

The Day of Prayer and Action for Children Report 2012

1. Introduction

Observed every 20th day of November, the Day of Prayer and Action for Children is celebrated globally on Universal Children's Day (1958) and on the anniversary of the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). Purposely commemorated on this date, it emphasizes the focus on the attaining the best interest of the child, this is priority here. They have rights that need to be protected, respected and enjoyed. DPAC provides an opportunity for people to come together to pray and recommit to take specific action in ensuring each child duly enjoys their rights.

GNRC-Africa engaged a number of stakeholders including religious leaders, children, media, responsible Ministries for children affairs, FBOs, CSOs working for children and UNICEF in celebrating the DPAC with the theme: *Stop Violence against Children*. GNRC-Africa built on the work commenced last year following the launch of the Violence against Children (VAC) in Tanzania Study, the first of its kind in Africa. GNRC-Africa continued to highlight the magnitude of violence facing *our* children by focussing on: promoting birth registration, promoting positive parenting and non-violent discipline and preventing early pregnancies as means to curb VAC. By engaging the different stakeholders, GNRC-Africa took this opportunity to empower the stakeholders and seek to change the mind-sets' of the communities in these aforementioned specific areas, bringing positive change to Tanzanian children – 50% of Tanzania's population.

2. Objective of the Program

Through activities leading up to and at the observance of DPAC, the main goal of the program was to educate and raise awareness to the public on the different types of Violence against Children for strategies to reduce this occurrence especially focussing on three sub-themes:

- Birth registration
- Positive parenting and non-violent discipline
- Preventing early pregnancies/ marriages

Recognizing the wide network religious leaders have access to, GNRC-Africa intentionally engaged this group with the aspiration that this information will be shared to the wider communities through their networks and community reach. Moreover, media sources were engaged capitalising on their huge communication channels capable of raising awareness not only on the alarming occurrences of Violence against Children in Tanzania but on ways to counter it.

The overall objective is to *Stop Violence against Children* which erodes the foundation and affects the development of children and ultimately nations. Highlighted was the fact that VAC is never acceptable nor is it unavoidable. The aforementioned sub-themes were seen as strategies to curtail VAC.

Other specific objectives included:

- i) Educating and raising awareness on the findings of the VAC in Tanzania study and the damaging effects of VAC on children and the development of Tanzania at large.
- ii) Educating and raising awareness on the importance of registering births, preventing early pregnancies and promoting positive parenting and non-violent discipline as a way to curb violence against children.
- iii) Empowering children to know their rights and to know how to address VAC whilst reminding all stakeholders of their individual and collective responsibility and ability to curb violence against children.
- iv) Using the channels of communication Religious Leaders and the media possess to raise awareness and change the mind sets of the community on VAC by first examining the actions in their own institutions.

3. Activities

To achieve the above objectives the following activities were undertaken;

- i) Three Forums for Children on Violence Against Children
- ii) Workshop with Religious Communities in particular Religious Leaders, Community Leaders and Children on Violence against Children
- iii) Development of Material
- iv) Push Mobile
- v) Media campaign
- vi) Music Conscious Band
- vii) Sharing is caring
- viii) Climax Day Celebrations

4. Achievements

The achievements include the following;

- i) Three Forums for Children on Violence against Children**

GNRC-Africa organized three forums at Alliance Francaise in Dar es Salaam for children who came from the three districts of Dar es Salaam to discuss on the aforementioned sub themes. The first forum was held on the 30th October (supported by NCA) on birth registration facilitated by members of the Registry, Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency (RITA), the government agency working on birth registration amongst other registry processes. Participants in this forum were sensitized on the benefits of birth registration for a child and the nation. Explained was the invaluable recognition of rights registration provides a child – a move that ultimately advance government progress in making development plans. The facilitator highlighted the negatives of not registering births including the loss to government statistics and provided information on how to register births. Participants had many questions which the facilitator was able to respond to (See Appendix I) The second forum held on the 1st November, 2012 focused on the second sub-theme, Positive Parenting and Non-Violent discipline. This forum was facilitated by school teachers for the 66 participants. An interactive session this session saw the following areas being addressed: what is parenting and when does the parenting role begin? What things must be considered and who is to be involved in child-rearing? They also examined the different parenting styles and the reason for these varieties. A number of issues and comments were raised from the children participants (see Appendix II) including recognizing that to have a healthy child that can grow to its full potential, parents have responsibilities that commence from conception. These include ensuring a healthy and balanced lifestyle, balanced diet, avoiding intoxicants during pregnancies. Moreover it was agreed that all in society have a parenting responsibility and children also have responsibilities including being respectful to elders.

The final Forum for children was held on the 8th November, 2012 was for sixty participants on the sub-theme, Preventing Early Marriages. To address this very critical issue, one that affects 8000 Tanzanian children annually, 3000 being in primary school, GNRC-Africa contracted Womens Legal Aid Centre (WLAC) to facilitate on this topic. The facilitator, Ms. Hosanna focussed on the following areas: What early marriage and pregnancy means; the reasons, effects and consequences of early marriages and ways to overcome it. Highlighted from these discussions was the attainment of age 18 as definitive mark to differentiate between an early marriage/pregnancy. Addressed were the varying reasons why one would marry early – including poverty, forced marriages, being deceived as some reasons raised by the participants. Participants also noted parents' inability to follow up on their children as a leeway granting perpetrators access to usurp children for their own advantages. An important challenge to the fight against early pregnancies and marriages was the contradiction in the laws e.g. the Marriage Act 1971 which provides latitude for a child aged 14/15 to marry. Of immediate concern in relation to early pregnancies was the inability for the child to continue with their studies. Moreover, the high risk of sexually transmitted infections and the augmented

complications that arise during and after child birth for a mother and child were raised.

From these forums a number of concrete steps were highlighted as issues to be addressed to ultimately reduce the incidence of violence by addressing the above issues (see Appendix III). The participants in the forum nominated members from the forum to represent the children in the forthcoming workshop with religious and community leaders.

ii) Workshop with Religious Communities in particular Religious Leaders, Community Leaders and Children on Violence against Children

GNRC-Africa organized a three day workshop from the 16th -18th November, 2012 at the Tamal Hotel in Mwenge, Dar es Salaam. Participants in this workshop included religious leaders from mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, children and from Zanzibar and mainland Tanzania as well as community leaders from Dar es Salaam. GNRC-Africa engaged facilitators from the Registry, Insolvency and Trusteeship Agency (RITA), Institute of Social Works (ISW) and Children's Dignity Forum (CDF) to address these issues.

Day one addressed Birth registration examining the benefits of registry for an individual, the nation and specifically to protect the rights of the child. Clearly highlighted was that registration is the first right of the child as the information on the certificate will clearly show an individual's age that will therefore allow the other rights accorded to a child to come into recognition/play. This includes protecting them from early pregnancies/ marriages, provide them access to passports, protect them from being forced into adult prisons and ensure they attend primary education etc. The facilitator provided a historical background to the formation and prior attitudes to birth registration explaining that it was first introduced to target foreigners. However, it was highlighted that statistics gained from birth registry build into the national development plans e.g. how many schools; hospitals will be needed following the number of new births in a nation – complementing the national census. Additionally, the facilitator explained how one could obtain a registration certificate whilst highlighting that there are many crooks out there looking to trick people, so one must go to the official offices.

Day two saw ISW facilitate on Positive Parenting and Non-Violent and addressed very important aspects in three phases:

- i. Definitions of the main concepts – who is a child, the rights and responsibilities of a child, the different types of violence and signs and effects of violence to the child.

- ii. Positive Parenting – what are the preferred parenting styles, different parenting styles, how to build an open relationship, types of praise and discipline and how to react to children in their different growth stages.
- iii. The child and their development – growing stages of human beings (0-2, 2-7, 7-12 and 12-17.)

Day three saw CDF examine the sub-theme Preventing Early Pregnancies. The facilitator started by stressing the fact that a child is anyone under the age of 18 and therefore any pregnancy under this age is considered early pregnancy. The startling statistics of early pregnancies was highlighted- 8000 children annually – 3000 of these who should be in primary school. Further addressed were the different causes of early pregnancies and the conflicting laws which provide leeway for such practices to occur. Some of these include the Marriage Act 1971, Religious Injunctions and the Cultural Statement 1963. Participants were able to highlight by bringing forth the negative effects of early pregnancies including health problems to the mother and to the child (higher mortality rate), increase in poverty and indirectly increase in street children.

At the end of day three, participants had an opportunity to come together in two groups, religious and community leaders and another group for children and youth. In these groups, participants drew up their statements that were shared on the actual DPAC having been better informed from the presentations and discussions on the themes in the forums and workshops.

iii) Development of Materials

GNRC-Africa prepared brochures (See Appendix IV) with child friendly messages highlighting the aim and importance of DPAC generally and further specifying the three year campaign, Stop Violence against Children, drawing light to this year's Tanzanian focus – promoting Birth Registration, promoting Positive Parenting and Non-Violent Discipline and preventing Early Pregnancies.

The aim was to print this information on Pen Flags to distribute to the children on the DPAC. Unfortunately, the printing agency failed to deliver these items at the agreed time and these materials are yet to be received and shared.

iv) Push Mobile

GNRC-Africa contracted the Push Mobile services to disseminate key messages on Violence against Children and the Day of Prayer and Action for Children commemorations. A total of four thousand three hundred and thirty four (4334) messages were disseminated four times to members of the public prior to and on the DPAC.

v) Media Campaign

Last year, GNRC-Africa empowered various media sources (including from blogs, television, radio and print news) with information on the Violence against Children study and provided an opportunity for the media personnel to be reminded on the Media Ethics Code especially in regard to reporting cases on VAC. Having already empowered them with this information, GNRC-Africa took opportunity this year to hold a media campaign leading up to the DPAC. GNRC-Africa staff (2) went to the following news stations to raise awareness on the DPAC, its formation, its aims and GNRC-Africa's vision and activity plans leading up to and on this day. The channels visited were: Channel Ten, the national channel TBC 1, and Upendo Radio. Plans are in place to be interviewed on Radio Tumaini as a follow up to the events that took place and to remind the public that we should continually play our part in stopping violence against children.

In addition, a 30 minute documentary on DPAC is going through the review process and will soon be aired on TBC 1.

vi) Music Conscious Band

The GNRC Conscious Music Band made up of 5 peace clubbers performed a number of songs related to VAC that were recorded last year following the theme Stop Violence against Children on the DPAC climax. The Music Conscious Band (MCB) started practices on the 5th -19th November, 2012 at Mwinyijuma Hall in preparation for the DPAC event. Songs rehearsed and performed included those recorded last year. These were:

1. Tukomeshe unyanyasaji kwa watoto popote – Let's Stop violence against children Everywhere
2. Watoto tuwalinde - (Let us protect children)
3. Mambo si sawa - (Things are not right)
4. Mtoto Afrika ni mrithi wetu – (The African Child is our heritage)

vii) Sharing is Caring

GNRC-Africa wanted to ignite in its peace club network the ability to sympathize and put themselves in others shoes. With this in mind, GNRC-Africa approached the peace clubbers and requested if any of them had items they did not need, they could donate to those more in need. Unfortunately, GNRC-Africa has not received notification of nor any such items. Therefore, despite planning to share these items a week after DPAC, this activity can no longer take place.

viii) Climax Day Events

On the 20th November, 2012 an estimated 1,700 children and youth accompanied by their matrons/patrons gathered at the Karimjee Grounds to commemorate the Day of Prayer and Action for Children by emphasizing the need to the public to register births, prevent early pregnancies and to promote positive parenting and non-violent

discipline as a means to Stop Violence against Children. Invited guests included Religious leaders, CSOs, FBOs, Community Leaders, Government and International Organization representatives.

The day commenced with the singing of the national anthem led by one of the pupils and entertainment from the GNRC Conscious Music Band who performed songs from its selection of recorded songs on Child Rights and specifically on Violence against Children recorded last year.

The GNRC-Africa Program Manager, Ms. Elizabeth Mwase welcomed and introduced the DPAC to the gathering, its aim and GNRC-Africa's hope for the DPAC this year. The different activities carried out in the build-up to the actual DPAC in the aim of bettering the situation for children in Tanzania were outlined.

After this brief introduction, there were youth prayers from TEC, Muslims from Zanzibar and the Baha'i community. These prayers were followed by a moving drama performance from the Buguruni School of the Deaf that addressed issues of violence in the home and school setting. Miss Salama Abdallah Kologombe from Msasani B Peace Club presented the Statement that was formulated from the Children's Forum on Violence against Children. Amongst the issues addressed was the need to improve the enforcement of laws, to better protect the rights of disabled people and the need for the state to prioritize birth registration and the conflicting laws surrounding marriages. Their statement also pleaded with religious leaders to use their pulpits and mimbars to advocate on Stopping Violence against Children. Also addressed were the roles of parents/ guardians, the media and CSOs. (see Appendix V)

The statement from Religious and Community leaders from the Workshop on Violence against Children was read by Ustadhi Suleiman Ahmed Yahya. This statement asked the government to look into enforcing child rights with regard to public transportation, to ensure street children are registered and to also address the conflicting laws on early marriages. In addition, the statement recognized that religious leaders have a huge role to play in advocating and sensitizing communities on the rights of the children in an attempt to reduce VAC. (See Appendix VI)

A Poem addressing Violence against Children in line with the three sub-themes was recited by Miss Wahida Idrissa Ahmada in the traditional Zanzibari style before the UNICEF Country Representative presented his remarks. In his address, the Country Representative, Dr Jama Gulaid praised Tanzania for going through the process of conducting thorough research into the situation of VAC in Tanzania and to publicly announce it. He explained that Tanzania is in a better position than many nations to address this issue as they know the problems they have and are best placed to develop plans and strategies to counter this horrible crime against children. Moreover, Dr Gulaid expressed UNICEF's continued commitment to tackling this problem in Tanzania.

Before welcoming the Guest of Honor to give her speech, the Kigamboni Community Centre entertained the group with an acrobatic performance that captured the entire crowds' attention. The Guest of Honor, Hon. Umyy A. Mwalimu, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community Development Gender and Children was respectfully welcomed by the Program Manager to speak to the 1700 children gathered at the Karimjee Grounds as well as religious leaders present. Honorable Mwalimu addressed VAC cementing the fact that it is an unacceptable crime and practice. She proceeded by highlighting the efforts undertaken to address the issue of VAC by highlighting the launch of the VAC study, the establishment of Gender and Children desks in the judicial systems as well as the free Helpline. She then invited the parents and guardians in the group to always consider non-violent options providing a personal example of how she disciplines her daughter using non-violent methods. In addressing the conflicting marital legislation, she highlighted that the challenge the government faced is with religious communities and asked GNRC-Africa to be the middle man in addressing this issue. (See Appendix VII)

After her speech, the two children MCs, Miss Jacqueline Christopher (Jamhuri Secondary Peace Club member) and Mr. Godlove Peter (Kumbukumbu Peace Club member) guided by the head MC Mr. Erasto Njaviku led the crowd through a silent prayer where each individual had the opportunity to pray for the well-being of children. Group photos were taken and the Guest of Honor and team left the event as further entertainment proceeded as refreshments were distributed to participants.

The following media outlets were present to cover the events of the day and to further spread the message to the Tanzanian public; TBC1, Channel 10, TBC Taifa, Sibuka TV, Star TV and the Guardian Newspaper. The event was aired on the above channels minus the Guardian Newspaper.

Challenges

Despite holding a successful DPAC celebration, GNRC-Africa encountered a number of challenges.

- i) The sensitive situation in Tanzania following the Mbagala incident forced GNRC-Africa to postpone certain forums to ensure the safety of the participants.
- ii) Late arrivals of participants and Guest of Honor to the actual event delayed the program of the day.
- iii) Last minute cancellations by the facilitator resulted in the teacher's present taking on this task of facilitating on Positive Parenting and Non Violent Discipline.
- iv) The printing agency failed to deliver the brochures on time thus resulting in no brochures being distributed.

5. Way Forward

GNRC-Africa is pleased with the Violence against Children Study in Tanzania as it provides a surface to work on which the government and CSOs have clearly embarked on. Despite achievements in gaining commitment from the Respective Ministries, Religious leaders, Children and Media, GNRC-Africa recognizes that for true changes to happen greater awareness and action is required. GNRC-Africa still sees the immense role religious leaders can play in advancing efforts to curb VAC. GNRC-Africa will continually work with its partners, community and religious leaders, together with media and children to advocate for the elimination of Violence against Children and to empower children with knowledge and courage to say NO to violence nor being a perpetrator of violence.