



An Interfaith Guide to End Child Poverty

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End Child Poverty

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PREFACE

Extreme poverty is the most extensive form of violence in the world. It claims an enormous number of lives worldwide and leaves the survivors with unbearable and endemic suffering. There are an estimated 1 billion children living in poverty today. Simply put, that is one out of every two children.

This Inter-Faith Resource Guide comes just after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the United Nations, whose first goal is to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere.” I would submit that the highest priority — both ethically and pragmatically — must be on the most pernicious form of poverty: child poverty.

First of all, we are morally compelled to come to the aid of those who suffer the most from poverty, and who on their own have the least capacity to fight it — the most vulnerable, the children. However, practically speaking, as well, the shortest path to eradicating poverty in the long term is by starting with today’s children — building structures and empowering families to ensure that they escape the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty. This child-centered orientation calls on us to address not just economic and systemic causes of poverty, but also the root causes of poverty that lie in the human heart. This is the conviction behind our End Child Poverty initiative, a multi-faith, child centered, global initiative that mobilises faith-inspired resources to end child poverty by addressing both the structural causes of poverty and its root causes in the human heart.

As the international community moves forward with its efforts to eradicate poverty, we call upon all religious people from all faith tradi-

tions to acknowledge and fulfill the special role they have, of directing the world’s moral focus on protecting children and ensuring that every child gets to grow up safe and sound. Let us make ending child poverty the top priority that it already is in our holy books, scriptures, teachings and traditions.

We hope that this Resource Guide will be a tool that will help faith communities to mobilise faith-inspired resources to end child poverty, empower their constituencies to take action, build networks and coalitions with like-minded actors around the world and hold policy makers accountable to ending poverty in general and especially, ending child poverty.



Rev. Keishi Miyamoto
President, Arigatou International

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Rev. Fred Nyabera
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary aim of this Resource Guide is to mobilise Faith-inspired resources to end Child Poverty. The Guide has been developed by Arigatou International's Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty, (End Child Poverty) — a multi-faith, child centred, global initiative that mobilises faith-inspired resources to end child poverty.

Religious communities and organisations have unique resources. These include their spiritual values, social capital and moral assets. By working together in partnership with like-minded organisations, we believe in mobilising resources to reduce poverty at grassroots and global level. We have a three-pronged strategy:

- Mitigating the root causes of poverty in the human heart through theological reflection, prayer and action;
- Combating the structural causes of poverty through interfaith advocacy and lobbying; and
- Accompanying, supporting or undertaking replicable and sustainable grassroots projects, all targeting alleviation of Child Poverty.

This guide has ten chapters, each dealing with a specific theme that analyses and relates various aspects of Child Poverty. The Guide is relevant and engaging to various audiences, for different purposes and different contexts. The guide can for instance be used as a resource to;

- Build the leadership capacity of an organisation or institution;
- Function as a training tool for adults and youth working with children;
- Act as a study tool for educational purposes in academic environments; and
- Provide practical tools and tips to help plan events and projects to alleviate Child Poverty.

Chapter 1: Introduction. This chapter introduces and provides an overview of the Guide, its purpose and usage.

Chapter 2: Understanding Poverty.

This chapter reflects on different definitions of poverty including the distinction between “absolute” and “relative” poverty. The chapter further reflects on the multidimensional measures of poverty and points out that, in order to be effective, any poverty eradication initiative ought to go beyond conventional economic approaches to address poverty. Noting that theories on the causes of poverty are the foundation upon which most poverty reduction strategies. This chapter gives a snap shot of three theories that attempt to explain the existence of poverty;

- Individual Deficiencies Theory of Poverty
- Cultural Theories of Poverty
- Structural Theory of Poverty

Finally, this chapter ends by demonstrating the multidimensional problem of child poverty and the impressions of children and youth on poverty.

Chapter 3: Root Causes and Drivers of Child Poverty.

This chapter reflects on how different drivers can contribute to and exacerbate child poverty. These include inequality, corruption, violence and violent conflicts, climate change and the Environment. The chapter further draws a nexus between child poverty and gender dynamics, lack of health facilities and education.

Chapter 4: Children, Religion and Spirituality.

Religious adherence encourages children's participation towards mitigating the impact of poverty. While the abuses of religion

and the strife caused by sectarianism are clear, a religious belief or affiliation and religious rituals can provide support and inner resilience to children in times of difficulty such as in situations of poverty or other deprivation.

Chapter 5: Religious Reflections on Children and Poverty. This chapter contains inspirational reflections from the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh faith traditions on mitigating child poverty.

Chapter 6: Overview of Children's Rights. This chapter provides an overview of Children's Rights that specifically address Child Poverty — including the Right to Non-discrimination; the Right to life, survival and development; The Best interests of the Child; and Respect for the views of the Child. All these rights originate from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Child Poverty. Eradicating Child Poverty in all its dimensions is one of the most important and urgent human rights issues of the 2030 global agenda.

Chapter 7: Faith-Inspired Approaches to Ending Child Poverty. This chapter reflects on some faith-inspired approaches to ending child poverty. Covered in this chapter are the role of religious communities in poverty eradication; universal values shared by religious communities; added value and strengths of faith inspired Organisations; communities and religious leaders in combating poverty; theological reflection, prayer and action; advocacy and lobbying; grassroots mobilisation and initiatives; global coalitions; research; evidence and knowledge generation.

Chapter 8: Community Mobilisation to End Child Poverty. This chapter reflects on the mobilisation of communities to end Child Poverty. The issues discussed include the

different groups of a community and the contribution each of them can make. They include religious leaders, theologians and educators; children and the youth; and ordinary men and women in society. It examines strategies for mobilising community members, organizing them into levels of community participation as well as guiding principles.

Chapter 9: Building Partnerships to Address Child Poverty. This chapter highlights the need to work with key partners and stakeholders in fighting Child Poverty including parents, guardians and caregivers; interreligious Organisations; the role of the Government; Civil societies; global coalitions; the United Nations and its key Organs; and the Media.

Chapter 10: Action Tools & Resources. Methods, Making Your Work Relevant and Advocacy, Communication Tools and Participatory Training. This chapter outlines the principles of working with different groups of people and the ethical considerations to make when facilitating trainings for each of these groups. The chapter further looks at useful approaches to use as teaching aids. The chapter also provides tips on how facilitators can achieve effective training sessions using effective teaching methodology and demonstrating appropriate behavioural characteristics.

The chapter provides tips on advocacy communication and media tools; different forms of media to communicate with; and the tools for media engagement.

Our anticipation is that the information provided in this Resource Guide will motivate you and equip you as an individual or as an organisation towards ending child poverty.

Rev. Fred Nyabera
Director, End Child Poverty Arigatou International

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS



ACRL-RfP

African Council of Religious Leaders - Religions for Peace

AI

Arigatou International

BRAVE

Building Resilience Against Violent Extremism

CBOs

Community Based Organisations

CRC

Convention on the Right of the Child

CHA

Cessation of Hostilities Agreement

DDR

Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration

FBOs

Faith-Based Organisations

FIOs

Faith-Inspired Organisations

FCS

Former Child Soldiers

GBV

Gender Based Violence

GNRC

Global Network of Religions for Children

IRCK

Inter-Religious Council of Kenya

MDG

Millenium Development Goals

NGO

Non-Governmental Organisation

SALW

Small Arms and Light Weapons

SDG

Sustainable Development Goals

UNCRC

United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child

UNDP

United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF

United Nations Children's Fund



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION



1.1 ABOUT THE INTERFAITH INITIATIVE TO END CHILD POVERTY

The Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty (End Child Poverty) is a multi-faith, child-centred, global initiative of Arigatou International that mobilises faith-inspired resources to end child poverty. End Child Poverty believes in a world where every child lives free of poverty. We aim to achieve this by addressing the root causes of poverty in the human heart and by challenging the structural root causes of poverty.

Our approach puts into action three main strategies, which involve:

- Mitigating the root causes of poverty in the human heart through theological reflection, prayer and action;

Our Vision: A World Free of Child Poverty

We envision a world free of child poverty and strongly believe that this is indeed, possible. Every day, in cooperation with many other individuals and like-minded organisations, we aim for and work hard to turn this goal into reality. We focus on the protection and promotion of the dignity of children, their innate value, their rights, their full human potential and ultimately, the enhancement of their overall well-being. Our mandate is to work for the benefit of all children.

- Combating the structural causes of poverty through interfaith advocacy and lobbying; and
- Accompanying, supporting or undertaking replicable and sustainable grassroots projects that alleviate poverty affecting children.

The **End Child Poverty** initiative was launched by Arigatou International at the Fourth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in 2012, in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



MISSION: TO MOBILISE FAITH-INSPIRED RESOURCES TO END CHILD POVERTY

Religious communities and Faith-Inspired Organisations (FIOs) have unique resources, which include their spiritual values, social capital and moral assets. We therefore seek to mobilise, connect, work with (and through) these valuable partners to reduce poverty at grassroots and global levels.

“Poverty is the greatest global injustice of our times.”¹

Organisation of the Guide

The Guide is organised as follows:

- A brief introduction to the Guide and its purpose;
- Background to the topics to be discussed within the Guide;
- A brief overview of Child Poverty and how this relates to Children’s Rights;
- A general discussion on children, religion and spirituality;
- The role of religious communities in combating Child Poverty;
- The importance of engaging with key stakeholders and developing poverty eradication projects;
- Conclusion

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As End Child Poverty, we are guided by four simple but powerful principles namely:

- Child-Centered initiatives;
- Integration of positive religious values in our work;
- Promotion of faith-inspired initiatives; and
- Cooperation with like-minded stakeholders.



1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE GUIDE AND ITS PURPOSE

This guide provides a general overview of the nature and scope of child poverty that you can use for informational and educational purposes. Moreover, it highlights the positive roles that faith communities and their leaders can, (and in reality) do serve in advocating for the eradication of child poverty, and promoting interfaith coordination and collaboration in advancing children’s dignity and well-being. Through this Guide, we will provide you with the resources to equip you and faith leaders, faith communities and organisations with the relevant knowledge and skills needed to address child poverty effectively. After carefully reading and understanding the information contained in this Guide, you will be able to facilitate discussions, plan and initiate activities with themes related to child poverty. Specific communities will also be able to respond effectively.

Consider using this guide during religious services or worship activities; prayer sessions; educational programs; grassroots activities; social justice initiatives, and workshop training sessions, as well as discussion groups. The Guide is equally suitable for religious leaders; volunteers and staff of Faith-Inspired Organisations (FIOs) and communities; educational and child-centred institutions; youth leaders; and advocates of Children’s Rights in Government and Civil societies, as well as individual advocates for the rights of the child.

1.3 HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This Guide is be used for various purposes and in different contexts, including to:

- Build organisational leadership capacity;

- As a training tool for adults and young people working with children, or as a study tool for educational purposes in an academic context.

The guide also has practical tools and tips to help you plan events or projects that could help alleviate Child Poverty. Look out for these special segments throughout The Guide:



Special Segments	Explanation
Snapshot	Quotes and introductory questions that allow you and your team to think about an issue and thereafter, give your own (related) experience.
Think About It	Questions to help you reflect, recap and discuss specific issues related to child poverty.
Have Your Say	Advocacy ideas that you can pro-actively use.
Take Action	Tips and practical activities that you can use to help address child poverty.
Fact box	Quick facts about child poverty and its root causes — these facts are especially useful during advocacy efforts.
Special Focus	A deeper look at child poverty and its drivers.
Impact Story	Read about what other like-minded people around the world are doing to successfully combat child poverty — your organisation may be included here.
Tool Box	A collection of resources to help you get started, build or improve on your work.
Tip	Handy information reduced to small bits.

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

Snapshot:

- What do you understand by the term “poverty?”
- How would you define “child poverty?”
- What measure(s) of child poverty does your community or country use?
- What are some of the manifestations of child poverty in your community?

2.1 DEFINING POVERTY

“Poverty is the root of the challenges children face around the world today. Poverty is a multi-faceted problem which is more than economic; it includes social and cultural dimensions, and impinges upon human dignity.”²

The word “poverty” comes from an old French word “poverté,” which when translated, means “poverty,” “misery” or “wretched condition.” From Latin, the word derived from “pauper” is “paupertās,” which when translated means “poverty,” “small means,” “moderate circumstances,” “need,” “want” or “indigence.”

Most people have an inherent sense of what it means to be poor. However, choosing an appropriate definition is not quite as easy. A number of questions have dogged social scientists for many years. For instance: Is poverty an absolute or relative condition? What defines a decent standard of living?

Poverty is usually measured in either absolute or relative terms. A number of definitions further try to distinguish between these two states of poverty. Consider the following definitions:

Poverty means different things in different countries. In Europe, the poor are those whose income falls below 60% of the median. Britain uses three measures: one relative, one absolute and a broader indicator of material deprivation, such as whether a child can celebrate his birthday. The concept of poverty becomes even more slippery when attempting international comparisons.

The United Nations’ “human-development index” assesses countries across a range of indicators, such as schooling and life expectancy (Economist, 2011).

The World Bank explains poverty as:

...deprivation in well-being, and comprises many dimensions. It includes low incomes and the inability to acquire the basic goods and services necessary for survival with dignity. Poverty also encompasses low levels of health and education, poor access to clean water and sanitation, inadequate physical security, lack of voice, and insufficient capacity and opportunity to better one’s life (World Bank, 2011).

The term absolute poverty is synonymously referred to as extreme poverty. The Copenhagen Declaration describes absolute poverty as:

...a condition characterized by severe deprivation of basic human needs, including food, safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, health, shelter, education and information. It depends not only on income but also on access to social services (World Summit, 2013).

According to the United Nations (UN), poverty is defined as:

...the inability of getting choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. It

Think About It:

- Does your faith community, religious tradition or cultural traditional belief have any definitions of poverty? What are they?
- Based on the various definitions of poverty provided earlier in this section, would you say that Child Poverty affects your community?

means not having enough to feed and clothe a family, not having a school or clinic to go to; not having the land on which to grow one's food or a job to earn one's living, not having access to credit. It means insecurity, powerlessness and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. It means susceptibility to violence, and it often implies living in marginal or fragile environments, without access to clean water or sanitation (United Nations, 2011).

According to the United Nations Children's Educational Fund (UNICEF), children affected by poverty are those who:

...experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their basic human rights as stated in the Convention on the Rights of Children, 1989 (CRC), to achieve their full potential and/or participate as full members of society contributing to national development (UNICEF, 2011).

These definitions imply that child poverty is multi-dimensional in nature and includes complex interactions involving the body, mind, soul and emotions. Consequently, the eradication of poverty is not merely an intellectual exercise of science, technology or economics — on the contrary, it involves an inner change in the individual as well. It is for this reason that End Child Poverty recognises the necessity to transform the paradigm of development by taking cognizance of the spirituality, ethics and values that promote sustainable development.

Indeed, End Child Poverty strongly maintains the position that in order to be effective, any poverty eradication initiative ought to go beyond conventional economic approaches to succeed. The measures must address not only the systemic structures, but also the root causes of the problems in the human heart, which stem from attitudes and perceptions such as greed, ignorance, hatred and fear.

Have Your Say

- Find out if your country has an official definition of poverty in general and a specific mechanism for identifying and measuring Child Poverty — for instance, by using a Child Poverty Index.
- In cooperation with like-minded individuals and Organisations, lobby your relevant Government authorities to develop and utilise a relevant Child Poverty Index.

Take Action

- Work with children in your community. Start by listening to them presenting their views on poverty. Request them to describe poverty in their own words. Collect their views and present these responses to leaders, government representatives and decision makers, in order to advocate for deliberate action to address child poverty in your community.
- Plan and organise a creative arts and crafts fair/activity day in your school or your community. Provide an area where children can share their creative drawings that demonstrate their understanding of poverty.

Tip:

A Child Poverty Index is a framework or a mechanism for providing indicators and 'measuring' the level of poverty which specifically affects children.

2.2 IMPRESSIONS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ON POVERTY

"The child was not born poor but it is the society that makes him poor."³

Several young people were asked to respond to the question: "What does it mean to be poor?" The following is a cross-section of their responses:

"Poverty is when one doesn't have a house or money, when children have no place to stay, no food, or even a place to sleep."

-Esther, Tanzania

"I think young people should have a say in poverty policy, as it helps people have an insight in to what poverty is like in the UK and how they can make a positive change, from the little things in their local community, to the big things on a national scale."

-Liam, UK

"I was surprised by how things can change so fast... You can go from doing OK, not having to go hungry, to this: going hungry and having to pay all your bills and not being able to [buy food], on the verge of being homeless again."

-Roger, USA

"I hope that with my writing I will be able to draw attention of the world to the poor children in (the) world. I'm happy because I am involved in the fight against child poverty, because every child has the right to a better life."

-Fatma, Bosnia and Herzegovina

"Finding solutions for the poverty in India is one of the most important needs. Poverty among the children is (a) very bad situation and bad thing to everyone. Here, involving the youth and children for finding solutions and to take a part for this input and their support is one of the precious gifts."

-Ravichandran, India

"To me, poverty is suffering, difficulties and diseases...it interferes with everything, the quality of education and the (ability) to purchase materials."

-Isabella, Brazil

"As a child, what I can do about poverty is to stay positive – I don't say because I am from Kibera that I will stay here forever. I will work hard and believe in God and one day I will move from here."

-Princess, Kenya

"Poverty is not having enough money to provide for one's basic needs."

-John, Tanzania



"We should try to get greediness out of our country. It is something that kills the dreams of those who come from poor states as I do. It kills them because – when people are greedy, the money that is meant for us, people who are poor and come from this state – it's taken by them and used to satisfy their needs. Not for us and for making us poorer."

-girl from Kenya

"When I was asked, how (should we) fight poverty? ... Empowerment seems to be the only way. If you give a man a fish for his meal, you're only helping him for that one meal. What if you teach fishing – you're giving him a means by

which he is independent, by which he can make his meal every day. But you should we stop with teaching him fishing alone? What about marketing skills? What about his communication skills? What if he can motivate groups of people to work with him? That is empowerment. And empowerment can definitely fight poverty.”
-female youth from India

“If my dream comes true and I play football and I get good (grades), I will build a school so that poor children can learn”
-boy from Kenya

“Not having enough money.”

“Poverty has a lot of forms”

“Not having a proper house.”

“Not having a proper school.”

“Not having enough to eat.”

“In some places girls can’t go to school.”

“An earthquake hit my country and people lost everything.”

-The child’s parents are from Nepal

Tip

Refer to Tool Box 10.1.2 Working with Young People: Youth and Children

Fact Box: Various Forms of Child Poverty

- In almost every country in the world, more children live in poverty than adults do.
- 47% of those living in extreme poverty are 18 years old or younger.
- The world currently has an estimated 2.2 billion children of whom 1 billion live in poverty.
- 640 million children (1 in 3) live without adequate shelter, 400 million (1 in 5) lack access to safe water, 270 million (1 in 7) have no access to health services and 1.4 million die annually due to lack of access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.
- Child Poverty is about more than just money-it is multidimensional.
- Children experience poverty in different ways from adults. Child poverty has been more specifically described as “deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed [for children] to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full and equal members of society.”
- For children, poverty means being deprived of major aspects of life like nutrition, health, water, education, protection and shelter. Poverty is a violation of child rights and denies children the chance to survive and thrive.
- Poverty impacts more acutely on children than on adults, as they are more vulnerable to the effects of deprivation (both immediate and long-term), less able to address or change their situation, and more greatly at risk of exploitation and other failures to meet and protect their rights.
- Cash grants and social protection systems play a huge role in taking families out of poverty.
- Due to the uneven human development achievements and widespread deprivations, 11 children under age 5 die every minute and 33 mothers die every hour.
- Around the world, millions of children are forced into exploitative labour. The world has around 168 million child labourers, almost 11 percent of the child population, some 100 million boys and 68 million girls. Around half are engaged in hazardous work.
- About 23 percent (23%) of child labour in developing countries occurs in low-income countries, with the largest numbers in Asia and the Pacific. The highest prevalence is in Sub-Saharan Africa, at one child in five.
- In developing countries, children in the households severely affected by poverty are four times as likely to be out of school as compared to those in the richest households.

Primary Information Sources: UNDP Human Development Report 2015;⁴ UNICEF;⁵ Save the Children⁶

Snapshot:

- What causes poverty? Why do we have poverty in our country?
- Why are children particularly affected or vulnerable to poverty?
- Is poverty acceptable? Kindly explain your perspective.

2.3 THEORIES OF POVERTY

Theories on the causes of poverty are the foundation upon which most poverty reduction strategies are based. Generally, scholars distinguish between theories that base the root cause of poverty on individual deficiencies (blaming the individual) and those that associate the causes to broader socio-structural phenomena such as the political and economic situation of a community.

2.3.1 INDIVIDUAL DEFICIENCIES AS A THEORY OF POVERTY

“We’re poor little lambs who have lost our way.”⁷

The Individual Deficiencies theory of poverty places the blame on individuals for creating their own problems. This group of theorists detests any efforts to develop social welfare programs for people living in poverty. They propose interventions that restrict support to people with disabilities or those who for one reason or other, are totally unable to work.

While it is easy to dismiss the Individual Deficiency Theory as an apology for social inequalities in societies, those who have overcome poverty give the theory some credibility. Many narrate success stories based on focus and hard work. Promoting the Individual Deficiency Theory of poverty though can have negative consequences on the pursuit of ap-

proaches that seek to develop the community as a whole. Bradshaw (2006)⁸ notes that persons with disability, the elderly, children, and the less fortunate are part of every community, and without blame, their individual needs can be met by collective action.

2.3.2 CULTURAL THEORY OF POVERTY

Oscar Lewis in his book *La Vida* (1966)⁹ highlighted similarities amongst the poor with regard to family structure, interpersonal relationships, time orientation, spending patterns, and value systems. These similarities point to an adaptation to certain problems resulting in a lifestyle, which he describes as a “Culture of Poverty” among the poor. By the time children living in the slum are six or seven years old, they usually have already absorbed the basic values and attitudes of their “subculture” and are not psychologically ready to take full advantage of changing conditions or increased opportunities that may occur. The implications of this theory are that targeting children early in life and providing them with a positive environment to grow and develop is the best approach to helping them acquire positive attitudes.¹⁰

“People... were poor not because they were stupid or lazy. They worked all day long, doing complex physical tasks. They were poor because the financial institution in the country did not help them widen their economic base.”¹¹

-Muhammad Yunus

2.3.3 STRUCTURAL THEORY OF POVERTY

Theorists of this school of thought blame the economic, political, and social systems for the failure of people to have opportunities and resources required to acquire a decent

income and sense of well-being. Accordingly, the economic system is structured in such a way that poor people continue to lag behind, irrespective of how competent and hard they work. A good example is intellectually gifted children who cannot maximize on their potential due to the inability of their parents to take them to good schools. It is for this reason that the elimination of structural barriers through education and training have been the focus of most poverty eradication programmes.



Other than economic barriers, political systems work in such a way that the interests and participation of poor people is impeded or misused. This becomes critical especially in developing countries, where power is closely linked to upward economic mobility and access to resources. Social barriers based on race, gender, disability, religion and other social factors limit people's ability to access opportunities even when they are competent or are 

The main areas of Structural Injustice are addressed in relation to:

Productive Assets:¹² Productive assets include the provision of goods for income generation whose absence among impoverished communities limits their ability to access and provide for their basic needs.

Markets:¹³ Structural challenges related to markets that exacerbate poverty include remoteness or limited access to markets in the

rural areas due to poor road infrastructure; lack of knowledge on how to negotiate effectively; unfair trade practices; and lack of collective organisations through which poor communities can compete in markets.

Human Development:¹⁴ The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines Human Development as the ability to develop people's abilities and create conditions where people can exercise choices and explore different opportunities. The different dimensions of human development entail a three-pronged approach, namely: enhancing human abilities through knowledge and decent standard of living; creating conditions for human development through gender equality, participation and community life; and the protection of human rights.

Evidently, poverty-stricken people are often denied the opportunity to develop their abilities and hence, live in conditions that are not conducive to explore opportunities to improve their economic status.

Governance:¹⁵ By virtue of their socio-economic status and limited access to participation in political and public life, people living in poverty are excluded from decision-making on governance issues. This creates structural injustices that affect every aspect of their lives.

Think About It:

- Do you see the tenets and explanations of any of the theories practically relating to child poverty in your community? Please explain using relevant examples.
- Using evidence provided by any of the theories, suggest ways of overcoming Child Poverty.

Have Your Say:

- Organise and Plan for an Advocacy activity during the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) on 17th October. Focus your action on addressing one primary structural cause of child poverty in your community.

Take Action:

- Help children prepare and present a skit (a short drama/play) on how to overcome poverty.
- Invite an economist, scholar or authority with expertise on the subject matter to speak and share knowledge on child poverty in your community.
- Nominate members from your community to research/investigate and advise on ways in which you can engage proactively to fight against child poverty.
- Write and post a blog, essay, and social media message or opinion piece on child poverty in your community.

Tip:

Check out the Tool Box 10.2 Advocacy Communication and Media Tools.

2.4 THE IMPACT OF POVERTY ON CHILDREN

Poverty affects children in different ways, it is caused by several factors, each child experiences and understands poverty in a unique manner. Therefore, poverty is multi-dimensional. Often, the effects of childhood poverty last well into their adult life. Furthermore, a child who lived in poverty during their younger years is more likely to experience poverty as an adult as well – due to lost opportunities and impacts of the multiple deprivations that they faced. As adults living in poverty, they stand a higher

chance of starting a family in poverty and living with children in the same circumstance. Thus, the cycle of poverty is perpetuated from generation to generation.

“...War and armed conflict are not the only forms of violence destroying the precious lives of our children. In fact, it can be argued that poverty is even more violent than war. It certainly claims a terrible number of lives, but the survivors suffer greatly, as well. There are an estimated 1 billion children living in poverty today. It is difficult even to imagine what such numbers mean. Simply put, that’s one out of every two children.”¹⁶

-Rev. Keishi Miyamoto

In what ways does poverty affect children? The magnitude and scope of this cannot be comprehensively captured in a single guidebook. However, involuntary childhood poverty negatively affects a child’s whole life. Their entire physical, psychological (mental and emotional), psychosocial (social and behavioural), spiritual well-being and health is negatively impacted by poverty and its effects.



It therefore remains the responsibility of the family, the child’s community, school, government, and all those in the child’s life – to prevent child poverty from occurring. When it

occurs, the child needs to be shielded from the negative impacts of child poverty. Efforts must be made to seek ways to get children out of poverty and build supportive structures around them to ensure that she/he lives healthy, with dignity and free of involuntary poverty.

Think About It:

- According to your faith beliefs or religious tradition, how does poverty during childhood affect young boys and girls?
- Think of any moments when you have witnessed or experienced childhood poverty. In what specific way were you affected? In what ways has the child been affected?
- Are you able to identify some of the influences of childhood poverty in the adult person? What are they?
- Other than affecting the child, how does childhood poverty affect the larger society as a whole?

Have Your Say:

- Meet with your Local Government leader(s) and tell them about your work in addressing child poverty in your community ask for their support to make ending child poverty a top priority in your community.

Take Action:

- Volunteer your time and visit children living in a children's home (or any other child care institution for children living without their family, including, orphaned, neglected or abandoned children).
- Work with a neighbouring school within your community. Involve the pupils/students in essay writing, creative debates, photography, music, performing arts or other creative session, on how poverty affects children.





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CHAPTER 3: DRIVERS OF CHILD POVERTY

Snapshot:

- What would you say are the causes of child poverty in your community?
- How can we prevent poverty from affecting children in our communities?
- How can we end child poverty?

“Poverty can be because of inadequate resources, but it can also be because of inadequate concern.”¹⁷

Poverty has been called “the world’s most ruthless killer” and “the greatest cause of suffering” (Gordon, 2002). The effects poverty has on human beings are so devastating, that the phenomenon of poverty merits the undivided attention of governments, human and natural scientists, and communities worldwide. People of various religions have an added moral responsibility, as the emphasis on caring for vulnerable and suffering people is particularly strong in religious texts.

Poverty is not simply manifested by a lack of physical resources. There are moral and spiritual problems at the core of any manifestation of poverty. For example, a society that puts money over family, convenience over the life of a baby, or feelings over covenantal commitment or consumption over thrift reveals a moral bankruptcy and is destined to end up in poverty. This is reflected in governments that live above their means, borrowing indiscriminately from the future. In such instances, there is more consumption of wealth than investing in the means of creating wealth. Such life and belief consists

of acquiring as much as you can, as quickly as possible and by any means possible.

Often, society will try to solve problems through introducing new policies and programs, and in so doing, fail to reflect on moral values. One cannot expect positive change outcomes as long as policies are derived from a materialistic philosophy. This would be like trying to keep a river clean by repetitively removing impurities downstream and not from the polluted source. Rather, one must change the source. Real change can only happen by transforming its moral foundations.¹⁸ In the same instance, we must look at the underlying value systems that cause poverty. It does not just happen. There is often a failure to uphold responsibility and lack of accountability at the source of it.

For any effort to address and understand poverty to be effective, it must go beyond conventional economic approaches aimed at addressing poverty. It must address not only the systemic structures but also the roots of the problem in the human heart, including — greed, ignorance, hatred and fear. Hence, faith communities, which have the spiritual tools, need to be at the forefront in addressing these latent causes of poverty.



3.1 CHILD POVERTY AND INEQUALITY

“Our world is not short of wealth. It simply makes no economic sense — or indeed moral sense — to have so much in the hands of so few.”¹⁹

Economic inequality is the state of affairs in which assets, wealth, or income is distributed inequitably among individuals in a group, among groups in a population, or among countries.

It can be argued that, “Some economic inequality is essential to drive growth and progress, rewarding those with talent, hard earned skills, and the ambition to innovate and take entrepreneurial risks.”²⁰ However, the extreme levels of wealth concentration occurring today threaten to exclude hundreds of millions of people from realizing the benefits of their talents and hard work.

Extreme economic inequality is damaging and worrying for many reasons: it is morally questionable; it can have negative impacts on economic growth and poverty reduction; and it can multiply social problems. It compounds other inequalities, such as those between women and men. In many countries, extreme economic inequality is worrying because of the pernicious impact that wealth concentrations can have on equal political representation.”²¹

It is often stated that 20% of the world’s population consumes more than 80% of the earth’s resources, while the other 80% consume less than 20%. While the accuracy of this is debatable, there is credence to this belief. A briefing paper by OXFAM found that, in 2015 just 62 individuals had the same wealth as the poorest 3.6 billion people; and

that the richest 1% have more wealth than the rest of the world combined.²²

Extreme unequal and inequitable distribution of wealth is unjust and unsustainable. One of the most salient examples of inequitable distribution of resources is the existence of continuing hunger in many parts of the world as others live in excess. Especially for children, hunger can have grave consequences. In many other cases, people will tend to cluster around areas where there are greater resources. This causes overcrowding as well as competition for scarce resources. In instances like this, children are exposed to severe situations. For instance, there is a higher likelihood of child labour, malnutrition and lack of access to proper health care and education. Parents also opt to ‘gamble’ with their children. This is reflected, for example, when parents lacking enough resources would send just one of their children to school, based on their gender or perceptions of which child is more likely to succeed in life.

Some people believe that poverty results from a lack of adequate resources on a global level that are necessary for the well-being or survival of the world’s people. Others see poverty as an effect of the uneven and/or inequitable distribution of resources around the world. This second line of reasoning helps explain why many people have much more than they need, while many others survive on the bare minimum. Justice demands that we oppose economic systems, which benefit the few at the expense of the many. The fight against child poverty will not be won unless extreme inequality is reduced.

Snapshot:

- What do you understand by the term corruption?
- How does corruption cause Child Poverty?
- In what ways has corruption affected your community?

3.2 CHILD POVERTY AND CORRUPTION

"Corruption is something that gets inside of us; it's like sugar but it ends badly. When we have too much sugar, we end up with diabetes, or our country ends up being diabetic. Everytime we accept a bribe and we put it in our pocket, we destroy our hearts, our personalities and our country."²⁴

-Pope Francis

Corruption generally comprises of illegal activities, which are deliberately hidden and only come to light through scandals, investigations or prosecutions.²³ The effects of corruption are personal, widespread and devastating. Corruption leaves children without mothers, families without healthcare, people without food, the elderly without security, and businesses without capital.

Corruption is both a major cause and a result of poverty around the world. It occurs at all levels of society, both private and public. Corruption affects the poorest the most, whether in rich countries or those severely affected by poverty. By its very nature, corruption diverts resources from those who need it most to those willing to use illegitimate means to acquire that resource. Beyond denying children access to basic needs, it denies them the power to systems of legal recourse. Child

labour remains a sad reality in environments where citizens are trapped in poverty and corrupt officials can be paid off. Other losses fuelled by corruption include human trafficking – even of children, child mortality, poor education standards, environmental destruction and terrorism.²⁵

The links between corruption and poverty affect both individuals and businesses, and they run in both directions: poverty invites corruption, while corruption deepens poverty.²⁶ Corruption both causes and thrives on weaknesses in key economic, political and social institutions. It is a form of self-serving influence akin to a heavily regressive tax, benefiting the haves at the expense of the have-nots (Forbes, 2009).

Think About It:

- "Not one single country, anywhere in the world²⁶ is corruption free."²⁶ Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- What does your faith or religious tradition teach about corruption?

Fact Box: Corruption

- Poor countries lose the equivalent of USD \$1 Trillion a year to corruption.
- According to Transparency International, five of the 10 most corrupt countries also rank among the 10 least peaceful places in the world. These include Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria.
- Corruption and conflict go hand in hand. Countries with high levels of public corruption also indicate higher propensity towards violent conflicts, which in turn causes and deepens child poverty.

Sources: Transparency International: Corruption Perceptions Index 2015

Have Your Say:

Attend a relevant town hall meeting or open council meeting organised by your local government. Request the local government leader(s) to respond to some of these questions – and any other questions that you may have on child poverty and corruption in your community:

- How are you ensuring that education/health care/welfare provisions reach the children most affected by poverty in our community?
- How are you addressing financial barriers to children from poor backgrounds continuing their education?
- What measures have you put in place to ensure that, as a community, we can keep you and other leaders accountable for effective and equitable resource allocation?
- Are our local councilors and other authorities trained on how to identify, manage, and report cases of corruption?
- How many cases of corruption have been reported in the last year? What action was taken, consequently?

Take Action:

- Suggest and plan activities that you can undertake to fight corruption in your community, local area or country.

Tip:

Always prepare and have accurate facts and supportive knowledge, beforehand. Keep in mind that the government can and should be an ally in preventing and reducing child poverty in your community.

Snapshot:

- What do you understand by the term 'gender'?
- Are women, men, girls and boys treated differently in your community? In what ways?
- Do gender roles or gender differences play a part in influencing child poverty? How?
- How would you define gender inequality?
- What would you say constitutes gender discrimination?

3.3 CHILD POVERTY AND GENDER DYNAMICS

1. Special Focus: Poverty and Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Gender Based Violence²⁷ is systematic, cultural and structural violence perpetuated and experienced by an individual because of their gender identity, characteristics and roles – as a male or a female. In this context, Gender Based Violence would be identified as violence towards a boy(s) or girl(s). Gender Based Violence is perpetuated and experienced in the form of intimidation, discrimination and/or abuse that is psychological, economic, physical or sexual.

Gender Based Violence is based on the perceptions and values placed on gender identities, characteristics and roles, by a given community. Gender Based Violence is also based on the power dynamics in the relationships between genders. At a macro level, these perceptions, values and power dynamics are shaped by socio-cultural beliefs including religion and faith beliefs, as well as political and economic ecosystems. At a micro level, the gender perspectives and values are primarily based on family upbringing, individual conviction and social strata. Gender Based Violence would therefore arise because of a seemingly “lesser value” or “lesser power” placed on particular gender and the reinforcing acceptance of behavior which allows for violence. Past history of violence in the family is also a factor; and situations of societal conflict, post conflict and displacement, may exacerbate existing forms and present additional forms of Gender Based Violence.

Fact Box: Violence Against Women and Girls

- Worldwide, up to 50 percent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16.
- Among women aged 15 - 49, 1 in 4 women reported physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in her lifetime. Up to 11.5% of women reported sexual violence by someone other than her partner, since she was 15 years; and 45% report that her first sexual experience was forced.
- Approximately 130 million girls and women in the world have experienced Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).
- In the majority of countries with available data, less than 40% of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort. Among women who do, most look to family and friends and very few look to formal institutions and mechanisms, such as police and health.
- GBV can negatively affect people's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, and may increase vulnerability to HIV.
- Factors associated with increased risk of perpetration of GBV include low education, child maltreatment or exposure to violence in the family, harmful use of alcohol, attitudes accepting of violence and gender inequality.
- There is evidence from high-income settings that school-based programmes may be effective in preventing relationship violence (or dating violence) among young people.
- Domestic and sexual violence in the United Kingdom costs the country £5.7 billion per year, including costs to the criminal justice system, health care costs, housing and the loss to the economy. In the United States, the health care cost of intimate partner rape, physical assault and stalking totals USD 5.8 billion each year, nearly USD 4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health care services. Lost productivity from paid work and household chores and lifetime earnings lost by homicide victims total nearly USD 1.8 billion.

Primary Information Sources: UN Women,²⁸ World Health Organization,²⁹ Futures without Violence³⁰

Impacts of Gender Based Violence (GBV) on Children

Gender Based Violence at the family level and violence against girls and boys within the society is closely linked to child poverty. This violence perpetuates and exacerbates child poverty and factors that lead to child poverty, on the one hand. On the other hand, there is a high prevalence of Gender Based Violence and violence against boys and girls, in families affected by poverty and in low-income communities.

The impact of Gender Based Violence on children lasts well into their adult life. Beyond the direct and short-term consequences of Gender Based Violence, children who grow up in families where there is violence or chil-

dren who witness violence are more likely to have emotional and behavioural problems. Such children are at increased risk of anxiety, depression, low-self-esteem and poor school performance, among other problems that harm their well-being and personal development. They are also associated with higher risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence in the future. Gender Based Violence has also been associated with higher rates of infant and child mortality and morbidity. This is in addition to the first-hand and immediate impacts of Gender Based Violence that is directed towards children, including; death, injury, health problems, missing out on school, drug and alcohol abuse, poor social functioning skills and social isolation and marginalization.

Impact Story: A Global Campaign Implemented at Local Level, Vanuatu

The End It Now campaign was launched in 2009 by the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and the Department of Women's Ministries of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. This global campaign aimed to create a global movement of 15 million Adventist Church members to respond to violence against women and girls in their communities, by raising awareness and finding solutions. Key campaign messages included:

- Stand up in favour of human rights, tolerance, and the well-being of children, freedom of expression and conscience, and the protection and integrity of families;
- Extend God's vision of love and compassion for all His children;
- Domestic violence has been documented as a major issue within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Incidences of abuse follow trends documented in non-Adventist populations. This is why End It Now seeks to increase personal awareness, responsibility, and involvement to effectively help end violence against women and girls in every family and community.
- While End It Now focuses on violence against women and girls, abuse of any kind should never occur against men or women.

In Vanuatu, Seventh Day Adventist Churches in Port Vila mobilised their members to participate in public demonstrations of support for the End It Now campaign, gaining media coverage in local newspapers.

Source: *United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*³¹

Tip:

Visit the United Nations Women³² website for more advocacy action ideas.

Think About It:

- Which values can you draw from your faith beliefs or religious tradition to prevent gender-based violence in your community?
- In what ways can you teach children to respect and protect their brothers and sisters, their friends and other children – both girls and boys – in your community?
- In what ways do gender discrimination and gender inequality contribute towards child poverty in your society?
- How does Gender Based Violence contribute to the increased likelihood of Child Poverty?
- How does discrimination against girls and boys limit the ability of a community to realise their full potential?
- How will progress towards equality – equal dignity for all – transform the allocation of material resources, the condition of the family and lead to ending child poverty?

Have Your Say:

- Organise an interfaith advocacy event during the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, which takes place between 25 November and 10 December yearly. Focus on addressing how Gender Based Violence affects children and how it can lead to increased child poverty.

Take Action:

- As a religious leader, preach a sermon, provide a teaching or prepare a faith-based study addressing gender based violence and how to prevent it/end it. You may choose to focus on its effects on children and its relationship to driving child poverty.
- Ask your religious leader or faith leader to prepare and provide a teaching addressing Gender Based Violence and how to prevent or end it. You may choose to focus on the effects of Gender Based Violence on children and its relationship to driving child poverty.

- Work with your religious leaders and place of worship to form a healing and support group for persons – especially children – who have been affected by Gender Based Violence.
- Form a Gender Based Violence response team. Build the capacity of the team to respond to and support the immediate needs of the children involved, if any.
- Find out which resources are available within your community to address Gender Based Violence. These could include a help-line, a support centre, Gender Based Violence recovery centre, a social worker, free counseling services, a safe house, a trusted religious leader or faith actor, police support or a qualified school nurse. Form linkages with these resource persons and ask for their assistance when you require it to address gender-based violence in your community.
- If you know someone affected by Gender Based Violence, find out if he or she would like you to help him or her. Be sure that your actions do not cause further harm or endanger you. Be mindful, discreet and respectful in all your interactions.

Tip:

Gender Based Violence often involves family members and is therefore seen as a personal and sensitive matter. In addition, support given to a victim, a survivor or a perpetrator, usually requires long-term involvement at multiple levels. Ensure you are aware of the family dynamics, before intervening. Be ready to express how short or how long you shall commit to the process of helping him or her; and be clear about the type of assistance you are able to provide. Seek to connect the person – and the children - to other support structures, where possible.



2. Special Focus: Poverty and Child Marriage

Child marriage occurs when a girl or a boy who is below eighteen (18) years is married, promised or engaged for marriage before adulthood, or is in a co-habiting relationship. It is also termed as 'early marriage.' Child marriage affects both girls and boys, although worldwide, more girls than boys are married before they turn eighteen. It is estimated that 10 -15 million girls are married before they turn eighteen (18), each year. Further, it is also estimated that a total 33 million men today were married before the age of fifteen (15); and a total of 156 million men were married before they turned eighteen (18), globally.³³

Forced marriage occurs when a person is forced into a marriage or a marriage-type relationship, without her or his consent. They

have little or no say in the matter and they are often unwilling to be in such a relationship. Because of the nature of children – naturally trusting, easily persuaded, and not fully mature or formed in their ability to make critical decisions, all cases of child marriage are considered as a 'forced marriage.' This is true even when the child seems 'willing' to be in such a relationship. Hence, it is a form of violence against children.

Child marriage perpetuates poverty, can negatively affect the health of the young person, and often ends their formal education process. Child marriage also puts victims at a higher risk of sexual, physical and psychological violence throughout their lives; and reinforces gender inequality. Ultimately, it violates their rights as a child and their fundamental human rights.

In this case, a child is defined, as any person below the age of eighteen (18), and an adult is anyone who is above the age of eighteen (18) – in accordance with several declarations and conventions agreed upon by a majority number of countries, through the United Nations.

Many factors drive child marriage, including:

- religious, social and cultural traditions;
- gender roles, (such as the need to care for one's family or younger siblings);
- seeking security for the child and for the family as a means to escape poverty;

- limited access to education; and
- Violent conflict and coercion, such as girls abducted or recruited as 'child brides' by armed groups and violent extremist groups.

Poverty remains one of the greatest factors driving child marriage as indicated by all twenty (20) countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage and the highest absolute numbers of child marriage; including Niger, Bangladesh, India, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Somalia, Nepal, Nigeria and Brazil.

Impact Story: The Sultan in Dosso, Niger says 'No' to Child Marriage in the Community

Niger has the highest rate of child marriages worldwide. 40% of girls get married – and leave school – before they are 15 years. 76% of girls get married before they turn 18 years. That is 3 out of every 4 girls. In some regions of the country the situation gets worse - for instance, in the region of Diffa, 89% of girls marry as children. A girl in Niger is more likely to get married than to go to secondary school.

Sultan Djermakoye Maidanda Saidou, one of five Sultans in Dosso, Niger, has taken a firm stand against child marriage. The Sultan has been able to apply his influence to encourage parents to educate their daughters and to dissuade child marriages and early marriages.

"As soon as a villager or a school hears about a case of child marriage, we intervene straight away. My local chiefs will try to stop it. If they can't sort it out, they bring the case to me. I summon the parents and all involved and try to dissuade them", says the Sultan in an interview recorded by Plan International. He further advocates for education of the girl child as a solution and draws from his experience in health care to build conversation. "We explain that a young girl who isn't physically mature can't give birth properly. Go to the hospitals – and it's tragic to see hundreds of women with fistula. I'm from a medical background and I prioritize health. And for me, there is no health without education". He continues to say, "The issue of girl's education is paramount... Girls are the protectors of the family and by extension the village, tribe and community. That's why education must be given..."

The Sultan tells us of a story of Amina* (name has been changed to protect her identity) a 14-year-old girl he helped get her back to school. Taken out of school, Amina's father had promised her hand in marriage to a man in Benin. After marriage, she was sent to Benin with her 'husband' and not allowed to return home or to school. After hearing of this, the Sultan spoke to Amina's father and took steps to have the marriage annulled, after speaking to the Niger Embassy in Benin. The Sultan had Amina returned to Dosso, where she was able to return to school. Amina's 'husband' and father were fined, and now she is enjoying her life as a young teenager.

Many families admit that poverty is a major driver of child marriage. A harsh climate further exacerbates the problem. Less rain often means more "drought brides," as families pursue early marriage as a survival strategy, seeking one less mouth to feed and bride price money to buy food.

According to additional statistics, nearly 200 out of every 1,000 girls give birth as adolescents (15 – 19 years). For school-going girls, this marks an end to their school education as they drop out to fend for their child/children. Only 2.5 of the entire female population above 25 years have had some form of secondary schooling, because of this and other reasons. Niger also ranks as the least developed country globally, according to the 2015 Human Development Index by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Primary Information Source: *Girls not Brides*,³⁴ *Plan International*,³⁵ *Care International*,³⁶

Lessons Learned:

- Communities need to work together; bringing in religious and traditional leaders, parents, teachers and schools; so as to reduce and prevent child marriage – and other drivers of child poverty;
- Educating girls is key in preventing child marriages, early marriages and forced marriages;
- Changing cultural attitudes requires dialogue and respectful interaction;
- Make health a priority when addressing the challenge of child and early marriages; and
- It is important to understand why the family wants their child to marry, so as to address their specific need.



Think About It:

- How can your faith community or organisation work with parents in order to prevent child marriage?
- In what ways does poverty contribute to an increase in child marriage?
- Which other factors can be drivers of child marriage in your community and other communities worldwide?
- How does child marriage affect the child? How does it continue to affect them as adults?
- What are the effects of child marriage on children, their families, and the society as a whole?

Think About It:

- Plan and hold a birth-registration campaign in your community. Registering childbirths, helps prevent child marriages by proving the age of the children as well as the age of their marriage partners.

Tip:

Visit Girls Not Brides for more resources and action ideas at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org>

Take Action:

- As a religious leader, preach a sermon or provide a faith-based teaching on the importance of protecting children from early marriage.
- Organise separate forums for boys, young men and fathers/elders in your community. Hold faith-based discussions on the factors causing child marriage in your community, and how you can all work together to prevent and end child marriage in your community.
- Find out which kind of support families in your community require in order to keep their children from early marriage.
- Spread the word about the need to end child marriage. Use social media and other communication tools.

3.4 CHILD POVERTY, VIOLENCE AND VIOLENT CONFLICT

“Violence against children may not claim their lives, but it always claims their childhood.”³⁷

Violence begets violence; violence begets poverty and poverty nurtures the environment for violence to breed and grow. Children are particularly affected by violence. Hence, this segment explores different forms of violence and their relation to child poverty.

1. Special Focus: Poverty and Violence Against Children

Violence against children and poverty are interlinked and it is therefore not possible to fight against one vice without confronting the other. The pressure people living in poverty go through to provide their families with food, electricity, water, books for school, clothes and so on causes extreme stress. Poor housing,

poor nutrition and hygiene, lower educational achievement and poorer life prospects generally, affect self-image and perceptions of self-worth, and are likely to lead to substance dependency, spousal violence or mental health disorders- cumulatively causing parents to abuse their children. Also, poverty contributes to inadequate care of children in several ways. Children born into poverty are at a greater risk of being left unsupervised, or in the care of siblings, or an adult who lacks the capacity to care for them properly. This increases the risk of these children to be subjected to abuse and violence. With no one to supervise their activities, these children often revert back to the cycle of poverty. Additionally, where organised criminal activity is widespread, physical violence is often common, and adolescent boys are at greater risk of becoming victims.

Research shows that it is during the earlier years of living in poverty that create the greatest risk of becoming involved in violence later in life. A child growing up in a family affected by poverty when they are age 6 to 11 is at a higher risk of becoming involved in violence later than a child living in a poor family from age 12 to 14. Research indicates that neglect, physical abuse and alcohol, drugs and maltreatment are empirically linked to poverty.

At a more macro level, violence against children places an economic burden on governments. The findings on a research conducted by Overseas Development Institute shows that physical, psychological and sexual violence perpetrated against children costs governments globally up to USD 7 trillion annually. This figure is alarming as such monies could be channeled to other development projects that would reduce poverty.

Fact Box: Violence Against Children

- Children who have been severely abused or neglected often stagnate in their development, experience learning difficulties and perform poorly at school. They may have low self-esteem and suffer from depression, which can lead, at worst, to risky behaviours and self-harm.
- Witnessing violence can cause similar distress. Children who grow up in a violent household or community tend to internalize that behaviour as a way of resolving disputes, repeating the pattern of violence and abuse against their own spouses and children.
- Violence against children carries serious economic and social costs in both lost potential and reduced productivity.

Take Action:

- Give examples from the teachings of your faith teachings and sacred texts, which encourage the protection of children from violence.
- "All forms of violence against children, however light, are unacceptable."³⁸ Do you agree with this statement?
- How has violence against children contributed to child poverty in your community?

Have Your Say:

- Find out which specific forms of violence against children exist in your community.
- Write an open letter condemning these forms of violence and suggesting solutions to prevent stop and end this violence. Invite other leaders from different religions, civil society, business, educators and even government officials – to sign and endorse the letter. Make the open letter available on various forms of media.

Tip:

List down all the forms of violence against children which occur in your community and the number of cases – both reported and unreported. Ensure to protect the identity of the child at all times, unless otherwise required by the law. Prepare a petition demanding heightened action from the relevant government authority (or authorities), to prevent and stop these forms of violence. Collect as many petition signatures from your place of worship, faith community, school, workplace, business and other community members, before presenting this petition to the government organ(s).

Take Action:

- Organise a story-telling event for children from your local school or place of worship. Use it as an activity to express and help children understand and begin to heal from the effects of violence.
- Invite a qualified and trusted psychologist or counselor to teach/speak with parents, care givers and teachers about helping children heal from the trauma of violence.
- Plan and conduct an event during the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children – Universal's Children's Day on 20 November. Focus the theme of your event on Preventing and Eliminating Violence against Children.



Tips:

- Be careful not to pressure children to talk about a trauma or join in expressing themselves. While most children will easily talk about what happened, some may become frightened. Some may be traumatized by talking, listening to others talk or looking at images of the event. Allow children to remove themselves from these activities, and give them time and space.³⁹
- A petition is a formal written request, typically one signed by many people, appealing to authority with respect to a particular cause.
- Visit Arigatou International — Prayer and Action for Children for more event ideas to promote and publicize your event at: <https://prayerandactionforchildren.org/>

Snapshot:

- What do you understand by radicalisation?
- In your view, is radicalisation good or bad? Explain your responses.
- What do you understand by violent extremism?
- Do religion or faith communities play a role in radicalisation to violent extremism? In what way(s) does this happen?
- Do religion or faith communities play a role in countering radicalisation to violent extremism? In what way(s)?
- Would you say that poverty influences radicalisation towards violent extremism? How?

2. Special Focus: Poverty and Radicalisation towards Violent Extremism

Radicalisation into violent extremism is an ideological challenge with multiple push and pull factors that cannot be treated casually. Some of these push and pull factors include: religious identity, socio-economic circumstances (education, unemployment), political circumstances, the need for a collective identity, a sense of belonging, geo-political factors and perceived historical injustices and

marginalization. All these may be true, but the fact that poverty exacerbates radicalisation into violent extremism among children and the youth cannot be ignored.

A study by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and Finn Church Aid in 2014 on “Radicalisation and Al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia” shows that 40% join Al-Shabaab terror group between the ages of 15-19 years. The majority of the interviewees indicated they joined the group after they lost one or both parents. Most of them do not have formal education and this hinders them from getting conventional jobs or even starting a business. One Al-Shabaab member from Somalia acknowledged that he joined the group because he was promised USD 300 monthly (McClutchy Tribune News Service).

According to a study by PAK Institute for Peace Studies, poverty and poor socio-economic structures also featured prominently in a study on violent extremism in Pakistan. Many children join Al-Qaeda terror group because of poverty.⁴⁰

There is reason to believe that there is a link between poverty and radicalisation into violent extremism, especially in fragile states, where the youth affected by poverty have very limited livelihood options. Indeed, major actors involved in violent extremism are vulnerable youths in unstable areas. This is especially the case in the East Africa region.



Their status is characterized by low literacy levels, low education and low knowledge and skill levels; a situation which reduces their capacity to secure meaningful livelihoods.⁴¹

They also suffer physical and psychological scars of war and trauma which can lead to alienation from society, making them easy targets for recruitment. Counter narratives alone may not be effective in keeping them away from the temptation to join extremist groups. Indeed this is why Arigatou International – Nairobi is engaged in a 



The program aims to address both structural push factors and those factors associated with the individual person (psychological, interpersonal and ideological) from a religious perspective.

Once children are radicalised towards violence, they become prone to homelessness; they lack parental care and sadly become perpetrators of crime. They are denied the opportunity to attend school or even pursue useful trades or develop the necessary life skill, which essentially leads them into the cycle of poverty.

There is therefore a need for concerted efforts between governments, non-governmental organisations, religious institutions and communities to tackle this vice. If poverty is reduced, it will reduce the motivation for children to be recruited into violent extremism.

Think About It:

- How does poverty increase the risk of radicalisation and recruitment to violent extremism?
- In what ways can your faith community take action to reduce poverty among youth, children and their families, so as to reduce the risks of radicalisation towards violent extremism?
- Which principles and teachings can you apply from your faith perspective to speak against radicalisation towards violent extremism and religious-based violence?
- “Extreme poverty anywhere is a threat to human⁴² security everywhere.” Do you agree with this statement? In what ways do you think this approach may be applicable in your own work to prevent and counter violent extremism?

Have Your Say:

- Find out if your country has a national strategy for addressing – preventing and countering violent extremism. Meet with the relevant government leaders and participate in the process of developing or reviewing your national strategy.

Take Action:

- Form or join an interfaith platform/ network or community which provides spaces for interfaith dialogue and common action to address radicalisation towards violent extremism.



3. Special Focus: Poverty and Armed Conflict

“My uncle died in war. I don’t want to die in war like him. Let us have peace.”⁴³

Armed conflict deepens and complicates poverty – especially poverty affecting children. During the times of intensified conflict, resources such as humanitarian support and relief resources including food, water, medical care and education, cannot reach those who need it the most. Children are especially vulnerable in instances of armed conflict because of the risk of forced recruitment into armed groups and forces, among other tragedies. A young girl from Warrap State, South Sudan, aptly stated, “A lot of children are suffering in our country and yet we still want to fight.” Often, in times of armed conflict, the needs of children are forgotten and become peripheral. Children who were already living in poverty are thrown into a deeper state of deprivation; and those who were probably not living in poverty, are now faced with greater risk of experiencing several forms of poverty due to the violent conflict.



Think About It:

- In what ways could poverty have contributed to the recruitment of child soldiers?
- List the child rights that were violated by the civil war and the recruitment of child soldiers.
- Discuss how each of the violations may have contributed to Child Poverty in Northern Uganda.
- Suggest strategies that can be used to alleviate Child Poverty in Northern Uganda.

Fact Box: Children and Armed Conflict

- In 2014, the world witnessed widespread conflicts, violence and human rights violations that resulted in the massive displacement of people, within and outside their countries. Multiple conflicts took place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Ukraine.
- At the end of 2014 almost 60 million people had been displaced worldwide, the highest level recorded since the Second World War. If these people were a nation, they would make up the 24th largest country in the world.
- About a third of the 60 million were refugees or asylum seekers, and more than 38 million were displaced within the borders of their own countries. Based on the available evidence, children accounted for half the global refugee population, the highest proportion in 10 years. Principally the growing number of Afghan, Somali and Syrian refugee children drove the increase.
- In countries affected by conflict, the proportion of out-of-school children increased from 30 per cent (30%) in 1999 to 36 per cent (36%) in 2012.
- Poverty can be an important motivating factor to join armed forces and groups.

Primary Information Source: UNDP Human Development Resource 2015,⁴⁴ UN The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015,⁴⁵

Impact Story: Alone and Frightened-Experiential Stories of Former Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda on Improving Reintegration

The Goldin Institute and Arigatou International conducted a research study to facilitate a platform for Former Child Soldiers (FCS) to share their experiences and challenges of abduction and escape from captivity; as well as to establish the community and family perceptions and attitude towards former child soldiers; to identify gaps in the implementation of re-integration programmes for Former Child Soldiers in northern Uganda; and to establish and highlight local mechanisms to reintegrate Former Child Soldiers.

Some of the key findings of the study were as follows:

- Majority of the children abducted (58.9%) were between ages 15 and below;
- Major health issues identified among former child soldiers included bullet wounds and fragments in the body, septic wounds, fistula, HIV/AIDS and cardiac problems;
- Lack of identity for children born in captivity remains a challenge;
- 40% of the returning children did not receive initial counselling and support despite their horrific experience
- Over half found either one or both parents dead, implying loss of primary hope, protection, support and identity. Secondly, they continue to experience constant feelings of guilt for having contributed to the death of their parents.
- Community members were less receptive and greatly stigmatized the Former Child Soldiers;
- Systems and structures within government and NGOs to address the plight of FCS were not well targeted and organised;
- Indigenous modes of correction, reconciliation and forgiveness such as wang'oo (bonfire) where proverbs and ododo (riddles) were told, traditional music, dance and cultural values like mato oput (stepping on an egg) and gomo tong (bending of spear) were used;
- Beside individual search for protection, former child soldiers have evolved strategies of group healing comprising counselling and comforting each other, working together, helping each other, talking and staying together;
- In some cases, marriage has occurred between FCS due to the shared experiences; and they use peaceful means to resolve conflicts and challenges contrary to common belief and documented research evidence.

The Long-term Impact of Violence on Children

Violence results not only in poverty but also creates more violence. This vicious circle of violence and impunity transforms many vulnerable groups into agents that replicate abuse and mistreatment from one generation to another, thereby causing unemployment, economic downturns and instability. Violence has a devastating impact on a poor person's struggle from poverty, seriously undermines economic

development in poor countries, and directly reduces the effectiveness of poverty alleviation.⁴⁶

“Without the world noticing, the locusts of common violence are right now ravaging the lives and dreams of billions of our poorest neighbours... In the lives of the poor, violence has the power to destroy everything...”⁴⁷

Violence suffered by children and other vulnerable groups translates into impunity because

a large proportion of people have limited or no access to justice. Impunity with foundations in poor justice is one of the major drivers of poverty because long exposure to a violent environment prevents otherwise perfectly healthy children gaining access to economic and social opportunities that may help them escape from the poverty trap.



Young People — Children and Youth — As Peacemakers

In many instances, children offer the very impetus for building lasting peace and thereby curbing childhood poverty. Children are capable of reaching their peers in ways that adults cannot. Young people have tools and resources available to them, which grow their communication, networking and connectivity capability. Children express mobility, adaptability to new ideas, creativity and a willingness to try solutions that can transform their society. Furthermore, they form the largest percentage of the population in almost all nations of the world. As religious communities, working together with children and building our collective capacities towards peace building and transforming conflicts, will ensure that we move closer to reaching the objective of ending child poverty.

“We need to make a special effort to reach out to young people and recognise their potential as peace builders.”⁴⁸

Impact Story: Sri Lanka Unites

Founded by Prashan De Vissar, Sri Lanka Unites is a nonpartisan, grassroots, multi-religious youth movement that seeks to achieve reconciliation among youth from different ethnic and religious communities in post-war Sri Lanka. Through its Champions of Change initiative, Sri Lanka Unites builds partnership between two or more schools from different ethnic, religious and social settings, to work together in projects that address a specific need in the community they live in. This promotes diversity by nurturing a meaningful connection between the two schools, creates appreciation for each other’s cultures and emulates respect for diversity. Other flagship initiatives of Sri Lanka Unites include its Future Leaders’ Conference on youth leadership and reconciliation, and its youth-led Reconciliation Centers in different districts across the country. By seeking to transform conflict, Sri Lanka Unites is contributing towards alleviating child poverty in the country.

“Contrary to caricatures of youth as either disengaged consumers of radicalized threats to peace and security, the reality is that young people have an acute sense of justice, they yearn for meaning and purpose, they desire to serve and contribute meaningfully, and they have a thirst for knowledge and an innate attraction to what is good and beautiful.”⁴⁹

Take Action:

- Plan actions together with children during the International Day of Peace, 21 September. Focus on how peace is important towards ending child poverty.

Tip:

Visit the Peace One Day for resources and more action ideas at:

<http://www.peaceoneday.org/>

Think About It/Reflect:

- What is Climate Change?
- Are Climate Change and Child Poverty interconnected issues? How?

3.5 CHILD POVERTY, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

“The future impacts of climate change are expected to have a considerable economic burden on the children of today and future generations. The Stern Review estimates that coping with the impacts of climate change could cost up to 0.7% of the global GDP. Not only does this signify that climate change will affect prosperity in the future, it is also likely to lead to costs being passed down through the generations. Today’s children could, for example, have to pay higher taxes as adults to cover the costs of climate change” (UNICEF, 2013).

Climate change poses severe threats to child survival and well-being, food security and nutrition, access to education and protection. Children will face disasters that are more unusual as well as reduced access to water, malnutrition and changing disease patterns.

The resulting rise in temperature of the earth’s atmosphere has resulted in global warming,

making some places drier and some wetter, and increasing the likelihood and intensity of extreme weather events like droughts, floods and cyclones. Climate change disrupts seasonal patterns, which can have a negative impact on crop yields. It is also creating more extreme weather patterns. Over the past two decades, the number of natural disasters has doubled. More floods, cyclones and droughts means more children’s lives are at risk.



Disasters associated with climate change threaten children’s survival and the livelihoods of the poorest households, which have the least capacity to cope. Poor households often respond to disasters in ways that are harmful to children. Households are forced to withdraw children from schools, sell off livestock and other assets and cut down on food consumption to cope with disaster losses. This can undermine and even reverse gains made in poverty alleviation and development.

Global experience shows that combining social protection with disaster risk management and climate change efforts can help reduce risks posed by natural hazards as well as building the resilience of vulnerable households, especially the poorest. Yet quite often, professionals in the three fields have limited knowledge of each other’s field of expertise. They also have a different way of understanding and addressing vulnerability and risks, which makes it challenging to promote an integrated approach.



Impact Story: “We Have Faith — Act Now for Climate Justice” Advocacy Campaign

“We Have Faith — Act Now For Climate Justice” is a religious-based advocacy campaign which begun prior to the COP 17 Climate Change conference⁵⁰ in Durban, November/December 2011. The Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) hosted the campaign. The purpose of the Durban campaign was to create a platform that had the possibility of influencing the process, rather than changing the outcome of the COP 17. It sought to ensure that the negotiations had “a moral basis.”⁵¹

Advocacy was geared towards calling on government and political leaders to negotiate based on sound values of justice, equity and compassion. Furthermore, the campaign identified its objectives as to:

- strengthen and mobilise faith communities around climate justice and sustainability;
- elevate the unified voice of faith communities to national and international platforms;
- influence national and international climate and environmental processes through ensuring that the negotiations have a spiritual and moral basis;
- bring the faith language of spirituality, morality and ethics to the sustainable development and green economy discourse; and
- raise awareness, provide educational support and motivate action from local people of faith on issues of climate change and sustainability.

The Durban Campaign was successful in organising and carrying out several flagship activities:

- The African Youth Climate Justice Caravan with 161 youth from 18 countries was formed. The Caravan aimed at mobilising and empowering youth and their communities, towards shaping common and leadership opinion, influencing climate change policy and inspiring initiatives that safeguard the earth. The youth used nine concerts, the collection of petition signatures, group meetings and one-on-one interaction for advocacy and mobilisation.
- One of the youth leaders participating in the caravan said, “My participation brought me to the realisation of what the real effects of climate change are in the African continent. Apart from the prolonged droughts and famine in my country, Kenya, I was able to witness what people in other countries are experiencing and the measures they are taking to adapt to the effects. It was upon seeing this that I perfectly understood that the future of humanity and nature is at stake. I was convinced that, yes, we have to act now to save our common future. And I came back with an increased ability and drive to do something to create a better world.”
- National, regional and Pan-African interfaith conferences were arranged. The conferences mobilised faith leaders and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) to remain actively engaged in the climate change discussions; and promoted the development of theological frameworks for responding to the challenges of climate change.
- The conferences developed a petition for world leaders that collected over 200,000 signatures through face-to-face interaction. Part of the petition read, “You must be honest and committed to treating the earth and people with respect at the climate summit in Durban. Moral principles – and not profit and economic gain – should be applied in the negotiations in order to secure our common future.” The petition was handed to Ms. Christiana Figueres, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), as well as the COP Presidency headed by the South Africa Foreign Affairs Minister, Maite Nkoana-Mashabane.
- An interfaith rally at the King’s Park Stadium, Durban, with nearly 4,500 participants was organised. Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, the host of the rally stated, “Whether you are rich or poor, this is the only home. If we destroy this home, we’ve had it. It’s not only the poor people who are going to be destroyed

– even the rich. This is the only home you have... if you destroy it; it's finished with you as it will be finished with us. For your own sake, you who are rich, we are inviting you, come on the side of the right."

- The Diakonia Centre served as hub both in the planning and during COP 17 from 28 November until the 8 December 2011. The centre, together with other FBOs, organised 95 side events held over four venues in 14 days, during COP 17.
- The campaign attracted media attention and coverage throughout its duration. Print media, TV, radio, internet and social media were used. This played an important role in mobilisation and advocacy related to COP 17. An estimated 120 newspaper articles were written on the faith campaign in addition to over 100 internet articles, over 30 radio spots and 8 television interviews.

ACT Alliance now spearheads the evolved inter-faith campaign under the name "Act Now for Climate Justice." In 2015, the campaign was instrumental in mobilising faith actors' engagement and advocacy in the historic Paris COP 21, which produced a global climate change deal.

Primary Information Sources: NORAD report on "We Have Faith – Act Now for Climate Justice" Campaign.⁵¹

Think About It:

- What values can you apply from your faith beliefs or religious tradition towards addressing climate change?
- "It is possible to save our planet, but we must act now. If we do nothing to combat climate change, we are in trouble." Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
- In what ways can children be encouraged to care for the earth and address the impacts of climate change?
- Which lessons on advocacy do you find useful in your efforts/work to end child poverty?

Lessons Learned:

- Have a good and clear advocacy strategy from the beginning of the process.
- Invite a prominent and respected leader to accompany your end child poverty advocacy campaign.
- Develop and use clear lines of communication and coordination.
- Work closely with young people – youth and children
- Develop an inclusive and participatory structure in your advocacy campaign. The structure of the 'We Have Faith - Act Now for Climate Justice' campaign enabled diverse groups and organisations to work together in an inclusive and open manner.
- Plan early and implement your end child poverty campaign activities in good time.
- Work with different faith actors including religious/faith leaders, representatives of Faith-Inspired Organisations (FIOs) and Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs), theologians and scholars.



3.6 CHILD POVERTY AND HEALTH

Health is a pillar in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Goal 3 stating, “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.” Children represent the future, ensuring their healthy growth and development ought to be a prime concern of all societies. New-borns are particularly vulnerable and children are susceptible to malnutrition and infectious diseases, most of which can be effectively prevented or treated.⁵⁴ Child immunization therefore plays a critical role in arresting poverty. Further, inadequate or lack of health products and health care services; lack of access to water and sanitation services, complicates any efforts to reduce Child Poverty. Poor health, of both the child and the adult, can undermine any efforts to eradicate Child Poverty.

“Ending child poverty is possible only when every child gets a healthy start to life.”⁵²

-Dr. Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram



Fact Box: Child Health

- Children born into poverty are almost twice as likely to die before the age of 5 as those from wealthier families.
- 17,000 fewer children die each day than in 1990, but more than 6 million children still die before their fifth birthday each year.
- Since 2000, measles vaccines have averted nearly 15.6 million deaths.
- Despite determined global progress, an increasing proportion of child deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa and Southern Asia. 4 out of every five deaths of children under age five occur in these regions.
- Children of educated mothers — even mothers with only primary schooling — are more likely to survive than children of mothers with no education.
- At the end of 2013, 240 000 children were newly infected with HIV.
- New HIV infections among children have declined by 58 per cent since 2001.
- Globally, adolescent girls and young women face gender-based inequalities, exclusion, discrimination and violence, which put them at increased risk of acquiring HIV.
- There were 250,000 new HIV infections among adolescents in 2013, 2/3 of which were among adolescent girls. As of 2013, 2.1 million adolescents were living with HIV.
- AIDS is now the leading cause of death among adolescents (aged 10–19) in Africa and the second most common cause of death among adolescents globally.
- Over 6.2 million malaria deaths have been averted between 2000 and 2015, primarily of children under five years of age in sub-Saharan Africa.

Source: United Nations: Sustainable Development Goals⁵⁵

Impact Story: Providing Reproductive Health Education for Adolescent Girls

Restoring and Empowering Communities (REC) mobilised volunteers to collect donations for young girls in primary schools and an adolescent girl's centre in Luwero District, Uganda. The donations provided included maize flour and dry foodstuffs; clothing; books, blackboards, charts and stationery; balls; mosquito nets; improved seeds and fruit tree seedlings for farming; sanitary towels, soap, toilet paper and other hygiene products. In a bid to boost the hygiene and health of the girls, REC also set up a hand-washing facility in Kalanamu Primary School and provided jerry cans for clean water storage. REC facilitated a learning session for 348 girls, which focused on teaching personal and menstrual hygiene practices. Out of these, 120 girls were given re-usable sanitary towels, with the recognition that stigma, lack of accurate information, poverty and lack of menstrual hygiene products, causes many girls to miss school and/or even drop out of school. Addressing this issue, Ms. Nageeba Hassan, the Restoring and Empowering Communities (REC) team leader, said, "My advice to everyone helping out children (is) - please provide all the basic needs to keep them in school. If we pay fees and provide food and books but we don't provide medication or sanitary towels, they will still miss school and will not perform well; making them fail to reach their fullest potential and this will still keep the cycle of poverty growing." These activities were held as part of the REC campaign around the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) 2015.

3.7 CHILD POVERTY AND EDUCATION

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

-Nelson Mandela

Education is one of the single most effective tools to catapult children, youth and adults out of poverty. This it achieves by increasing their access to further opportunities, providing knowledge and skills, preparing them for employment and entrepreneurship, and shaping their world-view. Education is perhaps the most adaptable tool for unlocking resources required to address poverty and its crippling effects.

It has been proven that education is a great driver of social, economic and political progress - as people learn to read, count and reason critically, their prospects for health and prosperity expand. However, there are many barriers to children's school enrollment and school completion. These barriers include factors and drivers of poverty, such as unaffordable costs; a shortage of classrooms; humanitarian emergencies, especially conflict; gender discrimination and violence against children expressed as child marriage, early pregnancy, lack of sanitary facilities and child labour due to poverty.⁵⁶

Many children especially those from the poorest households arrive on the first day unprepared to succeed in school.⁵⁷ The impact of poverty on education begins early, because the poorest children are the least likely to attend early childhood education programmes.⁵⁸ In sub-Saharan Africa, nearly 60 per cent of 20 to 24 year-olds from the poorest fifth of the population have been through fewer than four years of schooling.

By contrast, only 15 per cent in the richest category have been in school for less than four years.⁵⁹ In Egypt and the United Republic of Tanzania for instance, being born poor nearly doubles the risk of missing out on basic education relative to the national average. It is also more likely that children from the poorest households are more likely than their more advantaged peers to drop out, worsening among girls. By age 11 in India, girls and boys who come from the richest homes and have educated parents enjoy a huge academic advantage over other children. The most advantaged boys and girls are about 6 times more likely to learn basic reading and mathematics skills than girls from the poorest households whose parents were not educated.⁶⁰



We simply cannot prevent, reduce and eliminate child poverty, without quality education. 'Goal 4' of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning, reinforces this with specific targets including the following:

- Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education;
- Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, nonviolent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all; and
- Eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, in-

cluding persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

It notes that consistent measurement – and knowing who the most disadvantaged children are, where they live and how they are deprived – is essential to developing successful policies and programmes to end child poverty.

In the Syrian Arab Republic, data suggest the conflict that began there in 2011 caused a sharp increase in the rate of extreme poverty, measured by the proportion of the population living below a national poverty line. The rate increased from 12.3 per cent in 2007 to an estimated 43 per cent in 2013.⁶⁰ Poverty is also a concern for the millions of refugees who have fled the crisis. In 2014, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that 7 out of 10 registered Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon could be considered poor.⁶¹

Half of these refugees are children. Another region of particular concern is sub-Saharan Africa, which accounts for a large and rising share of the world's extreme poor. Based on current trends, 9 out of 10 of the world's children surviving on less than US \$1.90 a day will live in sub-Saharan Africa in 2030.

Fact Box: Children and Education

- Enrolment in primary education in developing countries has reached 91% but 57 million children remain out of school;
- More than half of children that have not enrolled in school live in sub-Saharan Africa;
- 103 million youth worldwide lack basic literacy skills, and more than 60% of them are young women;
- Children severely affected by poverty are 5 times more likely not to complete primary school than those who are economically enabled;
- Children with disabilities are less likely to complete primary school;

- 61 million children of primary school age are out of school. 42% of these children live in conflict affected poor countries;
- Providing all children with quality basic education could boost annual economic growth by 2% in low income countries; and
- 12% of people could be lifted out of poverty if all students in poor countries had basic reading skills (over 170 million people).

Source: United Nations,⁶³ Sustainable Development Goals,⁶⁴ UNESCO⁶⁵

Impact Story: "We Have Faith — Act Now for Climate Justice" Advocacy Campaign

Islamic Relief Worldwide (IR) is giving children access to education and training to enable them to escape hazardous work in Dhaka, Bangladesh, where many children are forced to work to help support their families. Similarly, it constructed a village school to provide children with a safe learning environment, in Lingshan village, China's Sichuan province. In Jordan, IR is working in Baqa'a refugee camp with Syrian and Palestinian children and families. It designed a project for providing remedial classes, family awareness sessions, and financial incentives for the parents, extra-curricular activities, learning through games, and support to focus on children who had left school or had low academic achievement.

The NGO is also implementing a range of children's educational projects in various regions and countries, including, Afghanistan, Mali, Chechnya, India, Gaza, Sudan, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iraq, Tunisia and Kenya. This is in recognition of the link between education and ending poverty and development. Islamic Relief Worldwide focuses on humanitarian action and development, by drawing on Islamic perspectives and teachings, and adding momentum to faith-community efforts in tackling the root causes of global poverty and suffering.

Source: Islamic Relief Worldwide⁶⁶

Think About It:

- "In some parts of the world, students are going to school every day. It's their normal life. But in other parts of the world, we are starving for education... it's like a precious gift. It is like a diamond."⁶⁷ Do you agree with this statement? What do you think causes lack of universal access to quality education for all children?
- What does your faith or religious tradition teach about the value of education for both girls and boys?
- Have you seen specific effects of education or the lack of education on children in your community? What are some of these effects?

Have Your Say:

- Find out what is causing children in your community to miss receiving primary (elementary) education. These are the barriers to school enrollment and completion. Develop an advocacy action to address these barriers.

Take Action:

- Mobilise a book-donation drive for schools that benefit children affected by poverty.
- During the International Literacy Day, September 8, organise a learning event for children affected by poverty from your faith community or local children's home.
- Work with your faith community, family, friends, neighbours and colleagues to raise funds to provide education sponsorship or a scholarship (or scholarships) to a child (or children) affected by poverty.
- During The International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3, organise a public event led by children. Focus on promoting quality and inclusive education for children with disability.



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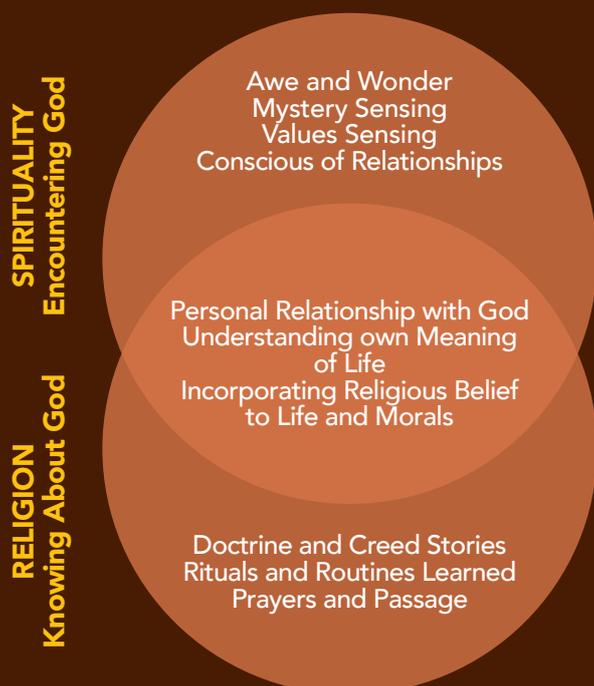
CHAPTER 4: CHILDREN, RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

4.1 OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTS

“The primary function of religion is to facilitate the search for the sacred by using religious practices, beliefs and feeling as the instruments to achieve the goal. In spirituality the search for the sacred consists of encounters with God, the divine and the transcendent.”

-Mathewson, 2011

The relationship between spirituality and religion is a matter of debate. There is no single definition acceptable to all, but a number of views concerning their relationship. Ratcliff and May (2004:11) explain the overlapping concepts of spirituality and religion by using two overlapping circles demonstrating both their commonality and difference. Helm, Berg and Scranton (2008:217) present the diagram below.



Spirituality/Religion Venn Diagram

Both religion and spirituality are concepts found within the framework of a search for the sacred. While various actors agree on an overlap between spirituality and religion, tension exists between the extents of the overlap. Copsey, (2005:17) cited by Mathewson argues that a child’s spirituality can be used as a springboard to faith. According to Copsey, concepts associated with spirituality are for example vulnerability, mystical, well-being, relationship, inner self and being in touch with God. Concepts associated with faith are trust, love, hope, relationship and God. Copsey concludes that spirituality relates to notions of otherness, while faith appears to be more grounded in the sense of confidence and is linked with the beliefs and practices of a given religious community.

Spirituality is often viewed as two main streams, non-religious and religious spirituality. Non-religious spirituality consists of natural or secular spirituality. It includes the existential (meaning making), humanistic (enriching life holistically), developmental (e.g. human developmental stages as proposed by the likes of Piaget) and psychological and social science spirituality. Religious spirituality on the other hand, is internally focused and sacred. World religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam and other faiths concur with this (Anthony, 2006:16).

Reflection

- In your understanding, is religion different from spirituality? Discuss
- What characteristics would be associated with religious people?
- What characteristics would be associated with spiritual people?

4.2 CHILDREN AND SPIRITUALITY

"No matter what religion you practice, it is important to have a set of core values that you believe in and stick to. This world is such a crazy place to live in right now, our kids need some sort of moral compass to help them know right from wrong."

-Ashlee Urry

Like adults, children are spiritual seekers; they come equipped with innate spirituality. What they may not have is the language to express it. Religious education for children, including spiritual writing, should give them the language and the tools they need to reflect and explore their spiritual experiences. Spiritual experiences are given while spiritual awareness must be learned or else it will remain dormant for a lifetime.

John Bradford⁶⁸ clearly states:

For a human being, especially a child or young person, to have a full quality of life, spirituality in all its aspects must be nurtured and affirmed. For children or young people who have been marginalized or who have suffered deprivation in every way, the need for such nurture and affirmation in human spirituality is pronounced.

Margaret Crompton⁶⁹ identifies spirituality as comprising:

- sensing a changed quality in awareness;
- sensing values, ideas about good and evil or what matters;
- sensing mystery, wonder and awe; and
- Sensing meaning, insight, or connectedness.

Tryst Chagnon, a religious education director at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Raleigh, thinks of spirituality as a feeling of balance and wholeness, and "being intentional in our treatment of the world and ourselves,

engaged in genuine community with others, and filled with awe and respect for the "great mystery." Chagnon further adds that regardless of one's religion, spiritual needs are human and undeniable. He reiterates that there is openness in children to explore spirituality and to flourish that is rarely recovered in adulthood if not nurtured in childhood. Neglect of children's sense of truth, justice or mystery may leave them expressing their terrors and pain in ways that harm society such as violence towards others and themselves.

Columbia University psychologist Lisa Miller in her book, "The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving" has detailed facts about children's spirituality based on recent psychological and neurological research. The study finds that children who are raised with a robust and well-developed spiritual life are happier, more optimistic, more thriving, more flexible, and better equipped to deal with life's ordinary (and even extraordinary) traumas than those who are not. Miller asserts, "Spiritual stunting can damage a child forever, creating a brittle sense of self and a lack of resiliency... Children without spirituality, build their self-esteem on achievement, are driven to please others, feel alone in the world, and are fatalistic about failures and setbacks."

From the above discourse, spirituality has to be nurtured in children to make them whole.



Chagnon suggests use of religious rituals as children thrive in them. He emphasizes involvement of children in creating family projects and rituals that promote family values, which if repeatedly done, have lasting positive effects on the children's lives (Cathy Downs, 2009).

Life challenges and difficulties are all spiritual teaching tools that parents can use to teach children how to handle them. Spirituality in times of stress thus offers a person something to fall back on – that you are not alone. *“Nurturing our children spiritually opens up their way of thinking about life, the way of viewing the value of their life... If children are introduced to spiritual concepts slowly, like rain slowly soaking the earth, when they meet with stress later on, they can develop a healthy way to cope with life's challenges.”⁷⁰*

Spiritual development involves teaching children to value qualities such as compassion, generosity and sacrifice. When parents and other adults or caregivers model genuineness, honesty, trustworthiness and kindness, children develop into kind and compassionate adults. Ways to achieve this include consistently demonstrating these character traits in everyday personal actions and explaining to children about their importance.

Tips: Building Spiritual Foundation's for Children

- Clarify your own beliefs;
- Help children define Spirituality;
- Credit any habits of reverence;
- Use daily events to teach spirituality;
- Read religious text together often;
- Lean on your spiritual beliefs in hard times; and let your children know who you are;
- Tell Stories;
- Teach by example; and
- Make it fun!

4.3 CHILDREN AND RELIGION

According to several religious beliefs and teachings, there is the widely held and deeply shared notion that human dignity originates from God and hence, is not based on any human quality, legal mandate, or individual merit or accomplishment. Human dignity is inalienable, meaning it is an essential part of every human being – an intrinsic quality that can never be separated from other essential aspects of the human person. Belief in the dignity of the human person is the foundation of morality.

Religion should add to the protection of human rights and human dignity, as it generally:

- Emphasizes man's spiritual and eternal nature and dignity as a creation of God;
- Rejects hatred and violence;
- Makes the practice of love an obligation through service to others; and
- Promotes forgiveness and reconciliation.

Most religious belief systems embrace the sanctity of life, respect and care for the family, community and others, and may be used to provide support to children or give meaning to births, coming of age, marriages or deaths in the family. Generally, religious texts promote a vision for a world of peace, harmony, and mutual prosperity.

Religion and spirituality are important in the lives of children as they serve as a basis for values and traditions and contribute to ethical and social growth. Prayer and/or meditation are practices that are common among different religions, offering a way to seek help, health and guidance, and express gratitude or sorrow. It also provides an opportunity to let go of unhealthy emotions.

Another aspect of religious faith is the notion of caring for others. Children should be able to see outside of themselves, identify with others and thus develop compassion. Through participating in acts of service, giving and charity, children get the opportunity to see the effects of their work.

While the abuses of religion and the strife caused by sectarianism cannot be denied, a religious belief or affiliation and religious rituals can provide support and inner resilience to children in times of difficulty such as in situations of poverty or other deprivation. Religious adherence encourages children's participation towards mitigating the impact of poverty.

4.4 PLACES OF WORSHIP AND CHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY

The mosque, church, temple, synagogue and other such institutions of religious activity, often provide children's first point of contact with the community beyond their immediate neighbours and with wider social institutions. There, children learn not only religion but also important lessons about morals, social behaviour and their own value as human beings. They also learn subtle messages about whether the world is a safe place, how to be a good person, and what their responsibilities are as members of a religious group. Their developing religious identity becomes part of the wider, collective identity that binds children and adults together into a people having a sense of collective meaning and place in the world (Wessels, 2006).

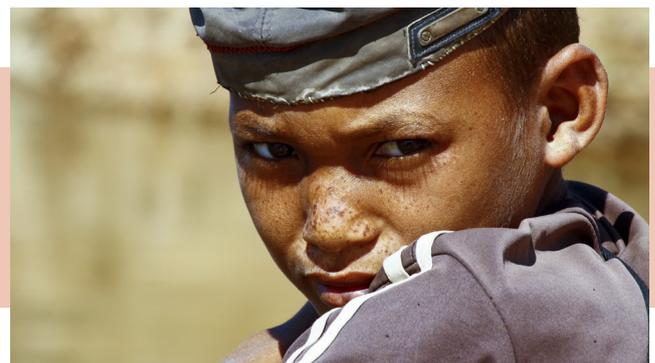
4.5 RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY AND CHILD POVERTY

Human poverty is a denial of human rights – because it infringes on human freedom, it destroys human dignity and it implies discrim-

ination and injustice. Poverty strips children of their human dignity.

Jewish scholar, Moses Maimonides (Maimondes, 1204) opined that though the ultimate aim of religion is perfection of the soul, 'perfection of the body' needs to be attained first, which can be interpreted to mean alleviation of poverty and the fight against injustice come first, to maintain physical health. His argument was that it is difficult to give your mind to higher things if you lack food to eat or a home in which to live (Sherwin, 2006). That is why the alleviation of poverty is a religious duty (Times of London, Sacks, 2013). This is further emphasized by Christian Aid whose slogan is, "We believe in life before death."

Speaking during the Fourth Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), the President of Arigatou International, Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, stated, "Religious leaders by definition, are called to develop and transform the human heart, and many hearts thus transformed have the potential to bring about great social change. Certainly, every religious tradition has done noble work to address poverty, but I believe that if all religious leaders of every creed would join hands in a united stand against poverty, it would unleash a powerful transformative force within the human spirit. We can all unite around ending child poverty."





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CHAPTER 5: RELIGIOUS REFLECTIONS AND POVERTY

5.1 A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD POVERTY

Rev. Hidehito Okochi

The world has achieved remarkable economic and scientific development. However, contemporary values, which emphasize the pursuit of economic expansion and efficiency in order to achieve further advancement, threaten the environment and are a leading cause of conflicts over resources and their sustainable exploitation. This is an indication that religious norms and values are losing grip in some parts of the world.

In January 2014, a new law to promote counter-measures against child poverty was passed in Japan, one of the world's top economies. This was against the backdrop of serious concern over worsening child poverty and a sense of panic over the falling birth rate and an aging population. The concern is this scenario will ultimately affect the country's economic growth prospects, leading to a decrease in the strength of the nation.

However, what is poverty? It is not just having little or insufficient money. Most religious faiths, including Buddhism, consider "voluntary poverty" a virtue. They proclaim the value of living humanely and enriching one's "standard of living," even without material possessions. The identification of poverty as a social problem is the basis of isolation and discrimination. Poverty is the state of being denied access to social resources that are essential to livelihoods.

Religious faiths are also known to be complicit in perpetuating a state of discrimination in poverty. In Buddhism, a person's present unhappy state is sometimes explained because of one's deeds in a previous life, implying that one should accept the chaotic state of the present life. We must now go back to the teaching of Buddha, which state that whether one is noble or humble is not determined by birth, but determined by one's deeds.

Children are tormented by various problems including poverty in a society that values economic growth, efficiency and competition over human well-being. Experts on child rights indicate in an international comparative study that Japanese children suffer from lower self-esteem. Such loss of the strength to live, caused by having low self-esteem, is another critical dimension of poverty today. A survey result shows only 20% of young people in Japan think that they can do something to change the society. It is a reflection of the extent to which young people are alienated from the society.



The mannerism of the Japanese children when asked about issues of child abuse was even much more telling. Too timid to speak

publicly, perhaps a reflection of the status of children in the Japanese societal context, most children would appear absent-minded and at a loss when questioned about their well-being and status in the society. At best, the children admitted to being exploited and unconsidered in the decision-making process.



Clearly, there is lack of information about child welfare issues. However, it is also clear the society would be willing to take action against child abuse once armed with the relevant information. The societal engagement then comes in the form of remedies proposed by the children. These remedial measures include public discussions about the factors that lead to child abuse and how the existing state policies permit their occurrence. The discussion also extends to whether the normative frameworks, policies and the cultural context provide an effective mechanism to deal with child abuse. The intention of the interviews was also to understand the feelings of the abusive adults.

Children are gifted with remarkable sensitivity and imagination. They are an invaluable social resource, capable of participating in society with awareness of their own responsibility and potential. Buddhism as a religion pursues "awakening to the truth," but also proclaims, "The way things are" as a virtue. This explains how to recognise the enlightened nature of all living beings, and thus, to see a child

not as an immature version of an adult, but as a dignified living person. In a sense, the Convention on the Rights of the Child shares common values with Buddhism.

The essence of Buddhism is the teaching of interdependent co-arising (Pratītyasamutpāda). This is the understanding that everything that exists is connected and related to each other. All phenomenas are manifested as a result of the mutual relationship of innumerable causes and conditions. There is nothing unrelated to me in the world. We have to live in harmony with nature, with other people, with the past and with the future. In Buddhism, the essence of life is suffering and the root cause of this suffering is our craving, anger and ignorance.

Humanity is taught to approach the suffering with love, kindness and empathy, to discern the mechanism of suffering and to walk the path of truth as beings who share one universe. From this perspective, the essence of poverty is human greed and mammon. In a society that gives priority to economic growth, making money becomes the cardinal virtue, valued more than traditional culture and the environment or life itself.

Those who have money make the laws and policies. This has skewed the distribution of resources to the disadvantage of the poor. Villages relying on farming, forestry or fishing in harmony with nature and communities based on mutual aid have collapsed. Humanity's shared assets and social capital have been passed into the hands of private corporations. Agriculture-based industries, forestry, fishery and manufacturing industries in Japan have been ruined since cheaper resources and labour from the South became available.

While it is arguable that economic development eventually trickles down to people at the bottom, the reality is that disparities and inequality is widening. The globe is walking the path towards further division rather than redistribution.

The poverty and discrimination, generated from power-imbalances have a top-down structure of domination as a backdrop. This can only be overcome by a society, which embraces human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These instruments came to the fore through deep reflection on the aspects of human suffering and follow the Buddhist teaching of the Four Noble Truths. These are the truth of suffering, the truth of the cause of suffering, the truth of eliminating the cause of suffering and the truth of realizing the elimination of suffering.

Extreme emphasis on economic growth and expansion is the driving force behind the aggressive and deceptive global economy, furiously destroying nature and cultures, creating concentration of wealth in the hands of a few and widening disparities. This has a negative impact on children's future. Religious groups around the globe must work together to spread the net of justice and ethics for children everywhere on the planet. Such initiatives should not only be driven by religious doctrines, but must also be driven from the grassroots by the victims of deprivation. Children are also the vital bearers of such initiatives. We are able to change the future and transform the world. This is the hope that we want to share with children. We are convinced that empowering and networking these efforts is the role and potential of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC).

5.2 A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD POVERTY

“Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these, that the Kingdom of God belongs. Truly tell you, whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”

(Luke 18: 16-17)

S. Wesley Ariarajah

This warm and affirmative saying by Jesus, when his disciples tried to stop parents who brought their children to him, is one of the very few sayings on children in the Christian Scriptures. Not surprisingly, one would be hard pressed to find teachings on 'Child Poverty' or on the 'Impact of Poverty on Children' in the Christian scriptures. This may reflect, in part, the social status of children at that period. Perhaps it has more to do with the reality that children were primarily seen as an inalienable part of the nuclear family and of the immediate faith community. In the Jewish tradition, the new-born child was received and incorporated into the covenant community on the 8th day, through the ritual of circumcision. In the Christian tradition, this was done at the time of baptism. This practice arises from the firm belief that a child is a gift of God and that its care and well-being, as well as its physical, mental and spiritual growth are entrusted to the family and the community into which it is born.



It should be noted that this was not the view of the Greco-Roman world into which Christianity moved and established itself in its early history. Adulthood was the norm in Greek and Roman cultures of that time; children were not considered as “people” until they reached maturity. Female children were treated with disregard, and it was all too common for male children to be sexually abused; pedophilia was an accepted part of the culture. Christianity challenged this reality by upholding the notion of the dignity of every human being in the sight of God, be it child or adult. It also instilled the belief that the family is entrusted not only with the well-being of the child but also with the duty to safeguard its dignity as a person. Historically these convictions have been the driving force in the Christian struggle, along with persons of other religious traditions and secular movements, against child-slavery, child-labour, child-soldiers, child trafficking and the many forms of child-abuse in our day. Christianity also has a strong record on protecting the well-being of the female-child by fighting female-child exposure, child-marriage and by actively introducing female-child education in many parts of the world.

I recall this Christian contribution not so much to pat the Christian back to say “well done;” all religions also have their ambiguous side and Christianity is not exempt from it. Rather, I have recalled this history to argue that struggling against child poverty should be a natural cause for Christians and should be looked upon as part of their religious commitment. The hidden nature of child poverty, as something embedded within the poverty of the family, has been one of the reasons why most Christians have not been conscious enough of the issue.

When a family is living in poverty, the most affected are the children within it. In situations of abject poverty, children are deprived of the nutrition and health care they need; the incidence of child mortality and childhood disabilities increase; there, family poverty is self-perpetuating, with very few individuals breaking out of it. A number of studies demonstrate that only a very small portion of those born into families below the poverty line, (despite possessing high intelligence and special abilities) do well in later life.

What is alarming today is that child poverty no longer relates only to the family context, because of numerous wars, indiscriminate killings and the displacement of populations, thus increasing number of orphaned children and those affected by poverty and become orphans when they are separated from their parents and extended families. A UNHCR⁷¹ report says that:

“Almost half of the world’s forcibly displaced people are children and many spend their entire childhood far from home. Whether they are refugees, internally displaced, asylum-seekers or stateless, children are at a greater risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking or forced military recruitment. They may also have witnessed or experienced violent acts and/or been separated from their families.”



This and other similar reports show that in addition to child poverty that is part of the poverty of the family, there is new phenomenon of “children in poverty” which needs even greater attention.

To sum up, for Christians, the religious resources to deal with the issue of children and poverty lie mainly on three important interrelated convictions that are central to Christianity. Firstly, as earlier indicated is the unequivocal affirmation that each child has its own dignity and personhood in the sight of God. Secondly, is the conviction that it is the sacred duty of the family and the community to nurture the child into adulthood and to protect the child from any form of violence and abuse. Thirdly, is the conviction that economic and social organisation of society that results in parts of society living in poverty and deprivation while others flourish, is an affront to God’s intentions for life in society.

There is a saying attributed to Jesus in Luke 17.2 (also repeated in the gospels of Matthew and Mark) which reads, “It is better for you if a millstone is hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea than for you to cause one of these little ones to stumble.” There is considerable debate among scholars as who is referred to here as the “little ones” and it may well not refer to children.



Either way, causing an offence or placing an obstacle that prevents a child from reaching his or her full potential or driving children into a situation that leads to the diminishing of their God given dignity would be a betrayal of some of the fundamental values that the Christian faith stands for. It is clear that child poverty is the main “stumbling block” to a child living out their full potential. It is not only a social but also a spiritual and faith issue. Christians cannot afford to do nothing about it.

5.3 A HINDU PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD POVERTY

“There was no premature death or suffering of any kind; everyone enjoyed beauty and health. No one was poor, sorrowful or in want; no one was ignorant or devoid of auspicious marks.”

Prof. Anantan and Rambachan, Professor of Religion, Saint Olaf College, Minnesota USA

The dignity and value of the child in the Hindu tradition flows from the fact that she or he embodies the infinite divine. Since Hinduism understands God to be intimately present at the heart of all that is created, we profess and express our value and commitment to God by our value and love for all in which God is present. In creation, God enters into every created form, and it is the presence of God that gives value and significance to the child. The value of children is derived both from having their source in God and by embodying God.

The profound value for the child in Hinduism matters very little unless it leads to practices that nurture and foster the flourishing of the child. It is important for religious value to become the basis of care and compassion for the child. When a utopian society was imagined in

Hinduism, it was visualized as a community free from suffering and violence of all kinds. The saintly poet, Tulasīdāsa (ca. 15th CE) provides one of the finest descriptions of such an ideal existence when he recounted the life of Rama in his famous work Rāmācaritamānas. His vision of the kingdom of God (rāmrajya) is practical and speaks of both material and religious realities. It is a community free from suffering caused by poverty and disease.



It is a primary responsibility of parents and communities, in the Hindu tradition, to secure the material and emotional well-being of their children by nurturing and loving relationships, ensuring education and providing for the nutritional and health needs of the child. One of the fundamental goals for all human beings in the Hindu tradition is artha (wealth) that includes the basic necessities that every human being requires for a good and healthy life. It is important to emphasize today that artha must include access to health care. It is not meaningful to specify artha as a basic requirement for the good life for all human beings and not be concerned about the fact that children, the most vulnerable and dependent among us, lack access to these necessities. The recognition of artha as a fundamental human need underlines the important fact that the religiosity of Hinduism must not be disconnected from recognizing and securing basic human needs. Hindu religiosity is not anti-materialistic and

cannot condone or be indifferent to poverty, where large numbers of children are malnourished, ill or do not have the opportunity to attain adulthood. Our inability to care for the health of our children is a failure to meet our religious obligation to them. We do not value life if we do not act to sustain and care for our children — the most dependent and vulnerable in any society.

The abuse of children and our failure to protect them from exploitation is incompatible and at variance with the most basic Hindu teachings. The Hindu teaching about the unity of existence in God and in the sacredness of life that is an expression of God is the foundation of its cardinal ethical principle, non-injury (ahi sā). Ahimsa, is regarded as the highest virtue (parama dharma). However, we need to understand that the suffering caused by poverty is a form of violence to children since it is a major obstacle to the realisation of their potential. Our recognition of God's presence in our children and our value for non-injury must become the foundation upon which we build a vigorous campaign against child poverty and exploitation of every kind. Eradication of child abuse and child exploitation is a measure of our commitment to the core values of the Hindu tradition.

“Our inability to care for the health of our children is a failure to meet our religious obligation to them. We do not value life if we do not act to sustain and care for our children, the most dependent and vulnerable among us.”

What is Poverty?

Within Hinduism, wealth is regarded as a beneficial and positive value, just like love and morality — if pursued within limits. Social rank in ancient India was dominated by religious prestige while economic success and the accumulation of wealth did not lead to a higher social standing. Hinduism has never condemned a rich and full life in the world or extolled poverty as a virtue in itself — though the case is different with monks, who voluntarily take the vow of mendicancy.

What can we do?

- Create awareness among Hindu on the several measures promoted by Hinduism to fight poverty;
- Support Hindu charities;
- Partner with Hindu institutions to fight poverty;
- Enhance the capacity of civil society to fight corruption and hold public officials accountable; and
- Seek justice in addition to supporting charity efforts.

5.4 A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD POVERTY

Dr. Sarah Bernstein and Rabbi Dr. Michael Marmur

An ancient Jewish text tells the tragic and gruesome tale of a widow who dwelt close to a landowner. She sent out her two sons to gather leftovers from the field, as the poor are entitled in Biblical law. However, the owner of the field refused to allow them to collect produce. The mother fretted, saying: when will my sons come from the field? Maybe they will bring me something to eat. Meanwhile her sons said: “When can we go to our mother?

Maybe she has something for us to eat.” When they met they discovered that none of them had any food, and the three of them died of hunger on the same day, held together in a desperate embrace.

In the continuation of this grim story (found in Avot de-Rabbi Natan, 38), a theological dimension is introduced. God offers stern words of reproof to the landowner and the bystanders, and cites a verse from Proverbs 22:22 “Do not exploit the poor because they are poor, and do not crush the needy in court, for the LORD will take up their case and will exact life for life.”

The Hebrew Bible is situated in the world as it may become and the world as it is. It acknowledges both the vision and the reality, and calls for a human response to bridge that inevitable gulf. Deuteronomy 15 points to the chasm between “ought” and “is” as it relates to the phenomenon of poverty. While verse 4 proclaims that “there will be no poor person among you,” verse 7 provides guidance on how to behave “when there is a poor person among you.” As one looks around the world, the existence of that great divide between the vision of eradicating poverty and the reality of its prevalence is all too apparent. One of the greatest challenges for contemporary Judaism is that the first Jewish State in two millennia has a high percentage of its children languishing below the poverty line.

The prophets of Israel resided in the valley between the inspiring vision of how things might yet be and the grim reality of how they actually are. They refused to remove their moral antennae, to settle for diversions and trivialities. They kept their focus on the great and pressing social issues. They insisted on calling out to the people: “Seek justice, undo oppression, defend the orphan, and plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1.17).

The landowner in the Rabbinic tale is in the same position as most of us – acts of omission and commission will have an enormous impact on children (and their parents) struggling to deal with the catastrophic impact of poverty. Judaism offers an insistent call of discomfort to those of us who have more resources than we need, and who contrive to convince themselves that their trivial interests have a greater valence than the call of a child crippled by poverty and despair.

The archetypal defenseless child in the Bible is Ishmael, who is abandoned in the wilderness and calls out to God. “And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is” (Genesis 21.17). Humanity is called to mirror this divine response.

“Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God” (Proverbs 14.31). Answering the call of a needy child, every needy child, is a Jewish imperative. We may know that the reality of poverty will continue, but we are not permitted to give up on the vision of its eradication, and we are called upon to engage in incremental acts of social improvement and expressions of humanity.

Poverty is an obscenity, and there is no excuse for becoming numb to its offence. Poverty is also a fact, and we build lives of meaning in the shadow of injustice. Somehow, in the rift between vision and reality, we are called to find a way of doing our part in bringing these two poles closer to each other. Some strategies involve regular acts of charity. Others relate to systemic social transformation. What they have in common is the sense that hu-

man beings must not act like the landowner preventing children from their rights; nor can we be the bystander and say that it is not in our power to eradicate poverty; our job is to hear the voice of the child where the child is and do all we can. A famous Jewish teaching states: “It is not your responsibility to finish the work [of perfecting the world], but you are not free to desist from it either” (Mishnah Avot 2.16). Each one of us may not be able to eradicate child poverty alone – but that does not absolve us of the responsibility to try.

5.5 A MUSLIM PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD POVERTY

Prof. Mohamed A. Mohamed

Semantically, poverty, “faqr” in Arabic, is not an objective quantitative concept that refers to lack of wealth. Faqr in Arabic means needing. Someone is faqīr, poor, if she or he needs something. Ghanī, or rich, is an adjective of someone who is not in need. Al-Ghanī is in fact one of the Names of God, for He is the One who absolutely needs nothing and no one. Fighting poverty, therefore, starts from raising the child in a culture, where individuals are not obsessed with material gain. This definition of poverty is further grounded in a system where the individual’s social value is tied to his or her personal character, and social credibility, and not to any material acquirement or hierarchical achievement. In addition, since someone is poor or rich relatively to other members in his or her community, personal competition is rigorously prohibited unless it is a competition in the spiritual sphere of striving towards God. Furthermore, Muslims are taught that their final evaluation by God on the Day of Judgment is conditioned by their individual capacity, in terms of both quality and magnitude, which are predeter-

mined by God and not the individual. Beyond the common minimum requirement which every Muslim must do, individual Muslims are required to do only their best, towards achieving the ideals determined by God or society.

Morality in Islam is often embedded in social and legal structures, in the form of regulatory or normative ethics. Fighting child poverty can therefore be found in the moral discourses of giving to the disadvantaged in society, as well as the legal discourses of rights, responsibility and authority. Food, housing and physical well-being are three basic rights, which all humans must enjoy. In the case of children, these rights are the responsibility of parents. Parents are legally obligated to provide for their children, and to be fair in distributing this providence among them. If a parent is not able to provide for their children, this responsibility moves to members of the father's extended family, who have inheritance rights, such as the grandfather. Once the extended family is unable to provide for the child, both the political rulers and the society, are legally responsible for meeting the children's material rights.



Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] said that he is close to each Muslim, and that if a Muslim dies, leaving behind debts, the Prophet would pay his debts. If a Muslim died leaving behind a family, the money would go to his heirs. This responsibility is reflected in many historical

and modern institutions that find their roots in the Islamic World. For instance, in 707 CE/88 H., al-Walid Ibn Abd al-Malik, the Umayyad Caliph, founded an institution for orphans, and hired servants, teachers and doctors to serve these children. Numerous institutions similar to this one, were later established through endowments paid either by rulers or by the wealthy among the society. Islam has also paid special attention to orphans. The law protects the orphan's inheritance, even if he or she is only an embryo. Once born, the orphan must be taken care of until the age of maturity, when he or she should have full authority of his or her inheritance.



The social responsibility of the ruler and the community is supported by a number of laws and institutions. In spite of protecting private property, Islamic law has granted the State the right to keep public properties away from the market, for purposes of providing to the needy or covering state's expenses. In exceptional situations, the state also has the power to control the market price of different commodities, especially those that are required to meet the basic needs of the society, such as flour. The institution of endowment has an extremely rich heritage in Islam. The control mechanism of endowments was neither by political rulers nor by the private donor, thus creating considerable stability among their beneficiaries. *Al-zakah*, or alms giving, has

served to meet the needs of poor children as well. Unlike *adaqah* or voluntary charity, *zakah* is obligatory and backed by the law. It is the responsibility of the state to collect and to redistribute it to create a more just society. Though collected centrally, *zakah* has to be distributed in a way that the needs of the local community are met before passing the balance to the central state authority. This rule gave priority to the local community, including its poor children, over central state needs. Muslims are encouraged to give charity. The Prophet promised that someone's money would never subside because of giving to charity, for God would always add more to him. He gave a vivid analogy by telling Muslims that God Himself receives the charity by His right Hand.

Fighting child poverty has other roots in tradition. Education was always to be provided free of charge to whoever wanted to learn. Numerous endowments guaranteed all students, free education as well as free accommodation and a modest salary. Therefore children living in poverty, who were not born in families of traders or craftsmen, were encouraged to pursue education and become respected scholars.

In the present day, Muslims are faced with new challenges and these come with new perspective practices. To begin with, the modern states, in which many Muslims live, do not carry out responsibilities as prescribed by Islamic Law, such as collecting *zakah* and caring for orphans. Historical endowments have been appropriated by these states and all revenues are now used to accomplish state budget priorities. Moreover, Muslims no longer live in the Caliphate. They are spread all over the world and very much integrated into an emerging global society. In addition, mod-

ern communication technology dramatically changed the concept and reality of space, and, therefore, the definition of the local. Should Muslims wait for a historical Islamic state to return to fulfill their duties, or could transnational Non-Governmental Organisations that care for poor children today be the right alternative to receive their *zakah* and charity? Should Muslims restrict their goodness and giving only to fellow Muslims, or should their contributions go indiscriminately to all people? Does 'local' still mean just Cairo or should it in this day and age include any global organisation with a website accessible on a personal computer?

What can we do?

- Create awareness among Muslims on the several measures promoted by Islam to fight poverty;
- Motivate Muslims to pay the *zakat* annually and to have transparent *zakat* management systems;
- Train *zakat* fund managers on development and microfinance strategies to fight poverty;
- Encourage and revive the creation of charitable trusts (*waqf*) especially for the poor;
- Partner with Islamic institutions, like the Islamic Development Bank, to fight poverty;
- Promote microfinance for the poor like the Grameen bank on a wider scale;
- Enhance the capacity of civil society to fight corruption and hold public officials accountable; and
- Support and promote initiatives that care for orphans within family settings and in institutions.

5.6 A SIKH PERSPECTIVE ON CHILD POVERTY

Charanjit Ajit Singh

An incident that took place in Delhi thirty years ago in 1985, outside the Sikh historic shrine (Gurdwara), is as vivid in my memory as the day it happened. The Gurdwara was put up in memory of Guru Har Krishan, the child Guru who led the Sikh community from the ages of 5 to 8. One evening while my husband Ajit and I were making our way towards the shrine, a Sikh child barely 5 or 6-years-old, followed us and urged us to buy incense sticks, which he was selling. My immediate thought was that he should be at home and not there on his own. I told him that we did not need them and we must first pay our respects at the holy shrine for which we had come.



After spending about an hour inside the shrine, listening to the singing of hymns and recitation from the most holy book of the Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib and partaking of the holy pudding, we came out with a view to getting back quickly to the place where we were staying. The child saw us coming out and ran towards us. He said, 'Please, please, buy just a small bundle as I need some money.' I tried to ignore him as if he was a beggar but he still insisted. Then a thought came to my mind that I should ask him why at this young age, he was doing it? Upon my asking, he became

very emotional but still remained dignified and he answered, 'my father was killed by rioters last year and my mother is very sick. By selling these incense sticks; I get money to buy food for my mum and I. There is nobody else left in the family.' I had known that a few months after the army attack on Harimandir Sahib (also known as the Golden Temple) in June 1984, ordered by the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, she was assassinated. Her death had led to a large-scale massacre of the Sikhs in many parts of India and especially in Delhi. The child I was speaking to had paid such a heavy price, had no time for childhood, yet he wanted not to beg but to earn an honest living to fend for himself and care for his mother according to the principles of the Sikh faith as a Sikh adult is expected to do.

I was so overcome with emotion, that despite not needing the incense sticks, I took the whole lot from him and gave him what he saw as a large sum. He took the money reluctantly after a lot of persuasion and I know it was just a small gesture in the heat of the moment. No child should be put in that position!

This encounter reminds me of the childhood of the fourth Sikh Guru Ram Das, the founder of the holy city of Amritsar famous for the holiest shrine for the Sikhs, Sri Harimandir Sahib, and the Golden Temple. He was born in 1534 in Lahore (now in Pakistan). His father Hari Das was a shopkeeper who provided well for his family. Ram Das became an orphan at the age of seven when both his parents died soon after each other. His maternal grandmother took him to her small town of Basarke, where he learned to fend for himself and support his grandmother by selling boiled brown chickpeas. He learned to read and write and developed an excellent knowledge of religious life after coming in contact with the third Guru

Amardas. What is remarkable is that the third Guru chose him to be his son-in-law and afterwards his successor, such was his ethical living, service to the community and devotion to the third Guru who is known for social and religious equality irrespective of faith, caste or gender.

It is important to note that Sikh teachings strongly emphasize hard work and individual and communal responsibility as well as sharing and social justice. Living on the path as taught by our divine parent, demand of us that we as God's children, look after all children beyond our own and especially those who are vulnerable and young Living in the United Kingdom (UK), the fifth richest country in the world, I find it hard to accept that there are a significant number of families, who may be going to bed hungry, because of the changes in the benefits system. This includes children. Food banks are increasingly providing emergency 3-day supplies of basic food to people in crisis and the Sikh places of worship, the Gurdwaras are involved in supporting.

By way of the Child Poverty Act, the UK government took the decision that it would end child poverty by 2020. However, a report published by Institute of Fiscal Studies in October 2014 shows that by 2020 child poverty would increase from 3.5 million to 4.2 million. This presents a grim national picture and this is more so in London, a rich banking city in which 30% of children live below the poverty line. In Boroughs like Tower Hamlets child poverty is 49% and in fifteen of the 33 London Boroughs between one-third and a half children live below the poverty line and variations do not enable children to have a decent childhood to which all young people should be entitled. Refugee children affected by war and violence also require active support.

David Holmes, Chair of End Child Poverty Campaign stresses that:

"Poverty ruins childhoods and reduces life chances. Failing to invest properly in children is a false economy: already child poverty costs the country £29bn each year and in the long run taxpayers will foot an even higher bill for correcting the damage."

We are calling on politicians of all parties to urgently set out a clear roadmap towards ending child poverty which includes the additional actions needed and the measures by which progress will be tracked.

There are Sikh organisations such as Khalsa Aid operating from the UK on and adhering to the Sikh principle of 'recognise the whole human race as one' which works across the globe providing both emergency and long term relief to people affected by adversity and poverty. Khalsa Aid helps run eight orphanages in Haiti many of which are managed by Christian missionaries. In addition they have also worked with grassroots organisations in Kenya and Uganda, establishing pumps and boreholes for clean water and providing desks and uniforms in schools there. Other institutions and organisations such as the Pingalwara, United Sikhs, Sikhs Helping Sikhs, Kalgidhar Trust and many others in India and across the globe, are working to provide practical help in areas of need and with families who find it impossible to send their children to school because of poverty. There are specific issues about the girl child who is denied equal opportunity to be born, or if born to be educated, which they are trying to address. It is a well-known fact that child poverty is very closely associated with parent poverty, whose lack of well-paid work and subsistence living leads to a cycle of deprivation, ill health and lack of

opportunity to improve their life chances. The Sikh faith is a faith for the whole family. That is why many Sikh *gurdwaras* have schools and well-being centres attached. Many Sikhs from abroad donate generously to open schools for disadvantaged and vulnerable children and sponsor free education for the girl child especially in the Punjab, as *education is considered the route for the elimination of poverty.*

Prayer and meditation, earning a living with honest hard work as well as sharing with others especially those who are less fortunate than us, are three key golden principles which we should inculcate in our day-to-day lives. That is why the Sikhs are exhorted to demonstrate their generosity of spirit through *Sewa* voluntary selfless service to others in the community. In the book 'The Ten Masters' published in 1920, Puran Singh writes:

"... the very first temple made by Guru Nanak was the temple of Bread or Guru's Langar. In one common Temple of Bread, the bread of God was made free to the children of man. Let none be hungry where the spirit of God prevails. The Guru's people and the Guru were one home and one family; but it was no Utopian idea, as of the democracy of labour; it was the democracy of Soul, so gloriously invoked in the temple of the human heart by the genius of the Guru... Here was a religion that made love and labour the common property of man."

He says further that, *"Today no Sikh with a grain of that faith in him can think that he owns the Bread. Bread and water belong to the Guru."* (p149) Guru here means God.

Sharing of food is part of the Sikh way of prayer and service in the more than 300 *Gurdwaras*, in the UK. Anyone can enter any *Gurdwara* irrespective of religion, sex or background and all visitors are welcome to have *langar*, from

the Guru's Free Kitchen. I have seen many East Europeans and others come to eat in my local *Gurdwara*. The homeless charities refer people to the *Gurdwara* for hot meals. Where possible special provision are made for families with children and those with disabilities.

Everyone eats together whether rich, poor, old, young, Sikh or non-Sikh in addition all food is vegetarian so that no religious group is offended, and the receiver and the giver are both equal as children of the same parent, One God. Men and women share the tasks of preparing, cooking, serving and cleaning the whole day. It is my hope that people from all faiths and belief will share this view so that no child goes hungry and all children are provided with the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing as well as opportunities to develop their full potential through education. There is enough God-given provision for our need but not for our greed.

We invite you to follow the scriptural guidance provided by the Gurus to elevate those in poverty. The One God pervades in all. Nanak says, *'Behold and blossom with joy.'*

Interfaith Reflections

- From the different faith and religious reflections, identify shared perceptions on child poverty.
- What resources in your faith community or religious community can be harnessed to eradicate child poverty?
- Suggest activities or interventions that two or more faith communities or religious communities can do jointly to address child poverty.



CHAPTER 6: OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

6.1 THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

“There is no trust more sacred than the one the world holds with children. There is no duty more important than ensuring that their rights are respected, that their welfare is protected, that their lives are free from fear and want and that they can grow up in peace.”

-Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary General

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a comprehensive, internationally binding agreement on the rights of children, which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly 20 November 1989. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights had already guaranteed the rights of children, the convention applied these principles specifically to children, independent of the state or adults, for the first time. The convention incorporates children's civil and political rights, their social, economic, and cultural rights, and their rights to protection. The convention defines a child as a person under the age of 18 (eighteen) years.

Four Umbrella Principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Etymologically, the term “child” comes from the Latin word “*infans*,” which means, “The one who does not speak.” For the Roman, this term designates the child from its birth, up to the age of seven (seven) years. The Convention on the Rights of the Child defines a child as everyone under the age of 18 (eighteen), who, regardless

of gender, origin, religion or possible disabilities, needs special care and protection because children are often the most vulnerable.

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC) recognised the child's interest and their rights were actualised with the adoption of the CRC. The Convention combines civil and political (so-called ‘first generation’) rights with social, economic and cultural (‘second generation’) rights. In general, civil and political rights impose limits on a government's powers; they are also known as ‘negative’ rights. On the other hand, social, economic and cultural rights (which include the rights to health care and welfare, education, and material living conditions compatible with human dignity and development) impose duties on governments — they are ‘positive’ rights. This deliberate combination of all the rights as indivisible and interdependent in a single instrument is crucial (Verhellen, 1997).

The Convention has four general principles. The first two apply to all people and the Convention reaffirms them for children. The last two are of particular concern to children.

Non-discrimination: Children must not suffer discrimination “irrespective of the child's or his or her parents’ or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.”

Right to Life, Survival and Development: Children have a right to survival and development in all aspects of their lives, including the physical, emotional, psychosocial, cognitive, social and cultural.

Best Interests of the Child: The best interests of the child must be a primary consideration in all decisions or actions that affect the child or children as a group. This holds true whether decisions are made by governmental, administrative or judicial authorities, or by families themselves.

Respect for the Views of the Child: Children must be allowed to be active participants in all matters affecting their lives and be free to express their opinions. They have the right to have their views heard and taken seriously.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Child Poverty

Children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of the society. (Source: United Nations General Assembly, 2007. The Rights of the Child (Resolution A/RES/61/146, 23 January 2007), para 46).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not contain an explicit human right to freedom from poverty. Hence, to measure poverty in terms of rights, a selection process is required to match these rights to the severe deprivations of basic human need that characterize poverty and cause ill health.

Article 26 (Right to benefit from Social Security) and Article 27 (Right to Adequate Standard of Living) of the CRC are significant when considering the nexus between the rights of the Child and Poverty. By virtue of their guardians, children as rights holders have the right to help from the government as duty bearers to policies and creation of conditions that contribute to an adequate standard of living and access to social security services, which alleviate poverty.⁷²

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* gives children the rights to survive, develop, participate and be protected. Articles in the Convention as well as in the Universal Declaration are concerned with living standards and aspects of material and social deprivation (United Nations Children's Fund/UNICEF, 2000).



Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is one of the eight United Nations human rights treaty bodies. The Committee was created by the Convention on 27 February 1991. The Committee is made up of 18 members from different countries and legal systems that are of 'high moral standing' and experts in the field of human rights. Although members are nominated and elected by States party to the Convention, committee members act in a personal capacity. They do not represent countries, governments or any other organisation to which they might belong. Members are elected for a four-year term and can be re-elected if nominated.

The Committee also monitors implementation of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. On 19 December 2011, the UN General Assembly approved a third Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, which will allow individual children to submit complaints regarding specific violations of their rights under the Convention and its first two optional protocols.



Ratification Status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, January 2015, Convention on the Rights of the Child. Last Updated: 08 January 2016



Country Status

■ State Party (196) ■ Signatory (1) ■ No Action (0)

Source: <https://treaties.un.org>

6.2 CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: ALIGNING ENDING CHILD POVERTY TO THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

Sustainable Development is a children's rights issue. Human Rights are increasingly being recognised as essential to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, these rights, principles and standards were reflected in the new global development framework and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Eradicating Child Poverty in all its dimensions is one of the most important and urgent human rights issues of the 2030 global agenda. In fact, the first SDG Goal is referred to as follows:

Goal 1: is to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

This goal has two targets of direct relevance to children living in poverty:⁷³

Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day. This is

indicated and measured by the percentage of population living below \$1.25 per day, disaggregated by age to capture the child poverty rate.

Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions. This target has two indicators for measurement; proportion of children (aged 0-17) below the national poverty line and the proportion of children (aged 0-17) living in multidimensional poverty.

Equity and the Realisation of the 2030 Global Agenda

Unless we accelerate our progress, by 2030:

- Almost 70 million children may die before reaching their fifth birthdays
- 3.6 million in 2030 alone, the deadline year for the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Children in sub-Saharan Africa will be 10 times more likely to die before their fifth birthdays than children in high-income countries.
- Nine out of 10 children living in extreme poverty will live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- More than 60 million primary school-aged children will be out of school – roughly the same number as are out of school today. More than half will be from sub-Saharan Africa.
- Some 750 million women will have been married as children – three quarters of a billion child brides.

"Success in one area supports success in another."



To avoid the grim situation described above, the pace of progress in the next 15 years will have to outpace that of the Millennium Development Goals period with equity around children's basic rights being the rallying call. According to UNICEF, the term equity refers to all children having the same opportunities to survive, develop and attain their full potential. Inequity occurs when certain children are unfairly deprived of the basic rights and opportunities available to others mainly because of their place of birth or their family of origin; because of their race, ethnicity or gender; or because they live in poverty or with a disability.



Pathways to Equity

By reducing the inequities that violate disadvantaged children's rights today, these children lead more productive lives as adults and enable them to pass on more opportunities to their children, thus replacing intergenerational cycles of deprivation with sustainable cycles of opportunity.

To achieve equity focus should be on these five key areas:

1. Information

Information broadly encompasses data about who is being left behind and how programmes are reaching or failing to reach those in greatest need. One of the most significant drawbacks in the global effort to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was the fact that national averages showing overall gains towards

certain goals failed to reveal that the poorest were not always benefiting proportionately from overall progress. Without solid data on the status of populations at the subnational level, communities unreached by the advance of progress may remain unnoticed. Quality of data disaggregated by household wealth, geography, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, age and many other key factors help shape programmes around community needs, it also helps governments and their development partners change course when programmes are not as efficient as they could be in meeting those needs.

2. Integration

Integrating interventions across these separate sectors is more effective than addressing them individually: Success in one area supports success in another. For example, the introduction of school feeding programmes to boost nutrition has been linked to increased learning and cognitive development. As noted earlier in this report, in Bangladesh, primary school students in a school meal programme showed a 15.7 per cent improvement in learning achievement, mostly in mathematics.⁷⁴ Integrated strategies can also be more cost-effective, particularly where service providers share human resources⁷⁵ – for example, using immunization campaigns in remote areas to deliver critical micronutrients and measure children for stunting.



3. Innovation

The evolving challenges now facing the world's children means, reinventing our ways of working. It means being agile and adaptable in how we build solutions. It means looking towards new partnerships – including collaborations with companies that might not be our traditional partners, and with young people themselves. The global drive for new solutions is engaging more and more young people not only as beneficiaries of solutions but also as problem-solvers in their own right. It is about using technology to get information and gather data in new ways, at new speeds. For instance, the Ugandan Bureau of Statistics is using the U-Report survey tool to create micro surveys that the government can distribute via mobile phone. Using real-time data gives governments and their development partners a quicker sense of critical issues as they arise and enables them to direct their responses strategically.



Innovating for equity is also about how to fund this work and make it real. UNICEF's Innovation Fund, launched in 2015, is a novel instrument enabling us to support local entrepreneurs and designers in a very concrete sense. The Innovation Fund pushes UNICEF to work with partners – including innovation labs, incubators and accelerators – in new ways. It allows for innovative ideas to more quickly permeate UNICEF's global system, and for us to test, evaluate and adapt them to the needs of the world's most vulnerable children.

“Failure to protect children from poverty is one of the most costly mistakes a society can make.”

4. Investment

All governments need to analyze the impact of their budget decisions on the most vulnerable children. But better coordination and planning between ministries of finance and development can help national budgets better serve the needs of the most disadvantaged. Can tracking expenditures more closely to understand whether the programmes they pay for are reaching the hardest to reach? Better monitoring of the impact of public spending is critical to achieving virtually all of a government's priorities, and achieving equity for children is no exception.

Making resources work best for the most disadvantaged children – by securing more equitable investment – takes on ever increasing importance in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. By encouraging governments to leave no one behind, the new global goals require deliberate shifts in policy, budget design and public spending to benefit those in greatest need.

5. Involvement

Traditional, top-down ways of promoting development are being challenged and now development is becoming more horizontal, crossing sectors, geographies and age groups, and transcending traditional barriers to participation. Social media and digital technology are organizing, increasing and sustaining public engagement more quickly and effectively, as groups share information, broaden their memberships and multiply the number of partners dedicated to the same causes.

Impact Story: Africa Interfaith Initiative on the Post 2015 Development Agenda

The Africa Interfaith Initiative on the Post 2015 Development Agenda is an advocacy platform comprising of pan-African, regional and national Religious Coordinating Bodies (RCBs), interfaith organisations, Faith Inspired Organisations (FIOs) and religious leaders. The initiative was formed as a response to the growing need for African faith communities and their leaders to speak into the post 2015 development agenda and influence its discourse and outcomes. Further, the significant contribution of faith communities and their organs towards Africa's development, is gaining recognition.

For this reason, the initiative aimed to:

- Provide African Faith Communities and Leaders a common platform to harness their resourcefulness in engaging and influencing the conversation on the post 2015 Development Agenda and its outcomes;
- Enhance the leadership and capacity of African faith leaders in order to engage and contribute effectively to the prevailing discourses on development and the architecture of sustainable development after 2015;
- To generate coordinated and programmatic actions that enabled African Faith Communities to bring their voice and organisation to bear on the formulation and implementation of public policy and programmes in connection to the new charter on development;

Over its two –year engagement from 2014 to 2015, the initiative successfully:

- Organised the first African Faith Leaders' Summit on Sustainable Development Goals and the Post 2015 Development Agenda, which was co-hosted by the Government of Uganda and the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU). In addition to the participation of senior religious leaders, women of faith and youth of faith leaders, the Summit included representatives from the African Union, East African Community, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Millennium Campaign (UNMC), and the World Bank. The President of Uganda, H.E. Yoweri Museveni and the President of Liberia, H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, also participated.

During the Summit, Rev. Nicta Lubaale, General Secretary – Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC) and Chair of the organising committee of the Initiative, stated,

...faith based institutions recognise that we have accompanied and cushioned the poor and tried to relieve the suffering. We have done that for too long and it is now time to dismantle the chains, structures, institutions and processes that perpetuate poverty. Charity and other support will continue, but we will also now engage in the 'war for justice' to address concerns about increasing inequalities and bring a moral perspective in discussions about the unfairness of a situation where there is increasing wealth, luxury and opulence, living side by side with extreme poverty... Faith communities also need to contribute to attitude change and ensure that communities consider the current injustices that have become 'normal' to be considered abnormal.

- Mobilised and facilitated religious communities and leaders to develop the Africa Faith Leaders Position Paper on the Beyond Post-2015 Development Agenda. It stated:
Together, we must build an equal, fair and secure society where each woman, man, or child can flourish and contribute to the betterment of humanity... In common; we cherish values of dignity, participation, environmental stewardship and ensuring the greatest positive impact for those among us experiencing the greatest deprivation and marginalization.

Continued page 72

- The Position Paper, which resonated with African Union's Common African Position (CAP) On The Post-2015 Development Agenda, further stated:

We welcome the centrality placed on fighting poverty in the new global development agenda...

The post-2015 framework must demonstrate seriousness by embedding poverty eradication in all goals and targets and should aim to get to zero poverty, not just reducing it. Poverty must be understood as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that encompasses a shortage of resources, capabilities, choices, security and power. In order to capture our concerns for poverty, we urge an ambitious, inclusive, equitable and sustainable Framework.

- Mobilised an initial 23 organisations to endorse the Position Paper,
- Organised several inter-faith side-events during the 69th and 70th sessions of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York; in 2014 and 2015;
- Organised an inter-faith side-event during the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (FFD), in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 14 July 2015;
- Mobilised religious communities and leaders to develop and disseminate advocacy statements: 'From Lament to Action,' and 'Unlocking Africa's Resourcefulness.'

Lessons Learned

- When conducting advocacy in collaboration with other Organisations, focus on the shared objectives, values and common messages;
- Designate focal persons or focal organisations to lead and coordinate the process;
- Ensure your structure is representative of the community you are in; and
- Plan advocacy meetings alongside other major events in order to gain mileage.

These new opportunities and channels are giving citizens a way to raise their voices about urgent issues affecting their lives and significantly fueling a new era of involvement and public engagement – ranging from local campaigns to broad movements that call for change and give people a powerful new way to demand accountability for the promises their leaders have made. These loosely organised efforts can be local, national, regional or global or cut across. In India, the I Paid a Bribe movement started out as a website for ordinary citizens to report instances of government corruption in their own lives, but it rapidly grew into a movement to combat government corruption in India and beyond.





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CHAPTER 7: FAITH-INSPIRED APPROACHES TO ENDING CHILD POVERTY

7.1 ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN POVERTY ERADICATION

“We expressed our commitment to mobilise faith-based resources to end child poverty, to challenge the unequal distribution of resources, war and violence, poor governance and corruption, and to utilize interfaith advocacy and grassroots action to overcome poverty.”

-Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International

The religious resources to address poverty include spiritual, social and moral assets that address humanitarian and welfare; development of communities and empowering of community members; and macro level efforts targeting political and economic structures nationally and globally. Spirituality is the ‘dynamic process of a conscious and ever-evolving path that brings us into deeper touch with ourselves, with one another, [and] with diverse ecologies.’ Our spirituality demands that we unconditionally give to and care for the poor. Spirituality provides what many would call ‘significance’ to the act of giving, of care, of physically nourishing of human life, and of empathizing with one another. The spiritual strength of the poor is one of resilience, of striving against poverty, always hoping for better days and, despite their own limitations, living in solidarity.

Historically, religious traditions have established many social networks and assets to fight against poverty. Community mosques, churches, temples, and shrines are focal social struc-

tures located in virtually every village, district and city. These social organisations range from assemblies designed for worship and reflection to those specifically dedicated to education, health, emergency relief, economic development and human rights, many of which have been successful in addressing poverty. With almost five billion people belonging to religious communities, their capacity for action is substantial. In Africa alone, there are an estimated nine hundred thousand religious communities, many of which support vulnerable families and children (Dharma World, 2009).



7.1.1 UNIVERSAL VALUES SHARED BY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

We find strong consensus across our religious traditions about the inherent dignity of every person, including children... Our faith traditions take a holistic view of a child’s life, and thus seek to uphold all the rights of the child in the context of its family, community and the broader social, economic and political environment. All children hold these rights equally and we must ensure that boys and girls have equal opportunities to enjoy these rights, particularly education, protection, health, social development and participation.⁷⁷

Children constitute a large percentage of the world's poor. There is a strong consensus across most religious traditions about the importance of caring for and supporting them. The beliefs, practices, social networks and resources of religion can instill hope, give meaning to difficult experiences and provide emotional, physical and spiritual support. Impact can be far-reaching when Child Rights efforts are grounded in the protective aspects of religious beliefs and practices in a community (UNICEF, 2012).

7.1.2 ADDED VALUE AND STRENGTHS OF FAITH INSPIRED ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITIES AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN COMBATING POVERTY

A traditional orientation towards serving and promoting the well-being of the poor, vulnerable and disposed: Faith actors often have a history of community-based development and service delivery to the poor and vulnerable in their local communities. Because they are trusted and they have a heart for serving the community, faith actors have a natural point of entry; through which they challenge and fight complex moral issues like corruption, discrimination, poor governance, inequality and other structural factors that cause poverty.

A long-standing, historic and widely spread presence in society at large and local communities in particular: Faith actors often have access to large constituencies. Even in the poorest and most remote areas, people organise themselves for religious practice. For this reason, religious communities and organisations can be mobilised to end poverty.

Well-developed networks that link local, national, and international organs: Faith communities can and do facilitate linkages among and between local faith efforts and

the broader development community, including knowledge exchange, partnership brokering and resource mobilisation.

Service delivery infrastructure, networks and assets to fight poverty: Faith-Based service delivery infrastructure includes facilities for worship, education, health that have a degree of alignment with national service delivery infrastructure. Faith actors also administer programs that include economic development, emergency relief and human rights campaigns, many of which have been successful in addressing poverty.

Impact Story: Relief and Development Reach, Sardovaya, Sri Lanka

Sarvodaya is the largest people's organisation and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in Sri Lanka, founded upon Gandhian and Buddhist principles. The NGO actively engages – serves and works with – people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds represented in the country. Through its relief efforts and ongoing development projects, the NGO has established a network of over 15,000 villages, which use its model for community mobilisation, development and poverty eradication. Sarvodaya's organisation includes 345 divisional units, 34 district offices; 10 specialist Development Education Institutes; and the country's largest micro-credit organisation with a cumulative loan portfolio of over US \$1 million, through the Sarvodaya Economic Enterprise Development Services (SEEDS). It also has a major welfare service organisation serving over 1,000 orphaned and destitute children, under-age mothers and elders (Sarvodaya Suwa Setha); and 4,335 pre-schools serving over 98,000 children. Sarvodaya's total budget exceeds USD \$5 million with 1,500 full-time employees, over 200,000 volunteer workers, and over 100,000 youth volunteers mobilised for peace building under Shantisena. Sarvodaya is also the host of the End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre at its headquarters in Moratuwa, Sri Lanka.

Source: Sardovaya⁷⁸

Operate Diverse Media and Channels of Communication

This includes newsletters, websites, radio and television. These can facilitate advocacy efforts and reach millions of people.

Multi-faith Benefits:

Religion can be a source of power and life in achieving positive change. Religion can also be used destructively to justify violence, injustice, inequality and other structural causes of poverty. In this light, faith-inspired institutions may need to be challenged to play positive roles in society, more consistently. Multi-faith initiatives like End Child Poverty have a common language and shared reference with faith communities. This enables them to challenge practices by faith-inspired actors and organisations, which bring about poverty.

Volunteer Networks Rich in Dynamic and Creative Human Resources:

Faith leaders can influence attitudes and inspire action towards ending marginalization. Religious communities have defined relationships, mandates and belief systems that encourage efforts to speak out on behalf of and assist the disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable. Houses of worship can be used as channels for communicating concerns and gathering people to guide, coordinate and support the work of their local faith communities. Religious communities generally are represented in large numbers and thus have a great potential for mobilisation and action.

Legitimacy and Moral Authority:

In many contexts, religious leaders are also community leaders. They are usually trusted in equal or even greater measure than other influencers within their societies. Religious leaders are listened to and they represent institutions with the potential to challenge and counter-bal-

ance injustice in society. Government officials, businesses and other community stakeholders, often recognise religious actors as impartial and influential ethical voices. In this regard, religious leaders can contribute toward activating their communities to eradicate poverty.

Ability to Mobilise Action and Influence Public Opinion:

Religious actors usually have a very high commitment to development, ending poverty and protecting the well-being of children. They motivate action by emphasizing compassion and service, unity and interconnectedness, and justice and reconciliation. Religious actors mobilise large numbers of highly motivated and skilled volunteers, who see volunteering as part of their calling and strive towards peaceful development. Many religious actors are also motivated to come together in joint volunteer action.

Impact Story: Countering Violent Extremism through Strategic Intra-Faith Mobilisation and Communication, BRAVE, Kenya

Building Resilience against Violent Extremism is an intra-faith program that was developed by Muslim leaders and Islamic faith Organisations in Kenya, in 2015. BRAVE aims to prevent violent extremism by countering false religious narratives and their alleged religious foundations that lead to radicalisation into violent extremism; and by equipping religious leaders through training and facilitating intra-faith and interfaith dialogue. BRAVE has successfully used media engagement, including TV infomercials, radio messages and social media campaigns, to reach a wide audience within Kenya and beyond; to spur dialogue and speak out against violent extremism and terrorism. An estimated 10 million viewers and listeners have been directly reached by the BRAVE messages. BRAVE has further facilitated the formation of intra-faith committees across various counties in the country, to serve as rapid response and communication teams.

7.2 THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION, PRAYER AND ACTION

“Religious communities bring vital assets to the effort to eradicate poverty. They offer the moral impetus for action, institutions that reach a vast swath of the world’s people, and a wealth of practical experience in helping the poor... To be faithful to our most elementary moral teachings – and to kindle hope for a peaceful future – we must act to end poverty.”⁸⁰

Theological reflection, prayer, the study or religious texts and other faith-based or faith-inspired actions, effectively address child poverty by going beyond political and economic approaches, and delving to the root of the problem in the human heart — addressing attitudes such as greed, ignorance, hatred and fear. Faith beliefs, teachings and practices of faith communities have the spiritual tools which, when correctly applied, can assuage and even transform these thoughts, attitudes and behaviours that drive, cause or exacerbate child poverty.

As a Religious Actor, draw upon these resources to address child poverty and to mobilise your community and other partners towards ending child poverty. As a Government, Civil Society, business, private or other organisation, seek ways to work with religious leaders, Faith-Inspired Organisations and other Religious Actors, in order to leverage upon these resources available to address child poverty.



Arigatou International President, Rev. Miyamoto reminds us that among the teachings of the Buddha, there is the following passage. “Fields are ruined by weeds; people by greed.” The desire for more that invades people’s hearts is like a weed: it grows back as soon as you cut it. We learn that what ruins people is this irrepressible desire for more, this greed. Nowadays, one of the ways human greed expresses itself is as the insatiable pursuit of profit. Furthermore, as globalization inevitably treats those who are not competitive enough as losers, it produces a divide between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” Arigatou International’s Initiative – End Child Poverty – aims to address the roots of poverty in the human heart, greed, ignorance, hatred and fear.

Impact Story: Multi-Religious Cooperation to End Poverty, Religions for Peace International

Religions for Peace is one of the world’s largest and most representative multi-religious coalitions advancing common action for peace. The coalition promotes peace through working to stop war, end poverty and protect the earth. It acknowledges that poverty — along with the growing divide between rich and poor — underlies many of the world’s most intractable conflicts. Its network consists of a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world, six regional inter-religious councils and more than seventy national inter-religious councils, the Global Women of Faith Network, and the Global Religious Youth Network. Through its networks, the coalition has fostered interfaith dialogue and action in 92 countries. Religions for Peace uses these platforms together with multi-religious cooperation to hold governments and civil society accountable for implementing development goals; promote justice and legal empowerment of the poor; and support efforts to improve the health and well-being of the world’s most impoverished children.

Source: Religions for Peace International⁷⁹

Impact Story: Inter-faith Prayer for the Eradiction of Child Poverty

The Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) members in the Dominican Republic prepared an interfaith prayer for children living in poverty, 'Oración por la Eradicación de la Pobreza Infantil.' The GNRC Dominican Republic shared the prayer with its networks and partners, during the International day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP), 17 October 2015. The prayer included several invocations such as, "Teach us to love, unconditionally, all children and youth in the world" and "Help us to overcome spiritual causes of poverty such as arrogance, fear, hatred, and ignorance." The GNRC Dominican Republic is now planning to utilise the prayer in the 2016 IDEP and disseminate it widely across Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the region. Members of the GNRC Dominican Republic include representatives from World Vision, Coalition for Children, the Baha'i community, The Art of Living, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), members of the Don Bosco Catholic Community, and the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

Think About It

- What values can you apply from your faith belief or religious teachings to address Child Poverty?
- Can we prevent Child Poverty in our communities? How?
- Is it possible to end all forms of Child Poverty? How?

Take Action

- Organise an interfaith event during the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children/Universal Children's Day — 20 November;
- Organise visits to institutions of prayer or places of worship for children among different religions and faiths. Use these visits as an opportunity for the children to learn, hold conversation and build a better understanding and appreciation of each other's faith communities, faith beliefs and religious perspectives;
- According to your faith or religious tradition, plan for a reflection session for children from your faith community. Facilitate a discussion on child poverty, its causes and the teachings from the traditions of your Faith, which can help address Child Poverty;
- Work with children from your faith community or religious organisation and support them to develop prayer(s) or faith-inspired invocations for children affected by poverty across the world. Share this prayer(s) or invocations with your congregation, wider faith community and multi-faith network(s). If available, use your communication avenues such as social media, website, blog and radio, to share this prayer(s) or invocations with others.

Tip

Be mindful and respectful of the faith beliefs and religious-based values of children. Faith and religion are often taught and acquired in a family setting, before moving outward to the larger faith/religious community. Where necessary, obtain consent from the child's parent(s), guardian(s) or caregiver(s) before conducting any faith-based or religious-based activity that involves children.



7.3 ADVOCACY AND LOBBYING

“Together We Can End Child Poverty Worldwide.”⁸¹

Advocacy aims to empower people through a range of activities from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilisation, to influence those in power whose decisions affect their lives (1995, Batilwala). Both advocacy and lobbying are tools to address – reduce, prevent and end child poverty, because they provide avenues to challenge systemic structures of injustice, including socio-economic injustice. Unequal distribution of resources, poor governance, war and violence, are part of unjust socio-economic structures that continue to be major impediments to the fight against child poverty.

Special Focus: The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, October 17

The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP)⁸² is a global awareness event marked every year on 17th October. It is a day of reflection, advocacy and action against poverty. This day can be strategic to mobilise action on behalf of children and rally people of faith, civil society, child welfare organisations and governments, to intensify the fight against Child Poverty.

An estimated 1 billion children live in poverty, globally – that is 1 out of every 2 children in the whole world. This poverty robs children of their future, their health, education, security and overall well-being. Together, our voices, our giving and our actions during the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP), can draw attention to this problem and help solve it. Together, we can end Child Poverty worldwide and build a better world for children.

Take Action

Religious and faith actors, including religious leaders, religious communities and Faith-Inspired Organisations (FIOs), can actualise their advocacy through:

- Mobilising their constitutes and partners to engage in multi-religious advocacy to address structural causes of poverty;
- Supporting interfaith advocacy campaigns at various levels – global, continental, regional, national and local levels to address specific areas of action aimed at eradicating poverty;
- Using specific days of observance, to highlight issues related to child poverty -including the *International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17th October*; the *International Day of Peace, 21st September*; and the *World Day of Prayer and Action for Children/ Universal Children’s Day, 20th November*.

Tips

- See Tool Box 10.2 Advocacy Communication and Media Tools
- End Child Poverty has a global map⁸³ that shows the various activities International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) carried out by faith actors and organisations across the globe. You too can add your event to the map by sending your activity information. You can also check out the map to borrow different ideas for your next event. The map is available on the End Child Poverty website. <https://endingchildpoverty.org>



Impact Story: Youth Campaign to End Child Poverty in Dobož, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sixth Sense, a youth-led Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) in Dobož, Bosnia and Herzegovina, implemented a series of activities surrounding the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) 2015. The youth organised a workshop, teaching basic advocacy skills and mechanisms to other youth, towards addressing child poverty. They facilitated an interfaith roundtable for youth, Non-Governmental Organisations, religious communities and the local municipalities, among other leaders; holding constructive dialogue on how to solve the problems faced by children and youth in the city of Dobož, particularly those brought about by poverty. The NGO also held creative games for children with special needs, "Games Without Borders," at the local city park in Dobož, recognising that children with disability and children with special needs are especially vulnerable to the effects of poverty. Sixth Sense further organised a donation drive by mobilising children and youth to collect clothing items, shoes, food, hygiene products and toys – and donating these as gifts to several families affected by poverty. In the same vein, Sixth Sense initiated "Volunteers in Action," by mobilising youth volunteers to spend a day serving children in need and visiting with the elderly persons in various homes across Dobož. Lastly, the youth-led NGO made use of media and communication to amplify their advocacy efforts during the campaign. A number of their events gained coverage on local mainstream media and online media, including ZOS Radio 107 FM. Sixth Sense is a part of Arigatou International's Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC).

Tip

For more resources and International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) action ideas, visit the End Child Poverty website:

<https://endingchildpoverty.org>

Take Action

How can you take part in the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) 17th October, Here are 10 simple ideas to help you and your faith community take part in the next IDEP:

1. Tell Your Story

Share Your Story with Arigatou International — End Child Poverty and other local organisations working towards addressing and eradicating Child Poverty. Many organisations would benefit and learn from the information that you share. You too will gain new ideas and build the potential for further partnership.

2. Spiritual Observance or Faith-Inspired Observance

Organise spiritual observance or Faith-inspired observance during the month of October – and more specifically on 17th October – to raise awareness regarding child poverty. According to your faith or religious tradition, organise spiritual or faith-inspired observance, faith-based teachings, sermons, meditation, inspirational messages and prayers for children affected by poverty.

3. Advocate and Lobby

Ask children from your community what poverty means to them and how they would end it. Ensure to ask for consent from their parent(s) or guardian(s) beforehand. Send these responses to your leaders, together with a call to end child poverty.

- Write an advocacy letter/message and send it to decision-makers and leaders in your community.
- Meet the key decision makers, religious leaders, members of parliament, local government, senators and other political leaders – within your community and lobby (ask) them to take action to end child poverty.

4. Give

- Give useful resources – such as foodstuff, clothing, shoes, books, learning material, medical kits – towards helping children affected by poverty and their families. Remember to ask the family or community what they require, before giving.

- Give a money donation to a local organisation serving children affected by poverty. This could be your local faith community, children's home, a host-centre for children living as refugees, a school, or other such institution.
- Organise a fund-raising event towards ending child poverty in your community. Ensure to follow the necessary legal and ethical procedures.
- Volunteer your time to visit or serve children affected by poverty.
- Engage in any other humanitarian activity that is relevant to ending child poverty in your community.

5. Work with Youth and Children

- Partner with the school(s) in your community to organise and host an activity around the theme, "Together We Can End Child Poverty Worldwide."
- Invite the students, teachers and parents to your event.
- Partner with children or youth organisations such as sports clubs, scouts and peace clubs, to take action for children affected by poverty.
- Work with young people from your faith community to develop and implement ideas that can help eradicate child poverty.

6. Organise a Cultural Event

- Conduct a cultural event with and for children – such as a concert, sports, dance, music, games, acting, photography, making or watching a film, taking part in a walk and creating artwork.
- In your event, communicate the message, "Together We Can End Child Poverty Worldwide."
- When planning the event, involve and work with children, as much as possible.

7. Organise a Roundtable/Workshop/ Discussion on Child Poverty

- Organise panel discussions involving leaders, partners and other stakeholders
- Conduct a skills training workshop for care-givers/ parents/guardians

8. Use Conventional Mass Media

Work with the conventional media channels, including TV, newspaper and radio, to communicate on the need to End Child Poverty and the work you are doing. Highlight the theme, "Together We Can End Child Poverty Worldwide."

- Write an article or opinion piece for your local newspaper;
- Organise a TV or radio interview/Take part in a TV or radio show;
- Ask the newspaper/ TV/ Radio station to run a special feature on child poverty in your community; and
- Post a fact sheet on Child Poverty in your community/country on your organisation's website or blog.

9. Spread the Word on Social Media

Use all your available social media channels to communicate about Child Poverty and what you are doing to eradicate it.

- Organise a social media campaign during the month of October - and especially on 17th October – to raise awareness on child poverty and positive ways to address child poverty.

10. Ask Others to Join You

Approach partners in your community – local businesses, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), other civil society organisations, Faith-Based Organisations, schools – and ask for their involvement and support. Encourage their participation by explaining how their collaboration will increase their visibility, give them an opportunity to support a good cause, as well as enhance their goodwill in the community.

Tips

- For more information and up-to-date research reports, visit relevant websites including the: Berkley Center for Religions,⁸⁴ Peace World Affairs, UNICEF Innocent Research,⁸⁵ and UNDP Reports.⁸⁶
- For the latest news and information regarding Child Poverty, visit the End Child Poverty website: <https://endingchildpoverty.org>

7.4 RESEARCH, EVIDENCE AND KNOWLEDGE GENERATION

Without truthful information, without timely evidence, without relevant research, it is impossible to know the extent of child poverty, to accurately determine its drivers and causes, and to gauge which interventions actually work. Faith communities and their leaders form a repository of vast knowledge and in depth experience, because of their long-standing work in poverty alleviation. It is important for

you, your faith community and transition, to collect, document, share and review this information. Through the lessons you have learned, you can be of great benefit to many others working towards ending child poverty. It is also equally important for you to seek out relevant sources of information so that you are working based on actual needs and actual solutions. It will save you a lot of time and effort if you do not have to make the same mistakes that others have made before you.

Impact Story: The End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre

Together with Sarvodaya, Arigatou International launched the End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre at the Sarvodaya Headquarters in Moratuwa, Sri Lanka, in 2014. The End Child Poverty Knowledge Center is a global faith inspired hub for research, resource gathering, networking, experience sharing and knowledge dissemination. The Knowledge Centre also serves to build the capacities of organisations working to reduce child poverty in Asia and other regions of the world. It draws upon traditional and modern tools of development, as well as faith-inspired resources and infrastructure. It was designed to provide a platform for forging concrete partnerships towards ending child poverty at various levels – global, continental and national.

Further, the Knowledge Centre aims at providing resources on various functional areas such as:

- Policy Briefing papers, working papers and reports (Reports, Publications, Journals Articles and Working Papers);
- Curriculum, tools and guidelines (Training Manuals and Religious Books);
- Opinion (Content blogs, Newsletters, Case Studies, Essays, Meetings & Workshop information, Questionnaires, Research/Charts & Tables, representation);
- Customized Trainings and Research on the plight of Children: The Knowledge Centre is also intended as a platform for organizing various trainings where practitioners from the various organisations share knowledge and experience on their work and showcase expertise in relation to improving children's well-being; and
- Global Mapping of Child Poverty Indices.

The Knowledge Centre has both a virtual and physical presence. Its online platform is geared to facilitate knowledge exchange on a variety of topics, policies, programmes and practices among stakeholders, practitioners, academics and policy-makers. The online platform will feature innovative and evidence-based practices that have a positive impact on children and their care givers.

- Other anticipated activities of the Knowledge Centre include: annual round tables, a book fair, exchange programs, information symposiums, global mapping on religious organisations that deal with child poverty eradication and evaluation of the State of the World's Children, in partnership with the existing stakeholders. During the launch of the Knowledge Centre on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, on 17 October 2014; Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary General of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) stated that: "Not all that counts can be counted; we have never captured the smiles which the children give us. There are things, including our spirituality, that count but don't get counted. I hope that the Knowledge Centre will inform and capture the things that count."

Source: Arigatou International – End Child Poverty⁸⁷



CHAPTER 8: COMMUNITY MOBILISATION TO END CHILD POVERTY

8.1 GRASSROOTS MOBILISATION AND INITIATIVES

Grassroots mobilisation and initiatives have the potential to change societies and nations, because of the power vested in numbers, the increased sense of ownership and the possibility to replicate and amplify the actions that seek to address child poverty. As a Faith Actor, work with your vast network of communities to address childhood poverty. Mobilise action and advocacy at grassroots level and seek ways to build the capacities of grassroots organisations and local leaders to address child poverty.

8.1.1 COMPONENTS OF A COMMUNITY

Communities are made of various categories of people existing at different levels and organisational structures. They include religious communities, theologians, educators, women, children, youth, political and traditional leaders etc.

8.1.2 THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES IN ENDING CHILD POVERTY

Religious movements are a critical catalyst in poverty eradication particularly because they are a major provider of services and social infrastructure in much of the developing world. People enriched by the resource of their religious and spiritual traditions are enabled to take action to foster conscience, increase empathy, promote just structures and make governments responsible to their people in eradicating all forms of poverty.

End Child Poverty recognises the huge benefits that can be achieved when people

of different religions work together to fight poverty. While many religious communities are already involved in poverty alleviation work around the world, collaborative approaches to deploy these assets remain underdeveloped or at the budding stages. Interreligious cooperation is both substantively and symbolically more powerful than the efforts of a single religious community working on its own, in many or some specific instances.

8.1.3 THE ROLE OF THEOLOGICIANS AND EDUCATORS IN ENDING CHILD POVERTY

Religious Academics need to make the care of children a moral priority. A theology of children must prophetically respond to this lack of action on behalf of children by holding the world accountable. This theology is based on the following precepts:

- Children are precious to God;
- All children are God's creation;
- Children have a privileged place in God's community; and
- Our call to service is to all children.

Lessons Learned

- Children and youth can design and implement effective programs that address child poverty;
- Partner with schools and learning institutions in order to maximise impact;
- By identifying their own community development priorities, youth and children are able to positively impact the society; and
- Use the resources available to you and your faith community.

“My education, my work, and my passion are to help people from all races that are trapped in poverty. I want them to have genuine options for lifelong success. This can only happen if the voices of those struggling with poverty can be heard and their perspectives understood.

Poverty is resolvable; however, making a difference for people who live in the crisis of poverty requires a paradigm shift. A shift that moves us beyond stereotypes and judgment to a deeper understanding of the causes of poverty and its impact on human beings. With this awareness, we can work together to provide genuine opportunities for people to move out of poverty. ”

-Dr. Donna Beegle

Impact Story: India Poverty Solutions, Shanti Ashram, India

India Poverty Solutions is a child and youth-led initiative of Shanti Ashram, a Gandhian organisation based in India. It unites children and youth to work together and find simple and effective solutions to child poverty. The initiative aims to mobilise at least 1,000,000 children and youth volunteers belonging to the major faith traditions of India, as ‘Poverty Solutions Ambassadors.’

The basic premise and strength of India Poverty Solutions rests upon it being led by children, for children. Children and youth set up their own savings mechanism, using a variety of devices such as “anundiyaalor hundi” – a traditional home savings box (piggybank). After a given period, the young people collectively gather their savings and allocate the funds as follows: one third of the savings remains with the child or youth for her or his own uses; a third of the monies is provided towards supporting their respective families; and the remaining third of the funds is given towards the larger society and meeting community development needs. This system of collective social responsibility for family and community development has led to a growing sense of confidence among the children and youth, as they have become more aware of their capability to affect their world, with the resources they have at hand.

Additionally, the children and the youth have been able to identify priority needs that they wish to address using the funds raised through India Poverty Solutions. Since its inception in 2012, the children and youth have chosen to focus on supporting child health, child protection, education for all children and provision of food to families affected by poverty. They have provided scholarships to students from at least 30 Government and aided schools. The initiative has immunized children living with HIV by providing basic vaccines including the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, typhoid vaccine and vitamin A and other supplements. The initiative carried out anaemia screening for girls and provided iron supplements to adolescent girls from various schools. The children and youth have also set up food-banks in various institutions and facilitated nutritional literacy to about 10,000 children.

India Poverty Solutions was first launched in Coimbatore and has now expanded to four other places: Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Kerala, with plans underway to replicate the model with children and youth in Pondichery. Over 100 institutions have partnered with Shanti Ashram to implement India Poverty Solutions. These include elementary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and institutions such as the Focolare Movement, Gurudwara Singh Saba, Jamat e Hind, Jain Association and Perur Atheenam. Shanti Ashram is now working with these and other partners in order to make India Poverty Solutions a pan-India movement that will benefit millions of children across the country. Shanti Ashram is also seeking avenues to provide this model globally, as a means to address child poverty worldwide.

Source: Shanti Ashram⁸⁹ The Hindu⁹⁰

8.1.4 CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Children are both the direct beneficiaries and key contributing partners towards ending childhood poverty. Youth, likewise are in many parts of the world, putting in effort to address poverty among their peers, the younger generation and in the community all around them. Popular phrases like “Each one, reach one” and “Each one, teach one” have been used to motivate young people – children and youth alike – to take positive social action for the well-being of other children and youth. Youth and children also have vast social networks that they can activate towards addressing poverty. This includes their friends, families, classmates, teachers, mentors, coaches, sports teams, employers and club members. By educating, mobilising supporting and working together with youth and children, the community greatly multiplies its strength in preventing, stopping and eliminating childhood poverty.

8.1.5 THE ROLE OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN ENDING CHILD POVERTY

Children should be involved in activities and decision-making processes that aim to fight Child Poverty for the following reasons:

- Children are citizens and share the same rights to participate as others;
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges countries to consult with children;
- Consulting with children as users of public and private services indicates how these services can be more relevant; and
- Participation by children helps them to develop communication and decision-making skills.

Take Action

- Work with children from your local schools or faith communities. Support them to develop a simple plan to tackle at least one social issue related to child poverty in your neighbourhood, city society.
- Facilitate children to set up a savings program within your faith communities or schools, each according to her or his ability. Use the India Poverty Solutions model of allocating funds towards social responsibility and community development. Ensure you follow all moral, ethical and legal practices to ensure integrity, accountability and protection of the children and their resources. Seek the consent of the child’s parent(s), caregiver(s) or guardian(s) before undertaking such action.

Think About It

- In what ways can you mobilise your faith community or organisation to take action towards ending child poverty?
- Which ideas can you pick from India Poverty Solutions?

Have Your Say

- Work together with children and their families to identify the development and children’s needs in your society. Develop community-based solutions together with the children and their families, to address these needs. Organise a public event during the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 17th October and highlight these needs and solutions.

8.1.6 THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ENDING CHILD POVERTY

Women caregivers are particularly instrumental in ending child poverty. Mothers are the first providers of food, nourishment and security for their babies. Grandmothers often take care of orphaned children, while sisters are tasked with the responsibility of caring for their siblings within a family set up. Women leaders often take into consideration the needs of family and society, including the needs of children. On the other hand, girls, (particularly in their adolescent years), are forgotten and overlooked in many cases – both at home and at societal level. This artificial invisibility puts them at a greater risk of falling prey to poverty and its impacts. It is therefore imperative, for any initiative, programmes or projects aiming to end child poverty to not only acknowledge these efforts, but to actively seek ways to engage girls and women in ending child poverty.

8.2 MOBILISING YOUR COMMUNITY

Success in the fight against child poverty can only be achieved when the community is fully and appropriately mobilised. Community participation means that members have a strong voice on issues that affect the well-being of the child. It is a process of building partnerships with members of the community by promoting meaningful participation through structured dialogue and collaborative actions.

8.2.1 LEVELS OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Looked at as a continuum, participation occurs at different levels with 'information sharing' considered the most shallow level and partnership considered the deepest level of participation. Consider the diagram on the next page.

Impact Story: Responding to the Needs of Displaced Persons and Refugees, Khalsa Aid

During the 1999 war in Kosovo, the global Sikh Community launched an appeal to help the refugees of Kosovo who were in camps in Albania. Many families had fled Kosovo, together with their children. Being the first operation of its kind for the community and the very first mission of Khalsa Aid, their response effort required massive grassroots mobilisation, networking and coordination across countries. Khalsa Aid led a convoy with donations, driving through several countries including England, Belgium, Germany, Austria and Italy, to Albania. The team of Khalsa Aid leaders and volunteers were able to provide food donations through the Catholic Mission to families in Laç, a town in northwestern Albania. They also provided food donations to families and children in several refugee camps along the Kosovo-Albania border and countryside of Albania. Khalsa Aid worked closely with the local Catholic mission and Catholic priests in Laç, in order to facilitate this process. Khalsa Aid is primarily a humanitarian relief agency, based on the teachings of the Sikh faith tradition.

Source: *Khalsa Aid*⁹²



Levels of Participation	Definition
Information Generating and Sharing	Information is jointly produced.
Consultation	Stakeholder input is requested and considered as part of an inclusive policy, program, or project decision-making process.
Collaboration	Stakeholders and work jointly with implementing body, but stakeholders have limited control over decision making resources.
Partnership	Stakeholders participate in decision-making process and/or exert control over resources, through a formal or informal agreement to work together toward common objectives.



Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation

RUNG 8: Youth initiated shared decisions with adults: Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

RUNG 7: Youth initiated and directed: Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

RUNG 6: Adult initiated shared decisions with youth: Adult-led activities, which decision making is shared with youth.

RUNG 5: Consulted and informed: Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

RUNG 4: Assigned, but informed: Adult-led activities in which youth understand purpose, decision making process and have a role.

RUNG 3: Tokenism: Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

RUNG 2: Decortication - Adult-led activities in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

RUNG 1: Manipulation - Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

Adapted from Hart R. (1992) *Children’s Participation from Tokenism to Citizenship*. Florence, UNICEF Innocent Research Centre, as cited in www.freechild.org/ladder.htm

8.2.2 IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN ERADICATING CHILD POVERTY

Participation offers many advantages as it:

- Minimizes the risk of exclusion of certain groups of children in poverty during the design and delivery of goods and services;
- Increases equity and empowerment through greater involvement of the poor, women, and other disadvantaged groups with a stake in child poverty;
- Recognises the power relations among groups (political, social, economic, gender, etc.) with control over resources and those without. Participatory assessment provides an insight into the gender, age, race, ethnic, or tribal dynamics that can lead to abuses and exploitation within child poverty eradication initiatives;
- Promotes greater respect for vulnerable groups such as poverty amongst women and children. Women have the opportunity to express their views and concerns, thus increasing the potential for their children to benefit from targeted programs;
- Leads to improved accuracy of baseline data thus planning and programming will be based on more accurate information;
- Will feel greater ownership from communities that have been directly involved over the process and the resulting programmes, and hence, there will be greater sustainability. This allows for a more holistic, comprehensive understanding and response to Child Poverty interventions; and
- The information gathered using different methods of enquiry with different groups reflects a diversity of perspectives and viewpoints thereby allowing links to be made across sectors involved in the fight to End Child Poverty.

8.2.3 PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATION

Community members' participations by several principles including the following:

- **Promote Accountability and Transparency:** Decision makers such as project implementers or community representatives of a target beneficiary group always remain accountable to all stakeholders and the beneficiaries. Good communication, openness about activities, and transparency at all times of involvement should be observed.
- **Allow for Participation at All Levels:** Ensure that people participate at all levels of decision making through timely, flexible activities that suit their skills, abilities, and interests.
- **Make Participation Accessible to All:** In community participation, people need to see and feel that they are valued and treated as equals; opportunities for participation are adequately communicated and offered fairly; and barriers that stop particular groups from participating are genuinely challenged.
- **Value Diversity:** The diversity of people's experiences, backgrounds, beliefs, and skills offer a unique resource for society. Embracing and utilizing them is key to the success of poverty eradication programs.
- **Ensure Participation is Voluntary:** People must never be coerced to participate in a poverty eradication project but should be helped to understand and appreciate the importance of issues at stake and be assured that their participation will make a difference.
- **Encourage Stakeholders to Create their own Ideas and Solutions:** In community-led participatory approaches; people should be allowed and enabled to take action themselves in ways appropriate to them.
- **Provide Regular Information and Feedback:** Participants must be informed about how the information they provide is being used and any follow-up actions taken.

UNICEF (2005) reports on “Childhood Under Threat,” provide the following steps for community mobilisation in child poverty relate interventions:

- Define and measure child poverty. Accept that child poverty cannot be understood only in terms of family income but also on how children experience poverty;
- Ensure that poverty-reduction strategies prioritize actions to protect childhood. Poverty-reduction strategies should have a strong focus on fulfilling children’s rights and addressing key issues of deprivation and protection for children and their families; and
- Expand basic social and education services and ensure universal access. Countries successful in improving access to basic health care and education for children are ready to spend more on social services, even in times of economic or financial crisis.
- Set targets and mobilise stakeholders. All stakeholders must be engaged;
- Promote the family since families form the first line of defense for children: The further away children are from their families, the more vulnerable they are to risks;
- Eliminate gender discrimination;
- Encourage local solutions and community participation. Children should be encouraged to contribute to the debate on ways to reduce poverty.



CRITICAL REFLECTION

Community

- What activities can you engage in to mobilise and educate the community on child poverty?
- What level of participation would you engage with different categories of community members in the suggested activities (children, youth, religious leaders etc.)?
- Where on the ladder of participation (see Chapter 8.2.1) would you rate your engagement with children?

Advocacy

- How is child poverty addressed by faith actors, institutions and/or organisations?
- In what ways does faith or religion impede or facilitate social, cultural, institutional and/or structural change in societies where child poverty is a severe problem?
- To what extent do faith actors, institutions and/or organisations engage in advocacy vis-à-vis secular authorities with regard to child poverty reduction policies and practices?

While participation produces many advantages, care should be taken not to raise false expectations among community members as this will cause participation fatigue if they see no reflection of their concerns. It may also worsen existing social conflicts if participation is unfair or is seen to be unfair.

Also, consider that participatory approaches are often time and resource intensive; may be logistically difficult; and often suffer lack of adequate capacity.



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CHAPTER 9: BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS CHILD POVERTY

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Tackling Child Poverty locally is a collective challenge and it may be more efficient and powerful if strong partnerships are formed to ensure collective responsibility. Promoting the idea that tackling child poverty is everybody's business encourages everyone to reflect on the relevance of their daily work. The cycle of poverty cannot be broken by one entity or organisation. It actually requires co-operation and joint efforts from not only religious communities but also government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as well as Public and Private enterprises. There is a two-way beneficial relationship between community development and child poverty eradication. The result would be a prosperous economy and healthy society, which respects people's right and dignity.

9.2 KEY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

9.2.1 PARENTS, GUARDIANS AND CAREGIVERS

Parents, guardians and adult caregivers are the first line of defense for protecting children against poverty and its impacts. Indeed, family is said to be the fundamental and most important unit of any society.

No community can effectively address child poverty without involving the parents, guardians and adult caregivers. They can be the best ally in fighting child poverty. Moreover, parents, guardians and caregivers require the necessary resources to care for their children, in the absence of which, children face higher vulnerability to poverty and its resultant outcomes. To end child poverty

we must ensure all parents, guardians and caregivers have the resources to support and nurture their children, jobs with livable wages, affordable high-quality child care and social support for working families, among other safety nets.⁹²



This two-generation approach to tackling poverty incorporates both parent-oriented interventions and child-oriented interventions within the same programme. Two-generation programmes and policies seek to engage families in ways that knit together these services and address both groups simultaneously. The idea behind the framework is that when opportunities for children and parents are approached jointly, the benefits may be greater than the sum of the separate parts.⁹³

Impact Story: Families are the First Line of Defence for Protecting Children Against Poverty

In my view, tackling child related poverty requires two pronged interventions," stated H.E Dr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, former President of the United Republic of Tanzania. "The first one is to assist families of the children to become prosperous so that the children will live in a poverty free environment. The second is actually informed by the fact that it may take

Continued page 93

time before poor families can become prosperous. In this regard, children should not be left to wait for so long. This therefore, behoves humanity to directly assist children from poor families to get the necessities of life they are deprived of because of being born and living in poor families.” He presented these remarks during the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Fourth Forum, held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania in 2012.⁹⁴

The United Kingdom (UK) has applied this two-pronged approach in its policies and programmes. In 2011, the UK Government identified “strengthening families — enhancing relationship and parenting support to strengthen family relationships and the home environment” — as one of the key drivers in their approach to tackle the causes of intergenerational cycles of poverty.⁹⁵ This strategy included supporting strong, stable families and positive home learning and physical environments, as well as supporting parents to achieve financial independence.

Similarly, the Children’s Defense Fund, focused on advocating for both parents and children, in a bid to identify policy improvements that could reduce child poverty and alleviate its harmful impacts. It based this two-pronged advocacy on the premise that “the best anti-poverty strategy is to ensure parents and caregivers who are able to work can find jobs that pay enough to support a family,” and that, “all of society benefits if children’s basic needs are met when the economy contracts, disaster hits or parents lose their jobs.” Hence, the Children’s Defence Fund advocated for policy improvements that would increase employment and make work pay for adults with children. In addition, it sought policy improvements that would ensure children’s basic needs are met when families ‘fall on hard times.’ The Children’s Defense Fund is non-profit child advocacy organisation based in Washington, D.C.

These three distinct examples from different regions show the increased recognition that child poverty is better tackled when the entire family – children, parents, caregivers and guardians – is involved.

9.2.2 INTERRELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS

“The shortest path to eradicating poverty in the long term is by starting with today’s children – building structures and empowering families to ensure that they escape the vicious cycle of intergenerational poverty.”⁹⁶

Drawing on their established networks, capacity to reach rural and hard-to-reach areas and populations, and respected and trusted status in local communities, Faith-Inspired Organisations (FIOs) are well positioned to leverage the work of other child poverty eradication actors. The efforts of religious organisations on behalf of the poor constitute a strong prophetic voice. Their work is not only grounded on economic realities but in essential moral truths: the belief that each person has intrinsic dignity and worth.



9.2.3 THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT

Any attempt at ending child poverty must include engagement with the Government. Governments bear primary responsibility for national policy development and implementation, with respect to ending child poverty and promoting child development and the overall well-being of all children. Relevant legislation and national laws are created and enforced by government organs, as well as national agendas such as education curricula and child protection programmes. The Government also represents

the interests of children and its citizens in fora such as the United Nations, Regional Economic Bodies and so forth. In addition, governments provide the infrastructure for the realisation of these processes, through provision of finances, qualified government workers or civil servants, timely information and diverse non-monetary resources, among other mechanisms. Therefore, religious communities must recognise that ending child poverty requires clear leadership from and engagement with the Government, in partnership with all sections of society. Where possible, religious organisations must commit to work alongside the Government and other agencies. Achieving a cross party consensus on this issue is vital for securing the life chances and long-term future of children currently living in poverty.

Conversely, in situations where the Government does not adequately provide these services, it is upon religious communities, Faith-Based Organisations, religious leaders and other duty bearers, to call the Government to task – through advocacy, lobbying and other avenues.

9.2.4 THE ROLE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

A strong, united and vocal national civil society is key to defending the right of all children to a happy and healthy childhood.



Impact Story: Choosing to Help Children Facing Hunger

When William Winslow was in the 1 Grade, he asked his friends to bring food to his birthday party in lieu of presents because he had heard about the need for food for his school's "Backpack Buddies" Program. This program sends backpacks full of food home each weekend, with children from food insecure homes. A few months later, William became worried that one backpack of food was not enough. He asked if he could solicit food donations for Backpack Buddies and it evolved into him planning a weekend long food drive. He raised \$305 and collected 1,400 lbs (pounds) of food for his school's program. William then decided to grow his food drive to benefit all of Wake County. He rallied his peers from church, school and scouts and got over 60 volunteers to help him staff a weekend-long food collection drive at 4 local grocery stores. William collected over \$7,000 and over 4,000 lbs (pounds) of food in 2014. He is determined to make his food drive bigger and better to help even more children. William is committed to eliminating childhood hunger. He has been quoted as saying "...when faced with a problem (like childhood hunger), you have two choices. You can choose to help or choose not to." William chooses to help.

Source: This story appears on Kids Are Heroes.⁹⁷ William Winslow. AB Combs Elementary Raleigh, North Carolina, USA 2015.⁹⁸

Impact Story: Ethics Education for Children in Panama and Kenya

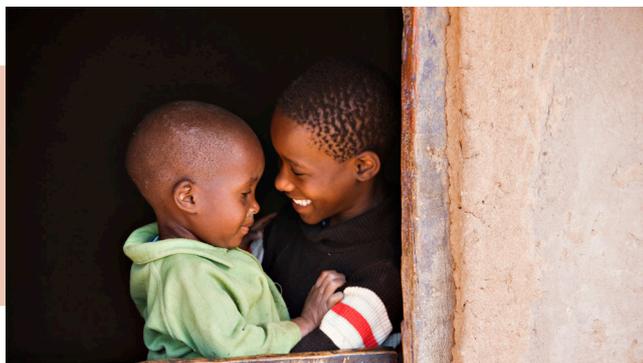
In Panama, **Arigatou International** Geneva, is collaborating with the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES) to implement the Learning To Live Together programme — an intercultural and interfaith programme for ethics education. Social workers will be trained through the Ministry's Office of Safe Social Development (ODSS) and of Network of Opportunities, to work with young people, families and women across six (6) districts in the country. The aim of the programme is to help children and young people in particular, to understand and respect people from other cultures and beliefs, to think

9.2.5 GLOBAL COALITIONS

Coalitions, alliances and networks provide a platform for amplifying impact, reach and synergies. Where relevant, seek ways to effectively engage and/or join such coalitions.

Global Coalitions, alliances, networks and platforms to end child poverty are strategic because they:

- Maximise the influence of the members with regard to advocacy; including helping activists overcome obstacles at a national level by drawing on international support;
- Make the most of scarce human and financial resources; and avoid duplication of effort among organisations working on similar issues;
- Ensure effective communications among key actors working on a particular issue and pool the expertise available to these organisations;
- Develop a unified voice for the various actors working on the same issue and thereby strengthen the common advocacy agenda and action areas; and
- Provide a coordinated way for different organisations to forge and maintain strategic partnerships with external actors. For instance, it is easier for a government to relate to a coalition as a single partner that represents the range of faith-based actors on an issue, than to work out whom to interact with from among a host of organisations.



critically and to use non-violent alternatives in order to live peacefully together. It will promote spaces and opportunities to nurture values and ethics in children and young people within the framework of the Child's right to education, as stated in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN CRC).

Similarly, **Arigatou International** Geneva, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Kenya (MoEST) and UNESCO Regional Office for East Africa, developed an initiative to implement the Learning to Live Together (LTLT) Programme in schools across Tana River County. Tana River is one of the counties affected by inter-tribal violence and conflict. As part of this process, teachers from thirteen (13) different schools implemented the LTLT Programme between 2013 and 2015. The programme included training workshops, experience sharing and facilitating child-led projects to promote justice, peace and dignity. This collaboration also facilitated processes to incorporate the key concepts of the LTLT Programme into Kenya's national education curriculum, in partnership with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). Other organisations involved in the programme included the Kenyan Primary School Head Teachers Association (KEPSHA) and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). "In my view, the Learning to Live Together programme is effective in the promotion of peace and harmonious communities as it allows in-depth exploration of issues and is experiential and participatory," said Ms. Mary Wanjiru Kangethe, Assistant Director of Education, MoEST, Kenya.

Source: *Ethics Education for Children – Arigatou International*⁹⁹

Tip

As a Faith Actor, determine which coalition(s) best suits your objectives and, where applicable, join such coalitions. In cases where you and your community can form a coalition or a similar platform to address child poverty, consider the factors necessary to ensure it meets the aim of addressing Child Poverty.

Impact Story: Child Poverty Action in the United Kingdom

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) is a leading charity campaigning to end child poverty in the UK and for a better deal for low-income families and children. CPAG works by providing high quality evidence to policy-makers on the causes, impacts and solutions to child poverty. 1 in 4 children in the UK is affected by poverty. By working with partners across the sector to advocate for and implement innovative solutions to Child Poverty, CPAG has successfully led lobbying by a coalition of charities to secure £850m for childcare help in Universal Credit for low income families. Campaigns have also been conducted to protect measures of child poverty based on family income; and hosted the UK-based End Child Poverty coalition and supported its successful campaigns. CPAG has also established the Early Warning System in Scotland, which collects and analyses case evidence about how welfare changes are affecting the well-being of children, their families and the communities and services that support them — among other progress achievements.

Source: Child Poverty Group¹⁰⁰

Impact Story: Global Coalition to Accelerate Access to Universal Coverage¹⁰¹

A global coalition of more than 500 leading health and development organisations worldwide was formed to urge governments to accelerate reforms that ensure everyone, everywhere, can access quality health services without being forced into poverty. The coalition was launched on 12 December 2014, on the first-ever Universal Health Coverage Day, to stress the importance of universal access to health services for saving lives, ending extreme poverty, building resilience against the health effects of climate change and ending deadly epidemics such as Ebola. The coalition recognises that universal health coverage is an essential ingredient to “end extreme poverty and boost shared prosperity within a generation.” Through providing universal health coverage, aspects of child poverty can effectively be addressed.

However, coalitions also impose costs and constraints on member organisations. A key trade-off when working in coalition is between the gains in effectiveness (stronger voice and wider-reach) on the one hand, and the amount of time and resources spent in making a coalition work on the other. Coalitions have been described as a ‘necessary bureaucracy’ and every coalition an organisation joins brings with it another set of communications, email list of conference calls and meetings. For this reason, coalitions must seek ways to increase their efficiency and effectiveness by:

- Defining and identifying a membership criteria and responsibilities;
- Have a common call for action, advocacy objective or common agenda;
- Clear leadership structures and responsibilities;
- A plan of action;
- A collective and shared identity; and
- Building trust and building clear communication channels.¹⁰⁰

9.2.6 UNITED NATIONS AND ITS KEY ORGANS

The United Nations and its constituent bodies form a crucial partner in addressing Child Poverty, because it derives its mandate from global governments. The United Nations is a source of leadership and structures that address poverty and in its various forms; as well as advancing child development and well-being. Instruments and frameworks developed by and through the United Nations processes, include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development (FFD), amongst other bodies, all serve a key role in governing actions towards eradicating extreme poverty and upholding Children’s rights. Fur-

ther, the United Nations provides platforms for direct engagement through avenues including its Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Additionally, the United Nations and its organ bodies are a rich source of relevant information regarding poverty, Child Poverty in particular, and the issues surrounding it. Religious actors can tap into these platforms, as well as plan advocacy efforts with the United Nations' organ bodies as a partner or as the target of the advocacy efforts. Moreover, collaboration can be established with the United Nations organ bodies globally, regionally or nationally. This can serve to leverage and maximise the impact of Faith actors in addressing Child Poverty. This includes working with such organisations as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Programme for Development (UNDP) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

Tip

See Chapter 9.2.6 Approaches to Ending Child Poverty: Global Coalitions

1. Special Focus: Faith-Based Action Framework to End Extreme Poverty and Realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In 2013, the World Bank Group Faith Initiative sanctioned two goals namely, ending extreme poverty by 2030 and promote shared prosperity by fostering income growth of the bottom 40% of the population in every country.¹⁰¹

Recognizing the need for a collaborative approach with actors sharing the same goal to combat extreme poverty, the World Bank Group Faith Initiative brought together religious leaders and faith based organisation

to endorse this goal. Accordingly, in 2015, a group of faith leaders and representatives of Faith-Inspired Organisations drafted and committed to "Ending Extreme Poverty: A Moral and Spiritual Imperative" a pledge aimed at eradicating extreme poverty by 2030.



As a first step, leaders from diverse religious traditions launched a joint statement titled, "Ending Extreme Poverty: A Moral and Spiritual Imperative" in April 2015. Their statement in part read:

Ending extreme poverty will require a comprehensive approach that tackles its underlying causes — including preventable illness, a lack of access to quality education, joblessness, corruption, violent conflicts, and discrimination against women, ethnic minorities and other groups. It will also necessitate a change in the habits that cause poverty — greed and waste, numbness to the pain of others, and exploitation of people and the natural world. It calls for a holistic and sustainable approach that transforms cultures and institutions, and hearts as well as minds...

"The Faith-Based Action Framework to End Extreme Poverty and Realise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)" was later formed and facilitated by the World Bank Group Religious Faith Initiative, in collaboration with the United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development and other organisation. The Framework can spur different actions at all levels (national, local, institutional etc.) including advocacy and grassroots activities.

Tip

Read the full text of the statement in Chapter 10: Tool Box 10.2.1: Advocacy Statement and Position Paper

2. Special Focus: The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty

“Poverty is the worst form of violence.”

-Mahatma Gandhi

The Global Coalition to End Child Poverty proposes that child poverty targets should be reinforced with a new focus on equity to ensure that those living in abject poverty and most disadvantaged children are reached in addition to improving data collection for the most vulnerable children who can easily be omitted from or bypassed in surveys and programmes. To do this requires consistent monitoring of disaggregated data to assess progress by income quintile and poverty status (multi-dimensional and monetary), and other vulnerable groups across all relevant goals and targets. Equity-focused approaches, such as considering that no target has been met unless met by all income and vulnerable groups and including emerging measures of children’s social inclusion and the discrimination they experience, would help prioritize progress towards the poorest to meet the new goals with equity.



For the first time, the global community recognises the centrality of children, the need to deliver on their promise to end poverty definitively the need to make children counted in the new development agenda.

Different interest groups have initiated different actions to help contribute to the achievement of poverty eradication targets. For instance, the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty has been established and has settled on four key priority areas and actions namely:¹⁰²

- Global advocacy and research to inform and champion Child Poverty causes;
- Promote practice Hubs and collaboration spaces on key research themes;
- Country Implementation development support; and
- Communication and knowledge management.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have also provided a logical platform for religious organisations to engage in anti-poverty action. Religious Communities must aim to be at the core of this drive by addressing not only the structural causes of poverty but also the human and spiritual roots of the problem — greed, ignorance, hatred and fear — as the necessary steps to finding lasting solutions.

9.2.7 THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA

When used appropriately, both the print and electronic media offer one of the most powerful tools for addressing some of the issues associated with Child Poverty. Recently established free or almost free democratic states celebrate freedom of the Media, often because bold reporting of different types of human rights atrocities is what helped them attain their freedom. Consequently, Faith-Inspired Organisations and religious communities need to form strong alliances with the Media. Their work and the

broad role of journalists and media organisations can be a powerful voice to articulate the needs of the poor and disadvantaged. The media can be a useful platform to provide information and ideas on issues of interest and be a forum for politics and culture, and an engine of change. The critical role of the media has been acknowledged by economists and political scientists as vital to economic development and democracy.

Online social media reach wider audiences, which subsequently strengthens the capacity to respond to Child Poverty policy develop-

ments, and engage in new advocacy tactics with political leadership. The role of journalists and bloggers empowered by new technologies in helping to improve the lives of ordinary citizens has never been clearer. International and regional institutions that promote economic development and security are increasingly becoming aware of the role of journalists as promoters of human dignity, vital to promoting transparent and accountable governments.

Call to Action/Take Action

“Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by actions of human beings.”

-Nelson Mandela

1. Separately engage different community stakeholders on poverty eradication strategies;
2. Jointly with all stakeholders within the community prepare and send a poverty eradication petition to local government authorities based on your deliberations;
3. Plan a meeting with your area representative or local Member of Parliament to discuss ways in which you can reduce child poverty in your community;
4. Draft an opinion piece to one of your dailies discussing a specific area of child poverty that is relevant to your community;
5. Seek out at least three (3) faith communities in your locality and hold a joint press conference on a current issue related to child poverty in your area; and
6. Annually engage in some child poverty eradication campaigns and or activities during or around the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP). The day is celebrated every 17th Day of October each year, (See Chapter 7: 3 Special Focus I: International Day for the Eradication of Poverty).

Impact Story: Viva a Vida Radio Program by Pastoral da Criança, Brazil

The Pastoral da Criança uses media to tackle child poverty in Brazil. During the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP) – 17 October 2015, Pastoral da Criança conducted an interview on eradicating child poverty in the world; through the radio program Viva a Vida. One thousand four hundred (1,400) radio stations across the country aired this interview. During the interview, Mr. Clovis Bouffleur, the Institutional Relations Manager of the National Coordination of the Pastoral da Criança, stated;

The basis for us to find ways out of poverty is dialogue and a people-to-people approach. And religious traditions can assist the society in this matter, as they can help to bring together groups of people and build bridges for a more equal society...”

It is possible to call the religious representatives and society to define actions that can be done to fight extreme poverty, especially the poverty that affects children...!

The Pastoral da Criança shares the vision of a world where no child will live in poverty. And we act every day to promote care, child protection in their home environment and to support children and their families.” Pastoral da Criança is the social action agency of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB).



CHAPTER 10: ACTIONS AND RESOURCES

10.1 MAKING YOUR WORK RELEVANT

10.1.1 WORKING WITH ADULT LEADERS

When using the guide to train adults, adhere to the Principles of Adult Learning, some of which are described below:

- Adults are motivated to put time and energy into learning if they know the benefits of learning and the costs of not learning. Sessions must therefore be relevant and flexible as much as possible to accommodate their individual needs.
- Adult learners have a self-concept of being in charge of their own lives and being responsible for their own decisions, and a need to be seen and treated as being capable of taking responsibility. They are task or action oriented.
- Adults start with a problem and then work to find a solution. Begin by identifying what the learner can do, what the learner wants to do and then address the gaps and develop practical activities to teach specific skills. They should be able to use these skills immediately so that they see their relevance.

- **Experience Affects Adult Learning:** Experience is a resource for adult learners' and gives richer meaning to new ideas and skills. Experience is a source of an adult's self-identify. During learning, opportunities should be created for adults to share their experience (negative or positive).
- **Adults Learn Best in an Informal Setting:** Involve adults in the learning process. Let them discuss issues and decide on possible solutions. Make the environment relaxed, informal and inviting.
- **Adults Want Guidance:** Adults want information that will help them improve their situation or that of their children. They do not want to be told what to do. They want to choose options based on their individual needs.

Think About It

- Suggest other characteristics of adult participants that can affect training.
- How else can you ensure the guide is useful to you and your user group?

10.1.2 WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE: THE YOUTH AND CHILDREN

Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provides for the right of children and young people who are capable of forming their own views to express those views freely in all matters affecting them, with the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be involved in all processes and activities that aim to end child poverty.



Ethical Considerations

When working with young people and children some ethical considerations need to be observed:

- i. **Consent:** Consent to participate needs to be gained before any engagement begins. It may require several layers of permissions from gatekeepers before you are in a position to seek the consent of an individual for example their parents or caregivers. The consent must be informed by providing all relevant information about the activity and nature of engagement, and ensure that this information has been understood by the child, parent or caregiver.

You should always seek a parent's or caregiver's consent if the young person is:

- Under the age of 18
- particularly vulnerable (for example if they have a learning disability), or if the activity is on an exceptionally sensitive or troubling area
- looked after, and consent must be obtained from their social worker



- ii. **Confidentiality:** The limits to confidentiality must be clearly explained to young participants. Issues such as how the information they give will be used, stored or disseminated need to be adequately addressed.
- iii. **Avoiding Harm:** Adults have a responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of any child or young person participating in any activity is assured. This involves being mindful of the possible effects on the child throughout the process. For example, use of focus group or self-completion questionnaire methods of information gathering are

not usually appropriate for children when dealing with a sensitive issue as the child may feel exposed. A lot of support and protection needs to be accorded to the child or young person at all times.



Engaging Children

Children and young people have rich imaginations, may have strong fears, and love to play physically. However, since they tend to lack experience of communicating directly with unfamiliar adults in a one-to-one situation, more innovative approaches to engage them are required. These may include Play, Drawings and Pictures, and Narration.

- i. **Drawings and Pictures:** These can be creative, fun and can encourage children and young people to be more actively involved. The children and young people have time to think about what they wish to portray and help discover what give children consider as important aspects in their lives, by showing how children see their world. Within the human population, 65% are visual learners and pictures and drawings are a powerful tool to use with children and young people.
- ii. **Play:** Play activities and materials are the best way for a child to express himself and the best testimony by which the adult can attempt to understand him or her. Many techniques could be employed, such as singing and dancing, to explore culture, sociability and interests.
- iii. **Narration/Story Telling:** Story telling is the conveying of events in words, images and sounds. Stories in children create

magic and a sense of wonder at the world. It helps children develop respect, understanding and an appreciation of their environment and other cultures. Narration can be accompanied with pictures.

Communication with Children

Children and youth should always be included in End Child Poverty initiatives. Girls and boys have needs and abilities, which are significantly different from those of adults and from each other.

Communicating with children has some particular requirements, which include the following:

- i. Being at ease with children, for example by sitting on the ground, engaging in play, taking a walk and tolerating expressions of distress or aggression. Adults can also make children at ease when they share their personal information about themselves e.g. "I have children your age;"
 - ii. Using simple language and concepts that are at the level of child's stage of development and culture;
 - iii. Practice patience because some children especially those with experiences of distress may take time to open up;
 - iv. Understanding that children may view their situation in distinctly different ways from adults: children may fantasize, invent explanations for unfamiliar or frightening events, express themselves in symbolic ways, and emphasize issues which may seem unimportant to adults and so on;
- Be aware of the power relations in terms of gender, culture, ethics, and the power relations between adults and the child which affect interactions;
 - Identifying in advance what challenges might occur and exploring the best ways to deal with them can be helpful. Expert support, such as from medical staff, should be sought on complex issues that arise;
 - Expectations: teams must be clear what kind of information they hope to obtain from the children;

- Confidentiality: children should be reminded during discussions of the confidentiality they owe to each other, and the team members owe to them;
- Acceptability: children's views and experiences should be accepted and never challenged;
- Informed consent: teams must obtain permission from parents before discussing with children. In addition, their participation is voluntary; children have the right to keep silent or withdraw from the process at any time; and
- Teams should be composed of both women and men when working with girls and boys, as some children prefer to speak with members of the same sex.

10.2 ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA TOOLS

Different ways to advocate¹⁰³

- Send a letter or e-mail to a local, regional or national leader expressing interest and concern regarding your country's progress on any of the campaign issues. Your letters should be brief and clear. Explain the reasons for your request, providing information and facts. Are there others advocating the same message? If so, write at the same time to achieve a greater impact. Distributing postcards throughout your community and asking people to sign and send them in, is an excellent way to increase advocacy.



- Speak with the traditional leaders in your society. As these individuals often hold a special role within their communities, they also have a special influence on politicians.



- Request a meeting with local, regional or national leaders to discuss their position on one of the campaign issues. Your targets should be the decision-making institutions and bodies, as well as individuals who have power and influence. Remember that while you are collecting information from the government on their position, this is also an opportunity to give information that could inform or shape their decisions.
- Attend conferences: Diplomats who attend international, regional or national conferences are trained to be approachable and expect to be lobbied. These conferences are the perfect opportunities to meet decision makers, find out their positions, develop a good relationship and provide them with information. They can be approached at any time during the conferences. Do not hesitate to engage in conversation with them.

Different Forms of Media

- Radio – given its accessibility to the masses, radio is by far one of the most powerful media tools available. Both national, regional, international and community radio should be taken into account;
- Newspapers and magazines (dailies, community and special interest publications);
- Internet sites for organisations, clubs, news or local event information;
- Blogs;

- Newsletters; and
- Television (International networks, national networks, local stations and cable networks)

Tools for Media Engagement

- Media Releases: Ensure that these are clear, concise and well written. Avoid using jargon that is unique to your industry or community. Always keep a list of journalists that have particular interest in your area.
- Press Conferences: this is good to help highlight a particular issue of interest, a launch or make an announcement useful to your cause.
- Opinion Pieces: Opinion pieces give you the latitude to go in-depth into an issue and explain a particular matter.
- Letters to the Editor: This has been very successful especially as it does not require exceptional/great writing skills.
- Media Training Sessions: To give Media People depth on a particular issue; taking journalists to a workshop or seminar is good as it grounds them on matters that you are passionate about. It also provides opportunities to build great relationships with them.

Tips

- State your position, call to action opinion or recommendation very clearly and very obviously.
- An advocacy statement must have a specific call to action – what, exactly, do you want the person(s) to do?
- Acknowledge the progress and achievements already made by you/your community and by the duty-bearers being put to task
- You may choose to have the advocacy statement or the position paper, endorsed by several other leaders or Organisations. In many instances, this adds strength to your position or statement.

10.2.1 ADVOCACY STATEMENT AND POSITION PAPER

Sample Statement: Ending Extreme Poverty – A Moral and Spiritual Imperative

Our Common Understanding

As leaders from diverse religious traditions, we share a compelling vision to end extreme poverty by the year 2030. For the first time in human history, we can do more than simply envision a world free of extreme poverty; we can make it a reality. Accomplishing this goal will take two commitments: to act guided by the best evidence of what works and what does not; and to use our voices to compel and challenge others to join us in this urgent cause inspired by our deepest spiritual values.



The world has achieved remarkable progress in the past two decades in cutting in half the number of people living in extreme poverty. We have ample evidence from the World Bank Group and others showing that we can now end extreme poverty within fifteen years. In 2015, our governments will be deciding upon a new global sustainable development agenda that has the potential to build on our shared values to finish the urgent task of ending extreme poverty.

We in the faith community embrace this moral imperative because we share the belief that the moral test of our society is how the weakest and most vulnerable are faring. Our sacred

texts also call us to combat injustice and uplift the poorest in our midst. No one, regardless of sex, age, race, or belief, should be denied experiencing the fullness of life.

Our Shared Moral Consensus

This is why the continued existence of extreme poverty in a plentiful world offends us so deeply. Our faith is tested and our hearts are broken when, in an age of unprecedented wealth and scientific advancement, so many still live in degrading conditions. We know too well that extreme poverty thwarts human purpose, chokes human potential, and affronts human dignity. In our increasingly interconnected world, there is enough to ensure that no one has to fight for their daily survival.

Ending extreme poverty will require a comprehensive approach that tackles its underlying causes — including preventable illness, a lack of access to quality education, joblessness, corruption, violent conflicts, and discrimination against women, ethnic minorities and other groups. It will also necessitate a change in the habits that cause poverty — greed and waste, numbness to the pain of others, and exploitation of people and the natural world. It calls for a holistic and sustainable approach that transforms cultures and institutions, and hearts as well as minds.

In too many parts of the world, women and girls are consigned to second-class status, denied access to education and employment, and victimized by violence, trafficking, and rape. Until each person is afforded the same basic rights, none of us can truly flourish.

We must also state unequivocally that ending extreme poverty without mitigating climate change and combating inequality will be impossible. Climate change is already disproportionately hurting people living in poverty. Extreme inequality, within and between coun-

tries, contradicts our shared religious values, exacerbates social and political divisions, and will impede progress. What is needed is a new paradigm of socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth.

Our Call to Action

We believe that now is the time to end the scourge of extreme poverty — by restoring right relationships among people, affirming human dignity, and opening the door to the holistic development of all people. If we were more committed to living these common values there would be less poverty in the world.

Our shared convictions call us to empower and uplift — not denigrate — those living in poverty, so that they can become agents of their own transformation. We must abandon a politics that too often marginalizes their voices, blames them for their condition, and exacerbates extremes of inequality. Now is the time to turn fatigue into renewed commitment, indifference into compassion, cynicism into hope, and impotence into a greater sense of agency that we can and will end extreme poverty by 2030.

We commit to working together to end the scandal of extreme poverty. We will act, advocate, educate, and collaborate, both

among ourselves and with broader initiatives. We commit to holding all levels of leadership accountable — public and private, domestic and international.



Our approach to this staggering need must be holistic, rooted in the spiritual visions of our respective faiths, and built on a shared recognition of the intrinsic dignity and value of every life on Earth.

Realizing this shared goal will require a revolution in social and political will, as well as innovations and greater collaboration across sectors. We call on international Organisations, governments, corporations, civil society, and religious communities, to play their essential parts and join with us in this critical cause.

Poverty's imprisonment of more than a billion men, women and children must end. Now is the time to boldly act to free the next generation from extreme poverty's grip.



Endorsers

Act Alliance, General Secretary, Dr. John Nduna

American Jewish Committee, International Director of Interreligious Affairs, Chief Rabbi David Rosen

American Jewish World Service, President, Ms. Ruth Messinger

Anglican Alliance, Joint Executive Director, Rev. Rachel Carnegie

Bibliotheca Alexandria, Founding Director, Dr. Ismail Serageldin

Baha'i International Community, Principle Representative to the United Nations, Ms. Bani Dugal

Buddhist Global Relief, Chairperson, Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi

Bread for the World, President, Rev. David Beckmann

Caritas Internationalis, Secretary General, Mr. Michel Roy

Catholic Relief Services, President and Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Carolyn Woo

Church World Service, President and Chief Executive Officer, Rev. John McCullough

Community of Protestant Churches of Europe, President, Rev. Dr. Thomas Wipf

EcoSikh, Board Member, Mr. Suneet Singh Tuli

Forum for Peace in Islamic Societies, President, H.E. Shaykh Abdullah bin Bayyah

Indigenous People Ancestral Spiritual Council, President, Priestess Beatriz Schulthess

Islamic Relief Worldwide, Chief Executive Officer, Dr. Mohamed Ashmawey

Islamic Society of North America, Office of Interfaith & Community Alliances Director, Dr. Sayyid Syeed

Global Interfaith WASH Alliance, Co-Founder, H.H. Pujya Swami Chidanand Saraswatiji

Joint Distribution Committee, Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Alan Gill

Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue, Director, Rabbi Dr. Burt Visotzky

Muhammadiyah, President, Dr. Din Syamsuddin

Organisation of African Instituted Churches, General Secretary, Rev. Nicta Lubaale

Religions For Peace, Secretary General, Dr. William Vendley

Rissho Kosei-Kai, President-Designate, Rev. Kosho Niwano

Religious Action Center, Director, Rabbi Jonah Pesner

Sojourners, President and Chief Executive Officer, Rev. Jim Wallis

Salvation Army, General, General Andre Cox

Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, General Secretary, Dr. Vinya Ariyaratne

World Council of Churches, General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit

World Evangelical Alliance, Secretary General and CEO, Bishop Efraim Tendero

World Relief, President and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Stephan Bauman

World Vision International, President, Mr. Kevin Jenkins

Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, Grand Mufti, H.E. Sheikh Shaban Ramadhan Mubaje

Parliament of the World's Religions, Executive Director, Dr. Mary Nelson

Integrated Research Ltd; The Charitable Foundation; and the Institute for Economics and Peace, Founder & Executive Chairman, Mr. Steve Killelea

Congregation Netivot Shalom in Berkeley, CA, Rabbi Menachem Creditor

Union for Reform Judaism, President, Rabbi Rick Jacobs

Rabbinical Assembly, Executive Vice President, Rabbi Julie Schonfeld

Islamic Relief USA, Mr. Anwar Khan

Temple Kol Emeth, Rabbi Erin Boxt

Rabbi Rachel Cowan

Congregation Agudas Achim, Rabbi Neil F. Blumofe

Auburn Seminary, Rabbi Justus Baird

Jewish Community Chaplaincy & Rafael Spiritual Healing Center of Jewish Family Service of Colorado, Rabbi Eliot

J. Baskin, D. Min.

Congregation B'nai Israel, Rabbi Barry Block

Uri L'Tzedek – Orthodox Social Justice, Founder and President, Rabbi Dr. Shmuly Yanklowitz Youth with a Mission – Norway, Director, Andreas Nordli

Christian Aid, Chief Executive, Ms. Loretta Minghella

Danmission, General Secretary, Mogens Kjær

The Norwegian Mission Society, General Secretary, Reverend Jeffrey Huseby World Association for Christian Communication, General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Karin Achtelstetter

Swedish Mission Council, Secretary General, Ms. Eva Christina Nilsson

Arigatou International, President, Rev. Keishi Miyamoto

Universal Peace Federation, President, Dr. Thomas Walsh

Universal Peace Federation, Secretary General, Dr. Tageldin Hamad

*For the initial launch we have focused on global Faith-Inspired Organisations. Moving forward more endorsers from countries and regions around the world will be joining the initiative. 8 April 2015

Source: World Bank

<https://www.rebelmouse.com/Faith2EndPoverty/ending-extreme-poverty-a-moral-and-spiritual-imperative-1081333677.html>

Other Useful Advocacy Statements and Position Papers:

Towards the End of Child Poverty: A Joint Statement by Partners United in the Fight Against Child Poverty, October 2015 | [http://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/files/Towards_the_End_of_Child_Poverty_Joint_Statement_by_Global_Partners_Oct2015.pdf]

Call to End Child Poverty: 17 October 2014, Sarvodaya, Sri Lanka

[<https://endingchildpoverty.org/en/news/in-the-news/32-call-to-end-child-poverty>]

The Africa Faith Leaders Position Paper On The Beyond Post-2015 Development Agenda: Issued by the Africa Faith Leaders' Summit, 2 July 2014, Kampala, Uganda

[<https://endingchildpoverty.org/images/zdocs/africa-faith-leaders-position-paper-on-the-post-2015-development-agenda.pdf>]

Tips: Preparing a Media Release/ Press Release

- Keep it brief, keep it simple, keep it accurate
- Communicate the most important message(s) at the beginning
- Recap the key message or call to action at the end – where applicable
- Always include the date, time and location of the story or the event
- Always, always, always remember to include contact information through which the media can reach you
- As a rule of thumb, say no more than three (3) main points
- Write briefly about who you are (your Organisation/group/community), what you do and how that is relevant to the news release.
- You may follow-up with an invitation to your event- if any- or request to visit the relevant media person(s).
- Include at least one quotable piece-meal – it would be piece of information, a direct quote from a conversation or a catchy 'headline'
- Make the work as easy as possible for the media person(s). She/he usually have short deadlines and many stories to cover and may not be willing to spend tons of time digging through yours to find out details. Give them what they need up-front and do not bore them with unnecessary information.
- Remember to cover as these relevant aspects in your media release – Who? What? Why? When? Where? and How?
- There is the temptation to load your press release with all the facts about what you are doing or all the information pertaining a certain issue. Do not. Instead, point the reader to where they can get more information – such as, your website, your media centre or attending the said event.

10.2.2 MEDIA RELEASE/ NEWS RELEASE

Sample Media Release: 87 Million Children Under 7 Have Known Nothing but Conflict

UNICEF

New figures reveal the number of children exposed to conflict during peak brain-development period:

NEW YORK, 24 March 2016 – More than 86.7 million children under the age of 7 have spent their entire lives in conflict zones, putting their brain development at risk, UNICEF said today.

During the first 7 years of life a child's brain has the potential to activate 1,000 brain cells every second. Each one of those cells, known as neurons, has the power to connect to another 10,000 neurons thousands of times per second. Brain connections serve as the building blocks of a child's future, defining their health, emotional well-being and ability to learn.

Children living in conflict are often exposed to extreme trauma, putting them at risk of living in a state of toxic stress, a condition that inhibits brain cell connections with significant life-long consequences to their cognitive, social and physical development.

"In addition to the immediate physical threats that children in crises face, they are also at risk of deep-rooted emotional scars," UNICEF Chief of Early Child Development Pia Britto said.

UNICEF figures show that globally one in 11 children aged 6 or younger has spent the most critical period of brain development growing up in conflict.

"Conflict robs children of their safety, family and friends, play and routine. Yet these are all elements of childhood that give children the best possible chance of developing fully and

learning effectively, enabling them to contribute to their economies and societies, and building strong and safe communities when they reach adulthood,” Britto said.

“That is why we need to invest more to provide children and caregivers with critical supplies and services including learning materials, psychosocial support, and safe, child-friendly spaces that can help restore a sense of childhood in the midst of conflict.”

A child is born with 253 million functioning neurons, but whether the brain reaches its full adult capacity of around one billion connectable neurons depends in large part on early childhood development. This includes breastfeeding and early nutrition, early stimulation by caregivers, early learning opportunities and a chance to grow and play in a safe and healthy environment.

As part of our response in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises, UNICEF works to keep children in child-friendly environments, providing emergency kits with learning and play materials. The emergency kits have supported more than 800,000 children living in emergency contexts in the past year alone.

Notes to Editors

Multi-media available here: http://weshare.unicef.org/C.aspx?VP3=SearchResult&L-BID=2AMZKT4JOH&IT=Thumb_Fixed-Height_M_Details_NoToolTip

About UNICEF

UNICEF promotes the rights and well-being of every child, in everything we do. Together with our partners, we work in 190 countries and territories to translate that commitment into practical action, focusing special effort on reaching the most vulnerable and excluded children, to the benefit of all children, everywhere.

For more information about UNICEF and its work for children visit www.unicef.org.

Follow UNICEF on Twitter and Facebook

For more information, please contact:
Georgina Thompson, UNICEF New York,
Mobile: +1 917 238 1559, gthompson@unicef.org

Source : UNICEF : http://www.unicef.org/media/media_90745.html



10.2.3 OPEN LETTERS

Sample: Poverty is Sexist – Open Letters

Dear World Leaders,
Nowhere on earth do women have as many opportunities as men. Nowhere.

While the debate around this truth rages everywhere, girls and women living in extreme poverty – those often hit hardest by the injustice of gender inequality – have been left out of the conversation.

This must change. The fight for gender equity is global.

Some 62 million girls are denied the right to education. Half a billion women can't read. 155 countries still have laws that discriminate against women.

Last year, you signed up to end extreme poverty, and because poverty is sexist, you promised to tackle the gender inequality that keeps people poor.

This year, there are a series of historic opportunities to test your commitment and to make meaningful progress by delivering:

- Funding in 2016 at the Nutrition for Growth and Global Fund Summits to help girls and women fight HIV and malnutrition, because it is an outrage that girls account for 74% of all new HIV infections among adolescents in Africa and 40% of women on the continent suffer from anemia which results in 20% of maternal deaths;
- Policies which support female economic empowerment: access to electricity, connectivity, education and justice, so girls and women have the right to own property, start a business and decide when and whether to marry;
- Better data on the girls and women we can't see, don't know exist and therefore can't yet deliver for. International Women's Day must be about advancing girls and women everywhere.

Signed

Ali Henson (Founder, Eden and Nude), **Elyse Nelson** (President & CEO, Vital Voices Global Partnership), **Aminatou Sow** (Digital Strategist, Co-Host, Call Your Girlfriend podcast), **Amy Poehler** (Producer, Actor and Co-Founder of Amy Poehler's Smart Girls), **Andrew Zimmern** (Chef), **Andrew Hozier-Byrne** (Musician), **Angelique Kidjo** (Grammy Award-Winning Artist and Activist), **Ann Friedman** (Columnist, New York Magazine, Co-Host, Call Your Girlfriend podcast), **Anna Loos** (Actress), **Anne V.** (Model), **Anne-Marie Slaughter** (President & CEO, New America), **Anne Wizorek** (Author, Consultant, Activist), **Arianna Huffington** (Co-Founder, President and Editor-in-Chief of the Huffington Post Media Group), **Arielle T.** (Singer and Activist) **Asa** (Singer, Songwriter and Musician), **Ashley Judd**, **Aziz Ansari**, **Bobby Shriver** (Co-Founder, ONE and (RED)), **Bono** (Lead singer, U2 and Co-Founder of ONE and (RED)), **Caitlin Moran**

(Journalist, Broadcaster and Author), **Carey Lowell** (Artist and Actress) **Carolyn Kebekus** (Comedian), **Charlize Theron** (Founder of Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project and UN Messenger of Peace), **Cindi Leive** (Editor-in-Chief, Glamour), **Colin Farrell** (Actor), **Condoleezza Rice** (Denning Professor in Global Business and the Economy at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, the Thomas and Barbara Stephenson Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the Hoover Institution, Founding partner of RiceHadleyGates, LLC), **George Stroumboulopoulos** (Television and Radio Personality), **Helen Clark** (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme), **Helene Gayle** (CEO, McKinsey Social Initiative), **Jeff Skoll** (Social Entrepreneur, Founder & Chairman of the Skoll Foundation, Participant Media, Skoll Global Threats Fund, and Capricorn Investment Group), **Jennifer Lopez** (Entertainer, Entrepreneur and UN Advocate for Girls and Women), **Jessie J.**, **John Green** (Author and YouTuber), **Jude Kelly** (CBE), **Judith Sephuma** (South African Musician, Jazz and Gospel Artist), **Kakenya Ntaiya** (Founder & President, Kakenya Center for Excellence), **Karen Kornbluh** (Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations), **Kathy Calvin** (President & Chief Executive Officer, United Nations Foundation), **Katie Holmes**, **Katja Iversen** (CEO, Women Deliver), **Lady Gaga**, **Laura Ling** (Correspondent, Discovery Digital Networks), **Lauren Bush Lauren** (CEO & Co-Founder of FEED Projects), **Lea DeLaria**, **Lilly Singh** (Comedian, Writer and YouTuber), **Lonnie Ali** (Wife of Muhammad Ali and, Co-Founder of The Muhammad Ali Center), **Luvvie Ajayi** (Writer, Digital Strategist and Executive Director, The Red Pump Project), **Mabel van Oranje** (Initiator & Chair, Girls Not Brides: The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage), **Marc Benioff** (Chairman & CEO, Salesforce), **Maria Shriver** (Award-Winning Journalist and Founder of Shriver Media), **Marian Salzman** (CEO, Havas PR), **Mark Ruffalo**, **Mark**

Zuckerberg (CEO, Facebook), **Mary J. Blige** (Artist and Activist), **Mats Granryd** (Director General, GSMA), **Melinda Gates** (Co-Chair of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), **Meryl Streep**, **Michele Sullivan** (President, Caterpillar Foundation), **Muhammad Ali** (3X World Heavyweight Champion and Global Humanitarian), **Oprah Winfrey** (Chairman & CEO, Oprah Media Group), **Padma Lakshmi** (Author and Host of Top Chef), **Patricia Arquette** (Actor and Activist), **Paul Polman** (CEO, Unilever), **Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka** (United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women), **Rea Garvey** (Musician), **Robert Redford** (Actor, Director and Environmental Activist), **Rocky Dawuni** (Grammy-Nominated International Music Star and Humanitarian Activist), **Ruby Rose** (Actress), **Samantha Bee** (Television Host, Comedian), **Sarah Degnan Kambou** (President, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW)), **Sean Parker**, President of the Parker Foundation), **Selmor Mtukudzi** (Zimbabwean Musician), **Sheryl Sandberg** (Chief Operating Officer, Facebook), **Sheryl WuDunn** (Co-Author, Half the Sky and A Path Appears), **Shonda Rhimes** (Creator & CEO, Shondaland), **Sue Desmond-Hellmann** (CEO, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), **Susan Wojcicki** (CEO, YouTube), **Tété** (Singer and Songwriter), **Thandie Newton** (Actress), **Tina Fey** (Writer, Actress and Producer), **Tina Brown** (Founder & CEO, Tina Brown Live Media and Women in the World Vanessa Mdee, Afro Pop Musician), **Victoria Kimani** (African Pop Artist), **Vincent Cassel** (Actor, Director and Producer), **Yemi Alade** (International Award Winner "MAMA AFRICA").

Source: One Campaign: http://act.one.org/sign/poverty_is_sexist_letter_US/?source=newsrelease#

10.2.4 QUOTES ON POVERTY

"Poverty is the worst form of violence."

— **Mahatma Gandhi**, Indian political and spiritual leader

"Anyone who has ever struggled with poverty knows how extremely expensive it is to be poor."

— **James A. Baldwin**

"Poverty is the single biggest killer in the world today, and the fact that it is the most preventable is bizarre, insane." — **Minnie Driver**, actress

"Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life. While poverty persists, there is no true freedom. In this new century, millions of people in the world's poorest countries remain imprisoned, enslaved, and in chains. They are trapped in the prison of poverty. It is time to set them free." — **Nelson Mandela**, former President of South Africa

"Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. It is man-made and can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings."

— **Nelson Mandela**, former President of South Africa

"Extreme poverty anywhere is a threat to human security everywhere."

— **Kofi Annan**, Seventh Secretary-General of the United Nations

"Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime."

— **Aristotle**, Greek philosopher

"Poverty is like punishment for a crime you didn't commit." — **Eli Khamarov**, writer

"In a country well governed, poverty is something to be ashamed of. In a country badly governed, wealth is something to be ashamed of."

— **Confucius**, Chinese teacher and philosopher

"An imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of all republics."

— **Plutarch**, Greek historian

"Saving our planet, lifting people out of poverty, advancing economic growth...these are one and the same fight." — **Ban Ki-moon**, Eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations

"I believe that if you show people the problems and you show them the solutions they will be moved to act." — **Bill Gates**, business magnate and philanthropist

"We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved and uncared for is the greatest poverty. We must start in our own homes to remedy this kind of poverty."

— **Mother Teresa**, Missionary and Saint.

"These days there is a lot of poverty in the world, and that's a scandal when we have so many riches and resources to give to everyone. We all have to think about how we can become a little poorer."

— **Pope Francis**

"Where you live should not determine whether you live, or whether you die." — **Bono**, Singer and Philanthropist

"Just because a child's parents are poor or uneducated is no reason to deprive the child of basic human rights to health care, education and proper nutrition." — **Marian Wright Edelman**, Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund.

"If poverty is a disease that infects the entire community in the form of unemployment and violence, failing schools and broken homes, then we can't just treat those symptoms in isolation. We have to heal that entire community." — **President Barack Obama**, 44th President of the U.S.

"Poverty is not only about income poverty, it is about the deprivation of economic and social rights, insecurity, discrimination, exclusion and powerlessness. That is why human rights must not be ignored but given even greater prominence in times of economic crisis." — **Irene Khan**, former Secretary-General of Amnesty International, 2010.

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." — **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, 32th President of the United States

"People...were poor not because they were stupid or lazy. They worked all day long, doing complex physical tasks. They were poor because the financial institution in the country did not help them widen their economic base." — **Muhammad Yunus**, Author of "Banker to the Poor: Micro-Lending and the Battle against World Poverty

"Poverty is the root of the challenges children face around the world today. Poverty is a multi-faceted problem which is more than economic; it includes social and cultural dimensions, and impinges upon human dignity." — **Rev. Keishi Miyamoto**, President, Arigatou International

10.3 IDENTIFYING PARTNERS

Tips: Identifying Partners

When determining your partners it may be useful to consider the following:

- Which organisations or services in your community tackle child poverty? Do they have a specific function or role? Are there any gaps in provision?
- What Organisations or services target the same groups as you? Do they have a measurable impact on child poverty but do not consider it one of their main functions? How can you make contact?
- Do you share the same overall goals and desired outcomes? If you do not share the same goals, are there areas in which to establish a common ground?
- What are the key strengths that they and you could bring to the table?
- Do you/they have any weaknesses that need to be considered?
- Are they/you willing to work flexibly and collaboratively across traditional boundaries including areas such as budgets?
- Are there any areas where they/you are not willing to compromise?

Source: Embedding outcomes based approach in tackling poverty SG/IS pilot project

10.4 PARTICIPATORY TRAINING METHODS

Ways to achieve effective training sessions

In training, the facilitator is among others a catalyst, coach and coordinator who must bring out the best in all participants and orchestrate successful group efforts. This role demands exceptional interpersonal skills, keen observation, insight and tact. According to Leslie Langbert, an effective facilitator exhibits the following behavioral characteristics:

- **Positive:** By maintaining a positive attitude about the session, others will share the positive energy.
- **Flexible:** While a planned agenda is a must, if the group determines another topic is relevant to their goals, let the group know the agenda is flexible.
- **Humor:** A light-hearted approach or smile can help keep things smooth and relieve tension in the room.
- **Neutral:** Keep the focus on the process of the session, not the content.
- **Genuine:** Stay true to your own style and personality. When you're comfortable, the session moves smoothly.
- **Active Listener:** Use paraphrasing, reflection and empathy to communicate to the speaker/participant they are heard and understood.

To ensure a successful session:

- Let trainees know what you are going to cover by introducing your session with a brief overview of the main points.
- Conclude with a summary of your opening overview. Use repetition to help trainees grasp and retain information.
- When using media such as a video presentation, always explain what trainees are going to see before you show. This practice creates a better learning environment by guiding trainees to know what to look for

and what to remember as well as improving the reception of its content.

- As much as possible, make the training be hands-on. The most effective training uses all the senses to affect learning (sight, smell, touch, hearing and tasting).
- Involve trainees. For example, ask participants to share their experiences with the training topic. Many trainees are experienced personnel who have valuable information to contribute. All trainees will get more out of sessions by hearing about their fellow trainers' experiences and not just the trainer's lecture notes. Hearing different voices also keeps sessions varied and interesting. Structure interaction time into all your sessions.
- Repeat questions before answering them. This practice ensures that all participants know what the question is about so they can make sense of the answer.
- Analyze the session as you go. Always be on the lookout for what works best and what does not so that you apply or do away with it in the next sessions or the future.
- Keep your session on track. Start on time and finish on time. Don't hold up a class waiting for late comers. Run the class according to the schedule and don't get too far off course. If desired pursue a separate session on that topic, but get this class back to the session plan.
- Give frequent breaks, especially for long and intense sessions.
- Solicit feedback on the training session. Critiques work best when they are written and anonymous, unless a trainee volunteers to discuss his or her thoughts in person.

Demonstration

Demonstration is a method of training that involves presentation of pre-arranged events for observation and learning purposes. It involves showing how something works or how to do something using accurate procedure and guidelines.

Demonstration method is appropriate when resources are limited, when working with participants with low literacy levels, when teaching a skill, concept or principles, when learning resources are too sophisticated, expensive or delicate or when learning resources may pose danger to participants.

Discussion

This method is important for training because it helps participants to process information rather than simply receive it. Discussions serve the following purposes: laying plans for new work, making decisions concerning future action, sharing information, obtaining and gaining respect for various points of view, clarifying ideas, inspiring interest and evaluating progress. For effective use of discussion; plan around issues of time and goal and decide the point at which discussion takes place during the session. Also problematize the topic in such a way that it is open ended so that trainees participate freely. Guide the flow of discussions by giving assignments to trainees from the topic.

Question and Answer Method

Questioning is a carefully designed string of questions which lead trainees to arrive at an answer. Questioning stimulates interest, imagination, initiative and creativity. It helps develop a rapport with trainees, keeps them alert and attentive. It is used to review a previous session: and link it up with the current one. Questioning also prepares trainees for new content and develops their thought process and self-expression. It is the best method to gauge trainees' level of knowledge and understanding of a given topic. When using questioning, use simple language, ensure respect for everybody's answers, have an answer in mind to compare with those of trainees, call trainees by name as it gives them a sense of recognition and ap-

preciation and pose after asking questions for digestion, organisation and response.

Field Trips and Surveys

These are visits or trips the trainees make to sites for practical sessions. Before embarking on a trip, the facilitator should expose trainees to the knowledge about the topic of training. Plan the objectives of the trip, provide procedures to be followed throughout the trip, provide the necessary materials such as handouts and writing materials, arrange for any safety devices or guides, and ensure active participation and movement in groups by participants. After the visit, have report presentations and evaluation for future visits. Field trips and visits are useful in that they arouse a desire to learn and participate and enable acquisition of skills such as report writing, observation and interpretation. By seeing and doing, learning is made real and vivid.



Simulation Method

A simulation is a scenario used to demonstrate a behavior or a process. It is the initiation of some real thing. They are used to put trainees in a real situation without taking the risks. They are meant to be as realistic as possible. Simulation is important because it allows trainees to learn by doing leading to higher retention and application. It also allows learners to practice tasks that would otherwise be dangerous. The danger of using simulations to train is that it may be oversimplified thus losing important details.

Project Method

A project is a problematic act carried out in a natural setting. A project has the following characteristics: problematic in nature, aimed at a definite attainable goal, directed and planned by trainees, and it is practical in nature. While a project may be time consuming, it has many advantages: It arouses and maintains interest, allows for some degree of freedom in decision making, provides for individual interest, develops team spirit, builds patience and generally helps build the skill of doing.

Role Play

Role play is a method of instruction aimed at changing attitudes and behavior, in which participants act out designated roles relevant to real-life situations. It is a spontaneous human interaction involving realistic human behavior under artificial or simulated environment. The trainee develops a strategy to how he/she should react or think in a particular situation and consider possible solutions to resolving the problem in the situation. Role play helps in developing a better understanding of the role while playing the new or the expected role, teaches how to handle a particular situation and helps in anticipating the reaction of other party. This method helps in dual learning. The trainee not only learns and reinforces the concepts by self-learning but also develops an understanding about a new role. It helps in building good decision making ability, management capacity and leadership overall.

Case Studies

Case studies are a form of problem-based learning, where you present a situation that needs a resolution. A typical case study gives a detailed account, or story of what happened in a particular project over a set period. The trainee is given details about the situation,

often in a historical context and then the key players are then introduced. Objectives and challenges are outlined, followed by specific examples and data, which the trainee then uses to analyze the situation, determine what happened, and make recommendations. The depth of a case depends on the lesson being taught. A good case study makes the reader think critically about the information presented, and then develop a thorough assessment of the situation, leading to a well-thought-out solution or recommendation.

They differ from lectures, because they require participation and deliberate application of a broad range of skills. They offer an opportunity to compare the learner's recommendations with what actually happened. Case studies are used when understanding the concept is more important than memorizing correct responses. They can be used to evaluate past problem solving. People can be asked what they would do in that situation, and think about what could have been done differently. Case studies are great team-building opportunities. When a team gets together to solve a case, they will have to work through different opinions, methods, and perspectives.





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**“Like slavery and apartheid,
poverty is not natural. It is man
made and can be overcome and
eradicated by the actions of
human beings.”**

—Nelson Mandela, former President of South Africa

Arigatou International - End Child Poverty

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