced by children and their families. Children and partner organizations invited to attend the High-Level Roundtable provided comprehensive recommendations to guide these efforts.

Recommendations included strengthening psychosocial support interventions for children and for parents; raising awareness about the increasing number of children involved in child labor, forced to marry, and early pregnancies in girls as a consequence of COVID-19. Discussions also highlighted the impact of climate change

and how it is contributing to exacerbate child poverty, as well as the need to integrate social protection mechanisms and policy advocacy efforts to address child poverty and violence against children. The education crisis was also discussed and the impact on the socio-emotional and spiritual well-being of children, particularly in the most vulnerable contexts, where inequalities have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The co-organizers committed to implement evidence-based strategies to address the exacerbation of violence against children, child poverty and the learning crisis due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. 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.

Partner organizations will identify countries where the collaborations can take place. Implementation in each of the selected countries will start with convening a National Dialogue to strengthen local coalitions at the national level bringing together children, leaders from religious communities, representatives of Faith-based Organizations, Civil Society Organizations, governments and United Nations agencies to discuss the multidimensional impact of COVID-19 on children, and together develop concrete action plans based on the local needs, identifying solutions and interventions that can have impact across not one but multiple target areas, using a development accelerator model.

CHILD-LED SESSIONS “CHILDREN AS AGENTS OF POSITIVE CHANGE”

THINKING TOGETHER - YOUNG PEOPLE, ADULTS, THE ELDERLY, AND CHILDREN - ABOUT THE EDUCATION WE DREAM OF

- Thursday, 19 November 2020
- 34 participants
- Live session: Play recording in [Spanish](#)
- Language: Spanish
- This session was organized by children from Latin America

Objectives

Children and adolescents reflected on education during the COVID-19 pandemic and promoted a call to think together (adolescents, adults, the elderly and children) the education they dream of.

Moderator

- **Mr. Manuel Deza**, Scholas Occurrentes

Speakers

- **Magali**, child from Argentina
- **Fernandina**, child from Argentina
- **Christopher**, child from Panama
- **Bryan**, child from Panama
- **Santiago**, child from Colombia, Scholas Occurrentes

Main discussion points

The participants were invited to discuss their feelings and thoughts they had during the pandemic. The stress felt by the participants was thought to be linked to the sudden change caused by the pandemic, not being able to see their friends, and having to attend classes online. Being home all day with the same people and routines felt challenging and repetitive.

At the end of the session, participants suggested to create an Instagram group to share ideas and resources to support each other weekly.

Recommendations

Children recommended listening to people to help them calm down, as well as helping others find the reasons behind their worries, and support them in finding ways to change the situation.

They recommended doing activities they enjoy to find peace within, and use technology to share with their friends and connect with people from different cultures and different parts of the world. The session was an opportunity for them to feel that they are not alone, to listen to one another, to share their experiences and dialogue with empathy and solidarity.

PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN

- Friday, 20 November 2020
- 522 attendees
- Live session: Play recording in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Arabic](#).
- Language: English, Arabic and Spanish, with interpretation

Objectives

To commemorate the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and celebrate Universal Children's Day. To bring together young people and adults to partake in an intergenerational dialogue dealing with a range of issues which had been raised throughout the Week of Faith in Action.

Speakers

- **Ms. Rebeca Rios Kohn**, Director, Prayer and Action for Children
- **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto**, President of Arigatou International
- **Ms. Muzoon Almellean**, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador
- **Emira**, child from Bosnia & Herzegovina
- **Sanjay**, child from India
- **Lucía**, child from Panama

- **Ms. Amanda Rives**, Sr. Director of External Engagement and Resource Development, World Vision International,
- **Ms. Audrey Kitagawa**, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World's Religions
- **Ms. Ornella Barros**, Program Officer, Arigatou International Prayer and Action for Children Initiative
- **Ms. Silvia Mazzarelli**, Coordinator, Global Network of Religions for Children for Latin America and the Caribbean, Arigatou International

Main discussion points

The webinar commenced with a pre-recorded dialogue between GNRC children and Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International. Children asked questions that sought to better understand the role that interfaith collaboration plays in securing children's rights as well as the role children can play in securing their future.

Rev. Miyamoto also posed questions to children regarding how they viewed their involvement and engagement with issues pertaining to children, as well as the roles they wished faith actors would play in supporting children. Ikran, from Kenya, spoke on behalf of the members of the GNRC group in her community. She spoke about the need for mass awareness campaigns to educate people on the rights of children and called on governments to allocate more resources in order to protect children from violence or other forms of abuse. Ikran also pointed out the vital role that religious leaders play in disseminating these awareness campaigns given the respectable standing many of these faith actors hold in their communities.

This section was then followed by a roundtable discussion hosted by UNICEF's Goodwill Ambassador Ms. Mozaan Almellehan. Having started her advocacy career from a refugee camp in Syria, from where she worked to encourage children to attend school, Ms. Almellehan spoke of her commitment to ensuring children are engaged with and taken into account by governments and international bodies. She noted that "We need to hear children. We need to listen to them. We need

for those voices to be heard, and they must be involved in the decisions that impact their lives."

Three other young people joined Ms. Almellehan as part of this roundtable discussion, these included Sanjay (India) Emira (Bosnia & Herzegovina) Lucía (Panama). Each one of the young individuals has contributed to work done in their local communities and has now given an opportunity to share some of their experiences on the ground including how COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation and the role of young people. Key issues such as the





“We need to listen to children, we need those voices to be heard. They must be involved in the decisions that impact their lives.”

- Ms. Muzoon Almellehan,
UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador

increase of income inequality, the lack of access to education, as well as the threats of domestic violence posed to children due to lockdowns were all raised by the various children with each recounting stories faced by children in their communities.

The next section consisted of two speakers: Ms. Audrey Kitagawa and Ms. Amanda Rives, both of whom further spoke about the role that faith based communities and actors can play to support children and youth. Ms. Rives noted the fact that World Vision International perceives violence, in many ways, as a manifestation of broken relationships and that it is only by mending these relationships that we will be able to secure a just and equitable future for children. Conversely, Ms. Kitagawa pointed to the role of faith based actors and their collaborative efforts with international bodies, like the UN, in promoting peace and furthering advocacy on the rights of children.

The webinar concluded with the presentation “Advocating for Children’s Rights and Well-being: An Interfaith Approach” an advocacy guide and companion toolkit that was jointly developed by Prayer in Action for Children and the Global Network of Religions for Children. Designed in direct response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the guide works to support the

advocacy work conducted by GNRC members and other faith-based organizations and provide user-friendly interfaith approaches to advocacy for children.

Recommendations

Children should be encouraged to speak up and share their ideas and recommendations; and it is our duty to take their opinions seriously. It is important to harness the power of children’s peer groups to ensure that children are surrounded by friends and peers who are able to support one another through these trying times.

Government bodies and faith actors must recognize the importance of engaging with children particularly when it comes to the decision making process. Children should be given a voice as it pertains to decisions that will ultimately impact their lives. Faith based actors must continue to work cooperatively both with one another but also with multinational organizations in order to further the rights of children everywhere.

CLOSING CEREMONY

- Friday, 20 November 2020
- 267 attendees
- Live session: Play Recording in [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
- Language: English and Spanish with interpretation

The closing ceremony involved the participation of three children: Sameer from Pakistan, Rhitania from India and Hector from El Salvador. It included introductory remarks by Dr. Mustafa Ali - Secretary-General, Global Network of ReCLOligions for Children, Arigatou International Children, and the remarks from

partners: H.E. Amb. Alvaro Albacete - Deputy Secretary-General, KAICIID International Dialogue Center and Ms. Andrea Kaufmann-Director, Faith and External Engagement World Vision International.

The Statement of the Global Week was read out by Mr. Kul Gautam - Former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Chair Arigatou International Advisory Group and Dr. Vinu Aram - President Shanti Ashram, Vice-Chair Arigatou International Advisory Group.

The closing ceremony came to an end with a vote of thanks and a moment of silence led by Mr. Atsushi Iwasaki - Interim Secretary General, Arigatou International and with a closing video highlighting the diversity of participants and the thrust of the inter-generational dialogue that took place during the week.



“To all the participants who joined us at the many events throughout the week, most especially to all the children who did so much to make the week a success, inspiring us with their stories and their wisdom. You have our heartfelt gratitude. Thanks to you the week surpassed our original vision.”

- Mr. Atsushi Iwasaki,
Interim Secretary General, Arigatou International

STATEMENT ON FAITH IN ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Greatly concerned by the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the lives of children around the world, the participants of the Global Week of Faith in Action for Children, have issued a Statement.

The Statement on Faith in Action for Children - Taking Action Together for Children in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond, specifies how children have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, re-affirms their human dignity, and recognizes their unique and essential role in building a better world.

It includes 11 proposals developed by children and young people after participating in the GLOBAL WEEK, as well as six joined Commitments to Action developed by children, young people and religious leaders from more than 53 countries, together with representatives of the United Nations, international, national and grassroots organizations, and diverse experts.

The statement is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).



CHILD PARTICIPATION



“We must keep in mind that children are very vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic, and we need to listen to their voices and stand by them.”

- Rev. Keishi Miyamoto,
President of Arigatou International,
and Convenor of the Global Network of Religions for Children

The discussions and reflections about the impacts of COVID-19 in the world and its implications for our future would be incomplete without children's voices. Children and young people must be given the opportunity to be heard, and to propose new alternatives and contribute to finding solutions to the problems that affect them.

With this in mind, the GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children prioritized children's meaningful participation, by ensuring the involvement of children in the design of sessions, as speakers, as well as active participants providing recommendations and call for action.

A set of Guidelines for Child and Youth Participation was developed by Arigatou International specifically for the Global Week to ensure the safe, ethical and meaningful participation of children and young people. In the same spirit, child-friendly versions of all materials were developed, including a child-friendly website, and a participation package with all the necessary materials for partners to engage children.

Child safeguarding was also paramount during the Global Week. Arigatou International ensured that its Child Safeguarding Policy and Code of Conduct were applied during the week; it also engaged with partners and organizers of sessions regarding children's privacy and safeguarding during the events, and provided safe spaces to ensure that children's identities were protected and they were safe to share their views.

To foster children's agency and genuine engagement, children and youth were invited to apply to organize three child-led sessions, under the theme “Children as Agents of Positive Change”. The sessions were led by groups of children from Shanti Ashram India, GNRC Indonesia, and youth from Scholas Occurrentes in Latin America.



Children have been made invisible during the Covid-19 pandemic. They might not be the face of this health crisis but they risk being among its biggest victims as their well-being is being impacted in profound ways. We can all contribute to help make children more visible and counted!



VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

The “Faith in Action for Children” virtual exhibition was unveiled on November 16, featuring messages, artworks, and multimedia projects by more than 150 children from 33 countries and produced in six different languages.

The exhibition was the conclusion of a process that started in July when Arigatou International Geneva initiated a campaign, leading to celebration of the International Youth Day, inviting young people to share how the COVID-19 pandemic had impacted their lives, what were their dreams and hopes for the future, and their recommendations for collective actions to face together this unprecedented crisis.

To foster intergenerational dialogue, the exhibition also presents the voices of religious leaders, representatives of civil society and faith-

based organizations, United Nations agencies, and governments, sharing their commitment to creating a better future for children and young people.

The exhibition offered a space for participants of the Global Week to share their own recommendations for collaborative actions. The exhibition will be used throughout the year as a tool to prompt reflection about the impacts of COVID-19 in the lives of children around the world.

The highlights of the exhibition can be seen in [this video](#).

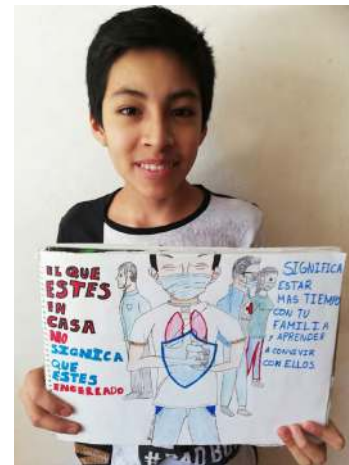




Yassin
Child from Peru



Dinara
Child from Indonesia



Abraham
Child from Mexico



Vinudi
Child from Sri Lanka



Akane
Child from Japan



Manish
Child from India



Ines
Child from The Netherlands



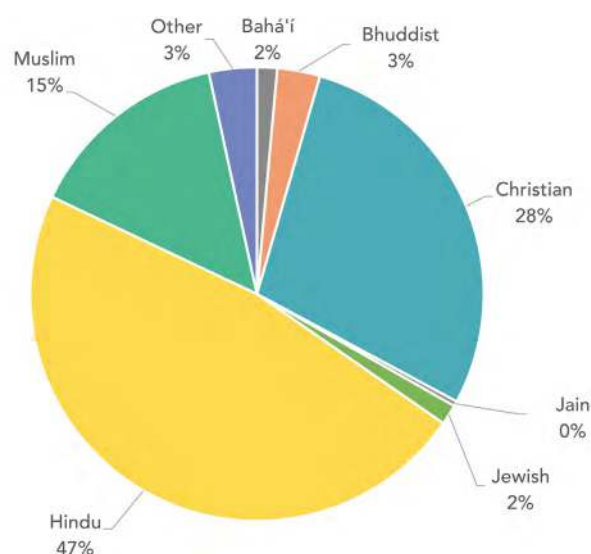
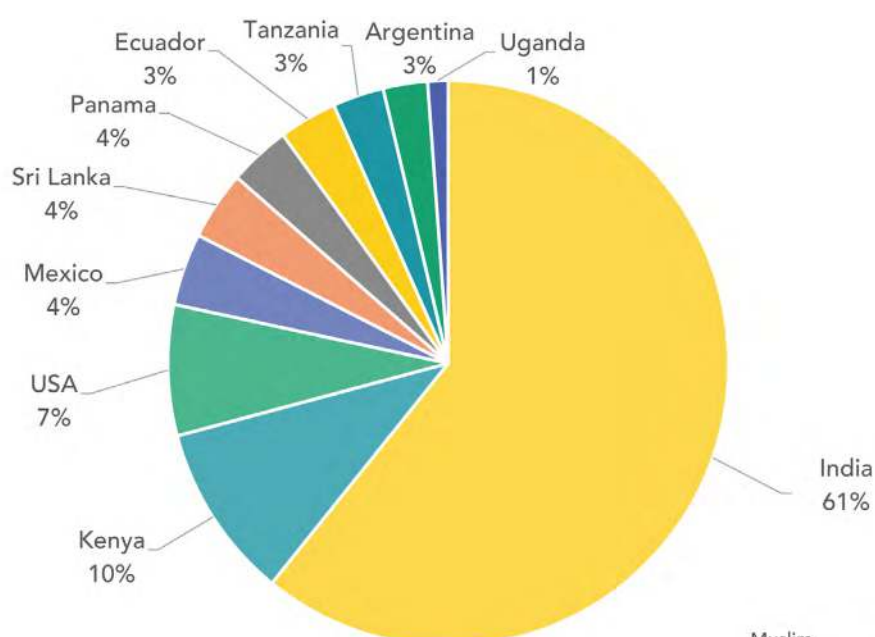
Nina
Child from Bosnia and Herzegovina

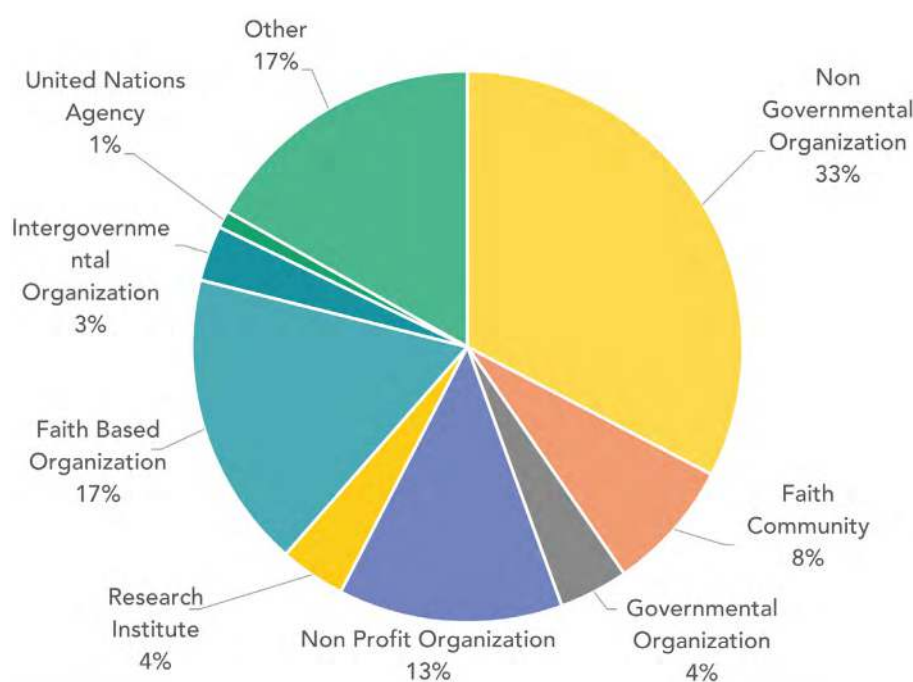
COMMUNICATIONS AND REACH

The GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children reached more than 1,700 people from 86 countries, including more than 300 children.

Participants came from different religious backgrounds, including people from the Baha'i faith, Buddhists, Christian, Hindus, Jain, Jews, and Muslims. This diversity enriched the reflections and discussions and provided a platform for encounter and dialogue.

Participants' professional background was also diverse; including representatives from faith communities, governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-profit organizations, the private sector, research institutes, and United Nations agencies. Almost half of the participants came from non-governmental organizations or faith-based organizations.





Sessions were held in Arabic, English, French, and Spanish; thirteen of the 25 sessions had simultaneous interpretation, and most videos or pre-recorded interventions have subtitles, which allowed for better interaction and inclusion of non-english speakers

A microsite containing all the relevant information about the event was developed in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), as well as a [child-friendly version](#) in both languages customized to meet the needs of children and to respect their privacy. The microsite now features the video recordings of each session, as well as the graphic recordings developed for some of the sessions, which provide an excellent overview of the sessions, supporting the dissemination of key messages, and a very stimulating way to visually recap the discussions, reflections and recommendations made.

A Communications Strategy was developed to guide the promotion and dissemination of

the GLOBAL WEEK. The strategy included a communications and media package with key information about the GLOBAL WEEK, that allowed partners to work in synergy; as well as a press release that was shared with different media outlets.

The GLOBAL WEEK was widely disseminated online through a compelling campaign that included advocacy messages and calls to action, invitations to lead grassroots and child-led sessions and to make contributions to the virtual exhibition. The campaign was launched on Arigatou International's social media channels and through the mailing list, reaching 718,326 users (3,760% more than the same period of the previous year) on Facebook, and 3,515 subscribers through email.

The campaign included five sets of graphics to promote the different stages of the GLOBAL WEEK, as well as graphics to help disseminate each of the 25 events.

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

The Transformative Role of Education in Times of COVID-19 and Beyond

Challenges and Opportunities

Education has a critical role in ensuring the well-being of children and young people and strengthening communities to live together with others. Join us to identify policies and approaches to drive education as a transformative force that can foster intercommunalism, strengthen children's agency, address inequalities and promote social justice.

TUESDAY 17, NOVEMBER 2020 / 10:30 EST - 11:30 GMT - 12:30 CET

SPEAKERS

<p>Shereen Ghani UNICEF Peace Clubs in Tanzania</p> <p>Prof. Mohamed Abu-Naser Senior Advisor, KACDC/Georgetown Centre</p> <p>Dr. Anantha Durvasul Director, UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development</p> <p>Ms. Amy Thomson-Rodriguez Director and Representative, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa</p>	<p>Enza Ghali UNICEF Somalia and Madagascar</p> <p>Dr. Kaseem Awan President, Shereef Awan - India</p> <p>Dr. Scherrie Gill Senior Fellow and Executive Secretary, Saadiah Foundation for Peace</p> <p>MODERATOR Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe Executive Director, Anglican International Dialogue</p>
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GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

Children have been **made invisible** during the Covid-19 pandemic. They might not be the face of this health crisis but they risk being among its biggest victims.

SAVE THE DATE: 16 to 20 November 2020

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

An interfaith, and intergenerational dialogue is necessary to reflect on the future we want to build together, and the transformations needed to move towards sustainable solutions for our shared future.

SAVE THE DATE: 16 to 20 November 2020

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

A week to strengthen COVID-19 coping mechanisms to support children.

SAVE THE DATE: 16 to 20 November 2020

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

A week to foster intergenerational dialogue.

SAVE THE DATE: 16 to 20 November 2020

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

Enhancing Dialogue and Collaboration for Children's Rights and Well-being.

16 to 20 November 2020

GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children

Enhancing Dialogue and Collaboration for Children's Rights and Well-being.

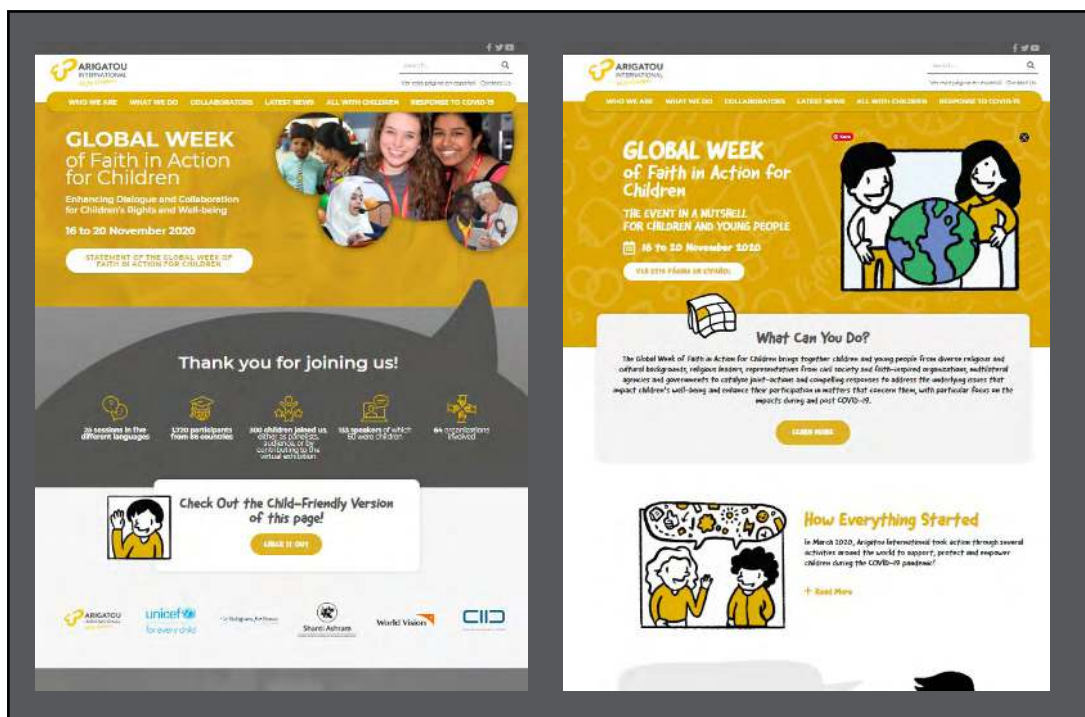
COMMUNICATIONS PACKAGE

The Global Week of Faith in Action for Children brings together children and young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, religious leaders, representatives from civil society and faith-inspired organisations, multilateral agencies and governments to catalyse connections and compelling responses to address the underlying issues that impact children's wellbeing and enhance their participation in matters that concern them, with particular focus on the impacts during and post COVID-19.

The discussions and reflections about the impacts of COVID-19 in the world and the implications for our future, would be incomplete if children's voices are not heard and if they are not part of the discussions to propose new alternatives and work on the solutions. An intergenerational and interreligious dialogue is a unique opportunity to reflect on the future we want to see, and the transformations needed to move towards sustainable solutions for our planet and our shared future.

There is an ethical demand for all of us, children, young people and adults alike, to help transforming the world to a world that is more compassionate, more just, that promotes and respects human rights and affirms the dignity of each and every one. A world that responds to the needs, dreams and hopes of children and young people. A world that leaves no one behind.

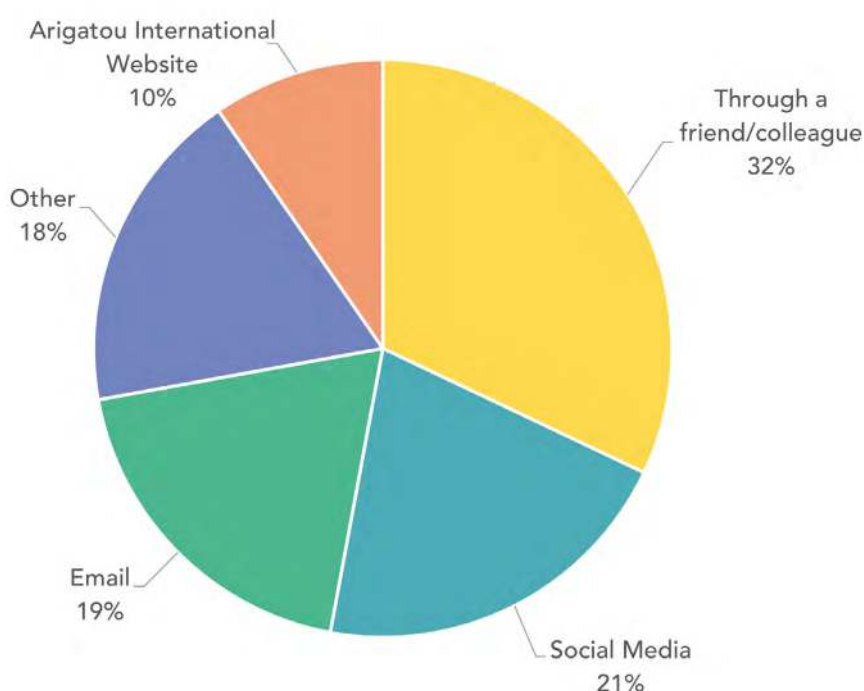
Promotional materials for digital platforms in English, and Communications Package.



Global Week website in English and child-friendly version in English.

The GLOBAL WEEK was disseminated through different channels, including networks from all the organizing partners, who worked together throughout the week to promote the event and its key messages. Grassroots organizations

played a key role in inviting their contacts to participate in the different events. 32% of the participants said they heard about the GLOBAL WEEK through a friend or colleague, while 20% heard of it through social media.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to our partners, KAICIID Dialogue Center, Religions for Peace, Shanti Ashram, UNICEF and World Vision International, and to the 64 global, regional, and local organizations that were involved during the GLOBAL WEEK of Faith in Action for Children.

We particularly thank those who carried out grassroots sessions: GNRC Bhutan, GNRC Colombia, GNRC Comoros, GNRC India, GNRC Jordan, GNRC Romania and GNRC Serbia, for their valuable contributions. We are grateful to the children and coordinators from GNRC Indonesia, Scholas Ocurrentes and Shanti Ashram, for carrying out child-led sessions, giving children the space and opportunity to participate in these discussions.

We send our sincere appreciation to all the GNRC Coordinators who contributed in one way or another, and to all the speakers, children and adults, who selflessly shared their experiences, knowledge and reflections.

Last but not least, and on behalf of all the organizers, a special thanks goes to all the participants that joined us throughout the week. We particularly thank children, whose optimism and enthusiasm, as well as their genuine ideas and recommendations inspired us, even more, to continue working to build safe participatory spaces for children and youth.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of all the staff members of Arigatou International. We thank our colleagues in the headquarters in Japan, the Global Network for Religions for Children, Ethics Education for Children, End Child Poverty and Prayer and Action for Children.

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

*—Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou
International, September 21, 2015*

Arigatou International

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