

## World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2022

### Protecting children's dignity! A call to action for children on the move

#### Draft Concept Note #4 (29-06-22)

#### Introduction

Arigatou International (AI) is *all for children* and carries out its mission through its [four global initiatives](#). The Arigatou International Initiative, Prayer and Action for Children (PAC) was established in 2008 and is led by the New York office. PAC works with diverse religious leaders and faith communities to promote interfaith cooperation and advocacy for children's rights, policy changes that benefit children and to influence positive social and behavioral change to end violence against children. PAC is guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the [Panama Commitments to End Violence against Children](#).

In collaboration with members of the [Global Network of Religions for Children](#) (GNRC) in over 60 countries, PAC leads the annual World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (World Day) on November 20, the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and also Universal Children's Day. In addition to promoting prayer, meditation, and other forms of worship including silent observance, the World Day acts as a catalyst to encourage a wide range of actions year-round to advance the well-being of children and advocate for the respect and protection of their rights.

World Day has been celebrated in over 90 countries, and every year more organizations work hard to facilitate, support, and host celebrations that reach and benefit grassroots. In 2021, eighteen child-focused organizations joined Arigatou International and UNICEF to celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children and launch the Wear My Shoes Campaign. Building on the contribution of faith actors to children's spiritual development and respect of their dignity and rights, the Wear My Shoes Campaign mobilized 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 livestream of the World Day's main event which took place at the Expo Dubai 2020 and the Wear My Shoes social media campaign reached over 2.2 million people; engaged more than 1.2 million visitors; and raised media attention from international and local media like the inter-press service (IPS) news agency. The World Day was also observed in communities in many countries such as Argentina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, India, Mexico, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Panama, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Tanzania.

Over the years, the World Day has become an advocacy platform coordinated by Arigatou International and implemented in partnership with many faith communities and organizations, in which spiritual ceremonies and actions bring together children and adults from diverse

religious and cultural backgrounds to actively support and promote children's rights and well-being.

## World Day 2022

Millions of children are "on the move" which includes refugees, migrants and internally displaced people. UNHCR estimates that in May 2022 global forced displacement surpassed 100 million,<sup>1</sup> and at least 37 million were children below 18 years old.<sup>2</sup> The driving factors are often related to armed conflict, poverty, natural disasters, and climate change. Regardless of the reasons for displacement, children face common risks in transit, at destination and upon return including economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect, and violence. Their vulnerability also prevents them from enjoying their fundamental rights including their right to education and health. For example, according to UNICEF, refugee children are 5 times more likely to be out of school than other children.<sup>3</sup>

***"Children on the move  
are first and foremost  
children and their  
rights move with  
them!"***

Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid – UN  
SRSB-VAC

As mentioned by Leyla Kayacik, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSB) on Migration and Refugees, *"when a large number of migrants and refugees arrive in new countries, after undergoing extremely difficult and potentially traumatic journeys, the most vulnerable persons, especially children, are often hit the hardest, and exposed to further risks, including the risk of sexual exploitation and abuse."*<sup>4</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic led to large-scale stranded migrant populations, with some experiencing destitution, detention, and abuse. The pandemic also pointed to pervasive inequalities deeply rooted in modern-day societies around the world leaving migrant and refugee children victims of discrimination, malnutrition, and family separation.<sup>5</sup>

Violence against children not only violates children's physical and emotional wellbeing but also their spiritual safety and development, as it breaks their connection with others and their sense of trust and respect for other human beings. We have a responsibility to protect the dignity of all children and to prevent the cycle of violence being repeated through family generations. Research shows that children who are victims of violence and abuse are more likely to abuse as parents/caregivers,<sup>6</sup> therefore, by nurturing the spiritual development of children who have been victims of displacement and violence, we can protect their dignity, support their holistic well-being and their healing process and resilience.

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<sup>1</sup> UNHCR: [Ukraine, other conflicts push forcibly displaced total over 100 millions for the first time](#)

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF: [Nearly 37 million children displaced worldwide – highest number ever recorded](#)

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF: [Migrant and displaced children](#)

<sup>4</sup> Council of Europe: [Council of Europe assesses measures taken by states to protect children on the move from sexual abuse and exploitation](#)

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF: [Children on the move, including Venezuelans and communities affected by COVID-19](#)

<sup>6</sup> WHO 2020, <sup>6</sup> WHO (2020), <https://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/child-maltreatment>

We know faith communities are often on the move with families and children and can provide a continuum of child protection services and support for them. As the world continues to struggle with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the on-going conflict, climate and poverty crises, driving factors of forced displacement remain affecting children’s dignity and posing risks to their physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual development, well-being and safety. With growing global instability and extreme challenges faced by host communities, there is an increased opportunity for faith actors to build social cohesion, promote peace, and address xenophobia through the spiritual support for children, and their unique role in the realm of faith-sensitive psychosocial support.<sup>7</sup>

Previous efforts to mobilize faith actors for children on the move include the [Faith Action for Children on the Move – Global Partners Forum](#), held in Rome in 2017 where over 85 organizations engaged in dialogue to better understand the many challenges and hardships faced by children on the move and the role of faith actors in supporting children and their families. In December 2020, the conference “[From Faith to Action](#)” highlighted the actual and potential roles of faith actors in contributing towards an effective and holistic response to child displacement in Europe and Central Asia. It illustrated a plurality of ways in which faith actors actively support children and youth on the move, including through ensuring protection and social inclusion, providing spiritual and psychosocial support, countering xenophobia and discrimination, and advocating for policy changes. Outcomes are documented in the publication “[From Faith to Action: Inter-Religious Action to Protect the Rights of Children Affected by Migration with a Focus on Europe And Central Asia.](#)”

Respect for the human life and dignity of the child, as expressed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is a fundamental principle found in all major religions. Religious teachings, in their distinctive ways, reiterate the notion of child rights and the critical importance of treating children with the upmost respect and consideration of their needs, rights and best interest.

The World Day 2022 presents an opportunity to increase multi-stakeholder collaboration to advocate for every child’s dignity and holistic well-being, including children on the move. The World Day 2022 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 the respect, safety, and well-being of children.

### **World Day thematic**

Protecting children’s dignity! A call to action for children on the move

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<sup>7</sup> World Vision: [Learning brief: Spiritual support to children on the move and their caregivers as a source of healing and resilience | Faith and Development | World Vision International \(wvi.org\)](#)

## World Day Committee

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is an opportunity to strengthen collaboration with like-minded organizations to amplify the advocacy efforts to promote children's rights and well-being, and this year it will have a special focus on respecting and protecting children's dignity, who are on the move.

Therefore, it is proposed that a World Day Committee is established, co-chaired by Arigatou International and UNICEF, and with the participation of other international and national faith-inspired organizations and child-focused agencies including:

- Alliance for the Protection of Children
- Bahá'í International Community
- Bethany Christian Services
- ChildFund Alliance
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, New York Office
- Global Network of Religions for Children
- Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
- Harvard University's Human Flourishing Program
- International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB)
- Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities
- International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (ISPCAN)
- Joint Learning Initiative of Faith and Local Communities
- Keeping Children Safe
- New York Board of Rabbis
- International Conference of Rabbis
- Religions for Peace
- Shanti Ashram
- United Religions Initiative
- World Council of Churches
- World Vision International

The World Day 2022 aims to:

1. Raise awareness about the **driving factors of forced displacement** exacerbated by the continuing COVID19 pandemic and the ongoing conflicts, climate crisis, imminent food crisis and worsening poverty and its impact on children's dignity – and raise awareness on effective measures to address these driving factors.
2. Promote local and global interfaith and multi-stakeholder collaboration to advocate for the **protection against violence of children on the move from all crises**, including advocacy on the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and the Global Compact on Refugees.
3. Promote the **key role of faith actors** as first respondents of emergency and humanitarian crises and **mobilize them to protect children's dignity and best interest when working with them and their families**; building on the action plans that resulted from the Faith Action for Children on the Move Forum and the "[From Faith to Action](#)" Conference.

The World Day – Wear My Shoes campaign activities leading to the World Day 2022 will be decided by the World Day Committee members, and therefore the timeline below only includes broad actions for now.

Activity	Deadline
<b>Establishment of the World Day Committee</b>	May 10 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Approval of World Day concept note</b>	June 7 <sup>th</sup>
<b>World Day – Wear My Shoes campaign activities including:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wear My Shoes Award</li> <li>• Wear My Shoes Podcast</li> <li>• Joint Statement</li> <li>• Symposium: Protecting Children’s Dignity! A call to action for Children on the Move</li> </ul>	June-November
<b>World Day hybrid event and local World Day celebrations</b>	November 17 <sup>th</sup> and 18 <sup>th</sup>