

# WORLD DAY <sup>of Prayer & Action</sup> for Children 2021



Activity **report**

## WEAR **my** SHOES CAMPAIGN

Return to School: Prioritizing the emotional,  
social and spiritual well-being of children



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Arigatou International — New York  
Prayer and Action for Children



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## Foreword

Every year on November 20, the anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children rallies faith communities and child rights advocates to stand together for the rights of all children. The World Day builds on the unique assets of faith actors to provide a platform for children and adults from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to advocate for the rights of all children. In response to the global learning crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the activities of the **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2021** put a spotlight on children as agents of change and on their right to education.

The World Day 2021 launched the first **Wear My Shoes Campaign and Award**, calling attention to grassroots efforts and the remarkable actions co-led by children and adults aimed to mitigate the learning crisis. At the invitation of Arigatou International and together with UNICEF and members of the Global Network of Religions for Children, 18 organizations working for children's rights and well-being joined forces in solidarity to draw world attention to the urgency of getting children back to school.

The Wear My Shoes Award was launched for the first time on November 19 from EXPO-2020 Dubai, thanks to the support provided by the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities. Each of the five winners, who were selected for their outstanding practices carried out during the global pandemic in 2020-21, received US \$5,000 to continue their work. The winning practices were found in Ecuador, Cuba, Mexico, Myanmar, and Serbia and focused on the most vulnerable and on the most excluded children whose education was deeply affected by the pandemic. As of the end of



October 2021, UNESCO warned that nearly 800 million students around the world were still affected by full or partial school closures and that the past two academic years have resulted in learning losses and increased drop-out rates and impacted millions of children, particularly the most vulnerable students.

I am pleased to report that the World Day 2021 succeeded in mobilizing children and adults—including religious leaders, policymakers, parents/caregivers, and educators—to take immediate action for students' return to school and to prioritize the grave impact of school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic on children's mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. We at Arigatou International are grateful to the World Day Organizing Committee Members, and to the many children and organizations that helped to plan and promote the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2021 and the Wear My Shoes Campaign. We also thank all the organizations that endorsed the **Joint Statement** calling for urgent action to ensure children's well-being during the global COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

**Rebeca Rios-Kohn J.D.**

**Director, Arigatou International New York  
Prayer and Action for Children**

## Introduction



*"Education is a fundamental human right and nothing and no situation must prevent and deny children of going to school. Education is the future and without education we cannot build a stronger society and we cannot create peace. Education is so important and now more than ever and I hope we all not only talk about these challenges; I know talking is so important, but actions are what the children need from us, and our actions can really change their lives and give them a future."*

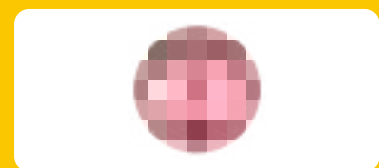
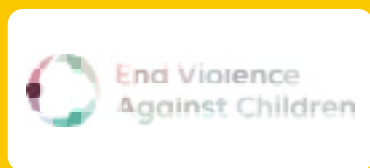
*- Ms. Muzoon Almellehan, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador*

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (World Day) is celebrated every year on November 20, the same day as the anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and World Children's Day.

**Arigatou International** launched the World Day in 2008 to provide an opportunity for people of different religions and cultures to come together to pray and meditate, but also to take action for children's rights and well-being.

# World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2021

In 2021, the following organizations and networks working for children's rights and well-being joined Arigatou International and UNICEF to celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children and the Wear My Shoes Campaign.



## What brought us together

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the way we live and interact with others. It has also exacerbated pre-existing harms and created new harms to children including violence, poverty, their limited access to fundamental rights such as to health care and education, the increasing digital divide and online safety.

Building on the contribution of faith actors to children's spiritual development and respect of their dignity and rights, the **Wear My Shoes Campaign** aimed to mobilize adults—including religious leaders, policymakers, parents/caregivers, and educators—to become the support system that children need to return to school and overcome the impact of school closures on children.

The campaign advocated for people and organizations from diverse cultural and religious background to take actions to ensure that schools and educators create learning environments that are sensitive to

the social and emotional needs of children; that respond to the changing realities and uncertainty brought by the pandemic; and provide learning opportunities for children to continue learning, while addressing their mental health and psycho-social support.



*"The Wear My Shoes Campaign aims to draw attention to every child's right to education, and to encourage concrete strategies to support schools and families with a view to strengthening children's social emotional and spiritual well-being. The campaign further aims to build on the unique assets of faith actors to provide a platform for children and adults from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to stand together for every child's right to education."*

*— Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President Arigatou International*

## What did we do?



**Raised awareness** of the importance for children to return to school while prioritizing their social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.



**Provided platforms** to make visible the effects of COVID-19 on children's mental health and the importance of children's right to education in building and maintaining their social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.



**Disseminated tools** that support children's social, emotional, and spiritual well-being in the light of the need for them to return to school.



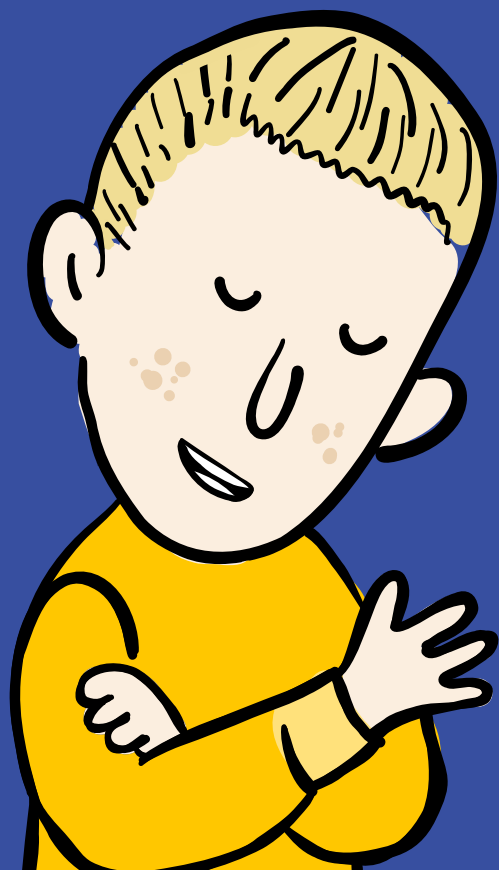
*"I want to point out that it is very important to go back to school because schools are the center of the community. Schools are the place in which we are able to build together and to envision a better world."*

*— Dr. Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Peace Nobel Laureate*

## What did we achieve?

The World Day 2021 built on the unique assets of faith actors to provide a platform for children and adults from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to stand together for every child's right to education. It placed a special focus on concrete strategies to support schools and families to strengthen children's social, emotional and spiritual well-being as a protection factor and coping mechanism to deal with the effects of the pandemic and school closures on children.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration for the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2021 resulted in several achievements including:



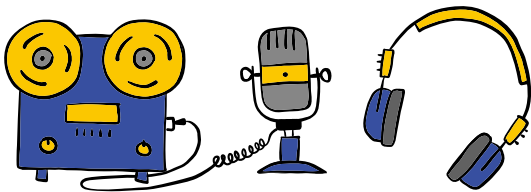




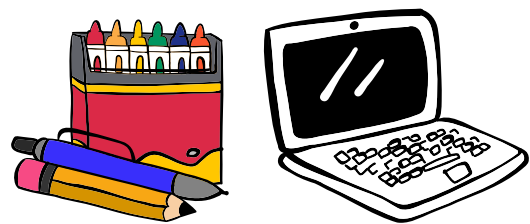
The Wear My Shoes Awards selected five outstanding grassroots projects which focus on children's right to education and promote their well-being.



Eighteen organizations collaborated and issued a Joint Statement on priority actions to ensure children's right to education with a special focus on children's social, emotional and spiritual well-being.



The first child-led interfaith and intergenerational Wear My Shoes Podcast Series was launched.



A new exhibition room was added to Faith and Children's Rights online exhibition.



World Day 2021 was celebrated at the EXPO 2020 Dubai with the participation of grassroots and high-level speakers.



Additional grassroots World Day celebrations were organized by local communities in more than fifteen countries.



*"We need to recognize that we will be leaving people behind. We are leaving people behind, and we have three crises at the moment: the COVID-19 pandemic, we've got the climate catastrophe, and we've got an imminent financial crisis."*

— Dr. Husna Ahmad, Secretary-General, World Muslim Leadership Forum

## WEAR **my** SHOES AWARD 2021



Established in 2021, the **Wear My Shoes Award** recognized five outstanding grassroots practices implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 and which addressed the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded children; four were co-led by children. The prize of US \$5,000 to each of the five Award winners is a significant contribution towards their work and a well-deserved endorsement of their outstanding efforts and results.

These awards were made possible thanks to a generous donation by the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities in support of the annual World Day of Prayer and Action for Children and the Wear My Shoes Campaign.

Applications were submitted in English, Spanish, and Arabic. They came from nineteen countries including Argentina, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Cuba, Ecuador, Ghana, Haiti, India, Kenya, Mexico, Myanmar, Philippines, Pakistan, Serbia, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, and Yemen.



The Organizing Committee of the World Day 2021 wishes to sincerely thank the fifteen judges for **dedicating many hours of careful review in order to identify the five winners of the Wear My Shoes Award.**

A representative of each winning organization participated virtually in the Awards ceremony as part of the World Day 2021 event in Dubai.

## 1st. Ecuador

**Title:** Escuchando las voces de los niños, niñas y adolescentes durante la pandemia del COVID-19. (Listening to the voices of children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic.)

**Organizations:** Fundación Paz y Esperanza and Movimiento con la Niñez y la Juventud de Latinoamérica



The project was implemented between January 4, 2020 until January 31, 2021 in the north-east of Guayaquil, Ecuador, to lift up the voices of children and adolescents during the pandemic and highlight its effects on their lives.

Carried out in the form of a research project, they conducted an online survey of 200 children to identify how children's rights were being affected during the pandemic. Additional research was carried out through face-to-face and online focus group discussions and two thematic virtual forums. The research revealed that the right to education was the most negatively impacted, followed by health, nutrition, recreation and a lack of protection from violence. The process provided

a safe platform for the children to express their feelings, thoughts and emotions, as well as provide an opportunity to share their opinions and recommendations for addressing the main challenges they faced. The research was part of a larger project entitled 'Healthy Families Free of Violence'.

This project was co-led by children and adults.

The Award will be used to continue to provide spaces and opportunity for the empowerment of children and capacity building around their rights and advocating for their rights to be taken into account in the development of public policies.



## 2nd. Mexico

**Title:** Conociendo y Aplicando Nuestros Derechos (Knowing and Applying our Rights)

**Organization:** Red Milpa (a network of Christian organizations in Mexico)



The project started on August 20, 2020 and will end on June 20, 2022, and is targeting 40 children each month in the marginalized communities in the cities of Monterrey and León. These communities are characterized by social and economic vulnerability and high levels of violence, with limited access to health and education services.

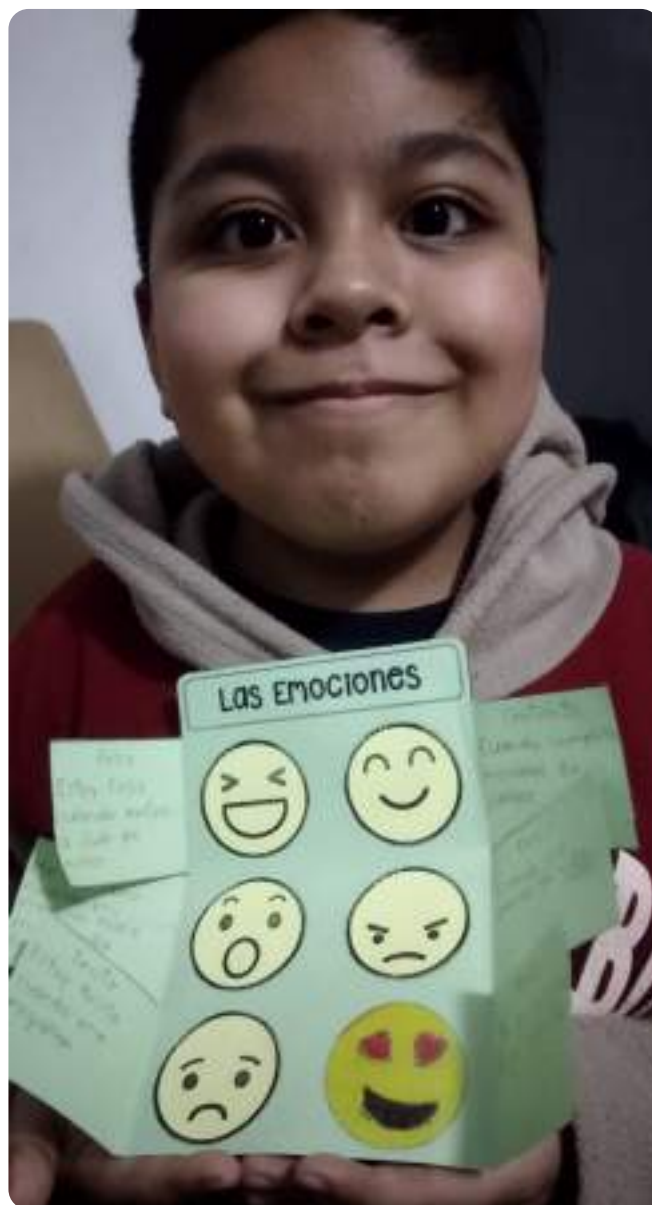
The project aims to address the negative effects of the pandemic on the children of these communities and focuses on four pillars: (i) child rights education; (ii) physical activities during lockdown; (iii) providing access to online learning and support in reading and writing; and (iv) spiritual nourishment and psycho-emotional support.

Activities include weekly online and face-to-face sessions, support sessions with parents twice a

month, and a one-week summer camp in both 2020 and 2021.

The project is co-led by children and adults.

The Award will be used to purchase laptops, basic school supplies and education materials to give to the children for access to online learning as well as to improve the infrastructure for face-to-face learning activities.



## 3rd. Cuba

**Title:** Niños y niñas del Internet. (Children of the Internet)

**Organizations:** Centro Cristiano de Servicio y Capacitación Bartolomé Gregorio



The project was implemented in Santiago de Cuba from November 19, 2020 – May 1, 2021. It was implemented by school children who assisted 30 children living in very poor and marginalized communities, with limited or no access to the Internet. The project aimed to address the digital divide affecting these children and which was preventing them from following online classes and completing their homework while promoting peer-to-peer support.

- Children identified which of their peers had no internet access and carried out a needs' assessment.
- They carried out internet searches based on the needs identified by the child who had no internet.

- The collection and printing of online education materials to give to the children without internet to complete their homework.
- They personally hand-delivered the materials to the homes of the children without internet, as well as other basic school supplies.
- Both groups of children assessed and evaluated the project.

During these months, they also held drawing and essay contests to allow the children the opportunity to express through art their experiences of the pandemic.

The idea of the project came from the children during a session to think of solutions for addressing the challenges of the pandemic in relation to education.

The project was co-led by children and adults.

The Award will be used to implement the second phase "Children of the Internet: Navigating in between Books" and aims to promote participation and empowerment of children through reading and providing educational and reading materials to build resilience in the face of the pandemic.



## 4th. Myanmar

**Title:** Learning at Home Program

**Organization:** The Saya Foundation



The Learning at Home Program was started by the Saya Foundation in Myanmar in April 2020 to help respond to the need for online education when schools were closed because of the pandemic.

While online classes could be accessed by well-off children, the Learning at Home Program sought to reach the 80% of the children who were excluded from online education and address the challenges: low level of internet access; teachers had low digital literacy skills; lack of mobile devices; no online resources in the language of Myanmar; and the Ministry of Education could not start online programs straight away.

The program is implemented all over Myanmar and ongoing goals include: to create inclusive and safe learning opportunities for children and to learn at their convenience; to help children feel connected to others and avoid isolation and have fun through learning activities; to keep learning/to prevent learning loss and be clear about the lesson; and, to find positivity and possibility in daily lives.

There was a 7-month break because of the military coup.

The Award will be used to implement the second phase “Children of the Internet: Navigating in between Books” and aims to promote participation and empowerment of children through reading and providing educational and reading materials to build resilience in the face of the pandemic.



## 5th. Serbia

**Title:** School of Good Will – Volunteers in the Service of Children

**Organization:** Sombor Educational Center



The program in 2020-2021 is an adapted version of the program School of Good Will that they have implemented since 2010. They co-operate with all primary and secondary schools in Sombor and its surroundings, as well as with interfaith leaders in the local community, and institutions for children.

The "School of Good Will – Volunteers in the Service of Children" is a unique volunteer service in which volunteers (youth aged 15 to 18), after having successfully finished training for working with children, provide learning assistance to children from vulnerable groups (including children without parental care, from socially vulnerable families, from foster families, Roma children, children of single parents and more).

This program is co-led by children and adults.

During the pandemic, Sombor Educational Center rented and provided equipment for online classes and workshops for families who needed them. Users of the program are children from marginalized groups and families, and many had never used devices such as tablet, computer, or smartphone so they trained them on how to use them so that

children could follow online classes. They also trained their volunteers online so they could offer classes online to the children they serve. They organized workshops for parents on positive parenting and challenges they face and supported users via online group meetings and individual conversations.

The Award will be used for creating an accessible, safe space and strengthening human resources for even better-quality work with children from marginalized groups. They will purchase materials, school and office supplies, technical equipment, pay for rent, and provide Internet if online schooling continues.

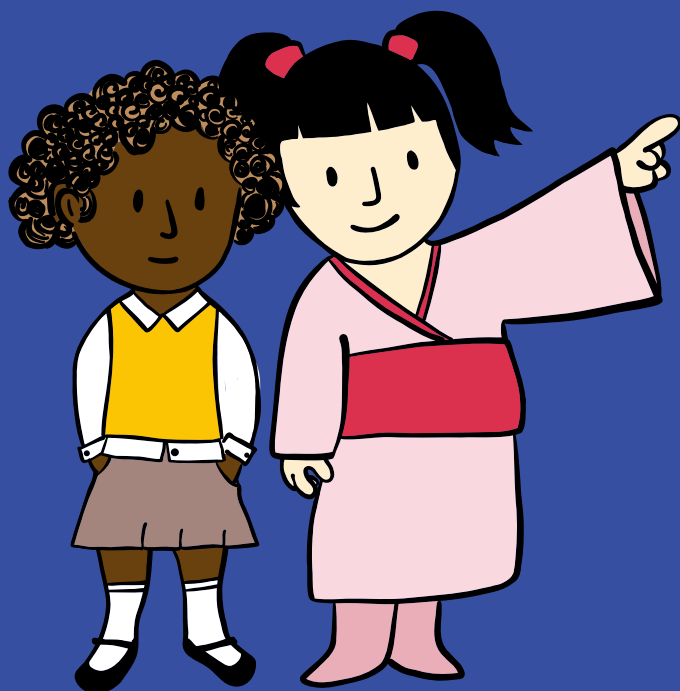


*"Does a child born today have better prospects in life than one who has born in 1989? The answer is yes, but not every child. At the heart of addressing this head-on mostly lies in political will, making children's interest a primary consideration and of course attention to detail in respect of what a child rights-based approach actually entails."*

*— Dr. Benyam Mezmur – Member of the Committee von the Rights of the Child, and member of the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors*

## Joint Statement

The World Day organizing committee members prepared and issued a Joint Statement to show their support for children's right to education and called for actions to ensure:



- Targeted programs to bring all children and youth back to school, where they can access tailored services and support to meet their needs related to learning, physical and mental health, and psychosocial well-being.
- Effective remedial lessons or teaching to help students catch up on lost learning.
- Support for teachers to address learning losses and incorporate digital technology into their teaching and address the inequalities in children's access to such technology.
- Learning about climate change and existing solutions in school curricula as called for by children and youth.

Please also sign it! The joint statement is [available online](#) and has been [endorsed](#) by other organizations including the Iglesia Reformada Calvinista and the Mouvement Citoyen pour la Paix et la Concorde.



*"It's what we do on the outside that determines what we mean on the inside, so let's make sure that people ... have an education that is a substantive education, not just any education but one that is going to guarantee them a proper place in our world. When we do that, we will have fulfilled the promises and the prayers that we offered inside our respective sanctuaries."*

*— Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Vice-Chair, The International Conference of Rabbis and Executive Vice President, The New York Board of Rabbis*



## WEAR **my** SHOES PODCAST

Launched on the World Day 2021, the Wear My Shoes Podcast Series provides a platform of inter-generational dialogue for transformative change for and with children co-led by children. In this series, twelve children from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds engage in dialogue with influential adults about issues affecting children's rights and well-being.

This series of eight podcasts focuses on the importance of reopening schools and for actions to prioritize children's mental health, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The first episode introduces a dialogue between Tharun, Shruthi and Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

Tharun and Shruthi are children from India who shared with Dr. Najat their personal experiences during school closures and the situation of children in their contexts. Tune in to the Wear My Shoes Podcast on Spotify and get inspired by insightful inter-generational dialogue and ideas about how to advocate for children's return to school in safer and better conditions that prioritize their physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. More episodes will be available in early 2022.



Touch the camera icon on the search section of the Spotify App and scan this code to listen to the first episode!



or [Click here](#) to listen to the podcast.

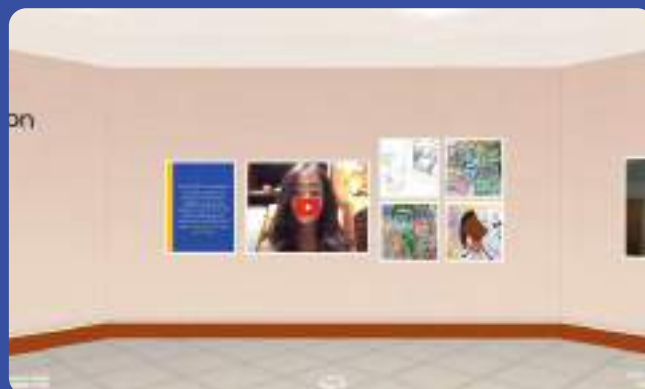
## WEARmySHOES EXHIBITION

added to Faith and Children's Rights Online Exhibition

A new Wear My Shoes exhibition room was added to Arigatou International's **Faith in Action for Children** online exhibition to introduce children's creative expressions (drawings, written works, audio and photographic and video materials) on:

- The effects of school closures and remote learning on their social, emotional, and spiritual well-being;
- Their vision about the future of learning; and
- Recommendations for creating learning environments that support their social, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

The new online exhibition room includes creative contributions of children from Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Comoros, Guatemala, India, Lebanon, and Panama.



*"The rights of children in Islamic legislation are well protected with laws and punishments, such rights represent a sacred goal in the philosophy of Islam and one of the main targets of the divine rules. All Muslims are obligated to observe children's right and to defend them against everything that could compromise their physical, mental, and emotional safety.*

*Unfortunately, the three have been badly affected after pandemic, dealing with children at times of crisis and trauma needs work on different bases and levels, it's easier said than done, actually, but we believe that with faith and knowledge we will believe and act, and we will be able to solve the most difficult obstacles in our lives."*

— Dr. Reham Abdullah Salamah, Al-Azhar University

## World Day event at EXPO 2020 Dubai

The World Day main event took place in a hybrid format of in-person and online participation at EXPO 2020 Dubai. The celebration included:

- **An interfaith service**

- Rev. Keishi Miyamoto (Buddhist)
- Tiago Masrouf (Bahai)
- Archbishop Felix Machado (Catholic)
- Swami Atmapriyananda (Ramakrishna)
- Prof. Akhtural Wasey (Islam)
- Sheikh Ibrahim Lethome Asmani (Islam)
- Prof. Dr. Isabel Phiri (Church of Central Africa Presbyterian)
- Master Tan Zhixia (Taoism)

- **Opening statement** by His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, United Arab Emirates.

- **Welcome and opening remarks** by Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President Arigatou International and Ms. Rebeca Rios-Kohn, Director, Arigatou International New York.

- **Dialogue** – Return to school: Prioritizing children’s social, emotional, and spiritual well-being in times of crisis. Moderated by Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary General, Global Network of Religions for Children, (GNRC), and Director, Arigatou International, Nairobi, and with the participation of:

- Dr. Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Peace Nobel Laureate.
- Ms. Muzoon Almellehan, UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.
- Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, J.D., Vice-Chair, The International Conference of Rabbis and Executive Vice President, The New York Board of Rabbis.





- o Dr. Husna Ahmad, Secretary-General, World Muslim Leadership Forum; and
- o Dr. Reham Abdullah Salamah, General Director of Alazhar Observatory for combating extremism (AOCE), and an associate professor of Urdu in Al-Azhar University, Cairo.

- **Statement** from Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children: Building safe learning environments and its impact on children's mental health.

- **Joint Statement** – World Day Organizing Committee Members by Dr. Kezevino Aram – President Shanti Ashram.

- **Wear My Shoes Award** by Mr. Hamdan Al Yammahi – Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities.

- Launch of **Wear My Shoes Podcast** by Ms. Esther Lehmann Sow, Partnership Leader for Faith & Development. World Vision International.

- **Keynote Address** by Dr. Benyam Mezmur – Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and member of the Pontifical Commission on the Protection of Minors (appointed by His Holiness Pope Francis).

- **Closing remarks** by Ms. Paloma Escudero – UNICEF Director Division of Global Communication and Advocacy, and Mr. Eltayeb Adam - UNICEF Representative for Gulf Region.









*“UN statisticians tell us of the tragic absence of schooling for millions of young girls and boys. This situation, faced by far too many children around the world, must not be allowed to continue. Without education, how can those children, and through them their countries, ever hope to be a part of the new economies developing today? Sadly, the answer is that they will not, and cannot, be a part of the emerging knowledge-based economies unless they can have access to quality education, better health, better nutrition, and better living conditions. Much work remains to be done to ensure that all the world’s children enjoy their full rights and are able to reach their full potential.*”

*We have come together today in a World Day of Prayer. Let us join in prayer for the many children who currently are not in school. Let us pray for the improvement of education and that all children would have safe, productive, and fulfilling lives to look forward to. Let us pray for education systems around the world to be more creative, more responsive, and more relevant to the needs of society and the demands of the twenty-first century.”*

*— His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan Bin Mubarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, United Arab Emirates.*



*We should also remember that schools are more than places of academic learning; they are where children learn to socialize and where they find support. At the same time, teachers and school staff are the frontline for identifying challenges that children may be facing in their lives, such as violence at home, in the community and online.*

*This vital protective shield has been compromised during the pandemic and needs to be restored as soon as possible by getting children back into school. Even before the pandemic there were wide disparities in education among poorer and vulnerable children. These have now been exacerbated by the limited availability of working parents to take the place of teachers and a lack of equipment and resources for remote learning.*

*As the world builds back after the pandemic, integrated services for children including education, protection, health, mental health, and justice must be considered as essential services and supported with adequate resources. They must be linked to an inclusive social protection system that will protect the most vulnerable children and their caregivers, leaving no one behind.”*

*— Dr. Najat Maalla M’jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children.*

# Media Outreach

## YouTube Live stream

In November 18, The World Day of Prayer & Action for Children 2021 (repost from Facebook)

**319 VIEWS** **51 HOURS** of watch time

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER & ACTION FOR CHILDREN 2021

## Twitter Status

In November

31 TWEETS 28.7K REPLIES 3,147 RETWEETS 17 MENTIONS 888 LIKES

Top Tweet: The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2021 is a global event that brings together people from all over the world to pray and act for children. It is a time to reflect on the challenges that children face and to work together to create a better world for them.

Top Retweet: Register for World Day 2021! @ WorldDay2021

Top Mention: Rebeca Rios-Kohn Director of Prayer and Action for Children, the best community coming together to call for the reopening of schools and the protection of children's well-being. Together, we can reimagine a safer & sustainable world. #WorldDay2021

## Facebook Organic Stats

Actions on Page: 5

Page Likes: 28

Page Views: 908

Page Shares: 28

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER & ACTION FOR CHILDREN 2021

## Facebook Ads Stats

2.2M REACH

63.415 POST ENGAGEMENT

7 AD IMPRESSIONS

41.615 ADIMPRESSIONS

1.2 M VISITORS

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER & ACTION FOR CHILDREN 2021



## Children Address Unequal Access to Education During Pandemic By Rebeca Rios-Kohn

Opinion piece by Director of Prayer and Action for Children, Rebeca Rios-Kohn published by the inter-press service (ips) news agency, november 18, 2022.



## Movimiento con la Niñez y Juventud en América Latina y Paz y Esperanza Ecuador ganan Premio internacional "Wear My Shoes"

Wear My Shoes award published by Ecumenical Communication Agency.



## The World Day celebrations around the world



### Argentina

On December 1, GNRC Argentina organized a virtual dialogue with Alejandro Cussianovich, psycho-pedagogue, Norberto Liwski, former member and President of the Committee of the Rights of the Child, and Nobel Peace Laureate Adolfo Pérez Esquivel. The virtual dialogue, titled "Pedagogy of Tenderness", was an opportunity to reflect on the role of adults and educators in accompanying children with empathy and care, and standing by them as they grow up; as well as the kind of support they should provide, so that they can make decisions in life on the basis of what they feel and who they are. The event started with a video produced by GNRC Argentina with children from marginalized communities of Argentina, Mexico and Colombia answering the question "What does "tenderness" mean to you?" "How do you know you are loved?". It continued with an interfaith service for children, with religious leaders of Christian, Bahá'í, Muslim and Jewish communities, and was followed by the dialogue between the three guests. The event was attended by more than 60 participants.



### Bosnia and Herzegovina

The celebration of the World Day in Bosnia and Herzegovina included a series of workshops in the framework of the project "School for young peacekeepers" for primary and secondary school students from the area of Visoko City on November 17. On November 20, the GNRC marked the World Day with a workshop on "Children's Rights in our Society" attended by students from secondary schools. On November 22, another workshop focused on "Quality Education." Other workshops addressed communication skills, volunteerism and activism. World Day actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina were organized by GNRC under the coordination of Mozaik. The activities involved more than 200 children and ten educators.



## Brazil

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children was celebrated by GNRC Brazil on November 20, with the virtual event “Wear My Shoes: ensuring my right to return to school”, with participation of children, youth, teachers, educators and religious leaders.



The event was livestreamed on Facebook and YouTube.

## Colombia

In Colombia, the World Day was celebrated with a three-day hybrid forum on the importance of children returning to school safely, prioritizing their mental health and their emotional and spiritual well-being. Organized by GNRC Colombia in partnership with World Vision Colombia, this event took place from 18 to 20 November.



The first day had an academic focus, with several keynote speeches and presentations.

During the second day, some promising practices and experiences were presented by faith-communities and faith-based organizations, through the organization of several virtual workshops. On the third day, a hybrid format included face-to-face activities with children in Bucaramanga and other online sessions.

## Guatemala

In Guatemala, the GNRC produced a video on the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of children. The GNRC team interviewed religious leaders from the Bahá'í, Buddhist, Catholic, Evangelical, Muslim and Indigenous Faiths, and collected their testimonies and recommendations in a video that was launched on November 20 and then widely disseminated through social media.



Additionally, on November 20, a small prayer service was organized by Puerta de Esperanza, one of the member organizations of the GNRC, with the participation of ten children who are living on a trash dump in Guatemala.

## Dominican Republic

In the Dominican Republic, the GNRC organized an interfaith breakfast with religious leaders, members of the GNRC, government officials and representatives of civil society organizations. The event took place on November 24. The topic of the event was children's mental health and spiritual well-being, in the context of their return to school.

The event started with a keynote speech by a psychologist from World Vision International, and then continued with the sharing of promising/good practices from faith communities that have been supporting children with distance learning/remote learning during the pandemic and continue to support them as they return to school.



The head of the department of psychology of the Ministry of Education presented the policies and programmes that the Ministry has put in place in this regard. Other guests included the First Lady of the Dominican Republic, the UNICEF Representative in the Dominican Republic, the coordinator of the NGO Coalition for Children, and others. The event concluded with the reading of the Joint Statement developed by Arigatou International and partners as part of the Wear My Shoes Campaign.

## India

In India, the World Day 2021 focused on mental health, spiritual well-being, right to education, child's dignity, and making schools safe for children. In partnership with 32 public and private organizations, Shanti Ashram led ten activities in the framework of the Wear My Shoes campaign.



The campaign was launched on 12th November 2021, a couple of days before India's national children's day. The campaign was launched by the District Collector of Coimbatore. Actions included workshops with parents and teachers, storytelling and dialogue sessions with children, children's parliament, dissemination of Wear My Shoes podcast, and stress management and mental health sessions with girls and boys, among others. World Day actions in India reached 5.145 people between adults and children.



## Mexico

GNRC Mexico celebrated the World Day on November 27 through an online event with children, religious leaders and GNRC members. Tamara, GNRC youth coordinator and member of the global GNRC Children's Committee, acted as master of ceremony. Children were invited to pray for children's safe return to school. Then religious leaders read a joint statement they had prepared and through which they committed to support children through emotional and spiritual care. Additionally, GNRC Mexico donated a school kit with school supplies to each child in attendance for their return to school.



## Montenegro

World Day activities in Tuzi, Montenegro, included a main event called "Children have all the rights" which consisted of an exhibition of 40 drawings done by children about the importance of listening to children and respecting their rights. The event was attended by 66 participants. It included child-led performances, including piano playing and dancing.

## Nicaragua

GNRC Nicaragua celebrated the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children on December 4, through an online exhibition with artwork produced by children, through which they expressed how the pandemic impacted their lives and their recommendations for building back better. The title of the event was "Children in the heart of God."



## Panama

In collaboration with the Ombudsman Office (of the government) and other partners, the GNRC Panama celebrated the World Day through a forum on "The right to effective participation of children." Around 50 children from different schools and religious backgrounds participated in the event to express their concerns about the urgency to return to school for in-person learning.



They asked the representatives of the Ministry of Education to ensure safe return to school for children and to reduce the existing inequality gap between private and public schools. It was an opportunity for children to advocate for the right to education of all children, including children with disabilities.

## South Africa

GNRC South Africa marked the World Day 2021 with an interfaith prayer service and a candle lighting ceremony, reflecting on children's right to education and opportunities to build back better through interfaith action.



## Sri Lanka

GNRC Sri Lanka celebrated the World Day through a workshop called "Art for mental well-being." The event was held at 'Thimbirigedara Art Gallery', Wariyapola, in North Western Province, and was conducted in the Sinhala language. Children from the Buddhist faith participated in this workshop and they began the workshop with silent prayer. Ms. Shriyalatha De Silva, an Art teacher at Sunanda College, Wariyapola, and Mr. Thimbiriyaagama Bandara, a well-known author and journalist.



It was an opportunity for the participants to discuss the benefits of art for children's mental health and well-being, especially during the pandemic and for their return to school.



## Tanzania

In Tanzania, the World Day was marked on November 20 with more than 72 participants including children and youth, matrons and patrons from ten different peace clubs, faith leaders from diverse religious institutions, educators, government leaders and partner organizations. The event was to reflect on the importance for children's return to school and to listen to what children had to say to adults as they were asked to put themselves in the children's shoes. during a pandemic.



One of the youth underlined how:

*"education brings children together not only to study but also to play and build relationships, with different children of diverse backgrounds. As we recover from COVID-19 lockdowns, it should be taken as an opportunity to value the time we (children and youth) spend together and use it to promote social cohesions, good values and learning the importance of being together".*





## Contact Us

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**“May all living beings be well, to every child, every boy, every girl, may we tell them that we are together in prayer but also in action.”**

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



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