

Inspire

Ending Poverty, Enriching Children: Inspire. Act. Change.



GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter

Issue No. 6

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Interfaith Cooperation for a Better World for Children

Welcome to Dar es Salaam, Home of the GNRC Fourth Forum

By Hawa Noor



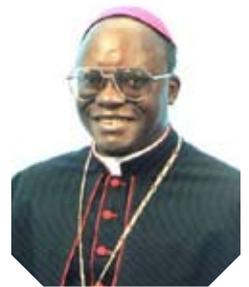
Rev. Keishi Miyamoto



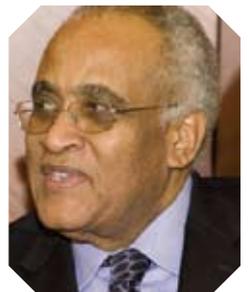
Mr. Abubakar F. Kabwogi

“We pledge to go beyond conventional economic approaches to addressing poverty, realizing that development does not automatically alleviate poverty. Our economies must be reconsidered and reconstructed on the basis of ethics and good governance: we call for dialogues of conscience to increase empathy, promote just structures, and make governments responsible to their people. We affirm that children and youth have the potential to transform their communities and the world.”

— Hiroshima Declaration, GNRC Third Forum Declaration



Bishop Dr. Method Kilaini



Dr. Salim A. Salim

There is an urgent ethical imperative that we commit ourselves to a vision that no one, especially children, should live under conditions dictated by extreme poverty. We are enriched by the resources of our religious and spiritual traditions and are particularly enabled to take action to foster conscience, increase empathy, promote just structures and make governments responsible to their people in eradicating extreme forms of poverty.

This is because we believe that extreme forms of poverty constitute the worst and most extensive form of violence in the world. It is the greatest moral scandal of our times, especially when considering that there is enough in this world for everyone, but grossly and unjustly distributed. Our theme for the Fourth Forum is: Ending Poverty, Enriching Children: Inspire. Act. Change. The program is designed to address issues related to child poverty, and how faith

communities and members from different spiritual traditions can engage, together, to reduce poverty and eradicate extreme forms of it.

This is why religious leaders are meeting in this historic city of Dar es Salaam. In the past Forums, unique initiatives have been launched, networks strengthened, best practices shared and important work planned. At the Fourth Forum, a Poverty Initiative will be shaped and launched.

“About Child Soldier’s Rescue” — an Interview with Dr. Dorcas Kiplagat, Goldin Institute Global Associate

By GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter Team

Q. What are you engaged in?

My name is Dorcas Kiplagat and I am the Goldin Institute Global Associate, currently coordinating a project to launch a regional platform for child soldiers prevention and reintegration in Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Southern Sudan.

How many children do you handle?

The main focus country of our work in the first year was Uganda, where about 30,000 children were engaged in armed conflict, majority of whom are now back in the community. Many of them are not fully emotionally, socially, physically and even economically reintegrated.

What are the common problems faced by ex-child soldiers?

Their problems include trauma, rejection by their own communities, inability to pursue education due to poverty and lack of income generating activities for the older ones, especially those who already have their own families. In 2011 we engaged former child soldiers in peace building activities with other youth in the Acholi area that was coordinated by our partners: the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative. In the same period a training workshop was organized for religious leaders and former child soldiers on reduction of small arms. Such involvements are

aimed at giving the children a sense of belonging and dignity as valuable members of their society.

How is the National Integration Platform likely to assist child soldiers?

It is important to note that the idea of a National Platform arose from the observed uncoordinated work in addressing their issues. Several organizations have intervened but the results have not been very good because each of the actors singly addressed a small component of the problem while leaving out a larger portion of it. The Platform will therefore clearly identify the issues and allocate responsibility according to each organization’s ability and strength while offering the children with a place to seek help and be heard. This will give them the opportunity to learn from others.

How do you compare faith-based interventions with other approaches?

Faith based structures are deeply spread i.e. grassroots-based and superior in accessing large numbers of people. They give assurance of a complete fresh start due to the belief in total forgiveness of sins and so former child soldiers can have a feeling of a second chance despite the many atrocities they may have committed. Faith in God has no place

for revenge hence acceptance with no conditions. This has accelerated peace and assured sustainability based on permanence of structures, knowledge and skills. Most other interventions are money driven and leave as soon as financial benefits go down.

What drives you to intervene?

My 10 years experience as a school teacher enabled me to interact with students, especially from the poor slum areas of Nairobi. This opened my eyes to the fact that something good can come out of a young person irrespective of his/her background if the right support and help is given. I saw young boys with very low self-esteem join the school and leave with success and confidence after four years of high school.

How do you feel when you meet traumatized children who have not known peace for a long time?

First shock and disbelief that a sane adult would let children go through such atrocities! Bitterness and hate for the perpetrators! I would sometimes wonder if the perpetrators have children of their own. Many times I get desperate when I cannot offer the kind of help that a child needs. If I had the chance, I would sponsor their academic pursuits and provide the older ones with the required skills to promote self reliance.



Ending Poverty, Enriching Children: Inspire. Act. Change.

Dr. Kiplagat with two former child soldiers from Uganda. Photo: ACRL—RfP

Children in India Share their Experiences of Poverty

By GNRC Fourth Forum Newsletter Team

A Children's consultation meeting held recently in preparation for the upcoming GNRC Fourth Forum in Coimbatore, India brought together over fifty children participants between the ages of twelve and eighteen from diverse religious backgrounds, to share their experiences of poverty and intervention measures that they can take to improve the situation. The aim was to provide space for children and young people, some of whom are victims of various societal vices such as HIV/AIDs and violence, to interact and analyze the effects of poverty in their community, highlight challenges involved and facilitate dialogue for action.

Although a good number of them, especially those from poor families said they sometimes felt stigmatized, the children also appreciated the opportunity provided by the meeting that they said; 'made them feel loved and appreciated' hence they contributed actively on actions that can be taken both individually and collectively to reverse the situation.

At the end of the one day meeting, participants had defined poverty-most of whom associated it with the deprivation of basic needs especially food, and mentioned a local example whereby some pupils who they knew took only one school-provided meal per day.

Besides basic needs, they also expressed their understanding of children's rights that they said included: the right to play, right to opinion, right to a decent meal and for disabled children the right to education and care. They also listed some of their rights that they felt were sometimes violated in their society i.e. the right to basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, being free from violence and child marriages and living in insecure and dangerous environments.

These they said were mainly caused by poverty, illiteracy, corruption, high-risk behavior such as alcoholism, harmful cultural practices and social stigma. Therefore, for the situation to improve, it was necessary for children to have access to basic needs, quality education and health care and support from adults that will eventually promote a poverty-free world, where young people will live in harmony with the law.

According to them, children can also be supported to undertake initiatives for their own goods such as education on financial literacy and to be trained on how to create awareness amongst their peers on the importance of education.



Photo: GNRC South East Asia

Doing Good All the Time

By Hawa Noor



As the world is currently roughed up with challenges such as the financial crisis, natural calamities, conflicts and wars among others, it is easy to hear people say that “the last days have come!” Well, this could be true but the situation puts demand on us to rack our brains for an underlying meaning of the real situation on the ground. This should however not be interpreted to mean that anybody is disputing the possibility of the current situation being characteristics of the last days... Nope! In fact, the contrary is more practical as it has been stated in most of our scriptures- even in the chronology of their happenings.

Now, back to reality: the world's current order has promoted selfish individualism as a way of life which has been a good tutor in training us to be less caring about others and worrying more about the self. In other words: “Everyone for himself and God for us all” In most such circumstances, it is easier to throw harsh words at another human being

before even attempting to put oneself in their shoes to understand what might have prompted their actions. I bet it is important to give an example at this juncture: I recently happened to be at a scene where a comedy series was being shot without the public's awareness of it; so that when it is finally screened, the audience can laugh about their actions when they were “caught unaware.” So this particular part involved a lady sitting at one of the parks in my city, holding an “infant” before suddenly deciding to abandon it and run away. To my surprise, apart from one person who held her and called the police, the majority of those who sat next to her left as fast as they could without the human instinct of looking back and worrying about the ‘abandoned infant.’ Oh My God -They all distanced themselves from ‘trouble!’

Well, due to the fact all the cameras were hidden, none of them was aware that they were being filmed and so they had acted on real situation! Alas! But thank God that it was just a doll used in a comedy series shooting.

What does such an experience tell about our nature these days? I had to pause and ask myself a couple of questions:

Does this portray the less and less human part of us?

What happened to the Bible's ten Commandments?

What about the concepts of not judging others and treating them as we would wish for ourselves?”

My Islamic teaching trains me to do good all the time since the same will reciprocate back to me in different

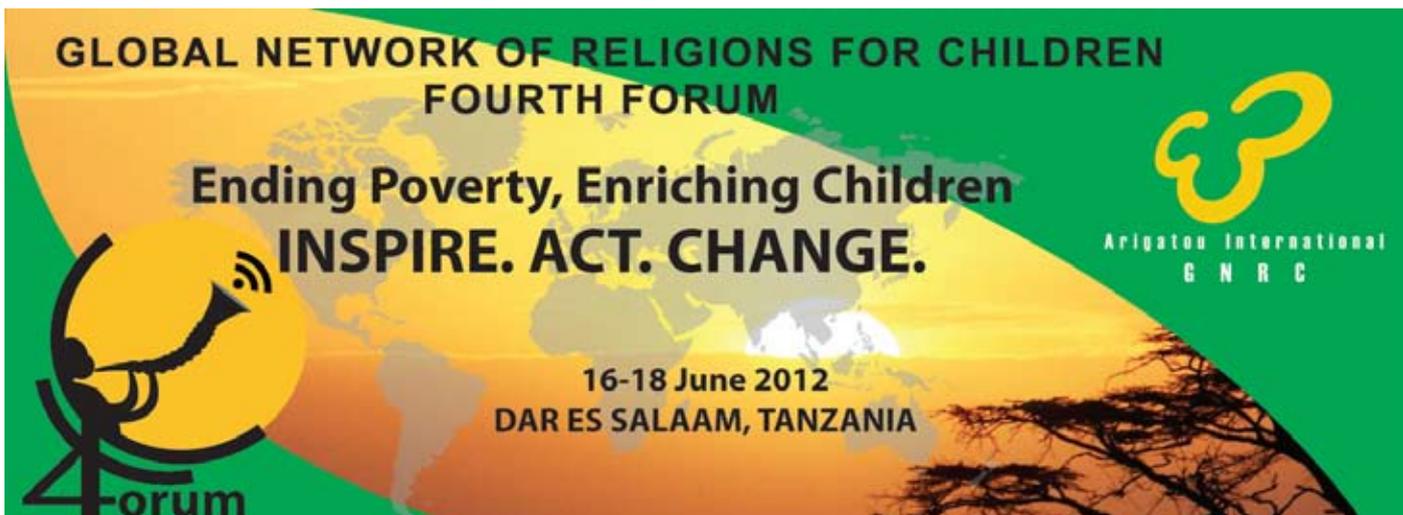
ways someday. From experience, this is indeed quite practical because whenever I do good especially to other people, there is a strong feeling of happiness, fulfillment and satisfaction deep in the heart. It also strengthens the relationship with the creator who rewards us for our good deeds and punishes us for allowing evil to dominate our souls. In my belief: the concept is simple: put yourself in the shoes of the other person and remember that whatever good one does, it is not to be taken for granted, after all we are all siblings of the same creator and in one way or the other by doing good to a fellow human being, our hearts are nourished and we feel satisfied.

Lastly, the fact that life is short and all of us will eventually vacate this earth is a clear reminder and a good reason to live and love one another and to live and let live.

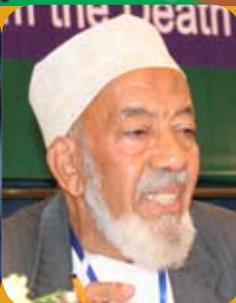
My urge therefore is that we should never shy away from doing good and never allow selfish forces to influence us. As believers, we are lucky to have our beliefs as guiding principles that help us differentiate between good and bad even in the most complex situations that beat reason: Our beliefs give meaning to our actions! And therefore, the simple act is to refer and get the guidance.

Remember that, the key to appreciating the practicability of being a believer is to start by developing an interest in understanding the mechanism of the social, economic and political orders of the world. And what can be more fulfilling than to live well and happy here on earth and beyond? So Let's continue doing good all the time!

GNRC Fourth Forum Countdown: All Roads Now Lead To Dar!



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