

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

SOUTH AFRICA

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.

South Africa

A number of activities were organized a week prior to the DPAC celebration in South Africa, an event that brought together 50 faith based leaders to pray for the children. All senior religious leaders were asked to become *Champions for Children*, promote awareness on DPAC as well as saying prayers on the weekend before the 20th November.

Religious institutions held special prayers at the various schools' morning assembly on the morning of 20th November while paintings, prayers and songs from children were presented at the celebration. These were aimed at passing these messages:

- PUT OUR CHILDREN FIRST! BECOME A CHAMPION FOR OUR CHILDREN!
- STOP POVERTY! INSPIRE OUR CHILDREN! ERADICATE VIOLENCE! CHANGE AND ACT!

Other activities for the day included: awareness creation of the of CARMAA – CAMPAIGN for accelerated reduction of maternal and child survival, promoting awareness of the NEO-Natalie program to help birthing attendants understand how to help babies breath, promoting the use of birthing kits for babies being born in rural communities where there are no health facilities like hospitals, clinics and trained midwives among others.

The most important idea to come out was the **“TEN POINT PLEDGE TO SAVE THE LIVES OF OUR CHILDREN”** that every individual and every community had to take up as pledge a follows:

“United in our common goal to save the lives of children in need, we pledge to take action to advance the life-saving behaviors listed below. These priority behaviors—ten life-saving acts for children—can and should be adopted by local families and communities. Doing so will help save the lives and reduce the burden of disease for millions of children. These behaviors are endorsed by UNICEF and other major international aid organizations because they work. Our respective religious doctrines are different, but we are united in the moral conviction

that we must save children from needless deaths. Thus, we commit ourselves to ensure that our respective faith communities promote these behaviors sustainably, even as we also support additional needed efforts to strengthen public health systems. We ask all, throughout the world, who have held a child in love, with joy for its life, with tears for its pain, to join us in advancing these life-saving behaviors. To save and improve the lives of all children, we pledge to promote, encourage, and advocate for the following actions by parents and children:

- 1. Breastfeed all newborns exclusively through the age of six months;**
- 2. Immunize children and newborns with all recommended vaccines, especially through the age of two years;**
- 3. Eliminate all harmful traditions and violence against children, and ensure children grow up in a safe and protective environment;**
- 4. Feed children with proper nutritional foods and micronutrient supplements, where available, and de-worm children;**
- 5. Give oral rehydration salts (ORS) and daily Zinc supplements for 10 – 14 days to all children suffering from diarrhea;**
- 6. Promptly seek treatment when a child is sick; give children antibiotic treatment for pneumonia;**
- 7. Have children drink water from a safe source, including water that has been purified and kept clean and covered, away from fecal material;**
- 8. Have all children wash their hands with soap and water especially before touching food, after going to the latrine or toilet and after dealing with refuse;**
- 9. Have all children use a toilet or latrine, and safely dispose of children’s feces; prevent children from defecating in the open;**
- 10. Where relevant, have all children sleep nightly under insecticide-treated bed nets to prevent malaria, and at the immediate onset of fever seek medical care for children to receive proper malaria testing and treatment.**

We are committed to working in collaboration with Faith-based Organizations, Intergovernmental, Governmental and Civil Society bodies – many of whom, such as UNICEF and leading bilateral development agencies, have been strong promoters of positive multi-religious action – and we urge them to support us to develop simple toolkits and roll-out mechanisms that the leaders and congregations of each religion can use to harness their respective beliefs and believers in the implementation of these vital behavioral changes.”

The day ended in jubilation following the pledge after the interfaith prayers for children.