

Inspire

Ending Poverty, Enriching Children: Inspire.Act.Change.



GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter

Issue No. 2

January 2012

Interfaith Cooperation for a Better World for Children



Beyond Conventional Economic Approaches: Faiths to Address Poverty

The Hiroshima Declaration of the GNRC Third Forum called for renewed action that goes beyond the conventional economic approaches to address poverty. Statistics on poverty alleviation from around the world, especially from Africa and parts of Asia have demonstrated that high economic growths do not necessarily lift major segments of population out of poverty. Participants in the last GNRC Forum held in Hiroshima, Japan in 2008 pledged to 'go beyond conventional economic approaches to addressing poverty, realizing that development does not automatically alleviate poverty.'

While a number of countries have made significant progress in the attainment of Millenium Development Goals (MDGs), some have stagnated while others have dropped deeper into poverty. Most countries are on, or nearly on-track in halving extremes forms of poverty by 2015. The biggest challenge, however, remains that of unequal distribution of resources, war

and violence and poor governance. Children remain the worst hit group. A number of Sub-Saharan African and South Asian countries are off-track in attempts to halve extreme poverty.

"Our economies must be reconsidered and reconstructed on the basis of ethics and good governance. We call for dialogues of conscience to increase empathy, promote just structures, and making governments responsible to their people. We affirm that children and youth have the potential to transform their communities and the world"

- Excerpts from the GNRC Fourth Forum Declaration

Above Photos: GNRC Latin America and ACRL—Rfp
Story by Fourth Forum newsletter team

Testimony of a Former Child Soldier

My name is Lily Grace Anena and I was abducted when I was 9 years old and taken to Sudan where I did domestic chores for wives of commanders. At age 12, I was trained on how to use the gun. I was shot in the leg and became unconscious. The only treatment available was honey being smeared on the wound. I was rescued by government forces but I continue having dreams of my sisters talking to me although I understand they died long ago. I have not fully fitted into society because some people still call me a rebel. People should understand and even sympathize with our situation because we did not choose to join the rebels. They should count themselves lucky that their own children, brothers or sisters did not fall victim of abduction. I am worried of my daughter's future to whom I gave birth at the age of 14 under very difficult circumstances and really desired that she would lead a normal life. Right now she is in some kind of a special school where children born in the bush are being helped to adjust and live a

normal life. I completed advanced level of secondary school education but my parents, although still alive, are too old and poor to support my education. I

"I am worried of my daughter's future to whom I gave birth at the age of 14 under very difficult circumstances and really desired that she would lead a normal life"

want to study to the highest level possible but right now I have no one to sponsor me. I was lucky to get a contract teaching job in a primary school where I earn 60,000 Uganda shillings (Approximately US\$ 25) a month. This money can neither support my daughter nor myself. I am not complaining though, because at least I have something I am doing unlike my other colleagues. The government is not doing anything. It should continue to offer scholarships to former child soldiers to con-



tinue their education if it is really interested in developing a normal society. Those who returned disabled must be able to get free medical care.

Story and Photo: ACRL—RfP

World Youth Exchange Ideas on how to Address Challenges Facing Children!



Youth from across the world met to discuss current challenges affecting children at the 2011 annual *Youth for Peace* workshop held recently in Sri Lanka.

Under the theme "*Youth in Interfaith Cooperation: Ending Poverty affecting Children*," the young people shared experiences on how issues affecting children can be addressed using experimental learning

and active participation based on GNRC's 'Learning to Live Together' educational manual.

Three key poverty dimensions that was the workshop's focus included: unequal distribution of resources, violence and war and poor governance that are also GNRC's priority areas to be addressed in the upcoming GNRC Fourth Forum to be held in Tanzania. Participants had a unique opportunity to

experience the value of working together across religious and cultural boundaries in order to improve the lifestyle of disadvantaged children in the world. The importance of interfaith cooperation while addressing issues of poverty affecting children was also emphasised.

The workshop hosted by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement and the GNRC South Asia Secretariat was an international capacity-building event for active youth aimed at enhancing their knowledge and understanding of issues affecting children around the world and develop leadership skills further.

Participants were GNRC youth drawn from Argentina, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, India, Israel, Jordan, Nepal, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda who also had a chance of making a field visit to a local community project in the southwest of Sri Lanka.

By: Youth in action during the workshop in Srilanka



There Exists a Strong Connection Between Poverty and Disability!

As the African continent prepares to commemorate this year's Day of the African Child (DAC) in June, reflections reveal a strong connection between poverty and disability.

According to a report by the *African Child Policy Forum*, preventable diseases like poliomyelitis, meningitis, cerebral malaria, inadequate prenatal and neonatal health care services and accidents are responsible for disability including poor nutrition that is linked to vitamin A deficiency in infants and may cause blindness or lead to children being born with disabilities.

On the other hand, unexploded landmines remain a major concern in parts of Africa and cause physical injuries, disorder, psychosocial disabilities and post-traumatic stress among children who witnessed armed conflict or participated as combatants. These factors are said to be preventable if resources were available.

The African Union, in preparation to commemorate this year's Day of the African Child in June, has therefore called on all actors in its member countries to make sure that programmes for the attainment of the MDGs target children with disabilities and their families by strengthening social protection measures that provide adequate support for families with a disabled child.

This includes reducing stigmatization and attitudes that often lie at the heart of the discrimination and exclusion experienced by children with disabilities.

The day is marked annually on 16th June since 1991 to coincide with the anniversary of the Soweto Uprising as a way of raising awareness on the need to improve education provided for African Children.

This year's theme will be: *"The Rights of Children with Disabilities: The Duty to Protect, Respect, Promote and Fulfill"*

In its recent four-country study, the *African Child Policy Forum* found out that the main barriers to the realization of the education rights of children with disabilities are poverty, negative attitudes, unskilled teachers inaccessible and inappropriate infrastructure and location and lack of appropriate resources (such as braille, audio materials and classroom assistants) to facilitate inclusive learning.

In spite of a recorded success in Africa which is a reason to celebrate, children with disabilities are still vulnerable as a result of entrenched social and structural discrimination against them. Many live in relative isolation and are invisible to society, often kept indoors and have less interaction with peers or adults in whom they could confide that can result in their needs and rights being dismissed by communities, authorities and families.

It is commendable that more than a third of the 106 States Parties to the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (CRPD), 38 are AU Member States.

The adoption of these instruments and the ratification of the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child* (ACRWC) and the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (CRPD) by a number of AU Member States is a positive step in protecting the human rights of the disabled.

This means that there can no longer be any justification for the exclusion of African children with disabilities from society. On its part, the AU has also instituted an agency, the *African Rehabilitation Institute* (ARI) that coordinates the implementation of Continental Plan of Action of the African Decade of People with Disabilities (2010 – 2019).

The DAC celebration in June will be a call to African Governments to protect, respect, promote and fulfil the rights of children with disabilities.

By Hawa Noor. Photo: Google

Pope Benedict XVI Calls for Motivation while dealing with Young People!

On his *World Day of Justice and Peace*, message, Pope Benedict the 16th has appealed to the world's youth to be patient and optimistic in the New Year in spite of hardships they might have undergone in the past year.

In a dispatched statement, the pope expressed his optimism that hardships are part of life that should act as motivation for them to do even better since challenges offer new hope to the world.

“Although it may seem as if a shadow has fallen over time, young people must never give up hope and expectation that is particularly powerful and evident in young people, that should motivate them to make contribution, which they can and must make to society” he said.

Pope Benedict also appealed to parents, leaders and even the mass media to set good examples and to be attentive to young peoples' concerns by appreciating their positive value in order to give them motivation, inspiration and hope during their daily struggle to achieve better

lifestyles:

“Today more than ever we need authentic witnesses and not simply people who parcel out rules and facts; we need witnesses capable of seeing further than others because their life is so much broader. A witness is someone who first lives the life that he proposes to others.”

Regarding today's society, the pope pointed out the importance of the family structure that is unfortunately threatened by the need for par-

principles.

The media according to him can also play an important educational role of educating young people so that they can deviate from the current culture of relativism that promotes self desires, a phenomenon that leads young people into doubting even the goodness of their own life and the relationships of which it consists.

The Pope also called for peace that needs to be worked for in order to bear fruits:

“Peace, is not merely a gift to be received: it is also a task to be undertaken. In order to be true peacemakers, we must educate ourselves in compassion, solidarity, working together, fraternity in being active within the community and concerned to raise awareness about national and international issues and the importance of seeking adequate mechanisms for the redistribution of wealth, the promotion of growth, cooperation for development and conflict resolution” said the Pope.

By GNRC Europe

“Although it may seem as if a shadow has fallen over time, young people must never give up hope”

ents to earn a living and not having enough time for their children. He therefore called on responsible authorities in educational institutions including politicians to ensure that education does not conflict with children's consciences and religious



Photo: GNRC Africa

Religious Communities Play a Big Role in Supporting Uganda's War Victims

Religious communities play a big role in advocating for child soldiers prevention and reintegration, in reducing demand for Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and supporting its survivors who are mostly women and ex-child soldiers.

This was discussed at consultative meetings for dialogue on prevention and reintegration of child soldiers held last year in northern Uganda and Eastern DRC. The meetings brought together participants representing governments, ex-child soldiers, religious communities, members of the civil society and religious leaders.

Bishop John Baptiste Odama, the catholic church arch-Bishop of Gulu arch-Dioecese and Bishop Johnston Gakumba of the anglican church in Northern Uganda diocese provided data on the situation of child soldiers in Northern Uganda and the work in progress by the religious community. These include: offering psychosocial support to survivors and perpetrators, carrying out advocacy, lobbying for Amnesty for perpetrators who were willing to surrender and the formation of a National Child Soldiers



Prevention and Re-integration Platform for dialogue. As a way of strengthening their role further, they called for utilization of the shared sense of brotherhood among religious communities in curbing the spread of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and remarked that it was a privilege for them

to be considered agents of peace to end "senseless wars" by turning instruments of war into peace.

Story and Photo: ACRL—RfP

Special Logo Designed in Honor of Fourth Forum by GNRC Africa Youth



Emmanuel Mathias N'humba grew up with GNRC Africa over the last decade, participating in many Peace Club activities and representing Tanzania's Dogo Dogo Centre Street Children Trust at the UN Special Session on Children. As a young man now, he is part of the core team preparing for the GNRC Fourth Forum to be held from 16 th to 18 th June

this year in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Recently, he put his artistic talent in practise and designed a special logo (right) in honor of the upcoming Fourth Forum.

Emmanuel describes what the logo represents and why he designed it that way:

“Let me start with the big gold circle. This introduces a new dawn, since the Fourth Forum will make new history for the GNRC - a new beginning for us to respond to poverty. There is a person blowing a horn which has been used for many things: in this case, it appears like a symbol of an official call to action. People respect animals with horns and the sound of a horn as an

instrument is also respected for its uniqueness. The sound waves emerging from its top look like a mobile phone SSR sign, which indicate that a message is being conveyed. Below the person blowing the horn, there are two C-shaped strokes which give the horn blower a place to rest since the Fourth Forum engages a lot of words that start with the letter “C” while fighting Child Poverty such as children, communication, change, corruption, commitment, concrete, communities, citizens, challenges, capacity and so many more. The C shapes in the logo stand for all the words of determination to take action to change the world's future by bringing to an end the fear caused



by child poverty. Below that is the number “4” to recall the flow of the GNRC forums so far, which also starts the word “Forum,” to add definition to the logo. If you look carefully at the whole logo and focus on the black areas, it looks like a satellite dish because the GNRC team is going to act like a powerful broadcast media to transform the lives of African children and the rest of the world, to end child poverty and form a universal human family.”

Story and Photo: GNRC Africa

World Day of Prayer and Action for Children marked Across the World

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) was marked with celebrations all across the world. In the Dominican Republic, different faith-based communities, civil society organizations as well as children and adolescents met for the celebration. The focus of the commemoration was the need to eradicate violence against children and eliminate corporal punishment, promoting assertive discipline applied with love and not violence.

An “Interfaith Declaration for the Good Treatment of Children and Adolescents” was read and signed by the authorities and representatives of different faith-based communities present and later presented to Marta Santos Pais, the Special UN Envoy on Violence Against Children and Tilza Ares, the Head of the National Council for Children.

In Amman, a full day of awareness-raising activities on child labour, physical and psychological abuse and discrimination against girls was organized by the Mashrek International School and the local community. Students watched videos and discussed issues of child rights, with the guest speaker, her Excellency Former Minister Mrs. Asma Khader.

In Managua, Nicaragua’s capital, for the first time an interfaith committee was created for prayer and action with representatives from seven religious organizations. Apart from that, different faith-based groups participated in saying the Latin American prayer for children countrywide.

The day’s focus was on “Peace in the Family” and its main aspects were sharing worldwide and national statistics on family violence focusing on prevention, and the responses that



the Prayer Committee would facilitate.

At the Rixensart Refugee Center in Belgium, around 40 young people including children of between 12 and 17 years from the Refugee Center and young people from the surrounding areas under the theme “We Can Do Something to Stop Violence” gathered to celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children..

They reflected on the aspect of violence and were made aware of their role as actors of change through mutual respect, empathy and non-discrimination.

In several African Countries events centered on the theme; *Stop Violence Against Children* and included activities such as tree planting, spiritual reflection from different faiths, material support to children and various child-

centered entertainment activities.

Participating countries included Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Liberia, South Africa and Somalia where the dire living conditions of children was also discussed.

The DPAC events were organized by respective GNRC Networks and celebrated in all its regions worldwide.

DPAC is an annual event initiated by the GNRC and marked on the Universal Children’s Day that brings people together to pray and take action for the well-being of children.

Photo: Children in Nicaragua undertaking activities for the DPAC celebrations. Story: GNRC Network

GNRC FOURTH FORUM SECRETARIAT

P. O. Box 1221, Dar-es-Salaam

Tel: +255 (22) 2664449, **Fax:** +255 (22) 2850447

Email: gnrcfourthforumsecretariat@gnrc.net
mailfourthforumsecreariat@gnrc.net

Website: www.gnrc.net

This Newsletter is produced by the GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter Team
Design, Editing and Layout: Hawa Noor
GNRC Fourth Forum © 2012



Arigatou International
GNRC

Partners:



African Council of Religious Leaders
Religions for Peace

NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID
actalliance