



"Caring for our children, is
Caring for our planet"






WORLD DAY^{of} Prayer & Action for Children 2023

Activity report

Copyright 2024

Arigatou International - New York
Prayer and Action for Children

Table of Contents

<u>World Day of Prayer and Action for Children</u>	4
<u>What brought us together this year?</u>	5
<u>Caring for our children is Caring for our planet: Solutions from India</u>	7
<u>Caring for our children is Caring for our planet: Online Session</u>	11
<u>Wear My Shoes Award: Outstanding child-led and youth-led action for Climate!</u>	15
 <u>1st place: Colombia</u>	16
 <u>2nd place: Cameroon</u>	17
 <u>3rd place: Romania</u>	18
 <u>4th Place: India</u>	19
 <u>5th place: Seychelles</u>	20
<u>Follow-up opportunities and commitments</u>	21
<u>Digital Media Impressions</u>	23
<u>Commemorating the "World Day for prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence"</u>	27

World Day of Prayer and Action for Children: Caring for our Children is Caring for our planet Activity Report

The **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children (World Day)** is celebrated every year on November 20, the anniversary of the adoption of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and World Children's Day.

The World Day was established in 2008, to catalyze multi-stakeholder joint actions among grassroots faith communities, International Non-Governmental Organizations, multilateral organizations, and national governments. Since its inception, there have been commemorations and celebrations in over 90 countries, and every year more organizations work together to facilitate, support, and host events and actions that reach and benefit grassroots initiatives.

Alongside prayers and spiritual reflection, the **World Day 2023** encouraged and promoted local actions by bringing together children and adults from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to actively support and advocate for children's rights and well-being. It built on the connection between climate (in)justice, health, education, poverty, violence, and migration affecting children, and capitalized on the contribution of faith leaders, communities, and organizations in advancing the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.



What brought us together this year?



In 2022, the [World Day](#) was commemorated through activities worldwide and launched at the Symposium: Protecting Children's Dignity! A Call to Action for Children on the Move held in Rome on November 17th and 18th. It was co-hosted by the Institute of Anthropology, Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care (IADC) and the Centre for Interreligious Studies of the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. Sixteen child-focused organizations joined Arigatou International and UNICEF to celebrate the World Day which was dedicated to Children on the Move.

The World Day 2023 built on past joint advocacy for children's right to education (2021), the wellbeing of children on the move (2022), and years of work to end all forms of violence against children. On World Day 2023, these issues were addressed through the lens of children's right to a clean and healthy environment, with an understanding of the importance of a sustainable and peaceful future for all. Even before the [Paris Agreement](#) was adopted by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21), faith communities and faith-based organizations were increasingly involved in climate action, bringing religious motivations to understandings of stewardship and care for our planet. Faith leaders, communities, and faith-based organizations have been proactively working on climate adaptation programs; advocating for mitigation measures around the [Kyoto Protocol](#), the Paris Agreement, and relevant research on the issue of climate change; and mobilizing communities for climate action and justice. Some of these efforts include the [2020 G20 Interfaith Forum](#), the [Interfaith Rainforest Initiative](#), the [Faith for Climate network](#), the 2021 [COP26 appeal](#) of world's religious leaders and scientists, the [Season of Creation](#), among others.

Addressing climate justice means having a human rights and people-centered approach to climate action. It means addressing social, gender, economic, intergenerational, and environmental injustice. From a faith perspective, it also means understanding and promoting the role of faith and spirituality in fostering transformation. In this process, understanding facts of climate change is as important as it is to understand the interrelationship between respect for the natural environment and ethical values that prompt intergenerational solidarity, empowerment, and peaceful societies. It is about advocating and taking meaningful action for the differential impact of climate-related decisions on children, especially the most vulnerable.

The World Day 2023 launched from Mumbai, India was an opportunity to address these complex issues from a global as well as a local perspective as it convened faith communities to inspire prayer and action for all children.



"In a world where children are deeply affected by violence and poverty, the climate crisis is a profound reminder of humanity's inter-connectedness with the Earth and all living beings. It challenges us to recognize the sacredness of nature and embrace our role as stewards of the planet."

**- Rev. Keishi Miyamoto. President,
Arigatou International.**

Committed to building a better world for and with children, the World Day Planning Committee convened **seventeen child-focused organizations and networks** including:



Caring for our children is Caring for our planet

SOLUTIONS FROM INDIA

*"If we are to reach real peace
in this world, we shall have to
begin with children."*

Mahatma Gandhi.

The **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2023** was officially launched through **two impactful in-person events held in Mumbai, on November 17th and 18th**. The events were organized by the World Day host Committee co-chaired by Dr. Kezevino Aram –President of Shanti Ashram, recently awarded Women of Excellence in Multi-Religious Action by Religions for Peace–, and Archbishop Felix Machado –Bishop of Vasai and member of Arigatou International Advisory Group.

The in-person events provided an opportunity to enhance local multi-stakeholder collaboration for children's rights.

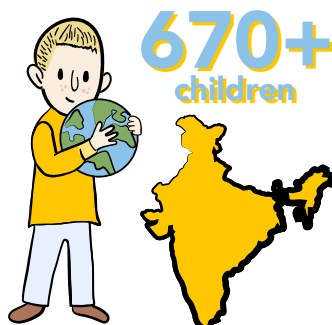
Some Highlights of the event on Nov 17th and Nov 18th:



Convening 40 partner institutions



Reaching 100 local child-focused organizations



Engaging 670 children from diverse cities across India



Five religious communities were represented in the program: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism.



On November 17th activities included child-led interfaith prayers at Mahatma Gandhi's Memorial, Mani Bhavan followed by a Round Table at the Nehru Center. Five religious communities were represented in the program including: **Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Jainism.**

“



I will also be very grateful that this moment will be recorded here in Mani Bhavan. That India came together, the world came together, to celebrate

our commitment, our accountability, and our love for children

Dr. Kezevino Aram – President, Shanti Ashram

”





The round table discussion focused on key factors for building a sustainable and peaceful future including ending violence against children; increasing nutritional security and child health outreach; and meaningful participation of children. Interventions from key stakeholders involved children, government representatives, scholars, United Nations agencies, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and child rights advocates. Some of the distinguished guests included Shri. DeepakVasant Kesarkar (Minister of Education, Government of Maharashtra), and Dr. Savitri Goonesekere (Emeritus Professor of Law University of Colombo, Sri Lanka).

“



A problem that deeply hurts me is the prevalence of violence against children in our society. From subtle forms of discrimination to explicit forms of abuse, violence of any kind leaves an everlasting impact on the mental health of children, destroying their ability to thrive and learn in a peaceful atmosphere.

Muskan – child representative and Shanti Ashram volunteer

”

The imperative to increase investment in children, fostering their effective and ethical participation while nurturing their spirituality, resonated as a compelling call to action for dialogue and commitment. This understanding acknowledges that children's present experiences shape our future as a society. A live 'Dialogue with Boys,' supported by Shanti Ashram, underscored the significance of addressing gender-based violence. The program emphasized the importance of open, respectful, and constructive dialogue with children regarding the factors that place girls and women at the highest risks of violence globally. Additionally, the hunger crisis exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a nutritional challenge impacting the generational development of children, including crucial aspects such as their learning abilities.





"Investing in children makes economic sense. Children victims of violence may not reach their full education and health potential which will limit their future income, productivity, and impact human capital development. The total annual cost attributable to adverse childhood experiences were estimated to be US 581 billion worldwide. Effective violence prevention and child protection requires addressing the drivers and root causes of violence at the same time as ensuring a chain of services in which all parts function in harmony ensuring support for families and communities."

Dr. Najat Malla M'jid – UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children

In this context, faith actors play a crucial role as advocates, educators, and first respondents to the multi-dimensional crisis affecting children worldwide. Efforts like the scoping study ***'Little Buddha Exploring Child Protection in Buddhist Communities across Southeast Asia'*** launched during the round table, present an opportunity for faith communities to self-assess their child protection successes and challenges, and to develop actions to advance social, economic, and political change for the realization of children's rights.



The commemoration concluded with the "Children's Huddle" at Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan on November 18th, serving as a creative and artistic platform for children to express themselves through dancing and singing. It provided an opportunity for them to learn more about their vital role in constructing a peaceful and sustainable world through intergenerational dialogue and action.



Two main outcomes emerged from the in-person World Day celebrations in India. The first, titled ***'A Call for a Peaceful World for our Children,'*** draws attention to parental and community responsibilities in peacebuilding, emphasizing the nurturing of peace from an early age and the importance of accountability. The second outcome is ***'A Call for Help to the World Leaders on behalf of the Children of the World ,'*** a letter proposed and developed by child participants to urge world leaders to preserve peace in the best interest of all children.



The World Day celebration in India was possible thanks to the hard work of the local host Committee and the **78 volunteers** that brought together over **75 speakers** for a two-day program.

Caring for our children is Caring for our planet

ONLINE SESSION



"We must focus on children to create a safer environment. Children are the future, and for that, we need to teach them about environment and the climate crisis. Many religions consider earth sacred but not everyone respects that. Children must learn to take care of the environment and create a culture of conservation that in the long term will preserve humanity as well."

Alleyne – Child activist and founder of Heart4Earth

On November 20th, the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children was marked by an online discussion co-organized by the World Day planning committee. The online discussion focused on the intricate connections between climate justice, health, education, poverty, violence, and migration affecting children, and highlighted the vital role of faith actors in climate education and action.





"Your faith plays a crucial role to ensure that we meet the small window of time which according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change we have to halt the continuing increase of Co2 emissions. Speaking the truth to powers is essential also for the spiritual support to ensure solid hope for children."

Ms. Frederique Seidel – Senior leader in child rights, climate solutions and peacebuilding, World Council of Churches



"It's not just about adults providing to children. A key powerful aspect of recovery and resilience promotion in the context of forced displacement and climate change is

the peer-to-peer support because these are the networks and support children would have had at home, and some of those would have been related in the faith context."

Dr. Kathleen Rutledge – Faith Action for Children on the Move Coalition

It was also an opportunity to promote the UN **resolution** on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and to discuss the transformative effects of **General Comment 26** on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change.



"Faith actors play a vital role in children's rights. For example, in education faith actors play a critical role in increasing the extent to which climate change is included in the curriculums to influence lifestyle change for sustainable development from an early age. Similarly, faith actors can promote climate justice, as well as the General Comment No. 26 which is the only General Comment we can confidently say was the result of a participatory process."

Prof. Benyam Dawit Mezmur – CRC Committee Member



The speakers underscored the intersection of children's advocacy for climate justice, the role of faith actors in supporting their participation, and the broader implications for addressing environmental challenges. In this sense, interventions shed light on:

- The risks and violence faced by child activists;
- The contribution of faith actors to mental health support for children on the move;
- The role of faith communities in addressing child poverty linked to climate challenges;
- The potential of integrating climate action into the 2030 Agenda to achieve Sustainable Development Goals, with a focus on what faith actors can do to raise awareness and support concrete actions.

Some Highlights of the Online Session:



The World Day online event mobilized participants from 26 countries representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam



The event convened 27 speakers including 8 children



Bosnia and Herzegovina



Brazil



Dominican Republic



Ecuador



Guatemala



Mexico



Pakistan

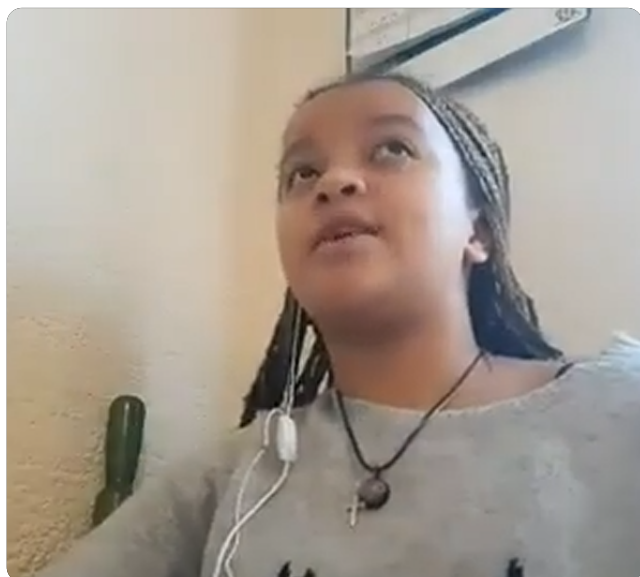


Peru



Nicaragua

The World Day 2023 was also celebrated by members of the Global Network of Religions for Children through local actions across many countries



“



“The reality of climate change is not just a scientific fact, but also a moral one. When untruths are told and when living beings suffer, religious voices cannot be silent. They must be the first to speak out. In the matter of education and climate justice religious communities have a pivotal role. As ancient centers of learning, religious leaders in their role as educators are teachers of wisdom and ethical obligations of our traditions.”

Prof. Anantanand Rambachan – Emeritus Professor of Religion at Saint Olaf College, Minnesota

”

WEARmySHOES AWARD

Outstanding child-led and youth-led action for Climate!



The thematic focus of the [**Wear My Shoes Awards 2023**](#) built on the World Day Planning Committee's interest to support child-led and youth-led action addressing the root causes of climate injustice and focuses on children who are at highest risk. It also built upon the long-term commitment of faith actors to contribute to increase climate justice for children at policy, regulation, project, and community levels.



The prize of US **\$5,000** to each of the five Award winners is a significant contribution towards their work and a well-deserved endorsement of their outstanding efforts and results. These awards were made possible thanks to a generous donation by the [**Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities**](#) in support of the annual World Day of Prayer and Action for Children and the Wear My Shoes Campaign.



The five Wear My Shoes Awardees of 2023 included:

1st place: Colombia

Title: Helping our planet through environmental empowerment at school system (HOPES)

Organization: Youth Human Rights Network



The project was initiated to address the pressing need for environmental education and action in a diverse school system catering to various populations, including Venezuelan migrants, indigenous communities, and diverse Christian denominations. Recognizing the universal impact of environmental issues, the project aims to unite people across cultural and religious differences. Its goal is to empower students and communities to embrace environmental consciousness and responsibility. The project was founded on the belief that education at the school level can cultivate a lifelong commitment to environmental stewardship. Through fostering understanding and a shared sense of responsibility, "HOPES" seeks to equip students to advocate for the planet, transcending cultural and religious boundaries for a sustainable and harmonious future.



2nd place: Cameroon

Title: Children's climate artist

Organization: Community Green Engagement



In 2019, children from different backgrounds met in Bamenda Town, Cameroon, to discuss poverty-related challenges and climate changes they face and envision a new future together. Their discussions delved into solutions, emphasizing the significance of norms, practices, and education in overcoming these challenges. A central vision emerged: envisioning trees in every conceivable space, symbolizing a collective commitment to a healthy planet. This initiative includes re-greening communities with native plants, supporting pollinator species, and promoting agro-forestry, reforestation, and the protection of existing tree stands. The vision is not just about planting trees but fostering a sustainable future through education, shared responsibility, and environmental stewardship.



3rd place: Romania

Title: By protecting our planet, we protect our rights - information. Motivation. Action

Organization: Education for Change Association



The project was initiated to address the schools' requirement to engage students in activities for Green Week, aligning with the new national school curriculum focused on protecting the environment. This initiative not only built children's capacities but also fostered a deeper connection with nature. Simultaneously, it provided a dedicated platform for educational and growth-related activities, empowering children, and youth to tackle the root causes of climate change and actions needed to address its impact on children and communities.



4th Place: India

Title: Eco-warrior bandstand beach cleaning at Bandra

Organization: St. Catherine of Siena School and Orphanage



St. Catherine of Siena School, located near Bandstand in Bandra, faced a prevalent issue of garbage surrounding the nearby Shantis. Despite the children being aware of the problem, their parents, grappling with issues like alcoholism, poverty, and making ends meet, lacked the initiative to address the situation. In response, Patricia Furtado (Trustee) and a group of volunteers from the school initiated a monthly cleanup activity to maintain cleanliness in the Bandstand area. This ongoing program, known as the Eco-Warrior, aims to instill a sense of responsibility in the children and the community. Despite recurring challenges, the commitment persists until recognized by the BMC for their commendable efforts.



5th place: Seychelles

Title: : Mont Fleuri secondary eco-school

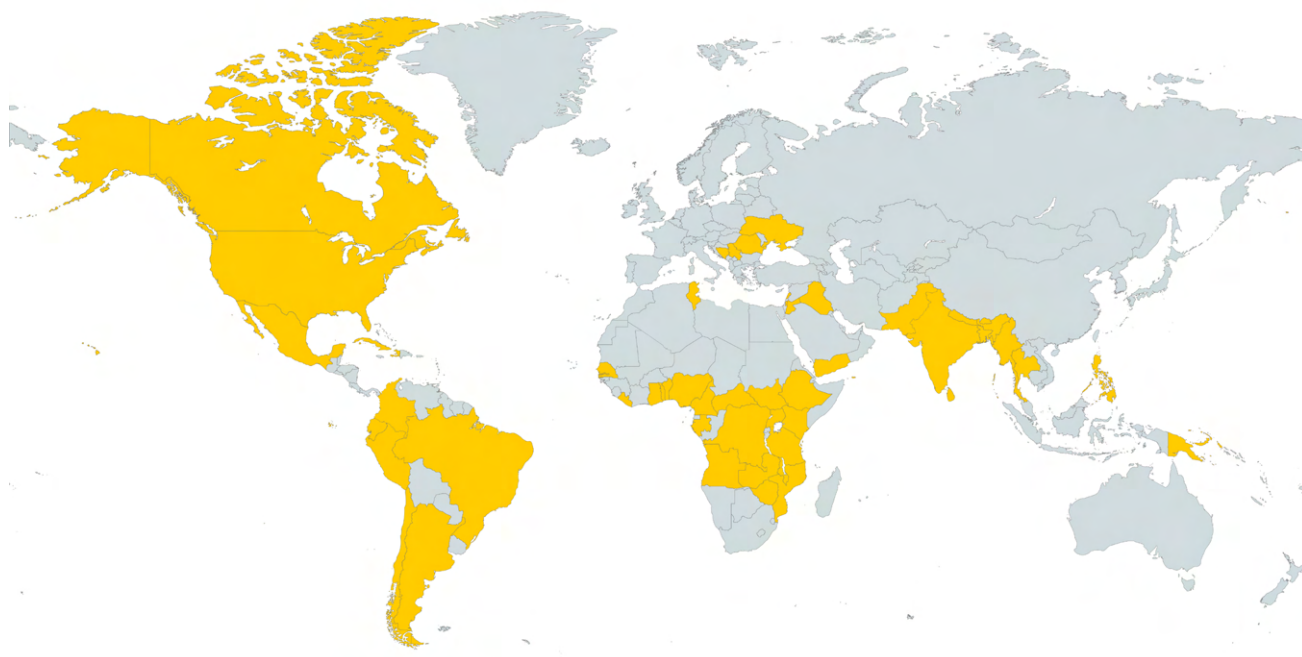
Organization: Mont Fleuri Secondary School



The project, initiated two years ago, aims to raise awareness and empower students at Mont Fleuri Secondary School to be more environmentally conscious, particularly regarding the vulnerability of our ecosystem. The focus is on addressing the aftermath of the southeast monsoon trade, where heaps of garbage accumulate on shores, posing a threat to marine life, including the fish consumed in the region. Collaborating with partners, the project involves beach clean-ups, mangrove cleaning, and awareness sessions for students, both at Mont Fleuri and other schools, highlighting the impact of pollution. The project is ongoing, extending efforts to reduce littering, promote recycling, and integrate living values into the school's initiatives.



Since its establishment in 2021, the **Wear My Shoes Award** raised interest from **58 countries** including:



 Angola	 Haiti	 Senegal
 Argentina	 India	 Serbia
 Bangladesh	 Iraq	 Seychelles
 Benin	 Jordan	 Sierra Leone
 Bhutan	 Kenya	 South Sudan
 Bosnia and Herzegovina	 Lebanon	 Sri Lanka
 Brazil	 Liberia	 Tanzania
 Cameroon	 Malawi	 Thailand
 Canada	 Mexico	 The Gambia
 Central African Republic	 Mozambique	 The Philippines
 Chile	 Myanmar	 Togo
 Colombia	 Nepal	 Tunisia
 Comoros	 New Guinea	 Uganda
 Cuba	 Nigeria	 Ukraine
 Democratic Republic of Congo	 Pakistan	 United States of America
 Ecuador	 Palestine	 Yemen
 Ethiopia	 Peru	 Zambia
 Gabon	 Romania	 Zimbabwe
 Ghana	 Scotland	

With Gratitude, The Planning Committee of the World Day 2023 wishes to sincerely thank all the applicants for their interest and the twenty judges for their support and commitment to review and score the **53 applications** received this year.

Follow-up opportunities and commitments

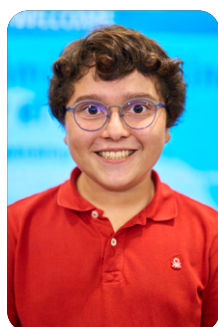
The **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2023** offered a relevant platform for collaboration and advocacy for a sustainable and peaceful world. Some of the follow-up opportunities and commitments include:

- Dissemination and scale-up of the children's letter 'A Call for help to world leaders on behalf of the children of the world' and the call for a 'Peaceful World for our Children'.



- Establishment of a community of practice with Wear My Shoes Award's winners and applicants to strengthen local to global multi-stakeholder and intergenerational collaboration for children.

- Establishment of an India Consortium led by the India Host Committee on commitments from the India roundtable.



"Education has the power to transform. Amid this uncertain and critical situation in which we are –which is not only related to the climate crisis, but also wars, hunger, pandemics–, we have tools like education to thrive and let children be prepared and empowered to face the challenges of our society. In this sense, we need an inclusive climate education that prioritizes children's participation."

Francisco Vera – UNICEF's first young advocate for environmental and climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean

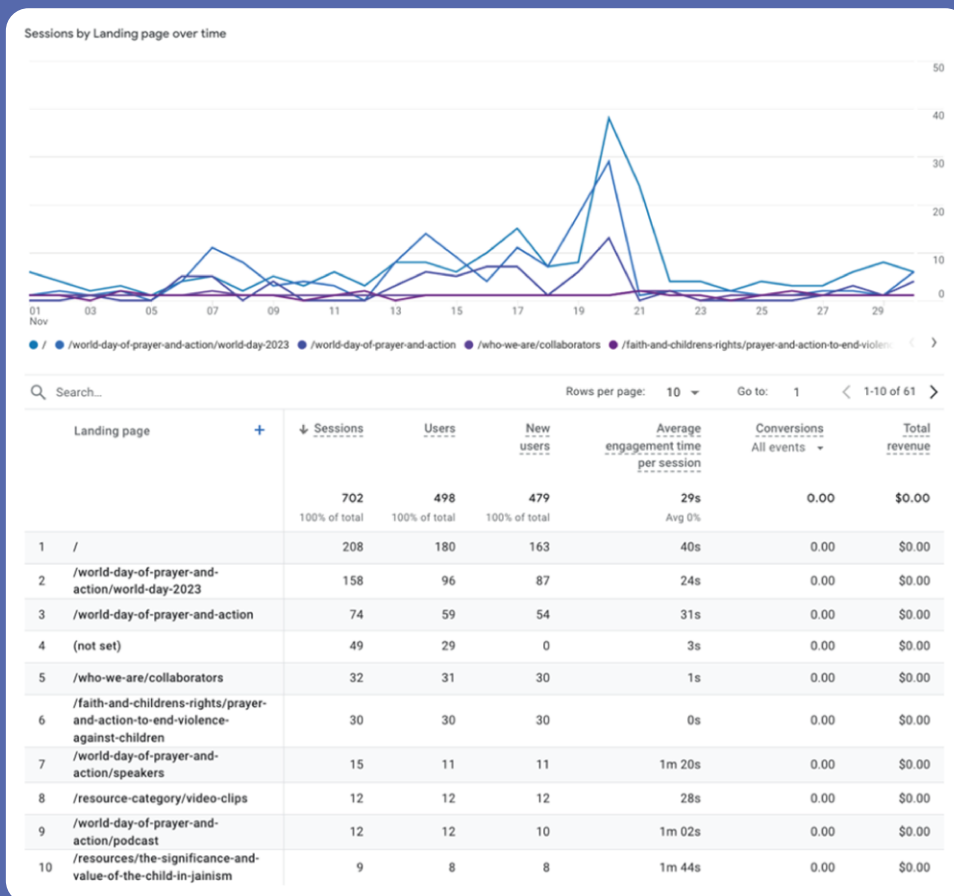
Digital Media Impressions

Reflecting on the digital interactions and engagements throughout November 2023, we are excited to present a comprehensive overview of our collective impact during the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children. Across social media platforms, our message resonated widely, fostering a growing commitment to our cause. Online events and campaigns, including the dissemination of the Wear My Shoes Award, further amplified our reach, attracting a substantial number of participants and generating hours of collective engagement. Our website served as a pivotal information hub, witnessing a noteworthy increase in traffic, with visitors spending valuable time exploring the wealth of resources we provide. The global scope of our efforts was evident as the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children sparked international engagement, reaching numerous countries and fostering a truly global conversation on the challenges and successes in securing a brighter future for children.



As we celebrate these achievements, we extend gratitude to each community member for their dedication and passion, recognizing the ripple effect created by our collective endeavors. Looking forward, let these statistics inspire us to strive for even greater heights in the new year. Together, we possess the ability to transform these numbers into meaningful actions, positively impacting the lives of children worldwide.

Landing page Google Analytics:

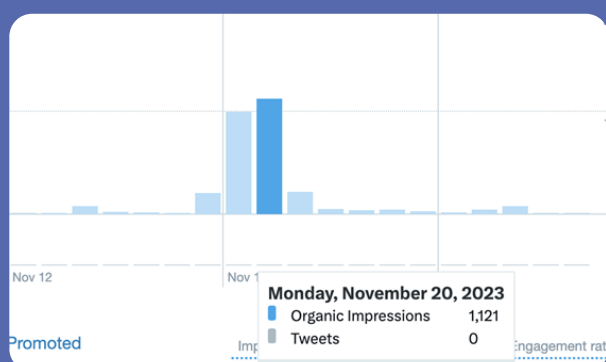


Twitter:

General statistics:

Post impressions

3129



Facebook - Instagram:

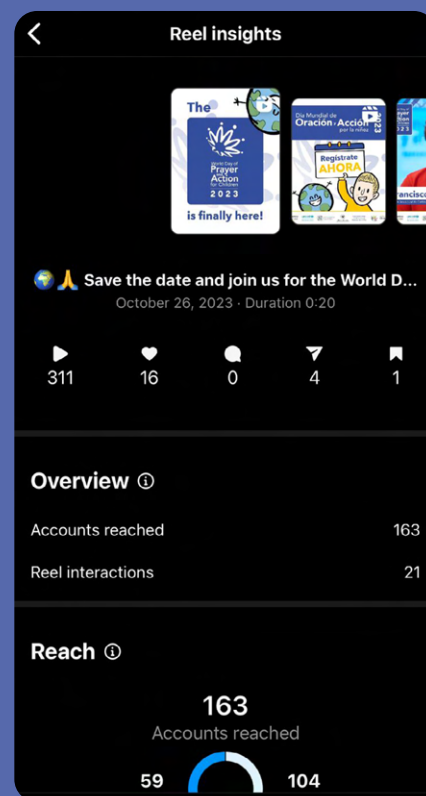
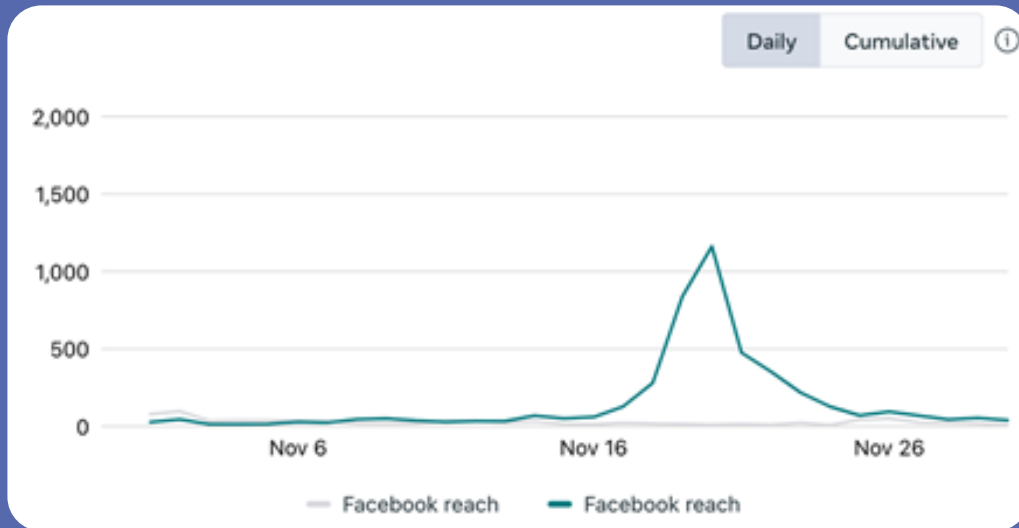
Our posts earned 3.655 impressions over this 30-day period, November 2023.

Facebook Reach

3345

Instagram Reach

310



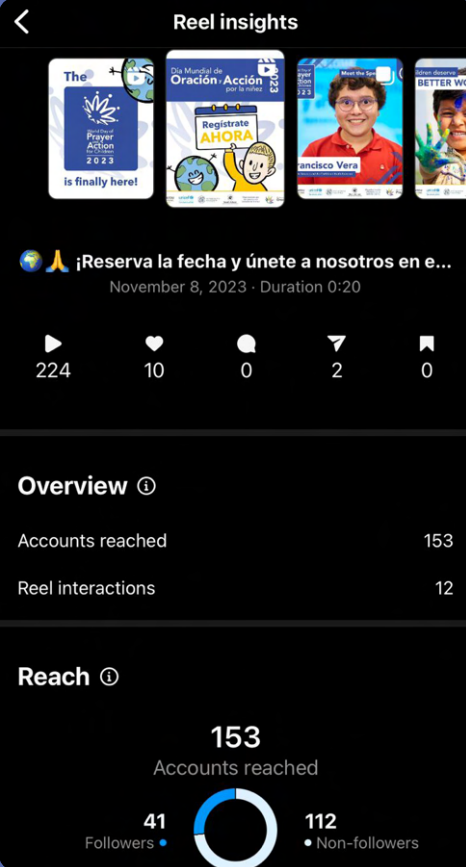
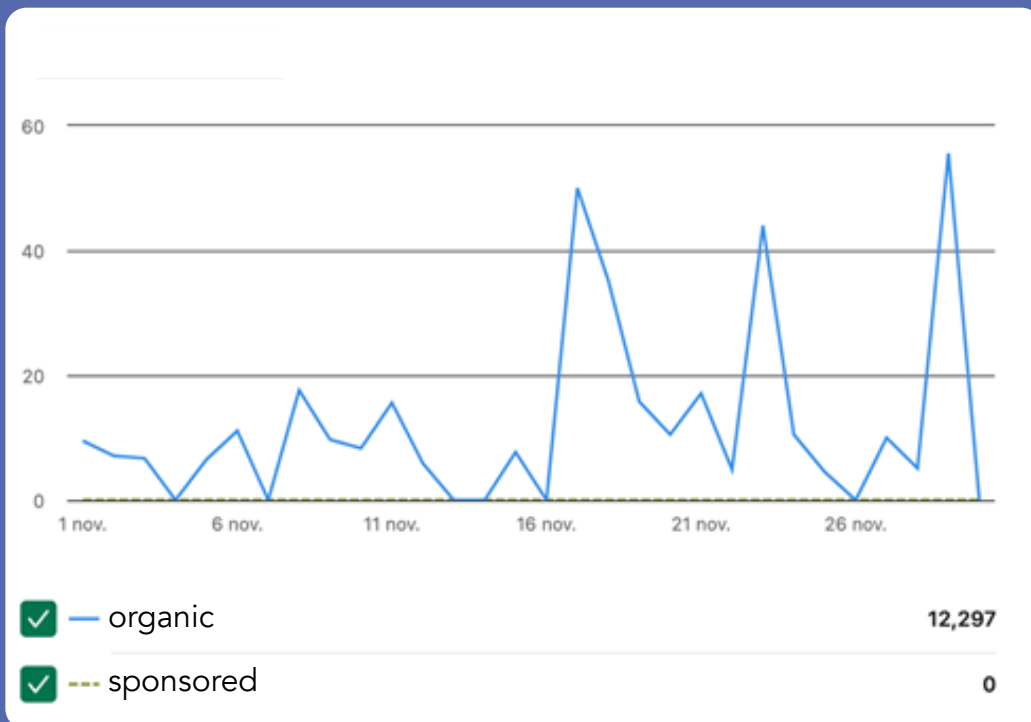
Overview

You reached **+112%** more accounts compared to Oct 2 - Oct 31

Accounts reached	310	>
	+112%	
Accounts engaged	36	>
	+24.1%	
Total followers	251	>

LinkedIn Analytics:

Interaction rate:



Commemorating the “World Day for Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence”



Arigatou International – Prayer And Action For Children, a global NGO dedicated to the mission of “All for Children,” invited global participation in commemorating the second-year anniversary of the adoption of the UN Resolution establishing the “World Day for the Prevention of and Healing from Child Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence” on November 18. The Resolution emphasizes children’s dignity and their right to a violence-free life in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). For three decades, Arigatou International has championed children’s rights and well-being globally by collaborating with organizations such as UNICEF, engaging the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), and supporting interfaith projects in over 70 countries. Committed to an interfaith approach and guided by CRC principles, Arigatou International employs tools like the Ending Violence Against Children’s Lab (EVAC-LAB) and the digital 2019 Faith and Children’s Rights multi-religious study on the CRC. The organization continues to work towards safeguarding children against all forms of violence and sexual abuse, and commemorating the UN Resolution annually on November 18 is a reminder of our collective responsibility to protect children’s rights and well-being.





Contact Us

Arigatou International — New York Prayer and Action for Children

250 Park Avenue 7th Floor
New York, NY 10177, U.S.A.
Tel: +1 212 739 0811

 arigatouinternational.org

 prayerandactionforchildren.org

 newyork@arigatouinternational.org

 [/PrayerandAction](https://www.facebook.com/PrayerandAction)

 [@prayerandaction](https://twitter.com/prayerandaction)

 [@prayerandaction](https://www.instagram.com/prayerandaction)

 [Prayer and Action for Children - New York](https://www.youtube.com/PrayerandActionforChildren-NewYork)

 [/arigatou-international-prayer-and-action-for-all-children/](https://www.linkedin.com/company/arigatou-international-prayer-and-action-for-all-children/)



World Day of
Prayer and **Action**
for Children



Arigatou International - New York
Prayer and Action for Children

250 Park Avenue 7th Floor
New York, NY 10177, U.S.A

prayerandactionforchildren.org