



Consortium Working Meeting

Strengthening Families to Nurture Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence

3 – 4 July 2018 – Château de Bossey
1279 Bogy-Bossey, Switzerland

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Arigatou International — Geneva

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INTRODUCTION

Objectives

- Become acquainted with one another as members of the Consortium and gain a common vision of its added value;
- Reflect on the relevance of nurturing values and spirituality in early childhood and on the importance of working with religious communities to support families in this endeavor;
- Share good practices on early childhood development, socio-emotional learning, spirituality, strengthening families and working with religious communities, as well as current research on the topic;
- Identify the strengths the membership brings to the Consortium, potential gaps, and opportunities to work together;
- Agree on a common plan of action and deliverables of the Consortium.

Participants

Mr. Friedrich Affolter, UNICEF; Dr. Mustafa Ali, Global Network of Religions for Children – Arigatou International; Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya Movement Sri Lanka; Ms. Caroline Arnold, Independent Expert; Ms. Shahin Ashraf, Islamic Relief Worldwide; Dr. Kezevino Aram, Shanti Ashram India; Ms. Ornella Barros, Arigatou International – New York; Mrs. Somboon Chungprampree, International Network of Engaged Buddhists; Mr. Andrew Claypole, Office of the SRSG on Violence Against Children; Ms. Caroline Dalabona, Pastoral da Crianca International; Dr. Nana

Danelia, World Vision International; Dr. Ibrahima Giroux, World Bank; Ms. Suna Hanoz, Early Childhood Peace Consortium; Ms. Vera Leal, Arigatou International – Geneva; Ms. Eleonora Mura, Arigatou International – Geneva; Dr. Ilham Nasser, Independent Expert; Rev. Fred Nyabera, Ending Child Poverty – Arigatou International; Dr. Rashied Omar, Independent Expert; Ms. Sabine Rakotomalala, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children; Dr. Anantanand Rambachan, Independent Expert; Ms. Rebeca Rios-Kohn, Prayer and Action for Children – Arigatou International; Ms. Frederique Seidel, World Council of Churches; Dr. Selamawit Tadesse, Catholic Relief Services; Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe, Arigatou International – Geneva.

Apologies

Dr. Patrice Brodeur, University of Montreal; Rev. Duleep De Chickera, Former Bishop Anglican Church of Colombo, Sri Lanka; Dr. Scherto Gill, Gerrand-Hermes Foundation for Peace.

TUESDAY 3 JULY



The meeting began with a welcome and introduction by Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe, Director of Arigatou International – Geneva. Ms. Uribe shared the welcome message from Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International, who expressed deep appreciation to all the organizations and experts who have joined this ambitious endeavor, and reaffirmed Arigatou International’s support in developing this initiative.

The morning was dedicated to getting to know one another, learning about the various organizations’ interests and expectations, experiences, and the expertise that each brings to the Consortium; as well as to reflect on the knowledge gained during the seminar.

KNOWLEDGE GAINED DURING THE SEMINAR

- Increased awareness on the latest scientific findings on Early Childhood Development (ECD);
- Deepened knowledge of ECD at the global level and identification of instruments developed that can support the work of grassroots organizations in ECD;
- Strengthened understanding on the latest research on the positive influence of religion and spirituality on emotional and physical well-being during childhood and adolescence;

- Increased understanding of good practices for nurturing spirituality in ECD as presented by the different organizations during panel III.

Open Questions and Unaddressed Topics:

- Need for working definitions and clarification of concepts, namely of the terms: secular, spirituality, identity, family, post-secular, positive disruption, deculturalization, decomunalization;
- Strengthen focus on gender violence;
- Further explore the relationship between early childhood development and violent extremism;
- Need for a stocktaking and mapping exercise on the roles of each member on the topics discussed;
- Explore the role of social media, how we relate to it when the world and children are so close to technology;
- Further explore the importance of the concept of identity and of developing “embracing identities”;
- Further reflection on how to create positive disruptions.
- Bringing an interfaith dimension to discussing the role and impact of ECD programming;
- Connecting ECD work from faith communities, NGOs, INGOs and multilateral organizations and strengthening understanding, trust and collaboration between these groups;
- Unique occasion to build a global movement of coalition of the willing to reimagine children’s futures, by promoting nurturing care and challenging social and cultural norms that condone violence against children;
- Working with academia to generate and systematize evidence, including finding innovative ways to collect and generate evidence from work at the grassroots level;
- Unique platform to exchange good practices between participants and to co-create new projects; engage and exchange ideas with a diverse group of stakeholders;
- Raising awareness on “faith literacy” among non-faith actors and multilateral organizations;
- Excellent space to speak frankly and identify the needs and demands (as participants in the Consortium), particularly to foster authentic relations between members.

Added Value of the Consortium: Identifying Potential Gaps and Opportunities

Opportunities:

- An integration of nurturing spirituality in ECD programming and fostering interfaith theological reflections on ECD;
- Arigatou International’s availability to support the work of the Consortium;



Gaps:

- Need to directly engage children in activities of the Consortium;
- Further develop Terms of Reference for Consortium participants;
- Create a Steering Group and refine the working modalities of the Consortium;
- Provide further clarification on the added value of the Consortium;
- Provide a detailed work plan for the next two years;
- Improve geographical diversity of the case-studies and best practices;
- Strengthen the connection between nurturing spirituality in ECD and peace building.

CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

This session examined the concrete practices and integrated approaches for creating a conducive environment where faith communities, faith-based organizations, NGOs, INGOs and multilateral organizations can work together to nurture spirituality for the holistic well-being of the child. The session also allowed for a dialogue on the concepts of family, spirituality and religiosity in relation to the upbringing of children.

Prof. Anantanand Rambachan provided some initial reflections on the role of religious traditions as of sources of the expression and cultivation of the vision of a “Good Life”, contributing to a flourishing human life. In this sense, he stressed how the different and

diverse theologies and practices of “Joy” and “Good Life” are also fundamental not only to understand human well-being as an aspiration within different religious traditions, but also to fully comprehend the visions of the child and the family as human experiences contributing to human flourishing.

In his remarks, he underscored the need for the Consortium members to invest in understanding the different religious traditions and to unpack the various visions of a flourishing child to appreciate common perceptions among these religious traditions. However, he also recommended that the Consortium look at the differences among the perceptions and outlooks within different traditions, honoring the rich diversity of approaches.

Prof. Anantanand continued his reflections, recalling the need to overcome violence against children by gaining insight into the narratives that condone the use of violence and by challenging the traditions that see the child as an inherently flawed human being whose flaws need to be rectified by the use of violence and fear.

Prof. Anantanand concluded his remarks by reflecting on the respective meanings of religiosity and spirituality, and their connections.

During the ensuing dialogue, participants engaged in deep reflections on the connections between spirituality and religion by sharing their thoughts on the meaning of spirituality for non-religious people and how positive spiritual experiences can be connected with “secular” concepts such as child protection and ending violence against children. The concepts of secular and post-secular were mentioned in these discussions.



The group commented on the importance of faith and non-faith actors working together to enhance concrete ways of creating trust among those concerned with the well-being of children, and committed to supporting families to nurture flourishing children, including tackling some of the root causes and systemic issues affecting the well-being of the child. In this regard, it was agreed that the Consortium should provide an opportunity for faith and non-faith actors to work together to build bridges and overcome the distrust that has often undermined the potential for cooperation among these actors. While the Consortium is formed of many organizations that are faith-inspired, it is not an exclusive platform, but rather a collaboration to foster child protection and bring peace, joy, and well-being to families. The importance of interfaith and intrafaith collaborations, that are also inclusive of minority faith traditions, was emphasized.

The ensuing discussions focused on the role of the Consortium, by examining key commonalities that brought these different organizations together, including their commitments to the well-being of children and their shared missions.

The discussions then addressed the concrete working modalities for the Consortium to allow for respectful, engaging and effective collaboration between faith and non-faith actors to contribute to the global challenge of

ending violence against children and nurturing spirituality in early childhood. The participants discussed the need for the creation of a clear Terms of Reference providing operating principles. However, participants appreciated that the Consortium is not embedded in highly formalistic and bureaucratic structures.

VISION DEVELOPMENT

The final session of the day was dedicated to creating a common vision for the Consortium. Participants engaged in an envisioning exercise which focused on determining the direction of the Consortium, defining the scope and approaches, and discussing the uniqueness and potential added value of the Consortium. The following is the proposed vision.

Vision

A world where the human dignity of young children is affirmed and they are nurtured by families and caregivers in safe, healthy and loving environments, free of violence; where they build positive relations with themselves and others, thrive and reach their fullest potential.



WEDNESDAY 4 JULY



OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

Ms. Uribe explained that the Consortium aims to achieve the following general objectives: raise awareness; advocate for changes at global and grassroots level; expand knowledge and research; develop holistic approaches.

In order to reach these objectives, the following four initial outputs are proposed:

1. An interfaith toolkit
2. Research
3. A group of religious leaders committed to the topic
4. Sharing of replicable good practices

The group was divided into these four working areas to discuss their objectives and deliverables. The following documents the ideas developed during these discussions.

AWARENESS-RAISING

The Consortium aims to raise awareness and provide information, among and with religious communities and leaders, on the impacts of violence in early childhood, as well as the importance and successful ways of supporting families to foster ethical values and nurture spirituality in children, as a violence prevention mechanism. Religious leaders play a crucial role in terms by providing information and raising awareness within their constituencies. The discussions in this group focused on exploring concrete ways to raise awareness with and among grassroots religious communities and families.

Group members:

- Shahin Ashraf, Islamic Relief Worldwide;
- Somboon Chungprampree, International Network of Engaged Buddhists;
- Selamawit Tadesse, Catholic Relief Services;

- Mustafa Ali, Global Network of Religions for Children – Arigatou International;
- Vera Leal, Arigatou International – Geneva.

Activities

- Organize roundtables and workshops with religious leaders, non-governmental organizations, and academics around the topic at global, national, regional and local levels
- Incorporate the key areas of the Consortium into already existent parental programs in different organizations
- Initiate a preventive strategic work in schools, nurseries and parenting groups

Channels

- Media, faith and youth leaders, schools, nurseries and kindergartens, hospitals (prenatal and postnatal), non-governmental organizations and faith-based organizations

Supported by

- Global community champions
- Using and sharing existing toolkits
- Getting the buy-in from multiple stakeholders

Challenges

- Embedded patriarchal notions.
- Religious leaders' ambivalence on the topic

- How the media portrays violence.
- Westernized agenda perceived to be imposing, as well as the stereotypes associated with it

Opportunities

- Develop a toolkit
- Use scriptures to challenge social norms
- Use social pressure and momentum on the topic
- Learn from each other
- Raise the quality of information through statistics and data

How

- Creating spaces for open dialogues for families and religious/faith leaders
- Working from a Convention on the Rights of the Child's perspective
- Organizing roundtable discussions at various levels
- Creating global interfaith campaigns
- Sharing evidence and impact.
- Carrying out policy briefings

ADVOCACY

The Consortium aims to contribute to challenging and transforming cultural and social norms and attitudes that condone violence in early childhood by strengthening the norms and values that support non-violent, respectful, nurturing, positive and gender equitable relationships and environments, focusing on the early years. The Consortium plans to

contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and will work with global actors and local religious communities for advocacy purposes.

Group members:

- Andrew Claypole, Office of the SRSG on Violence Against Children;
- Sabine Rakotomalala, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children;

- Frederique Seidel, World Council of Churches;
- Rebeca Rios-Kohn, Prayer and Action for Children, Arigatou International;
- Eleonora Mura, Arigatou International – Geneva.

Considerations

- Take an integrated approach when working with families
- Focus on the spiritual, educational, health and nutrition, protection, and economic aspects of child development, with the family, children's well-being, and ECD at the center

Actors

- At the community level: families and caregivers, religious communities, traditional leaders, community-based organizations, faith based organizations, local agencies, etc.
- At the state level: policymakers (co-creating a vision for ECD through advocacy), local municipalities, service delivery systems (schools, kindergartens, health centers, etc.)
- Private sector: business communities
- Media campaigns: radio, TV, billboards, local community communication systems

Activities

- At the community level: home visits, economic outreach programs, nutrition, supportive social networks, life-skills and trauma-healing programs, theological reflections and ECD, gender and ECD and identifying opportunities for co-creation with religious leaders
- At the private level: through ECD programs and innovation resources

In addition to the four groups, another group was formed to discuss the Theory of Change of the Consortium.

THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change will be further developed based on the view that by nurturing values and spirituality in early childhood, children's identity formation as well as their upbringing practices are influenced, supporting the flourishing of the child. Ethical values such as respect, empathy, responsibility, compassion, and non-violence, are key to nurturing children's identities and can only be developed in an environment free of violence. Children's spirituality, reflected in their relations with the "Divine" or the "Ultimate", themselves, others, and nature, as well as in their capacity to manage their emotions; their self-awareness and self-worth, are closely related to the practice of ethical values and are developed, among others, by creating spaces for introspection, quietness and wonder, and connecting with oneself and others. Religious communities play a crucial role in supporting families and caregivers in these efforts, as well as helping to challenge the structures and cultures that violate children's dignity, through self-examination and theological reflections. Positive parenting programs are not enough to achieve these efforts; it is necessary to look



at the holistic development of children and influence the ecological systems that impact their upbringing.



Group members:

- Kezevino Aram, Shanti Ashram India;
- Caroline Arnold, Independent Expert;
- Rashied Omar, Independent Expert;
- Anantanand Rambachan, Independent Expert;
- Maria Lucia Uribe, Arigatou International – Geneva.

The members agreed that the Consortium should look into conditions that affect early childhood, as well as the subjective nature of human agency; the analysis of both of these areas can help direct strategic programmatic actions. The members emphasized that social change requires patience, as results are only seen in the long term and can take generations.

The focus of nurturing values and spirituality in early childhood will help to develop an understanding of various influences on the identity formation of the child. The question of identity leads to the existential question of who we are, and how the process of construction of identities evolves throughout life, starting from the moment of birth. It is in the early

years that the child starts building relations with others and learning how to relate to one another; this process is influenced by how children are nurtured and the experiences they live. The unspoken teachings reflected in how caregivers and adults act around children, their relationships with others, and how they raise the child, are far more powerful in the identity formation process. There are, however, larger elements related to the systems and structures in which children grow that need to be taken into account and questioned, which demands additional investments in communities.

Family environments are key places for children to learn to interrogate themselves, reflect on who they are, and be mindful of their relations with others and the interdependence of human life. One's identity should not be based on violence to the "other" or on dehumanizing the "other". The concept of co-arising was discussed as key to interdependence and as a critical component to the identity formation process that allows children to flourish in relation to others, holding each other together.

It is critical that the Consortium centers its work on the agency of the child that allows for enquiry.



ACTION PLAN

AWARENESS-RAISING

Output	Activity	When?	Where?	How can your organization contribute to it?
Foster religious understanding of the child and ECD's	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roundtable discussions/ dialogue with religious leaders and families • Develop an edited volume (building on the information collected from the roundtables) that contributes to the toolkit 	2019-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India • Kenya • United Kingdom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting and supporting the organization of the roundtables
Faith leaders and faith actors literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faith literacy training based on the toolkit 	By end of 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be discussed 	
Assessment and launch of toolkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring, Evaluation Accountability and Learning – Global Meeting 	2021	Geneva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hosting and supporting the organization

Comments from the group:

- Focus on the understanding of the child.
- During roundtables: identify and explore if practices are in harmony with theology and assemble caregivers from different religious traditions.
- Assess the contributions of neuroscience to ECD and incorporate the research during activities.

RESEARCH

Output	Activity	When?	Where?	How can your organization contribute to it?
Information gathered on past and ongoing research on children, spirituality and the prevention of violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an internal survey in the Consortium to map past and current research, as well as findings and gaps • Prepare and design a survey • Prepare and disseminate the survey results 	January 2019		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design the survey • Provide inputs into survey design • Participate in the analysis of the results • Prepare report • Recruit volunteers
A glossary of terminology on spirituality and faith-inspired approaches on ECD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a literature review on the terminology used in research studies focusing on spirituality-inspired approaches to ECD • Add citations <p>Glossary template:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECD • Family • Religiosity • Spirituality • Morality • Virtues • Identity • Tolerance • Cultural and social norms 	July 2019		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every organization will suggest terms for the list and then will be assigned to research • Consortium members who have access to academic institutions
Conduct a discourse analysis of ECD related religious practices and materials of major faith traditions and their alignment/non alignment with evidence-based ECD practices				
An analysis of the added value of faith-inspired and supported ECD		July 2020		

Comments from the group:

- Mapping of cases where religious actors have also encouraged violence against children.
- Work with academic institutions such as Yale that can support the research.
- Define the scope of the research.

ADVOCACY

Output	Activity	When?	Where?	How can your organization contribute to it?
GLOBAL: Use the advocacy messages produced	• Attend/organize events	March 2019	Side Events: • CRC Reporting • HRC • CSW	
		July 2019	Side Event at HLPF: To bring champions: Heckman, Bernard Van Leer, experts, WHO, UNICEF	
In-Country	• Rountables with faith leaders		• Kenya • India • Dominican Republic	

Comments from the group:

- Connect advocacy with awareness raising as many areas support each other.
- Identify clearly what to advocate – key advocacy messages.
- Ensure inter-sectionality of the messages.



HOLISTIC APPROACHES

Output	Activity	When?	Where?	How can your organization contribute to it?
Develop a guide on Holistic Intervention Design (develop the guiding principles and framework) as part of the Toolkit	• Mapping of existing resources and holistic Interventions	2 months	• Virtual	• Share existing materials and practices
	• Target group mapping	2 months		• Time and commitment from the team
	• Concept and outline development (define the implementation strategies)	3 months		
	• Presentation and validation from steering committee/piloting	4 months		
Design and development of concrete interventions				

Comments from the group:

- Connect the mapping to the Theory of Change.



FUNCTIONING AND STRUCTURE OF THE CONSORTIUM

Regarding the functioning and structure of the Consortium, the group shared the following ideas and reflections:

- Review the Terms of Reference; the objectives and vision of the Consortium are a way to clearly convey the identity of the Consortium. Members suggested to replace the word “members” by “coalition” or “participants” of the Consortium;
- The group stressed the importance of an organic and fluid approach to working, emphasizing the group as “a coalition of the willing” mobilized by a shared mission;
- Arigatou International will continue as the Secretariat of the Consortium, and Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe as the convener;
- Identify opportunities for a flagship program for the next 18 months across the different working areas;
- Work on the visibility of the Consortium;
- Create a Steering Group with one person representing each of the working areas and prepare a clear Terms of Reference;
- Importance of managing, monitoring and evaluating the work of the Consortium and holding everyone accountable;
- Identify stakeholders and allies that can be mobilized within our organizations but also from other areas such as child psychology, pediatrics, etc.;
- Clearly determine what must be done together that cannot be done individually. For this, two questions will be sent to the group in order to reflect on (1) the added value of the Consortium (2) the benefits of being a Consortium member.

Next steps

- Share the report and one-page document compiling the added value and benefits of the Consortium members – End July 2018;
- Identify members of the Steering Group – End August 2018;
- Working group members from each area and the Secretariat to meet virtually, fine tune the action plan and identify priority actions for the next year – September 2018;
- Finalize Theory of Change.



FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT US

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**"May every day find every
one of us continually
embraced in growing peace."**

*—Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou
International, September 21, 2015*

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