



GNRC ANNUAL REPORT
2015/2016

Grassroots Transformations for a World Free of
Violence Against Children



About **Us**

The GNRC is a global-scale interfaith network of organizations and individuals specifically dedicated to securing the rights and well-being of children everywhere. GNRC members come from all of the world's major religions and many other spiritual traditions.

Together the GNRC is committed to creating a world where every girl and boy can grow up safe and sound—a world where every child has the chance to shine.

Our **Mission**

To mobilize the potential of all religions to become a positive transforming force for children and invite the solidarity of people from all walks of life, while seeking partnership with leaders, individuals, and communities, international, national and regional institutions, grassroots organizations, and people of good will everywhere.


Our **Vision**

A peaceful world where every human being takes full responsibility for children's dignity, safety, well-being and joy.

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GNRC Around The World



CHILDREN: OUR HOPE FOR A WORLD FREE OF VIOLENCE



In 2015 alone, one billion children were subjected to various forms of direct violence, resulting in over 100,000 deaths. Every five minutes of 2015, a child was killed as a result of callous violence. More were forced to serve in the frontlines of pitiless wars, resulting in their deaths, or grave injuries. Others endured different forms of physical and sexual violence, every day.

But there is hope. For the first time, ending violence against children has been put on the international development agenda, compelling governments and imploring the global community to address violence. With a focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, world leaders called to an end all manner of abuse against children.

While we laud these efforts, we must know that we will be judged by our children on whether we honored our promises to them—that we gave our all, in attempts to end all manner of abuse against them.

In this report, the GNRC activities carried out in 2015/2016, are summarized. I thank all those who have supported our work across the world. Children are the future, and hope for a more peaceful world.

As we prepare for the GNRC 5th Forum to take place in May 9th, 10th and 11th 2017 in Panama City, Panama – a Forum that will exclusively address the issue of violence against children, I welcome you to join the GNRC members around the world in ending violence against children.

GNRC is for the children – our hope for a world free of violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mustafa Y. Ali'.

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali,

Secretary General, Global Network
of Religions for Children
Director, Arigatou International –
Nairobi

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN: OUR GREATEST RESPONSIBILITY



“No child in the
World should
suffer any kind of
violence”

Rev. Keishi Miyamoto – President,
Arigatou International and Convenor
for the GNRC

Living a life without suffering from violence is the right of every child and is essential to unfettered development to adulthood. Violence against children can have devastating long-term impacts on their wellbeing and future world view. Protecting children from violence is an explicit obligation for all, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocols. Moreover, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions a world which invests in all of its children, where every child grows up free from violence and exploitation.

Unfortunately, the reality globally paints a different picture. One billion

children experienced different forms of violence in the single year of 2015. Several million are involved in hazardous work, and over one billion live in countries or territories affected by armed conflict, which aggravates vulnerability to sexual violence, especially for girls.

The crises in Syria, Iraq, DR Congo, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Nigeria, Burundi and other countries have affected millions of children, mostly now out of school. Children constitute almost half of all forcibly displaced persons. Gangs and other organized criminal groups are increasingly targeting children, recently driving thousands of Central American children to try to escape harsh conditions. Coupled with

harmful cultural practices, children seem to be under siege all around the world.

From April 2015 through March 2016, GNRC implemented activities in 42 countries which directly addressed the challenges affecting children. I thank the GNRC members, partners, supporters and sponsors for joining hands, through those programs, in projects and activities that helped make many corners of this world a better and more peaceful place for children to live. On behalf of Arigatou International, I would like to take this opportunity to express our profound gratitude to everyone who was involved in these efforts, including all of the stakeholders and supporters of our global initiatives for ethics education, ending violence against

child, and ending child poverty, who work so closely with the GNRC.

In May 2017, the GNRC will host its fifth global forum in Panama City, Panama. At the GNRC 5th Forum, we will focus all of our attention on the pressing and urgent matter of violence against children. I look forward to seeing you and sharing the good work you have all been doing, and to discussing ways we can strengthen our collective efforts to address violence against children.



Rev. Keishi Miyamoto

President, Arigatou International
Convenor, Global Network of
Religions for Children

1.0: UPDATES FROM THE NETWORK

1.1 Argentina

GNRC in Argentina carried out a number of activities targeting youth and children during the reporting period. On the 8th of August 2015, a workshop on violence prevention was organized for 70 youth from Aldeas Para la Paz, El Pilar (at the outskirts of Buenos Aires). The objective of the workshop was to analyze gender-based violence and discuss ways of preventing it while promoting human rights.



Committee of the GNRC and plan activities for the coming years. Participants had the opportunity to meet and share their experiences. Clovis Boufleur briefly presented the main conclusions of the GNRC regional meeting held in El Salvador in 2014 and the global initiatives of Arigatou International namely: Ethics Education, Prayer and Action for Children and End Child Poverty.

1.2 Brazil

The GNRC Managing Committee in Brazil was restructured in a meeting on 13th August, 2015 which was attended by 23 representatives from faith-based organizations. The event took place at the national headquarters of the Pastoral da Criança, in Curitiba. The purpose of the meeting was to create a National





1.3 Colombia

In Colombia GNRC continued with the implementation of the ECP project in Soacha, Cundinamarca Province. The project supports approximately 40 women of the Mennonite Church who live in extreme poverty. The project is done through vocational training and the establishment of a textile micro-enterprise. The trainings combine both technical and social aspects specifically, sewing, self-esteem promoting activities, human rights, ethical values and other social empowerment activities coordinated by Martha García, director of the “Growing Together” project of the Mennonite Church.

1.4 Cuba

From 12th - 14th August 2015, Ms. Greta Montoya Ortega, the GNRC Coordinator-Cuba, visited Panamá to exchange experiences with

GNRC-Panamá. During the visit, Ms. Montoya met with: the Jewish Rabbi Gustavo Kraselnik in the synagogue Kol Shearith Israel, the GNRC-Panama’ Coordinator, Ms. Isis Navarro, the Ecumenical Committee of Panamá and Leader of Baha’i Community.

1.5 El Salvador

GNRC-LAC manager was in contact with the Coordinator and other GNRC-El Salvador members. The Coordinator expressed much concern about the escalation of the levels of violence especially gang violence and urban violence in the country. The GNRC-LAC manager pointed to the fact that the situation was making it difficult to work with adolescents and youth in some of the marginalized communities as both educators and beneficiaries were at risk of being exposed to violence.

1.6 Moldova – National Picture Competition

Towards the end of June, GNRC-Moldova held the National Competition of pictures “Do not steal my childhood”, which was attended by about 350 children aged 6 to 16 years from different districts in Moldova. This competition was possible due to the partnership of GNRC with trade unions from Moldova. Parents and School teachers also attended the event.

1.7 Nicaragua

Network building and partnerships is one of GNRC's key objectives. Ms. Mazzarelli the GNRC Network and Programme Manager for LAC held discussions with Mr. Jaime Tercero of *Instituto Nicaraguense de Evangelismo a Fondo – INDEF* (Nicaraguan Institute of Evangelism) to explore membership possibilities of Nicaragua to the GNRC family. INDEF is a Christian-based NGO that works for the integral development of communities living in poverty and vulnerability in Nicaragua. Other organizations that have so far expressed interest to be part of the Nicaragua GNRC network are *VIVA Juntos por la Niñez*, *Centro Intereclesial de Estudios Teológicos y Sociales (CIEETS)*, the Baptist Theological Seminary, World Vision and the Bahai Faith group.



1.8 Nigeria – Women Empowerment Program

Children's health and proper growth is greatly dependent on the ability of their parents or caregivers to provide them with basic needs including food, shelter, medical and education support. GNRC-Nigeria led by the Nigeria Women of Faith Network embarked on a training beginning in November 2015 to empower over 30 poor or jobless rural women with vocational skills to boost their family incomes.



2.0 INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATIONS

2.1 Day of the African Child – Tanzania

The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in Tanzania celebrated the Day of the African Child (DAC) on the 13th of June at the Russian Cultural Centre in Dar es Salaam, three-days before the actual day on 16th of June. A Panel Discussion was organized with the theme ‘Accelerating our Collective efforts to End Child Marriage and Pregnancies in Tanzania’. Invited guests included ninety three (93) school children from Kumbukumbu, Msasani B, Oysterbay, Msimbazi, Migombani Schools and another thirteen from the International Youth Development Program (IYDP) in Ubungo accompanied by their guardians and speakers.

The discussion allowed the participants to learn and understand the effects of early marriage and

pregnancy on both the female and male child and the legal stand on the same in Tanzania. Guest speakers included Mrs. Joyce Mdachi – Gender Specialist, GNRC-Tanzania addressing Gender issues, Mrs. Flora Kapinga- Executive Director, IYDP, and Advocate Juvenal Rwegasira – Advocate, Women’s Legal Aid Centre (WLAC).

2.2 International Day of Peace

Kenya: Under the Sports for Peace component, GNRC marked the International Day of Peace, by helping organize an interfaith football tournament on 20th September between Christian and Muslim religious leaders. The tournament which took place at Olympic Primary, Kibra- Nairobi was attended by various organizations including: the Inter-Religious Council





of Kenya (IRCK), the Trans Nzoia Youth Sports Association (TYSA), Global Peace Foundation Kenya, the Kibra Youth Association, and officials from the government and Arigatou International-Nairobi. The aim of the activity was to promote peaceful coexistence and strengthen the bond between Christian and Muslim communities in Kenya.



Bosnia & Herzegovina: GNRC-Bosnia marked the International Day of Peace on 21st September, 2015 at Musa Ćazim Ćatić“V.

Čajno primary school grounds. The event was organized by the Association of women “Mosaic” and Arigatou International GNRC Nairobi. 50 children, 3 teachers and representatives of organizations such as the Municipality of Visoko and World Vision who also donated material resources towards the celebration participated. Some of the activities for the day were: creative workshops involving greeting cards; writing and sharing of peace messages with other participants and passersbys; and sharing a lunch among others.

Cuba: GNRC-Cuba led celebrations on 21st of September 2015 to mark the International Day of Peace in Los Arabos (Matanzas), Holguín and Santiago de Cuba. In Los Arabos children and adults, including professional artists and painters painted murals for peace. The celebration concluded with a concert.

2.3 International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP):

The GNRC members and partners participated in celebration to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) - an annual even that takes place every 17th of October. Over 20 members and partners participated as highlighted below.

Argentina: To commemorate IDEP, GNRC-Argentina organized an awareness raising campaign

through social networks, under the slogan “Bridges for the Eradication of child poverty” targeting local communities. Organizations and individuals supporting GNRC carried messages about the importance of contributing to community-based activities towards the eradication of child poverty. Approximately 200 adolescents and young people posted pictures of the event on Facebook. 250 other persons took part in the campaign.

Brazil: Mr. Clovis Bouffleur, leader of the “Pastoral da Criança” - a member of the GNRC-Brazil, aired a 15-minute radio interview in a program called *Viva a Vida*, across 1,400 radio stations in Brazil. Clovis stressed the critical role of religious traditions in child poverty eradication

Burundi: Amid the escalating situation of violence and growing insecurity in the country, GNRC member “The Children’s Club for a Peaceful World” gathered 10 youth representatives from various secondary schools in Bujumbura for a solidarity event. The youth focused on addressing violence as it relates to perpetuating child poverty, later calling on their government and other community leaders to restore peace in the country.

Comoros: In Comoros, the “Conseil De La Paix (CAP)” celebrated the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty by donating school kits

and clothes to 5 families with a total of 17 children living under vulnerable and impoverished circumstances. CAP also carried out an online communication campaign on eradicating child poverty.

Croatia: GNRC-Croatia conducted a one and-a-half hour workshop on child poverty over the course of 2 days. 300 university students participated in the workshop.

Cuba: GNRC-Cuba, organized prayers for children and sent messages of support. They also planned to mobilize basic resources to support children lacking parental protection, including orphans and children with disability, particularly, hearing and speech impairment.

Dominican Republic: GNRC-Dominican Republic prepared a prayer for children living in poverty, *Oración por la erradicación de la pobreza infantil*, and shared it widely with its networks and partners. The prayer included several invocations, including “Teach us to love, unconditionally, all children and youth in the world” and “Help us to overcome spiritual causes of poverty, such as arrogance, fear, hatred and ignorance”.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): In Bukavu, South Kivu Province, the “Laissez L’Afrique Vivre (LAV)”, organized an event for 100 participants (youth, parents

and leaders) to sensitize them on their roles in fighting child poverty. LAV held meditation and prayers for children who die every minute because of poverty. The children and youth made presentations through drama, poetry, music and dances. Ahadi Amuli, a 17-year old participant said, "The child was not born poor but it is the society that makes him poor." One of the parents in attendance commented, "(As) parents, we must struggle against the poverty which our children are victims, some of causes of this poverty is due to our irresponsibility as parent ..."

Ecuador: On 17th October 2015, the 1st Forum and Interfaith Festival on Ethical Values and Participation for the Eradication of Child Poverty", was organized at the Cultural Centre of the Bahá'í Faith in Cumbayá. 50 children, 100 adolescents and 50 adults representing Methodists, Lutheran, Catholic Churches and Bahá'í Faith, participated in the event. The keynote speaker, sociologist Bladimiro Luque, presented a paper on the issue of child poverty from a theological and interfaith perspective. The GNRC-Ecuador used TV and online media to spread the message.

Panama: GNRC-Panama, organized basic support drive for the community living in San José, Puerto Caimito, West Panama, just

after a flooding experience, which benefited 13 families comprising of 60 children and 20 adults. The donations included foodstuffs, clothing, lamps, cooking stoves, mattresses and furniture (couch). For the children, they organized games and entertainment based on the LTLT model as a tool to teach the children how to share and help each other. The GNRC-Panama team also engaged a faith community leader from the area, who provided free meals (breakfast and lunches) to the very impoverished children. The community committed to making IDEP a day of celebration, volunteerism and community outreach day.

2.4 World AIDS Day – India

GNRC member, Shanti Ashram, India organized a number of sessions on 2nd December 2015 to celebrate the World AIDS Day. The day is an opportunity for public and private partners to create awareness about the status of the pandemic and encourage progress in HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care in high prevalence countries around the world. The rallying theme, *Getting to zero: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS related deaths* is a call for governments and other key actors to act now.

The first session was an interactive discussion involving experienced persons, people living with HIV/ AIDS



and 85 students from four colleges. Ms. Kezevino Aram, the Director of Shanti Ashram used her experience to educate participants on the HIV/AIDS menace. Further awareness was provided by Mr. Vijayaragavan Head of the Youth Leadership Programme.

The other HIV/AIDS awareness sessions involved 480 students between the age of 13-16 years from two nearby Secondary Schools; Sundakamuthur and Kulathupalayam. A similar procedure was employed in both schools.

2.5 World Religions Day – Mauritius

GNRC-Mauritius participated in the commemoration of World Religions Day at the Municipality of Port Louis on Sunday 17th January 2016.

Mr. Belall Maudarbux, addressed the audience on the issue of the 'Place of inter-religious dialogue in world

religions' with emphasis on education of children and youth in building a culture of dialogue.

The event was hosted by the Council of Religions/ RfP.

2.6 Safer Internet Day – Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Association of Women for Inter-religious Dialogue in Family and Society (MOZAIK) and member of the GNRC-Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized a total of 12 workshops for children between the ages of 10-14 years, focusing on internet safety and cyber bullying among the children. This was during The Safer Internet Day observed on February 9th, 2016. The essence of the event is to create a global safer and better internet for all, especially the young. In attendance were two hundred and twenty elementary school children and 10 adults among them facilitators and teachers.





2.7 World Day of Social Justice – Kenya

The Cry OF Young One, a member of the GNRC, organized activities to celebrate the International Social Justice Day on February 20th, 2016 at the Mathare Social Hall grounds in Nairobi. The aim of the celebration was to create awareness on peace and development specifically on the next general elections, 2017.



3.0 END CHILD POVERTY (ECP)

3.1 Africa

CAP YEI, one of GNRC's partners in Kenya organized a Youth entrepreneurs' conference in Nairobi where the best entrepreneurial projects received awards to kick start and boost their businesses. Still in Kenya, 2 students identified through the Equity Group Foundation (EGF) selection process in Baringo County were offered secondary school education scholarships by the ECP initiative of Arigatou International.

The Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA) launched a pilot initiative on livelihoods on 24th February 2016. This saw four (4) Youth Peace clubs (YPCs) each receive a seed capital of fifteen thousand Kenya shillings, bringing the total to ksh.60, 000. These efforts will go to addressing the high rates of unemployment among youth in Mukuru slum and by extension in the country. The Income Generating Activities (IGAs) identified by YPCs range from water services to sanitation and provision of soccer cleats.

The Clubs' Representatives (12 people -3 people per peace club) not only received the seed capital on behalf of the peace clubs, but were

also provided with an opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills in Business Management through motivational talks and business mentorship by the representatives from the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) – Nairobi Region; Rev. Jared Nyangweso and Ms Caroline Ongalo. In their speeches, they encouraged the youth to put into practice the skills and knowledge they acquired through entrepreneurship training. They also gave them tips on marketing.

In Nigeria over 30 poor or jobless rural women received vocational' skills training and business start-up kits in November 2015 to boost their family incomes.

3.2 Asia

GNRC-Nepal distributed Relief supplies to families affected by the Kathmandu earthquake while the "I Can" project pioneered by the students of the International Islamic University of Malaysia (IIUM) provided aid to orphans, children, homeless and refugees in Kuala Lumpur. Shanti Ashram, a member of the GNRC in India, launched the India Poverty Solutions in August 2015. This innovative program is expected to mobilize 100,000

volunteers from major faith traditions to jointly tackle child poverty. Additionally Shanti Ashram launched the Global Classroom on health where experts in the field of public health offer professional and expert talk to the public.

3.3 Europe

GNRC committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted an End Child Poverty event in Sarajevo in June, 2015. The event was attended by a member of parliament, faith leaders and the civil society including Honorable Senad Sepic (MP) and Ms. Vinu Aram, the coordinator GNRC-India. Other members of the End Child Poverty Steering Committee were present. Marko Jakovljevic, a Catholic priest pointed to the vicious cyclic nature of poverty that requires a change of heart and behavior from everyone.

3.4 Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

GNRC-Cuba engaged 15 children from deprived communities in a painting workshop organized by the *institution Meñiques del Futuro* in the month of November.

In Colombia, the GNRC continued with the implementation of the ECP project in Soacha, Cundinamarca Province that economically supports approximately 30 women of the Mennonite Church through textile making activities. Endeavoring to promote child rights, GNRC-Argentina conducted a workshop aimed at promoting the participation of adolescents and youth in the definition of public policies targeted at protecting the rights of children.

Additionally, GNRC-Argentina supported the implementation of three vocational training/ entrepreneurship projects benefiting about 150 youth of El Pilar.





4.0 ETHICS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN (EEC)

4.1 Africa

The GNRC member in Mauritius, Mr. Belall Maudarbux delivered a keynote presentation on interreligious education project in March, 2016. The idea is to use the book *Religions in Mauritius* along with *Learning to Live Together* to expose school children to the religious 'other'. GNRC-South Africa and partners organized an LTLT workshop in May for youth, children and educators. The youth held discussions and the children reported back what they had learned from the *Learning To Live Together* Manual. Again in February, the GNRC conducted a workshop with the theme "Growing up Smart: Understanding Self and Others" emphasizing that mutual respect grows with greater mutual understanding and appreciation of differences and similarities.

4.2 Asia

In July 2015, Shanti Ashram held an experiential workshop on preventing adolescent high-risk behavior termed 'Solution- Exchange LAB (SE)' to address the high-risk behavior among the youth. The forum dwelt on innovative and creative solutions for the wellbeing of children and young people. Through Project Rainbow, an

inclusive consultation and planning forum was held in Philippines attended by 22 youth leaders of *Batug Youth Movers for Peace and Development* who agreed to put up a youth Re-sources Centre that hosts among others a youth reference library, a tool library and community garden. The youth have recognized that they need to have their own resources first to better be able to serve their community.

4.3 Europe

GNRC-Romania conducted several workshops using the LTLT methodology between January and February. The three workshops targeted school teachers, accredited by the Ministry Of Education and children in schools focusing on Conflict transformation, nonviolent alternatives and child rights- a strategy to motivate teachers to implement participative methods; prevent and decrease violent attitudes; provide teachers with efficient methods to effectively deal with the children's problems in schools; and to prevent school drop outs.

4.4 Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)

GNRC-Panama engaged 60 Christian, Muslim and Jewish children and 10 educators in an

interfaith tour of worship sites, the main objective being to create and opportunity for children to know about other religions and to promote respect for diversity and mutual understanding.

There were a number of workshops using the *Learning to Live Together* manual in LAC region: Panamá adapted the *Learning to Live Together Ethics Education* programme to sports activities with children and conducted a workshop with 50 public school youth mobilizers; Cuba conducted a workshop targeting 30 educators and another on the protection of the environment in addition to one other for youth on values-respect, responsibility, empathy and reconciliation.

Ecuador held a workshop on pedagogy and spirituality and a second LTLT workshop for another 25 people. GNRC network in Ecuador grew with the Jesuit School San Luis Gonzaga becoming its member. The GNRC-Dominican Republic and Brazil held workshops under the slogan "Building a Culture of Peace in the Family, School and Community" concluding with the formation of Community of Practice for mutual sharing, while in Quibdo and Istmina, Colombia two training workshops were conducted in August to increase the number of educators. Also a six-month systematic implementation of the programme is expected to start in Colombia with Arigatou International Office in Geneva supporting the hiring of a part-time M&E Coordinator.

5.0 PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN (PAC)

5.1 Bosnia and Herzegovina

Visoko, Bosnia and Herzegovina was happy to commemorate the World Day of Prayer and Action for



Children (DPAC) through an activity themed 'Stop Violence against Children'. The activity scheduled on 20th November, 2015, was attended by primary school children, religious leaders, teachers of Visoko and the community at large. An estimated



170 primary school pupils attended the event.

Creativity and shaping of children's morals were among the major topics tackled during the DPAC activity.

5.2 Dominican Republic

GNRC-Dominican Republic in partnership with the NGO Coalition for Children marked the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) on November 19th, 2015





with an interfaith breakfast meeting attended by 30 religious leaders and faith-based organizations at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Santo Domingo. The different faiths represented in the meeting were Catholics, Evangelicals, Mormons, Bahá'í, Hindu, Jews, Brahma Kumaris, International Society for Divine Realization, Sri Sathya Sai

Baba and Art of Living. Discussions and reflections centered on the importance and urgency of reviewing the Dominican legal framework to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment towards children, in all settings, including the family, and to set up a religious and spiritual leaders' committee to spearhead the push for legislative reform in the country. Francisco Leonardo, World Vision's Director of Advocacy and Mobilization, noted that over 80% of parents in the poorest communities used corporal punishment. Key contributors to the discussion included Mr. Ernesto Diaz, a consultant, Mr. Eduardo Gallardo, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF, and Ms. Eric Gómez, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Early Childhood Care (INAIPI).

6.0 PEACE BUILDING (PB)

6.1 Africa

Kenya:

The CRAVE Program: GNRC partner *Peaceful Innovation Organization (PIO)* held an activity on June 28th, under the theme 'Countering Violent Extremism' at the Matopeni Church, General Warunge Street, in Nairobi, attended by over 30 youths. The discussion centered on the problems faced by Muslims in Nairobi particularly their stigmatization by the local authorities and the general population. The root causes of violent extremism were examined and analyzed by the youth in addition to highlighting strategies to counter terrorism.

The BRAVE Program: An Iftar dinner (Breaking of Fast) was held to introduce the *Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism (BRAVE)* program at the Laico Regency Hotel on Tuesday 30th June, 2015. The event had more than 140 guests representing various organizations, the Muslim community and brothers and sisters from the Christian faith. Members of the BRAVE steering committee and the media were also present.

To further contribute to peace building, GNRC-Kenya mobilized members and religious leaders to two day workshops, in Nairobi and Mombasa, in an attempt to address the increasing conflicts that have caused many schools to close and children to be sent home. The workshop, which took place in Nairobi in August and in Mombasa in September, 2015 aimed at building capacity of members to address and reverse the misuse of children through radicalization. The participants included the youth, religious clerics and professionals.

At the workshop, the alarming rate at which youths from the coastal and Nairobi regions were being radicalized were highlighted. The workshops addressed the need for, and how the various stakeholders in





the community can join hands and fight the misuse of children for violent purposes.

North Eastern Kenya: GNRC mobilized members and religious leaders to a two day workshop, in Garissa, North Eastern region. The event was an attempt to address the increasing conflicts and animosity in the region. The North Eastern region has heavily suffered the evil actions of violent extremist groups and for the past few years the economy and security have extremely deteriorated. The workshop, which took place

in October, 2015 was to build the capacity of community members to address and reverse the misuse of children by radical and extremist groups. The workshop also aimed at building self-confidence among the community members. The participants included the youth, clerics and professionals selected from Wajir, Mandera and Garissa counties.

It emerged clearly at the workshop that the youth were the most vulnerable due to lack of employment, lack of proper guidance, poverty, lack of goals and lack of proper education, thus are the easiest target for recruitment into radicalized and violent extremist groups, or are easily influenced into engaging in violent crime. Participants were trained on how various community stakeholders can join hands and fight the misuse of children for violent acts. The participants were also informed of GNRC's global work towards creating a better environment for children.





building processes. Participants were drawn from every part of Nairobi and its environs including; Kibera, Pumwani, Kawangware, East-Leigh, Kiambu, Ukambani, Mathare, Huruma and Kayole.

Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome argued for greater community involvement in efforts to counter violent extremism, peace building, self-sustainability and

Isiolo, Upper Eastern Kenya: Led by Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, the Secretary General of the GNRC, a team of religious leaders visited the secular and madrassa classes, the children orphanage and the mosque in Isiolo, North Eastern Kenya on November 4, 2015. The team also visited the Al-Falah Centre in Isiolo, one of the biggest educational hubs in the county.

Nairobi, Kenya: GNRC held a two day community workshop in Runda Islamic Centre, Nairobi focusing on participation of the society in peace



development through training and information sharing. He added that the community had lost its children to radicalization and extremism and it was time the community united and called for an end to it.

North Eastern and Coast Region-Kenya: Arigatou International and other partners including religious communities in Kenya, with the support of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) held interfaith workshops in North Eastern and Coast regions of Kenya. The workshops themed Community





Dialogues on Peace and Social Cohesion, aimed at strengthening community's capacity against radicalization and violent extremism.



to *Live Together* training indicated interest to establish a club. Forums on Civic and Ethics Education, Interfaith and Peace Building, and Good Governance were held in Dar es Salaam, Tanga and Zanzibar.



The GNRC was invited by SOS and C-Sema to attend a training on advocacy for children with disabilities in May 2015. As a result of this training, the GNRC organized its first forum in May, on the topic "Gender Based Violence and the involvement of people living with disability in community development affairs." Seventy children from primary schools gathered at the Oyster Bay Primary school to raise awareness on GBV issues and the involvement of people with disability in community development, recognizing that people living with a disability are capable and have rights like everyone else and therefore it is each individual's responsibility to engage all peoples in community development activities.

Tanzania:

Peace Clubs: GNRC-Tanzania visited peace clubs in to ascertain the status of the clubs, discuss ways to improve them, and elect new club leaders. Additionally, the GNRC began plans to establish a new peace club at Chang'ombe secondary school after the students who participated in a Good Governance and *Learning*

GNRC Music Conscious Band:

The GNRC Music Conscious Band participated in the Amani Kwanza Peace Concerts organized in Buguruni Chama on the 2nd of May that brought an estimated 200 people together as part of the effort to raise awareness on the need for peaceful elections.

Awareness campaign with

local authorities: On the 23rd of April, in Temeke district, 20 local authorities representing 4 wards were sensitized on Good Governance and Community Resilience against Violent Extremism (CRAVE) using the LTLT methodology. The session saw participants share experiences and highlight the major differences in transforming the theoretical good governance to the practical reality on the ground. Participants called for greater transparency in their districts. One leader highlighted the danger caused by the over 600 unemployed youth in his constituency- recognizing that the threat could increase

violence especially as the elections approached. The local leaders appreciated the value that the sessions had added to their work, while emphasizing the need to live in peace despite our differences.

In addition, the Norwegian Church Aid, Swiss Development Corporation, Norwegian Embassy and Arigatou International Tanzania supported other activities such as the Advocacy for Children with Disability organized by C-SEMA and SOS Tanzania and meetings with KAICIID, the Global Centre on Cooperative Security, and Swiss Peace.

On the 19th and 20th September, the Office of Mufti in Zanzibar in collaboration with the GNRC through the Friends of Zanzibar initiative held a National Conference; *“Elections will pass, Zanzibar will remain: Vote Peacefully for Development.”* The Conference which brought together over 100 participants from seven neighboring countries (Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Burundi, Uganda,





Kenya, Rwanda), mainland Tanzania and the Isles of Unguja and Pemba was preceded by a peace prayer session on Friday 17th September at the Masjid Mushawara where the GNRC member from Zanzibar, Sheikh Soraga, Secretary of the Office of the Mufti acknowledged the contributions of the GNRC in mobilizing religious leaders and young people in Zanzibar. Religious leaders were called upon to use their unique and influential platforms wisely to advocate for peace. Over 1,000 persons attended the prayers.



Also present were representatives from the European Union, the Executive Government, Zanzibar Electoral Commission, Zanzibar Police Commissioner, Regional Police Commander, Armed Forces including JKU (*Jeshi la Kujenga Uchumi*), KMKM (*Kikosi Maalum cha Kuzuia Magendo*), KVZ (*Kikosi cha Volunteer*), Zanzibar Women Lawyers Association (ZAFELA), UKUEM, Zanzibar Legal Society, Zanzibar Council of Imams, Media and students from various universities.





Leadership Mentoring Program

(LMP): The LMP was conceived by GNRC-Tanzania as a springboard for the prevention of radicalization taking root in the youth of Zanzibar, with expansion of the program later to include youth from Tanzania mainland. The program engages youth in community development activities as in building a sustainable frame of peace and development for humanity. LMP equips youth with conflict mitigation and leadership skills, aimed at building a generation of youth leaders. On 20th December, 25 youth from Unguja and Pemba

graduated from the mentorship program after four months of training.

Youth Peace Conference: The Zanzibar Youth Peace Forum took place on 17th and 18th October in Pemba and Unguja respectively. Discussions of the forum focused on youth and patriotism supported by presentations from religious leaders and a documentary from Kenya "Heal the Nation". The forum in Unguja was privileged to have the former President of Zanzibar, Dr. Karume as the guest of honor. Dr. Karume





took time to discuss the issue of political tolerance among Zanzibaris, emphasizing that voting was not about enmity but a democratic and constitutional right of every citizen. He urged everyone to respect all the 14 candidates vying for the presidency.

National Day of Prayer: Three weeks before the election, GNRC collaborating with Imam Council of Zanzibar called for a National prayer. The prayer was at the Maisara open grounds in Zanzibar. This prayer

was mainly for peaceful election in Zanzibar. Most of the election stakeholders were invited. It was a moment of excitement and pride to see the First Vice President of Zanzibar and General Secretary of CUF, H.E. Seif Sharif Hamad and the former Wawi MP Mr. Hamad Rashid in the same gathering considering that the First Vice President had expelled Mr. Hamad Rashid from the party some months earlier.

6.2 Asia

India - Coimbatore Peace Festival 2015

The Coimbatore Peace Festival 2015 was celebrated on 7th of August at the PSGR Krishnammal Golden Jubilee Auditorium. The event was co organized by Shanti Ashram and PSGR Krishnammal College for Women respectively.

More than 1,380 students from different schools, colleges and youth organizations, involved in peace-



building activities attended the event.

As part of the India Poverty Solutions 2014, thirty SSLC toppers from Government and Government aided schools were honored with scholarships. On that day, the India Poverty Solutions 2015 was launched by the chief Guests of the day. The children and youth depicted thematic cultural presentations.

Philippines: The Teach Peace Build Peace Movement (TPBPM) in Philippines works with volunteers to nurture peace across generations, faiths, cultures and networks. TPBPM aims to build the capacities of its volunteers to have more reach in creating awareness about the importance of building peace, one child, one school, and one community at a time. In December, 2015, TPBPM organized a forum dubbed, "Peace Journey" targeting its volunteers. The sessions were meant to help volunteers to engage in introspection so as to push them out of their comfort zones, enabling them to work with cross-functional groups as well as deepen their understanding about peace and the value of intergenerational peace building. One of the themes of the forum was "My Life, My Purpose, My Journey" which involved going back to oneself, understanding how one's behavior influences others and the importance of 'self' in advocating for peace.

A total of 40 participants were able to interact freely with one another, learn from one another and were an inspiration to one another.

6.3 Europe

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Romania: The GNRC members from the above mentioned countries participated actively in a youth information sharing forum on "Empowering Youth in Interfaith and Multicultural Peace Action" organized by the World Conference of Religions for Peace-Belgium. It took place at the Mariapolis Center in Castel Gandolfo, Italy from the 27th of October to the 1st of November 2015.

Fifty (50) young people and fifteen (15) facilitators participated in this event that ran in parallel to the Religions for Peace (RfP) Europe assembly that gathered around three hundred (300) people from all over Europe.

The program aimed at empowering young people of faith and other interested youth with interfaith and multicultural tools for preventing and eliminating xenophobia and intolerance. The project responded to the problem of a growing intolerance on religions and religious expressions, which is currently endangering societies in Europe.

Dr. Mustafa Ali and Ms. Masue Susuki represented Arigatou International.



They shared information about the GNRC and the Day of Prayer and Action for Children. Also present was Yolande Iliano, Marta Palma, Heidi Rautionmaa, Ismeta Begic, Mauro Bombieri, Laura Molnar, Andre Bossuroy, Alexandra Jastrzebska, Ricardo Mendez, Minakoemarie Mangre, Srdjan Vlaskalic, James Edwards and Kumari Sherreitt. Erasmus+ supported the youth event and the GNRC was also one of the supporting partners.

On 12th March 2016, with determination to promote faith-



based approaches to peacemaking, a team of 66 children and 10 adults representing the Global Network of Religions for Children took a one-day-trip organized by the Women's Association "MOSAIC" V.Čajno to Sarajevo. The group, comprising children representing different religions visited the 'Fallen Children Memorial', Sarajevo and paid tribute to fallen children. In addition, they visited religious buildings that included the Cathedral, the Church of St. Anthony in Bistrik, the Jewish Museum, Emperor's Mosque and Gazi Husrev Bey Mosque.



7.0 OTHER ACTIVITIES

7.1 The GNRC 5th FORUM

The 1st meeting of the GNRC 5th Forum Organizing Committee was held in New York on 25th and 26th January 2016. Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, Organizing Committee members and Directors of Arigatou International deliberated on the proposed plans for the GNRC 5th Forum scheduled to take place in May 2017 in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Several other meetings and activities have been undertaken since then.

In his opening remarks, Rev. Miyamoto expressed hope that the GNRC 5th Forum will focus on the urgent challenges facing children, especially violence against children in all its manifestations. This paved way for deliberations on the proposed theme on Violence Against Children.



7.2 Secretary General's Advocacy Round Up

The GNRC Secretary General Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali made a presentation on the thematic areas of Religion, Violence and Extremism on 1st February 2016, at the 2nd Symposium on the Role of Religions in International Affairs, held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, USA.





He participated in the panel on “Multi-religious perspectives on violence in the name of religion: Role of Religion in Countering Violence and Extremism”. The symposium was co-organized by the World Council of Churches and co-sponsored by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force for Engagement with Faith-based Organizations.

Other presenters at the Symposium included; Mr. Antti Pentikainen, Convener and Executive Director of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (NRTP), Mr. Jehangir Khan, Director of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force Office, UN Department of Political Affairs, Prof. Dr. John L. Esposito, Professor of Religion & International Affairs and of Islamic Studies, Georgetown University, Dr. Azza Karam, Advisor on Culture at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) among others.

7.3 Launch of the Research Report, Kenya

The final research report titled “Alone and Frightened: The Experiential Stories of Former Child Soldiers of Northern Uganda” was published in 2014 and officially launched on September 30th, 2015 at the Sarova Panafric Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The study was sponsored by The Goldin Institute (GI) and Arigatou International (AI), and conducted in partnership with the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), the African Council of Religious Leaders — *Religions for Peace* (ACRL— RfP) and the Interreligious Council of Uganda (IRCU). The over 40 participants in attendance were representatives of different groups and organizations including child rights and other non-governmental organizations, religious leaders, national security and anti-terrorism units, diplomatic missions, media,

high level government officials, GI and AI officials and staff, and representatives of Former Child Soldiers from Gulu, Northern Uganda. For more details on the research findings, see the published copy.

Testimonies from former child soldiers

Mr. Charles Okello a victim of Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) child' abductions, and a beneficiary of the education scholarship initiated by AI-GNRC and GI narrated his chilling five years' experience in the hands of LRA while in captivity.

Mr. Geoffrey recalled the ordeals in captivity, and finds it difficult to understand why children were forced to go through such difficult situations.

Ms. Janet, as a young girl in lower secondary school, was confident of a bright future until the fateful day when she was abducted. In the bush Janet was one of 56 'wives' of a senior LRA commander with whom she got two children who are now grown up. She is most grateful to her family for encouraging, even persuading her to go back to school. Janet is a graduate of Gulu University in Northern Uganda and she currently



runs an organization whose goal is to assist children born in captivity.

The meeting ended with the launch of the research report by Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia. He together with the invited guests and the former child soldiers cut the ribbon to symbolize the report launch. The meeting was deemed successful with a promise to do even more to cultivate peace in our respective nations.



8.0 FEATURE

8.1 Kenya Against Violence

GNRC on 20th November, 2015 conducted a one-day spirited campaign against all forms of violence against children living in Kampi Turkana, an IDP Camp in Baringo County for the Turkana people who were displaced by the more aggressive Pokot community in a conflict resulting from cattle rustling. The IDPs are destitute and lack a source of livelihoods. Majority depend on brewing of alcohol for livelihoods leading to an environment that makes children very vulnerable to all sorts of abuses.

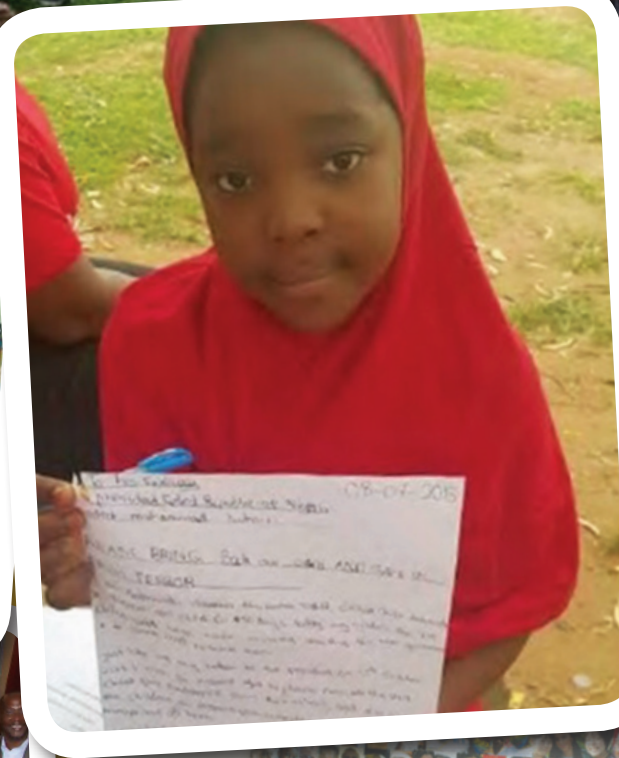
Most girls drop out of school due to early marriages and pregnancies. The girls also suffer gender-based violence especially FGM and

sexual abuse. The campaign took place at the Alice Ingham Primary School coordinated by the school administration and management and the Christ Dominion International Church led by Bishop Julius Chepsat.

Youth and children were encouraged to advance their emerging talent in football while parents were encouraged to use their passion in singing as source of income instead of brewing alcohol which is illegal and at the same time counterproductive in respect to upbringing of children. Ms. Kipseba encouraged girls and boys who have dropped out of school to consider going back to school or develop livelihood skills in the existing technical institutions.

The representative from the Office of the President pledged key promises to the children to be fulfilled in 2016 including: introduction of school feeding; building of new classes to accommodate the large number of children; providing scholarships to bright children from poor backgrounds; and facilitation of children to travel to other countries to expose them to different cultures.







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