

**REPORT OF THE WORLD DAY
OF PRAYER AND ACTION
FOR CHILDREN**

KENYA

November 2012

A Joint Initiative

Between

The African Council of Religious Leaders—*Religions for Peace* (ACRL—RfP),

The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC Africa)

And the

The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

Introduction

Observed on 20th November every year, the Day of Prayer and Action for Children (DPAC) 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, this further emphasizes that children are the priority. They have rights that need to be protected, respected and enjoyed.

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children brings people together to pray for the well-being of children and recommit to take specific action in ensuring each child duly enjoys his/her rights. Universal Children's Day, established by the United Nations in 1954, also commemorates the 1989 adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children connects people and organizations to protect children. Improving the welfare of children is an urgent global challenge. By working with the world's diverse faith communities, governments and non-governmental organizations can accelerate and magnify their efforts to help children worldwide.

Kenya

The African Council of Religious Leaders—*Religions for Peace* (ACRL—R/P) in collaboration with the Global Network of Religions for Children sponsored various activities to mark this year's World Day of Prayer and Action for children (DPAC) in different parts of Kenya. Under the theme "*Stop Violence against Children*" different activities were implemented with the participation of children, civil society organizations, government representatives, religious leaders (mostly christians and muslims), parents and other stakeholders.

Baringo County

In Baringo County, the event was organized together with the Mwafrika Institute of Development with the sub-theme: *Elimination of violence against children through promotion of non-violent discipline and positive parenting* in which various stakeholders were mobilized to take part. Two main activities were carried out:

a) Public celebration

At the Kabarnet town bus station, children, government officials, religious leaders, parents and other stakeholders gathered to commemorate DPAC. Messages for the event were centered on the elimination of violence against children and promotion of non-violent discipline and positive parenting through:

1. Presentations from children with messages advocating for positive punishment and non-violent discipline as well as entertainment
2. Prayers from religious leaders
3. Speeches from clergy, government officials and leaders
4. Public awareness creation on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children's Act of 2001
5. Distribution of prayer cards and pamphlets (IEC materials)

b) Visit to the Sunrise Children's Home

Sunrise Children's Home is home to 34 orphaned, abandoned and neglected children. During DPAC the home received various donations including foodstuffs and other basic items. The children were prayed for and given words of encouragement from the visiting team. They were reminded that they were as capable as other children growing up in families with parents and that with hard work and commitment it is possible for them to realize their dreams fully such as in acquiring senior leadership positions. They were also reminded that success was possible only by trusting in God (Ephesians 4: 17)



Photos: Presenting foodstuffs (l) to Children of the Sunrise Children's Home and (r) prayers during this year's DPAC celebration in the county

Outputs

The following outputs were attained:

- i. 42 school going children received awareness on violence against children and how it can be prevented in addition to opportunity to interact with leaders and entertain them.
- ii. 34 children were supplied with basic items including foodstuffs.
- iii. 50 pamphlets with information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Children's Act of 2001 were printed and distributed to the public.
- iv. 50 pamphlets with scriptural extracts on Christian and Islamic teachings on non-violent discipline were printed and distributed.
- v. 70 adults representing child centred CSOs, children's department, ministry of education, office of the president, HIV/AIDS control office, national assembly and business community received awareness on the prohibition of corporal punishment in all schools in Kenya as per the provisions of the Children's Act of 2001 and how all violence against children can be eliminated and prevented.
- vi. All participants received spiritual nourishment and prayers from both Christian and Muslim perspectives.
- vii. Sunrise Children's Home was visited and basic items donations were made.

- viii. Opportunity for inter-religious cohesion and integration and deeper understanding of religious traditions emphasizing on non-violent discipline and positive parenting leading to unity was created.
- ix. Strengthened government commitment to the protection of children's rights.
- x. 200 tree seedlings were planted to conserve the environment.

Kisumu County

In partnership with the Kisumu Interfaith Network, an activity with the theme: *Mobilizing religious leaders to fight violence against children* was organized in which religious leaders were mobilized to address violence against children. The event took place on 20th November, 2012 at the Brilliant Academy grounds. A total of 75 participants, 43 of whom were children participated. The goal of the event was to address violence against children through the active involvement of children themselves, religious leaders and other community leaders.

Activities

1. The one day event was used to create awareness among religious leaders, government officers, school teachers and children on the concept of violence against children, child rights and child protection policies
2. Material support was provided to children from poor families.
3. Children participated in planting of trees as a way of mitigating climate change.

Outputs

1. The event provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of combating violence against children in Kisumu County where many incidences have been in media reports
2. A total of 7 children were issued with school uniforms
3. A total of 50 trees were planted at the Brilliant Academy school compound



Photos: Children listening to a presenter during the DPAC event in Kisumu County (left) and planting trees for environmental conservation (right)

Nyeri County

An event with the theme: *Coping with abusive family environments* was organized together with the Ajabu Kilele Foundation on 24th November, 2012 in Muthaara primary school, Nyeri county. Other than teachers and their students, the school's committee members and area Chief Mr. Jonh Mbugua joined participants for the event. 15 Adults and 30 pupils aged between 13-15 years participated in implementing the following activities:

a) Education on the meaning of violence against children

Mr. Alexander Maina, the facilitator defined child abuse as: *either the physical, sexual or emotional mistreatment or neglect of a child or children. His second definition was 'child maltreatment act or series of acts of commission or omission by a parent or other caregiver that results in harm, potential for harm, or threat of harm to a child at home, in organizations, schools or communities the child interacts with'.*

b) Pupils Presentations

Pupils made presentations highlighting the following forms of abuses against children; physical, emotional and sexual manipulation. From the presentation each group gave ways in which child abuse could be tackled such as by loving care, prayer for the victims, seeking immediate medical treatment where applicable and advice and reporting cases of abuse to authorities such as area chiefs. It emerged clearly that violence against children was very common in the area especially sexual abuse by close relatives with ignorance and stigma hampering its elimination. For instance in one incidence narrated, a girl was sexually abused by the father but the court case stopped after the mother to the child was coerced to withdraw the case. The participants attributed child violence in the area to illicit brew popularly known as "*changaa*" which has made many parents to be irresponsible and sexually abusive to their children. Worse, the widespread consumption of the brew has accelerated spread of HIV/AIDs and crime rates in the area. The participants proposed the following solutions to challenges of violence against children in the area:

- Introduce peer educators in schools.
- Educate children and the community at large about the side effects of illicit brews
- Educate children to maintain high moral standards and avoid negative influence of their parents.
- Introduce activities that keep people busy to prevent them from engaging in negative vices.

Mr. Alexander Maina concluded the event by sharing the message below titled "*Finding personal peace*":

"If you are a young person living in an abusive home, know that you are a strong person to have survived as long as you can have a better life. Know that you are not responsible for the abuse and violence. The abusers are responsible for their actions. You do not deserve to live with abuse. You do not deserve to be abused. Nobody does. You deserve respect and a safe, healthy and loving home. Know that you are not alone. Others have been in a situation like yours and have gone on to have a safe and happy life. You can too. Look for people who are strong without being mean or violent. Look for people who are living a life that you would enjoy. Look for people who have healthy, affectionate relationships with their friends and family. Notice how they act. Notice what they do. What can you learn from them? If you can, seek out opportunities to be with them or talk with them. Find ways to be in places that are safe, fun and healthy. Find places that you enjoy, that make you feel good. Spend as much time in these places as you can. The more you are in safe and enjoyable places, the more you will be able to create a life for yourself that feels like that. Find activities that are fun and safe. Find activities that help you discover more of your talents and gifts. Get help from your school counsellor."

Outputs

1. Children and other participants were sensitized on the issue of violence against children
2. Participants in particular children provided contextual suggestions to reduce violence against children.



Photos: Pupil Participants of DPAC in Nyeri County

Naivasha County

In the Mai Mahiu Camp for the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), Naivasha County, an event was organized by the ACRL—R/P together with the ‘We Care Club’ with the theme: *Caring for children affected by violence*. They were joined by the ‘One World’ Football Organization, the Kenya Youth Climate Network (KYCN) and the Kenya Interfaith Youth Network (KIYN) in celebrating DPAC in Naivasha. The event involved a visit to children in Mai Mahiu camp for the Internally Displaced as a result of the 2007 disputed presidential elections. The camp has been in existence for the last five years. Children live in squalid conditions with traumatising scars of death and fear as they witnessed their family members and friends being beaten, murdered and their houses burned. Integrated activities included:

a) Tree planting

Stephen Njoroge aka ‘Njoroo’, a 12-year old pupil from Makini Primary, formed the ‘We Care Club’ as a way to lead other children to show their peers and their community at large, care and concern. With a deep love for the environment, his neighbours and friends, Njoroo formed a movement that grew beyond the boundaries of his school and neighborhood. A week prior to DPAC, *We Care Club* established a ‘Kibaki Corner’ in Limuru town, by planting 81 trees. Each of the trees symbolically represented each year the current president of Kenya, His Excellency Mwai Kibaki, has lived. *We Care Club* used this platform to push forth the ‘Plant Your Age’ Initiative, which encourages Kenyans to plant the number of trees representing their age, as an effort to advance re-forestation. They also visited a children’s home and used the day as an opportunity to speak of the upcoming DPAC on national television, and to mobilise other young people to participate.

b) Visit to Internally Displaced Children (IDPs)

On the actual DPAC, November 20th 2012, *We Care Club* members , youth members from *Kamirithu Catholic Church* in Limuru and representatives from different organizations paid a visit to Mai Mahiu IDP Camp. At the camp religious leaders prayed for the children. The visiting team also had an opportunity to dance, play music and games with the children. Njoroo encouraged young people to care for one another and the environment. He taught them that “the best time to plant a tree was ten years ago while the second best time was today.

c) Planting of ‘Tree Pals’

After sharing a light meal/ refreshments with the nearly 200 children and 25 parents present, the children were grouped according to their respective classes. Each class was presented with an indigenous fruit tree to grow, as part of their initial process of forming local *We Care Club* groups. This activity was dubbed ‘Tree Pals’. During the ‘Tree Pals’ session, a 12 year-old boy named *Josephat Maremi* , thanked Njoroo and the team for coming, and had this to say:

My name is Josephat and I’m in class 5. One day, I would like to move out of the tents. I want to have maisha mazuri (a good, decent life) with water, food and clothes. My dream is to be an engineer and to help other people.



Photos: ACRL—R/P’s Abdul Alawi sharing a light moment with the children (L) and (R) Njoroo speaking to fellow children

Outputs

1. 300 children, youth and adults participated in the DPAC event at Mai Mahiu.
2. Several trees including fruit trees were planted to conserve the environment.
3. The visiting team got to learn of the need and plight of the community living at the camp; therefore will better be able to serve them.
4. Children learned and appreciated the importance of growing trees, keeping their compound clean and conserving their environment.
5. Children found a new way to form positive friendship with each other and with adults in the society, through growing ‘tree pals’.
6. The children at the camp, who were indirect and direct victims of violence, had an opportunity to express peace, care and love for one another

7. Through the visit, *Njoroo* and other members of the *We Care Club* were able to form local teams of *We Care Club* at the camp.
8. The youth and adults were inspired by the initiative by children to form the *We Care Clubs* and to positive actions undertaken
9. The DPAC will likely be celebrated again by the community at the camp in the year to come
10. It was recommended that the '*We Care*' Clubs which were formed, can be linked to the local GNRC network in Kenya.

Kwale County

Together with Waa Primary School, ACRL—R/P organized an activity with the theme: *Community Sensitization against forced marriages and female genital mutilation on 21st November, 2012*. The event was held in Kwale County at the Diani beach – Kim 4 love pavilion in which a beach cleaning activity was undertaken including prayers. These aimed to create awareness on the need to address the challenges affecting children especially the girl child in Kwale. Participants were drawn from Waa Primary School that has become a rescue centre for girls who have escaped forced marriages and female genital mutilation (FGM) from their homes. Other than teachers and students, religious leaders (both muslim and christian), some members of the public and other local leaders were present. The leaders emphasized the bigger role that parents have in raising their children. They noted that negligence by parents was highly to blame for the challenges facing girl children hence some parents end up marrying off their young daughters to raise money to support their livelihood. Participants especially leaders present therefore articulated poverty and lack of proper education as core factors that have contributed to the violation of children's rights in Kwale. 50 Children and 14 adults were in attendance in which the following activities were implemented:

a) Beach Cleaning exercise

The event brought together girls/pupils from Waa primary school- a rescue centre for girls, their teachers, some members of the public and staff of the Kim-4-Love public pavilion and beach in the beach cleaning exercise. The exercise took about three hours before participants settled down for lunch and discussions.



Photos: Pupils of Waa primary school during the cleaning exercise to mark DEPAC in Kwale County, South Coast region.

b) Public Celebration

Speeches began, and were lead by the Kadhi of Kwale, Sheikh Bedzenga and Pastor Brian. The spiritual leaders taught and encouraged pupils not to despair but soldier on no matter the challenges. Pastor Brian reminded them of the tribulations of Joseph in the scripture who later became very successful through perseverance. The pupils then presented poems which were rich with messages against early marriage and FGM according to Islamic and Christian teachings. Finally the girls were given a small token in form of school bags while other participants were issued with certificates of participation. They were later entertained by the master of ceremony until 5 p.m. when the event was declared closed.

Outputs

- a) 50 children were spiritually nourished and encouraged to soldier on for a better future.
- b) Pupils of Waa Primary School gave back to the community by cleaning the public beach, as they created awareness on the need for their better treatment, like good education and opportunities for them to realise their dreams.
- c) 50 schoolbags were distributed to needy children.
- d) 64 participants and unspecified members of the public (onlookers who were not part of the event) received the message against early marriages and female genital mutilation.
- e) 14 Certificates were presented to various stakeholders such as Waa Primary School, Kim 4 love, leaders and other officials.
- f) A socialization platform was provided in which participants exchanged knowledge on FGM and forced marriages.
- g) Awareness was created on challenges facing children especially the girl child in Kwale County