

In the Dominican Republic, Religious Leaders and Representatives of Faith Communities Strengthen Alliances against Violence towards Children.

In the Dominican Republic, between the months of November and December 2012, the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and the NGO Coalition for Children (NGO Coalition) took action to raise awareness among religious and spiritual leaders and faith-based organizations, on child protection against any form of violence.

The initiatives, under the title “We want to grow in an environment of peace”, are part of the activities promoted by the GNRC and the NGO Coalition for the implementation at country level of the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children.



On **November 20**, anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, **the GNRC and the NGO Coalition celebrated the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) with a group of 35 children and adolescents and 15 educators from seven religious and spiritual traditions** (Catholics, Evangelicals, Mormons, Bahai, Buddhist, Brahma Kumaris, Jehovah's Witnesses). The celebration took place in Santo Domingo, in the Children's Library.



The children shared their worries and concerns about violence against children and reflected on the importance of growing and developing in a peaceful environment. They also prepared a short video in which they expressed to their religious and spiritual leaders their concerns and desires.



On December 10, International Day of Human Rights, the GNRC and the NGO Coalition invited more than 60 adults (religious and spiritual leaders and other representatives of faith-based organizations) to an **Interfaith Breakfast for the Rights of the Child**. The main objective of the breakfast was that **the religious and spiritual leaders of the country publicly reaffirm their commitment to the protection of children and adolescents living in the Dominican Republic**, on the premise that violence against children is unacceptable and that religious leaders have a moral and spiritual responsibility to promote concrete actions to prevent and respond to this worrying situation, protecting at all times human dignity. Ten children also attended the Interfaith breakfast, in representation of the 35 children who had celebrated the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children.

The breakfast was held in Santo Domingo, at the Ambassador's Hotel, from 8:30 to 10:30 a.m.

The event began with a few introductory remarks by the Coordinator of the Global Network of Religions for Children in the Dominican Republic (Mrs. Silvia Mazzarelli) and a short welcome from the Coordinator of the NGO Coalition for Children (Mr. Ernesto Diaz). (The introductory remarks can be downloaded at:

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B3i1qi2yaedUWmxkblBhS0Q3UWM/edit?pli=1>)

After that, Mr. Alberto Padilla, Public Policy Manager of the National Council for Childhood and Adolescence (CONANI), explained to the audience, the process that the country is undertaking to design a roadmap for the implementation of the three Recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children, prioritized by the UN Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children (Marta Santos Pais). In this context, Mr. Padilla reiterated the importance that all sectors of the Dominican Society get involved in this process; therefore he extended an invitation to the religious and spiritual leaders to participate in the consultations that are going to be held, between the months of January and February 2013, for this purpose.

The poster is titled "Día Mundial de Oración y Acción por la Niñez" and features a rainbow and a silhouette of a child reaching up. It is organized by the Red Global de Religiones a favor de la Niñez (GNRC) and the Coalición de ONGs por la Infancia. The event is an interfaith breakfast titled "Los Niños y las Niñas Queremos Crecer en un Ambiente de Paz" on December 10, 2012, at the Hotel Embajador in Santo Domingo. It includes contact information for Evanny Acosta and a list of participating organizations at the bottom.

Logo: COALICIÓN ONGS POR LA INFANCIA

Logo: Día Mundial de Oración y Acción por la Niñez

Logo: ALIADOS INSTITUCIONALES

La Red Global de Religiones a favor de la Niñez (GNRC) y la Coalición de ONGs por la Infancia
Tienen el Honor de Invitarle al:
DESAYUNO INTERRELIGIOSO
"Los Niños y las Niñas Queremos Crecer en un Ambiente de Paz"

Lunes 10 de diciembre 2012, 8:30-10:30 a.m.
Hotel Embajador, Salón Embajador III
Av. Sarasota, 65, Bella Vista, Santo Domingo

Favor confirmar su participación a Evanny Acosta, evanny.acosta@crs.org Tel.: (809) 567-1271, ext. 101

Cada año el 20 de noviembre, en ocasión del Día Internacional del Niño, la Red Global de Religiones a favor de la Niñez (GNRC) celebra el Día Mundial de Oración y Acción por la Niñez (DPAC). La GNRC promueve el diálogo y la cooperación interreligiosa por el respeto, la protección y la plena realización de los derechos fundamentales de todos los niños, niñas y adolescentes del mundo. Desde el 2011 la celebración del DPAC promueve acciones concretas por la erradicación de la violencia contra la niñez y pone énfasis en la difusión de una cultura de paz en todos los ámbitos.

Este año se invita a los líderes religiosos del país a un desayuno interreligioso en el Día Internacional de los Derechos Humanos con el objetivo de reafirmar su compromiso en favor de los derechos de la niñez dominicana.

La Coalición de ONGs por la Infancia agrupa a 32 organizaciones de sociedad civil comprometidas en la promoción y protección de los derechos de la niñez.

Más información:
www.gnrc.net • www.dayofprayerandaction.org • www.coalicioninfanciaid.org

Este evento es posible gracias al proyecto "En Ruta contra la Violencia" patrocinado por:

Logos: UNICEF, COALICIÓN ONGS POR LA INFANCIA, Plan, REDLAMYC

The event continued with the presentation of the short video recorded during the celebration of the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, video that can be viewed on youtube: http://youtu.be/bLJ1E_Ro_hM

Finally, two of the participants read the **Interfaith Declaration against all forms of violence towards children**, which was developed by the GNRC in 2011 and that was signed last year by more than 30 religious leaders on the occasion of World Day of Prayer and Action for Children.

Some of the religious and spiritual leaders reaffirmed the commitment made in 2011 by signing the Declaration again; others signed this important Declaration for the first time. *"...We reaffirm the commitment made in Kyoto and we promise to play a central educational role by promoting non-violent values and attitudes. At the same time, we are committed to serve as monitors, identifying and denouncing, in the communities where we operate, any form of violence against children and adolescents. "(...)" As religious and spiritual leaders, we commit ourselves, to encourage in communities, families, schools, the values of respect, love, positive education and*



reconciliation. We are committed to educate parents, guardians, teachers and educators on the use of positive assertive discipline, based on love, respect and dignity... " (the full Declaration can be downloaded at: <https://docs.google.com/open?id=0B3i1qi2yaedUR1d0WVcwRHVMcUk>)



The event ended with an **Interfaith Prayer** for Children.

Representatives of the following churches and spiritual traditions signed the Declaration: The Baptist Churches of the Dominican Republic, the National Council of Churches, the Assembly of God, the Trinity Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day

Saints, the Episcopal Church, the Ecumenical Network of the Dominican Republic, the Bible League, the Youth Ministry, the Ministry of Education and Children's Pastoral of the Dominican Episcopal Conference of the Catholic Church, the Salesians, the Dominican Association of Reiki, the Brahma Kumaris Organization, the Metropolitan Community Church, the Bahai Faith, Sri Sathya Baba, the International Society of Divine Realization, and the Hindu Community.

Among the faith-based organizations present, include: the Art of Living Foundation, Muchachos con Don Bosco, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Caminante Proyecto Educativo, Don Bosco Foundation, Hogar Renacer Foundation, Niños Limpiabotas de la Merced Foundation, World Vision, Poveda Centre, Dominicana 2012 and the International Volunteers for Development (VIS).



Among other authorities that attended the interfaith breakfast, we mention: Mrs. Guadalupe Valdés (member of the National Congress), Ms. Maria Jesus Conde Zabala (UNICEF Representative in the Dominican Republic), and Representatives of the Ministry of Education and of the National Council for Children and Adolescents (CONANI).



All guests received a folder with information regarding child protection against violence against children, and a copy of the final report of the consultation conducted in 2011 by the NGO Coalition to more than 5000 children regarding human rights violations in the Dominican Republic.

If we are to eradicate violence against children it is necessary for all sectors of society to engage in collective advocacy efforts. In this regard, it is important that all religious communities and faith-based organizations come together on a common platform of interfaith cooperation and strengthen their commitment with the Rights of the Child.

The events organized in the Dominican Republic in the last years, by the GNRC and the NGO Coalition, are promoting new interfaith alliances to strengthen this collective commitment with child protection. The religious leader's response so far has been very positive. Religious leaders have committed to continue working for the prevention and response to violence against children and to contribute to the regional and national initiatives for the implementation at country level of the recommendations of the UN Study of Violence against Children.

The events were promoted through the media, on television and in the press. (To download one of the articles: <http://www.listindiario.com/la-republica/2012/12/10/258177/Religiones-se-unen-para-prevenir-violencia-entre-adolescentes>).

The events were held in the framework of the project "Pathway against Violence", funded by the Government of Finland and implemented by the NGO Coalition for Children in the Dominican Republic, by the Coordinating Committee for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CDIA) in Paraguay, and at regional level by the Latin American Network for the Defense of the Rights of the Children (REDLAMYC).



Special thanks to the members of the GNRC in the Dominican Republic for taking the time to organize these events and for their great enthusiasm and strong commitment with children's rights.

Silvia Mazzarelli (GNRC Rep. Dom.)