



Arigatou International
G N R C

**Overview of the
Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Fourth Forum
Ending Poverty, Enriching Children
*INSPIRE. ACT. CHANGE.***

**June 16 - 18, 2012
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania**

The Fourth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) will be held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania from 16th – 18th June 2012. The Forum comes at a time when youth are leading non-violent transformations in various parts of Africa, demanding a better life, better governance and more access to opportunities. Fittingly, the Forum’s theme — “Ending Poverty, Enriching Children: INSPIRE. ACT. CHANGE.” — will address these concerns largely resulting from poverty.

Two hundred and fifty (250) participants including representatives from different religious constituencies – Buddhists, Bahais, Christians, Hindus, Indigenous Traditions, Jews, Muslims, Shintoists and others – will gather together with representatives from the United Nations and its agencies, the African Union and other multi-lateral institutions, civil society organizations, government officials and children from around the world. They will address the challenge of poverty and its devastating consequences for children, not only in Africa but also around the world. Like previous GNRC Forums, interfaith cooperation among religious communities is expected to result in a unique new faith-based contribution to children’s well-being. At the Fourth Forum, with the focus on poverty, the GNRC is expected to announce a global initiative to reduce child poverty. The Fourth Forum will be hosted by GNRC Africa, one of the major regional networks of the Global Network of Religions for Children.

The Forum will focus on three concrete areas perceived as main causes of poverty – corruption and poor governance, war and violence, and unequal distribution of resources. These challenges have conspired to cause a contrasting situation of unprecedented global economic growth in many parts of the world, while significant parts still remain in absolute poverty. Tragically, children still suffer disproportionately from poverty, accounting for a large share of poverty statistics. Children therefore must be at the centre in any effort or strategy to fight poverty.

The Forum will commence on 16th June in honor of the hundreds of courageous children who on 16th June 1976, and armed with nothing but their fragile bodies, were ruthlessly gunned down by the Apartheid Regime of South Africa for demanding better education and livelihoods speaking out against imposed poverty.

The GNRC recognizes the enormous potential of diverse religions and faith traditions working together to fight poverty. Each religious community has assets that can be engaged in poverty eradication, and the spirit of inter-religious cooperation — which has always characterized the GNRC — provides a powerful set of capacities for fighting poverty. Taken collectively, religious social structures represent significant channels for communication and action, that if engaged and transformed, can enable believers and communities to function as powerful agents of change in eradicating poverty. In the struggle against poverty, the Forum will seek to engage the three major assets that all religious communities possess: spiritual, moral, and social resources. The question is: how can these enormous assets, found in every village, every corner of the world, where even governments do not reach, be aligned and be deployed to eradicate absolute poverty? And just as critical: How can enduring partnerships between faiths, and between secular development partners and faiths, be forged to eradicate absolute poverty? Concretely, how can we make children a central and integral element in all of our plans to eradicate absolute poverty?

Through the Fourth Forum, the GNRC seeks to *INSPIRE* all of us — people of faith and people of good will everywhere — to *ACT* to *CHANGE* the current trends of corruption and poor governance, war and violence, and unequal distribution of resources, in order to put an end to child poverty and empower children and young people to build a more just and spiritually abundant world for all.

Expected outcomes of the Fourth Forum include:

Children and youth will engage in dialogue among themselves and with senior religious, political and social leaders; demonstrate their commitment and capacity to lead in the implementation of GNRC's initiative on poverty together with adults; develop their knowledge and understanding of the world's key challenges, empowering them to become responsible global citizens; and be encouraged to participate in peer-to-peer education in their communities.

Faith communities will show-case their contributions to eradicating poverty, propose ways to partner with development agencies, and call on governments, multi-lateral and bilateral agencies including the United Nations, the African Union, the World Economic Forum and others to join hands with them in fighting poverty.

A unique initiative on poverty, spearheaded by religious communities working together, is expected to be announced during the Forum, with contributions to this initiative coming from various partners, building on the hopes and yearning of children to transform their future.

Concrete steps and initiatives designed to eradicate poverty will be shared, and the possibility of scaling up existing successful practices will be studied and considered.

A passionate plea to the governments, development agencies, private business communities, and partners to scale-up efforts to eradicate poverty will be made by religious leaders in this Forum. Partners in addressing poverty, especially governments, will be called upon to honor previous promises made, and obligations agreed to under different agreements. The religious leaders themselves will also make a pledge to engage their own faith communities more fully in the fight against child poverty, and to devote the vast spiritual, moral, and social resources of their traditions to the shared goal of lifting enriching and empowering the world's children.

Now is the time to implement more effective partnerships to eradicate poverty. The Fourth Forum will be a reminder – and a call to action – that children can no longer wait for years-on-end before solutions to end poverty are found and implemented. The courageous actions by the children on 16th June 1976 in Soweto, Johannesburg, transformed the struggle for apartheid, and forever the course of the history of South Africa. So too, can we, with the children, transform this world in which poverty still reigns. The moment to act is Now. The time for action is Today.

“The Child’s Name is Today”

*We are guilty of many errors and faults,
But our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the fountain of life.
Many things we need can wait,
The Child cannot.
Right now is the time bones are being formed,
Blood is being made, senses are being developed.
To the Child we cannot answer “Tomorrow,”
The Child’s name is Today.
(Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral)*