

Online Course based on Faith and Children's Rights: A Multi-religious Study on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

In July 2022, **Arigatou International** launched the online course Faith and Children's Rights in collaboration with the **Interamerican Children's Institute of the OAS**. The online course is based on the multi-religious study Faith and Children's Rights developed by Arigatou International, UNICEF and other partners in 2019. The online course aims to build multi-stakeholder collaboration by creating an exchange and learning platform to increase knowledge and understanding about the common values shared among religions and the principles of the UNCRC.

The online course was launched through an **online dialogue** that convened **88 participants and speakers including:**

Mr. Victor Giorgi, Director (former) of the Interamerican Children's Institute
Mr. Luis Pedernera, Member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
Rabbi Pablo Berman
Ms. Rebeca Rios Kohn, Director Arigatou International New York
Ms. Silvia Mazzarelli, Author of the online course Faith and Children's Rights

The first edition of the eight-weeks online course benefited 47 participants –including 28 GNRC members and States' representatives from the LAC region– finalized in October 2022. Thanks to the success and relevance of the online course, the Interamerican Children's Institute showed interest in implementing a second edition for the first semester of 2023.



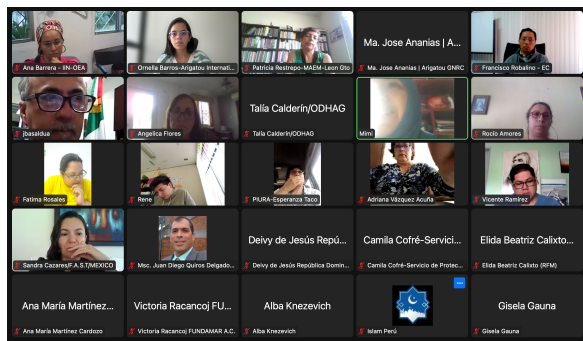
Lesson learned from the first edition included:

- There is a significant **collaboration gap** between State and civil society in regard to child rights. There are cases of duplicated work from the lack of dialogue and common language to understand each other's efforts to address child rights issues. This is even more evident when interacting with faith-based civil society organizations.
- Participants struggled to **connect theory and praxis**. The course succeeded in providing relevant knowledge to faith actors and State representatives. However, it was difficult for participants to apply the knowledge to their day-to-day work focused on children's rights and wellbeing.
- **A few States are reluctant to engage representatives in faith-related courses**. Some concerns were expressed about the Interamerican Children's Institute promoting faith-related courses in a secular region.

In April 2023, Arigatou International and the Interamerican Children's Institute announced the open call and selection process of participants for the second edition of the online course, "Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration for children's rights – States and faith-based civil society organizations". Measures to tackle the lessons learned from the first edition included:

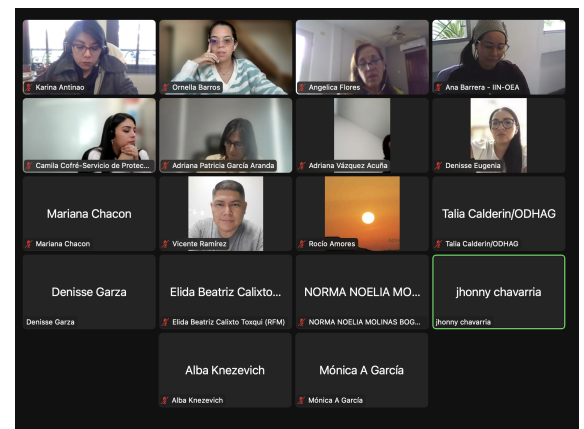
- Three synchronic sessions to prompt dialogue about approaches to child rights; child participation; successes and challenges of collaboration between State and faith-based civil society organizations; and, common values shared by diverse religions and the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Two-pilot opportunities for a closer mentoring with State and faith actors from Mexico and El Salvador to advance implementation of action plans proposed in the final assignment of the course.
- The second edition focused its assignments on a concrete issue selected by the participants during the first week of the course, so that they could connect more meaningfully the theory and practice, while deepening their knowledge and reflection on the same issue throughout the course. Some of the topics included: parental rights, health and reproductive rights, children's participation, and children's dignity in the digital world.
- The title of the course was slightly updated to suggest a stronger focus on multi-stakeholder collaboration for children instead of faith or children's rights as such.

The second edition of the online course raised interest from **141 individuals** including **56 States' representatives** from seven countries (Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, and Paraguay), and **85 faith actors** (43 of them came from non-GNRC members) from the following countries:



Between July and August 2023, the second edition of the eight-weeks online course was co-facilitated by Arigatou International and the Interamerican Children's Institute. It built the capacity of **22 States' representatives** and **24 faith actors** from Latin America. Participants highly valued the support to broaden understanding of the importance of engaging with States and faith actors, as well as the opportunity to have in-depth reflections on key issues affecting children in their contexts.

Localized knowledge and a platform for respectful and constructive dialogue to explore common ground and collaboration opportunities were highlights of the course. Most of the participants showed a significant evolution in the quality of their assignments by incorporating feedback provided by the facilitators, but also by being very proactive in their learning and reflection process. Some stood out and delivered pieces worth publishing to encourage collaboration and solutions to key issues affecting children across Latin America.



Follow up actions from the second edition include:

- Continuation of the online course in the first semester of 2024.
- Pilot of a mentoring process by Arigatou International and the Interamerican Children's Institute to strengthen multi-stakeholder collaboration in El Salvador and Mexico.
- Adaptation of best assignments to be published as articles in relevant sites and journals.
- An online event on the importance of State-faith actors' collaboration with some of the course participants as speakers. The event could also be the opportunity to launch the articles.



In this course I learned many things. It made me realized how little knowledge I had about the situation of child rights in my country. This course opened my eyes and left me with the commitment to continue learning and doing my best to be part of the solution. I thank you for the course and for the knowledge acquired. (State representative, Mexico)

