World Day of Prayer and Action for Children

Planning Guide 2012 Version4

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children connects people and organizations working to protect children.

The World Day is celebrated annually on 20 November, Universal Children's Day.

This guide was designed for NGOs and faith-based organizations as they plan for the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children in their communities.

World Day of Prayer and Action for Children

The logo for the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children features a stylized image of a child painting a rainbow in the sky. The rainbow in the design symbolizes the beautiful diversity of the human family; the many colors unite in a single rainbow to express the universal hope that all children will one day be able to grow to their full potential in a peaceful world. The child in the design is taking creative action to produce the rainbow, representing the inspired work of people of good will everywhere — especially the efforts of children and young people — to build a world fit for children. The logo is meant to serve as a daily reminder of the spirit and vision of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children.

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Letter of Welcome

Convening Chair, Kul Chandra Gautam and Co-Chair, Reverend Dr Hans Ucko

Dear Colleague:

Welcome to the World Day of Prayer and Action Planning Guide.

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, celebrated annually on 20 November, is an opportunity for all sectors of society - governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and religious groups - to work together on behalf of children.

2011 marked the first year of “Stop Violence against Children” the principal theme for World Day activities. In 2011, more than 200,000 people in 72 countries participated in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children. We hope that you will join this growing global movement to make a difference in children’s lives.

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is working to:

1. Promote World Day celebrations on or around November 20 (Universal Children’s Day).

All of the world’s faith traditions share a common concern for protecting children from violence. The World Day is an opportunity for ***people of faith*** to join multi-faith and secular efforts to protect children; for ***individual religious communities*** and leaders to be part of a larger global initiative; for ***organizations*** working to protect children to accelerate and magnify global efforts to stop violence; and for ***governments*** to partner with civil society, including religious communities.

2. Combine faith with action.

The World Day highlights three proven child protection strategies: 1) protecting children through universal birth registration, 2) promoting positive parenting and non-violent discipline, and 3) ending child marriage. Consider collaborating with others on one specific, tangible, measurable action on these issues.
The “Plan Your ‘Take Action’ Activity” section in this guide will tell you more.

3. Protect more children from violence.

Ending violence against children is an urgent global challenge that affects up to 1.5 billion children worldwide every year. Violence threatens children’s rights, well-being and development, but it can be prevented. By working together, religious communities, governments and secular organizations can protect more children from violence than by working alone.

We welcome feedback through our website:

http://www.dayofprayerandaction.org/events/participant-center/feedback-form.

Thank you for your partnership to improve the lives of children!

Sincerely,

Kul Gautam
Convening Chair

Hans Ucko
Co-Chair

How to Plan a Successful Event

Day of Prayer and Action at a Glance

Date On or around the week of 20 November, to observe Universal Children's Day

Timeframe Prayer session followed by three to five hour "Take Action" program

Location Prayer service: church, mosque, synagogue, temple or place of worship

Target Audiences

Leaders and members of:

Religious communities

Faith-based organizations

Intergovernmental organizations

Academic institutions

Child advocacy networks

Child care practitioner networks

Civil society

Educational networks

Families

Media

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children celebrations are planned locally by the participating groups. A typical celebration frequently begins with an inter-faith service organized by community religious leaders.

Individual religious communities can also celebrate the World Day through their own service. In both cases, the service is usually followed by an organized activity designed to meet the needs of children in that community. You know the needs of your local community best. This guide is intended to walk you through some steps to plan a successful day.

Remember that each small action in a single community contributes directly to tackling the problems affecting all of humanity.

Create a Small Planning Committee

Select a chairperson. While most groups will want to work by consensus, one person will need to lead, manage the group, and make key decisions as necessary. Recruit widely, but make sure that there is a small core group responsible for the main component being planned. Within your core team it may be helpful to designate one or two people for each of the key task areas. Responsibilities for these leaders are as follows:

Religious Leader Liaison

- Become familiar with the Religious Leaders Guide.
- Reach out to leaders; introduce them to the purpose of the interfaith service.
- Secure their involvement in the action/advocacy initiative.

Project Developer

- See the "Take Action" section in this guide for ideas.
- Lead discussions for selection of the one-day community or advocacy project.
- Take the lead in organizing the project.

Community Promoter/Media Liaison

- See "Promote your event," and "Get media coverage" in this guide. Also, see "*Ten Tips for New Photographers*" in the Take Action page on our website.
- Develop a strategy for your community.
- Visit your local law enforcement agency to tell them about your event, especially if it will be a large public one.
- Explain who will be participating. Answer any questions that they may have. Follow up with them afterward to get their feedback.

Location Manager

- Choose locations for the prayer service and project that are:
  - easily accessible by foot or mass transportation.
  - easy to provide directions to.
  - usable in case the weather is rainy or stormy.
  - accessible to restrooms and drinking water.
- Arrange for permits if necessary. Assign team members to post signs in the area that day to direct people to the event.

Coordinator of Volunteers

- Recruit volunteers and orient them on the purpose of the event.
- Identify volunteers who may enjoy serving as resource persons to answer general questions during the day of the event; equip them with information.
- Create a sign-up sheet for gathering names and contact information of participants. Include a column where they can state their particular area of interest in children's work.

Young Adult Leader Liaison

- Identify and recruit a couple of youth or young adults to enrich the planning process and project work with their creativity and ideas.
- Recommend to prayer service organizers where these young leaders can take part in the public celebration.

Plan your Interfaith Celebration

> ***Spiritual life is like living water that springs up from the very depths of our own spiritual experience. In spiritual life, everyone has to drink from his or her own well.***
>
> **St. Bernard of Clairvaux**

Spirituality inspires our action for children: that is our fundamental conviction in this work. In fact, our combination of prayer and action makes the day unique. How can we, after all, as people of faith and goodwill, do one without the other? On this day, let us reflect on the teachings of our religious traditions concerning children. This can take the form of prayer, worship, silence or meditation. Depending on local circumstances, your prayer and program may be organized by a single faith group or an interfaith group.

One model involves several faith traditions holding their own religious events on 20 November followed by a collaborative multi-faith advocacy or direct action component shared by all.

Another model brings together people of different faiths to pray and recommit themselves to working for children's well-being. In this instance, religious leaders from various faiths may take a turn offering a prayer, petition, or observing a moment of silence from their own tradition. This method offers all who are present to join in with the others as they feel most comfortable. In some cases, Religious Leaders will choose to pray, petition or meditate according to their own tradition(s) in the presence of the others. In any case, participants are encouraged to include:

- *Religions for Peace Supplications for the World's Children*. Created by Religions for Peace during the Spiritual Summit on the World's Children (Princeton, 1990), these prayers embrace the range of children's needs with an appeal for their protection and care. (Please see http://http://www.dayofprayerandaction.org/take-action)
- A concise, compelling reflection on an issue of particular relevance to children in your own region, country and community which may be tied to an advocacy or action. (For additional information, see the *ABCs for Action and Advocacy* in the Get Involved section on our website.)

Strengthen Leader Support

When addressing religious leaders for support, remember these points. Religious leaders are:

- Expert communicators, opinion leaders and role models. They are well positioned to influence and emphasize to the broader community the importance of protecting children. All religious traditions share this commitment.
- Social mobilizers. As one global initiative aptly states: "religious leaders can be agents for change and influential advocates for children. Many provide direct services to children through child and family organizations and have contact with people at different life stages. Many also have longstanding links with education and youth networks and are involved in charitable work and service provision."[1] Religious leaders may also have experience working with intergovernmental organizations, governments, civil society and other faith-based organizations.
- People who work amid many pressures and demands on their energy. Help them by pointing out resources already available to them, such as the Religious Leaders Guide and ABCs of Action and Advocacy.

Ask your religious leader to identify one topic that is of key concern to your community, and to weave it into their prayer, meditation, or worship service for the Day of Prayer and Action for Children on Universal Children's Day (20 November) or during that week.

Point out the importance of linking all messages with existing international guiding frameworks, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and others found in this manual. This linking also empowers listeners in knowing that their actions will make them part of a worldwide community dedicated to protection for children.

Encourage your religious leader to share any written statements or presentations with our Secretariat through: mail@dayofprayerandaction.org. If possible, videotape short messages for posting on our website at: www.dayofprayerandaction.org.

Please include:

(1) The full name of the religious leader/s presenting.

(2) The date in which the message was delivered.

(3) The name and place of worship.

(4) The approximate number of people who were present.

Plan Your "Take Action" Activity

> ***To me, faith is not just a noun, but a verb.***
>
> **Jimmy Carter**

The World Day of Prayer and Action theme for 2011-2013 is the prevention of violence against children. For religious communities, it is also an opportunity to reaffirm the values and teachings of your faith about the protection of children.

How is the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children focusing its work?

The World Day will work within the existing mandate prescribed by the leading recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children and focus on the five settings where violence occurs:

1. home and family,
2. schools,
3. alternative care institutions and detention facilities,
4. places where children work, and
5. communities.

Source: Regular Report to the Human Rights Council by the SRSG on Violence against Children, February 2011

Please join us in these three areas of focus:

* promoting non-violent child-rearing
* protecting children through birth registration drives
* empowering girls and families with options other than early marriage.

A summary outline of ideas appears below.

Take Action Ideas

Organizers at the grassroots know best how to stop violence against children. Here are suggestions based on violence-related issues which cut across many cultures.

First of all, become acquainted with the facts and the issues surrounding them.

UNICEF and Religions for Peace offer a noteworthy place to begin, in their resource *From Commitment to Action: What Religious Communities Can Do To Eliminate Violence Against Children.*[2]

Then please consider how you can encourage action in one or more of the three areas of focus (A, B, and C in the following pages).

A. Promoting positive parenting and non-violent child-rearing

Here are two good places to start your planning.

1. ABCs for Action and Advocacy : A Note on Positive Parenting and Non-Violent Discipline

This informational note for action aims to support religious communities and partners in promoting "positive parenting" and non-violent disciplining of children. How can "positive parenting" help us find practical effective methods for parents to give guidance but also listen to children, encourage children's participation and build children's skills to solve problems without violence? What concrete actions can religious communities together with partners take as part of the Day of Prayer and Action for Children initiative? This guide will explore these issues with you.

2. UNICEF's report on Child Disciplinary Practices at Home.[3] This document states the importance of parenting programmes that are culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive, and that help parents find positive ways to raise their children. It affirms that parents can learn skills such as:

- positive reinforcement (such as praising children when they behave well),
- setting limits (being clear when giving commands, and using non-violent methods for training children to comply).

Take Action: Organize parenting groups to discuss positive discipline practices for raising children. Create venues where parents can talk about the challenges of child-rearing and effective solutions for them. Encourage and empower parents with opportunities to share practical wisdom among themselves.

ACTION EXAMPLE

In Sri Lanka, over 500 community leaders, religious leaders and young people came together at a 2011 World Day of Prayer and Action for Children event, organized by the Sarvodaya Movement, the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and UNICEF, to raise awareness of the negative effects of corporal punishment as a form of discipline.

B. Protecting children through universal birth registration

UNICEF advocates for free birth registration, and a free birth certificate, for every child in every country. The World Day of Prayer and Action encourages the organizing of birth registration drives toward this goal.

Why is birth registration so important?

Each year 51 million children are unregistered, mostly in developing countries. Without documentation, children risk being denied basic rights to education, healthcare, employment and nationality, and are more vulnerable to trafficking, forced marriage, abuse and exploitation.

A registered child is legally on record as having a name and a nationality. This "proof of existence" basically protects the child's rights and well-being; for example:

- to be eligible for health care and immunization.

- to be enrolled in school at the right age.
- to not be forced into child labor, since it will be clear when minimum age for employment laws apply.
- to counter the forced early marriage of girls who have no proof of age.

Later, the child will need this registration to open a bank account, vote, find work or get a passport. Governments also need registration data for their planning, and to maintain education, health and other social services.

Why is birth registration not happening regularly?

Legal provisions are often incomplete, or not enforced, or don't work. Families in poverty may not be able to afford it. Or, children may be born away from medical facilities where registration normally happens. Sometimes groups are excluded to minimize their size and assistance given to them. And in remote areas particularly, parents may not see any benefit in citizenship, for themselves or their children.

What help is needed to increase birth registrations?

Please read *ABCs for Action and Advocacy: A Note on Protecting Children Through Universal Birth Registration*.

This informational Note for Action and Advocacy was written to support religious communities that wish to work with other sectors of society in promoting Universal Birth Registration. It outlines and explains the need for universal birth registration and provides examples of practical action, which religious communities can take all year long to promote the birth registration of every child in their society.

Take Action: Organize and participate in rallies to support birth registration. Where possible, coordinate birth registration campaigns with other events held on Universal Children's Day.

ACTION EXAMPLE

As part of 2011 World Day In Nigeria, UNICEF organized a national workshop with key religious leaders to engage religious communities as advocates for universal birth registration. The workshop developed a joint work plan with the National Population Commission to improve birth registration in local communities.

C. Ending child marriage

How does early marriage relate to issues of violence?

Child marriage puts children, especially girls, at higher risk of exploitation and abuse, and of violations of their rights to health and education, among others. UNICEF describes early marriage as the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls, affecting one out of every three girls in developing countries. Every year, 10 million girls under the age of 18 are married, putting them at higher risk for domestic violence, as well as injury or death from sexual activity and childbearing.

UNICEF explains in a May 2006 child information protection sheet:

"Child marriage is a violation of human rights whether it happens to a girl or a boy, but it represents perhaps the most prevalent form of sexual abuse and exploitation of girls. The harmful consequences include separation from family and friends, lack of freedom to interact with peers and participate in community activities, and decreased opportunities for education. Child marriage can also result in bonded labour or enslavement, commercial sexual exploitation and violence against the victims. Because they cannot abstain from sex or insist on condom use, child brides are often exposed to such serious health risks as premature pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and, increasingly, HIV/AIDS."[4]

What can be done to prevent early marriage?

UNICEF seeks to build a protective environment for children, in:

- Attitudes, customs and practices.
- Capacity of families and communities.
- Children's life skills, knowledge and participation.
- Essential services, including prevention, recovery and reintegration.
- Government commitment and capacity.
- Legislation and enforcement.
- Monitoring, reporting, and oversight.
- Open discussion.

The UNICEF information sheet is a must-read for a quick overview on the issue and directions to address it.

How can I learn more on the subject?

Please read *ABCs for Action and Advocacy: A Note on Child Marriage*.

This note to religious communities outlines the scope and consequences of child marriage. It also provides examples of practical action, which religious communities can take all year long in their campaign to end child marriage.

See International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), *How to End Child Marriage: Action Strategies for Prevention and Protection*, Washington, D.C., 2007. http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/How-to-End-Child-Marriage-Action-Strategies-for-Prevention-and-Protection-Brief.pdf

Take Action: Organize seminars and information sessions on the harmful effects of early marriage, particularly on the health and well-being of young mothers and their children.

ACTION EXAMPLE

As part of World Day 2011, the Inter-Religious Council of Kenya helped organize an interfaith prayer and action meeting for children aimed at sensitizing the community and promoting public discussion of birth registration, and the prevention of child marriage.

D. Engage youth as agents of change

The World Day encourages our young partners to take action together to advocate for their well-being and for younger children. Please see the Annex section below for the UN definition of youth, basic statistics and the overall UN philosophy on the critical needs and potential of youth.

Take Action: Invite youth to take part in the planning and implementation of your events. Give some thought as to the roles and individuals best suited for various tasks.

Promote Your Event

On the internet

- Post the event on your own website. Encourage people to also visit www.dayofprayerandaction.org for more information.
- Send news on your World Day activities to share on our website. Visitors to the site will be particularly interested in events in their vicinity.
- Write e-mails to invite people to join in on the Day of Prayer and Action for Children and direct them to visit our website.
- Send the announcement to listservs in your area.

With organizational representatives

Appoint a representative from your organization to be a contact person for the Day. Ask your partners -- whether they are from faith-based organizations, places of worship, local service or advocacy organizations – to also appoint a representative to serve as their point of contact for the event. Invite these persons to be part of the planning committee.

In your community

- Write (or find someone to write) a few lines about the event with all pertinent information about time, place, and so forth.
- Ask the groups you are affiliated with to place this in their bulletins and newsletters, both online and in print. The announcement should ask people to visit your webpage and list you as a resource for the event — while also inviting them to view www.dayofprayerandaction.org.
- Ask your religious leader to announce your event to the members at their weekly worship.
- Ask your school, house of worship, and other organizations you are part of to help you publicize your event.
- Find out where you can post flyers about the event. Get necessary permissions first.

Get Media Coverage

Working with the media is crucial. Media coverage expands your outreach and attracts the attention of a large number of people beyond your usual network who may be good partners for you in the future.

Do your preparation:

- Designate a member of the planning committee to serve as a media liaison or spokesperson.
- Create a contact list before reaching out to the media.

1. Ask yourself: What are the major newspapers, online news sources, television news networks, and radio programs in your area? Which reporters and correspondents cover issues related to children and youth? In what ways do they present the issues?
2. Collect relevant contact information – the email addresses, phone and fax numbers and street addresses — for reporters, correspondents, editors, producers and other relevant departments.

3. Not sure who to contact? Call the media outlet's general phone number or write to the website e-mail address to find out. You might ask to be referred or routed to the assignment desk. Reporters and correspondents receive their assignments from this department's editor or producer.

4.Find out the deadlines for each media outlet as well as their preferred mode of communication (phone, fax, email or post).

Do the outreach:

- See if you can get your event listed in a community calendar of events. Some media outlets post these calendars on their websites.
- Write a press release and send it to your media contacts one to two days before your event.

At the event:

- Document it by recording it — or portions of it — if possible.
- Take photographs — and have media release forms with you. These are important for getting permission especially from parents if you are taking pictures of their children.
- Keep track of who attended the event and their affiliations. Your notes will help you later when you write captions for photos, summaries or stories about the event.

World Day Q & A

This Q & A will assist you in your outreach with the media to promote your World Day event. These are the basic questions media may ask, however you may also check out Media Resources under our News/Press section for more in-depth information.

What is the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children?

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is an opportunity for all sectors of society - governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and religious groups to work together to end violence against children. It is celebrated annually on 20 November, Universal Children's Day.

World Day events take many forms, including mobilization and media campaigns, workshops, religious services and vigils, and common action to protect children from violence. World Day activities, actions and advocacy are planned locally by participating groups.

Why do we celebrate the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children?

Ending violence against children is an urgent global challenge. With up to 1.5 billion children worldwide enduring some form of physical and psychological violence, discrimination, exploitation, neglect and maltreatment every year, violence against children threatens children's rights, well-being and development. Urgent action is needed from the global community to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, wherever children are at risk.

Protecting children from violence, exploitation and abuse is essential for protecting their rights to survival, growth and development.

The World Day is an opportunity for ***people of faith*** to join multi-faith and secular efforts to protect children; for ***individual religious communities*** and leaders to be part of a larger global initiative; for ***organizations*** working to protect children to accelerate and magnify global efforts to stop violence; and for ***governments*** to partner with civil society, including religious communities.

What is the impact of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children?

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is a platform that brings secular organizations and the world's religious communities together. Governments, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations can accelerate and magnify their global efforts to end violence against children by working with the world's diverse faith communities.

By promoting birth registration, positive parenting, and an end to child marriage, religious communities can play a critical role ensuring that all children develop to their full potential and grow up free from violence.

Working together, governments, secular and faith-based organizations can have a greater impact on child protection than organizations working alone.

Who is involved in the World Day events this year?

You may use the following phrase in publications for your event:

"The (insert your organization's name here) is promoting observance of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children in partnership with (insert name of partner organizations). "

How is the World Day celebrated in your community?

World Day events take many forms, including mobilization and media campaigns, workshops, religious services and vigils, and common action to protect children from violence. World Day activities, actions and advocacy are planned locally by participating groups. A World Day event typically begins with a faith celebration organized by religious leaders in the community. Faith celebrations can bring together people of the same faith or people of different faiths to pray and recommit themselves to working to end violence against children.

The celebration is usually followed by a collaborative "take action" project carried out with local community groups, government, UN agencies or other faith-based organizations designed to meet the needs of children in that community. The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children can lead to year-round initiatives and partnerships to protect children from violence.

2011 marked the first year of "Stop Violence against Children" the principal theme for World Day activities. The World Day highlights three proven child protection strategies:

1) protecting children through universal birth registration,
2) promoting positive parenting and non-violent discipline, and
3) ending child marriage.

Where can interested organizations get more information about the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children?

Visit www.dayofprayerandaction.org. You will find a variety of online tools available to assist you in:

- Organizing an event.
- Connecting with other people.
- Promoting the Day.
- Observing the Day.

After the Event

- Write op-eds and press releases to be included in major and local news outlets, whether online sources, newspapers or as feature stories in magazines.
- Send a thank-you email or note to your faith leaders, participating organizations and volunteers.
- Within a few days, gather the planning committee together for a debriefing. Identify what worked well at the event, what needed improvement, and what follow-up steps are needed.
- Within a week, write or email attendees a thank-you note along with highlights of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children.
- Save press clippings about the event.
- Post a summary about the World Day on your website. Even a few well-chosen photographs with captions can go a long way in telling your story.
- Send along relevant stories with photos to mail@dayofprayerandaction.org.
- Fill out a Feedback Form available in the Participant Center on www.dayofprayerandaction.org. This will help our Secretariat to serve you better in the future. Sharing your experiences will also give us more knowledge that we can share with others.

ANNEX
Useful Definitions

How does the World Day for Prayer and Action define violence?

The UN Study on Violence against Children defines violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, that results or is likely to result in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.[5]

The Study also bases its understanding of violence on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.[6] According to Article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse." [7]

How is "child" defined?

A child is "every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." [8]

What is the definition of "youth"?

The UN defines youth as those between the ages of 15 to 24. Today, youth represent 18% of the global population or 1.2 billion people. 87% of youth live in developing countries facing challenges brought about by limited access to resources, healthcare, education, training, employment and economic opportunities.[9]

What is the role and potential of youth to prevent violence against children?

Member States of the United Nations recognize that young people in all countries are a major human resource for development, positive social change and technological innovation. Their ideals, energy and vision are essential for the continuing development of their societies.[10]

Young people are not merely passive beneficiaries but effective agents of change. Dedicated, enthusiastic and creative, youth have been contributing to development by addressing society's most challenging issues.[11]

Protecting children from violence is essential for protecting children's rights, well-being and development. Violence against children can never be justified. Violence hampers a child's development, learning abilities and school performance inhibits positive relationships, provokes low self-esteem, emotional distress and depression. Violence against children perpetuates a cycle of violence, poverty, illiteracy and early mortality.

Endnotes

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Other Resources

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World Day of Prayer and Action for Children

DAY OF PRAYER AND ACTION FOR CHILDREN is an international movement of religious leaders and faith-based organizations, civil society, government leaders, intergovernmental organizations and individuals who care for children. The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is an initiative of Arigatou International and guided by an International Planning Committee.

Arigatou International was established in 1990 by Myochikai, a Japanese Buddhist organization.

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children was launched at Arigatou International's Global Network of Religions for Children Forum in Hiroshima in May 2008.

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