

Inspire

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



GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter

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Interfaith Cooperation for a Better World for Children

Ready: GNRC Fourth Forum Organizing Committee Meets in Dar es Salaam, the Forum's Host City

Committee Finalizes Plans and Preparations for the Forum

By GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter Team

The GNRC Fourth Forum Organizing Committee met in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on 10th and 11th March to finalize preparations for the Forum. And at a press conference during the third organizing committee, the GNRC Fourth Forum 2012 was officially announced to the Tanzanian media. Bishop Dr. Method Kilaini, the Forum's Co-patron and Dr. Mustafa Ali, the Organizing Committee Chairman, were joined by the members to announce to the Tanzanian media the Forum's dates, the program and goals and objectives of the Forum.

The theme of the Fourth Forum "Ending Poverty, Enriching Children: Inspire. Act. Change." was discussed during the meeting and announcement. The Forum will bring together over three hundred participants including representatives from the United Nations and its agencies, the African Union and other multi-lateral institutions, civil society organizations, government officials, children from around the world and religious communities comprising Bahais, Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Indigenous traditionalists, Jews, Muslims and Shintoists.



They will discuss the challenges of poverty and its devastating effects on children and come up with strategies to address it based on the enormous potential that faith communities possess: the moral, spiritual and social assets.

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

Photos: Emmanuel Mathias and Sr. Jean Pruitt

Vital: Children's Views Fully Incorporated into the Fourth Forum Objectives



By Hawa Noor

Article 12 on the Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that children have the right to participate and be heard in all matters affecting them. The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) fully recognizes this in its objective of creating a better world for children especially in the upcoming Fourth Forum to be held in June in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

As an important component therefore, national consultations with children were held in eighteen countries within the GNRC regions and their outcomes are providing valuable inputs for the discussions during the Forum. The aim of the consultations was to provide space for children to air their views on how poverty affects them and voice their needs and ideas

for action to change the situation. This is the aim of the Fourth Forum: to end poverty and enrich children by inspiring, acting and changing the current trend of things.

The consultations conducted separately were done through a guided reflection, exploration and dialogue amongst the children themselves and with members of their community and most importantly: without facilitators influencing either their thinking or opinion for the exercise to be as objective as possible.

During the process therefore, children were empowered to express their own views and voice their needs using the interactive participatory learning approach and methodology of the valuable tool: *Learning to Live Together* manual, whereby the Fourth Fo-

rum's three sub-themes, which are the main causes of poverty provided a framework for the children's discussions, namely:

a) War and violence

b) Unequal distribution of resources

c) Corruption and poor governance

The outcomes of the consultations are now being fed into the Fourth Forum concept note with produced materials being used as support visuals — to ensure that the Forum is child-driven by taking into account their inputs and above all that it incorporates their interests in alleviating child poverty.

"I visited Bangladesh in the 2011 summer and saw large buildings located right besides the slum district. While wealthy people have plenty of money to spend on themselves, people in the slum district are facing food shortages. I asked myself: Why does the gap between the rich and the poor exist in the same country? In order to help, we must be aware of the current situation, the fact that the gap is still expanding because of poor governance, and find ways of solving those problems together. At the same time, we should express our opinions and ask ourselves: Does poverty exist in Japan? Are we not related to poverty at all? Is poverty far from us? I believe the answer is NO!

Remark by a Japanese youth who took part in the consultations in Japan

Photo: GNRC Europe

Children in the Arab States Prepared for the GNRC Fourth Forum

By GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter Team

In preparation for the Upcoming Fourth Forum, the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Arab States recently organized workshops in four Arab countries aimed at clarifying and discussing the theme and subthemes of the Fourth Forum for the children. The workshops were held in Jordan, Sudan, Egypt and Lebanon in January and February, and were organized in cooperation with the GNRC National Committee in each country. The fifth workshop is currently underway in Palestine.



Each Workshop attracted an average of thirty children from different religious backgrounds who had the chance to learn more about poverty and its negative impacts on children and to share their experience on the effects of unequal distribution of resources, war and violence and corruption and poor governance in their respective countries, cities and villages.

In each country where the workshops were held, the young participants put down their recommendations for the Fourth Forum, as well as a national plan of action to change the current negative trend in the coming years. The recommendations will be put together and presented to the Fourth Forum by the Children Delegation from the GNRC Arab States who will attend the Fourth Forum in June.

Children's Thoughts on Poverty as Expressed in the Workshops:

In Amman, Jordan, a child in commenting on a picture of an Iceberg with its larger part under water and the smaller part submerged said:

"What we see of poverty on the surface is very little. The problem is like an Iceberg in the ocean. The peak is small and that's what we see. The dimensions, causes and results are very big and that is hidden under water."

Cairo, Egypt: "Poverty might be a cause for disorders and physiological harm for children. No one has everything; everyone lacks something and is poor in some sense. That is why we should complete each other and help each other."

Fatka, Lebanon: "Poverty is to be sad, if you're not joyful and peaceful inside then you are poor."

Om-Dourman, Sudan: "Poverty is not to have resources or maybe these resources are not distributed in a good way. Sudan is a poor country

but it has a lot of resources. The problem is that these resources are exploited by a small number of people while other people live in poverty."

Cairo, Egypt: "Poverty is being hungry, cold, with no accommodation or good health. The person who needs less is the richest."



Photo: GNRC Arab States



Success: Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali Selected as Runner-Up for the Global Coexist Prize in New York, USA

By Hawa Noor

In recognition of his efforts in transforming conflicts and mobilizing faith leaders to work together for peace in Africa, the Secretary General of the African Council of Religious Leaders — *Religions for Peace* (ACRL—RfP) and the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) coordinator for Africa Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, has been honored as runner-up for the global Coexist Prize.

Dr. Ali was the only finalist from Africa to be selected out of a list of over two hundred peacemakers and conflict transformation practitioners from around the world. In the second round, he was among only six finalists and one of two runners-up from a distinguished group of six finalists selected worldwide.

The awards ceremony took place in New York, US on 20 March 2012 and organized by the Coexist Foundation.

A distinguished panel of judges consisting of former President of Ireland Ms. Mary Robinson, Grand Mufti of Egypt Ali Gomaa, Regius Professor of Divinity and Director of Cambridge Inter-faith Program Prof. David Ford and the International Director of Jewish Interreligious Affairs Rabbi David Rosen selected the winners.



The Coexist Foundation initiated the award that consisted of funds and certificates of recognition, to honor individuals who have made substantial efforts to build bridges in promoting religious understanding and peaceful co-existence amongst people of different faiths, including resolving conflicts in the most hostile environments.

Lian Gogali from Indonesia won the first prize. The other runner up was Dishani Jayweera from Sri Lanka. Other finalists were: Oliver McTernan (UK), William Ury and Josh Stanton, both from the United States.

Photos: ACRL—RfP

Learning to Live Together in Practice

In Tanzania's cities of Dar es Salaam, Unguja, and Pemba a series of trainings organized by the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Africa, brought over a hundred school children and youth peace club members and their patrons aimed at equipping them to understand, practice and learn how to live together using the Learning to Live Together (LTLT) toolkit.

This was part of the Training of Trainers (ToT) exercise conducted between February and March, with the overall aim of promoting peace and harmony

within society by teaching peace-club leaders how to use the LTLT toolkit and enabling children and youth from different religions and culture to work together towards development.

The toolkit, which is the first outcome of the worldwide Ethics Education Initiative launched by the Arigatou Foundation and GNRC in 2008, approaches the issue of Ethics Education from the perspective of Intercultural and Interfaith learning, human rights and quality education, where ethics and values are nurtured and where youth and children are

given the space to develop their innate potential for spirituality to understand and respect people from other cultures and religions.

During the recent training in Tanzania, activities undertaken included preparation of lesson plans, presentations and exercising on how to use the manual and most importantly — how to put into practise the lessons learned.

The Swahili version of the resource-manual will be launched during the upcoming GNRC Fourth Forum.



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Photo: GNRC Africa

"Do unto Others as you would have them Do unto You"

By Abubakar Kabwogi, the GNRC Fourth Forum Secretary General



The continual exercise of human power on the planet seems to be moving us all towards a zenith of oppression, discrimination and poverty. The comprehensiveness of this phenomenon affects even our most private discourses and personal affairs and as you prepare to come to Dar es Salaam I feel overwhelmed to address this issue with you.

As a religious person, I should remind us that this phenomenon has both immediate and transcendent aspects. In particular I am concerned about the correlation between social and political systems of those with everything and the spiritual well-being of those with little or nothing at all.

The best of human experience, i.e. heartfelt and good conscience, can overcome this negative human mani-

festation of oppression and poverty. The most fundamental and unique right of human beings is the right to live a decent life yet it becomes the very thing taken away from us by systematic oppression and poverty. When one cannot exercise the basic right of being a human being, how does that affect one's concept of self?

My religion may be described as a system of 'engaged surrender' but as a religious person it is me who often actively engages with the world to bring about the order of peace and harmony as ordained by God.

What happens to our engaged surrender after experiences of prolonged poverty that violates human dignity?

What happens when you know what is right and just, fair and honourable but are helpless to make any difference without dire consequences?

What happens to your sense of self?

What treasures do you pass on to your children and what joys do you share with your neighbours?

What well-spring of strength do you draw when your very strength is that which must be broken in order to live under terms of extensive humiliation?

When it comes to poverty, a simple and fundamental rule of ethical behaviour is to judge and treat “others” as if they are equal in worth to ourselves as stated in the words of the great traditions: “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*” - a true sign of faith.

As I continue to grapple with the notion of equity, I notice that whenever someone’s fundamental humanity becomes a means to another’s end rather than being an end for themselves, then the gates of poverty and oppression are opened — yet the noblest acts do not require extensive funds but an expansive heart! Therefore, each of us must assume an active responsibility in monitoring unjust practices so as to inspire.

One reason why so many infractions occur is because we are not raising humanity in a mode of collective global responsibility; otherwise such a shift could greatly change the world. In my guess, most of our current mindsets work like this: If I had enough food for eight meal portions, I would be tempted to save the extra seven for the coming days whereas on the contrary, if the emphasis was on responsibility towards others then the extra seven portions would be distributed to seven others in

need and the same would be reciprocated by someone someday when I am the one in need. Unfortunately, such notions seem hopelessly idealistic because most human beings operate on the basis of self-preservation. Our well-being is not restricted to the immediate hence everything we acquire is already delegated towards fulfilling one present or future personal need. Such is the result of individualism and selfishness.

Dear Fourth Forum participant and friend of GNRC; remember the global problem of poverty requires a different notion about ethical participation — one that approaches problems collectively and incrementally, little by little, step by step, strategy by strategy, contribution by contribution we set up a movement to save our future generation. We must not lose hope over the inability to be effective immediately! The goal should not just be immediate success but the whole process of ethical change and in this way, each of us will have something to offer; offers that fit in the circle of life hence making many more things possible in future and enhancing the quality of soulful living. Let us all be part of saving the future generation.

See you soon here in Dar es Salaam!

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