



2020

# International Youth Day

— Youth Engagement for Global Action —



## About Arigatou International

**Arigatou International** is a non-profit organization that brings together people from all walks of life to build a better world for children.

Arigatou International is "*All for Children*," and draws on universal principles of common good to offer compelling new ways for people of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to come together to address children's issues.

Arigatou International develops and sustains unique multistakeholder initiatives designed to ensure that all children are treated with dignity, have their rights respected, and have the opportunity to freely pursue their full human potential.

## About End Child Poverty

**End Child Poverty** is a multi-faith, child centered, global initiative that mobilizes faith-inspired resources to eradicate poverty affecting children.

We aim to create a world free of child poverty, by addressing both the human and structural root causes of poverty.

We accomplish this through promoting theological reflection and action; carrying out interfaith advocacy and lobbying; and supporting grassroots initiatives that alleviate child poverty.





## A. THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY 2020

### An Overview

Globally, the International Youth Day (IYD), marked every 12<sup>th</sup> August, is not only meant to honor youth around the globe but also take stock of the crucial contribution of the youth to the global economy and development, replicated in the way youth around the world support their communities in achieving much needed progress in varied sectors. The day also highlights the challenges youths encounter around the world including issues of unemployment, non-inclusion in policy making processes and programs and the effect of unstable and violent conflict affected societies.

In marking this year's International Youth Day with the theme – **Youth Engagement for Global Action**, Arigatou International — End Child Poverty demonstrated how to meaningfully engage the youth in building better world for children, to achieve local, national and global action. Specifically, it partnered and supported important youth activities in Africa organized and coordinated by Youth In Action (regional networks established and supported by End Child Poverty and other partnering organisations) and the African Children and Youth Network for Human Rights /Réseau des Enfants et Jeunes Africains pour les Droits Humains (REJADH). These youths led various processes, activities and events in their communities within the thematic areas of peacebuilding, gender equality, ending poverty, while relating them to the IYD's theme.

It is key to note that the International Youth Day 2020, came against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic, that has drastically affected lives and livelihoods at the same time sharply changed the way we live. In the midst of this global pandemic, the youths have been instrumental in supporting their communities in addressing this global pandemic. On the other hand, the youth have also been on the receiving end especially with regards to the economic shockwaves occasioned by the pandemic. Hence, there was need to focus the IYD 2020 towards concerted global action and the meaningful engagement and participation of young people to effectively address the impacts of the pandemic. In this regards, End Child Poverty engagement with the youth in marking this Youth Day put the COVID-19 pandemic at the centre of all key discussions, interventions and activities.

Here are highlights of the proceedings and outcome of the activities supported and implemented in collaboration with End Child Poverty during the IYD 2020.

## Kenya

End Child Poverty supported two youth activities in Kenya during the IYD 2020. These were the **East Africa Youth Consultation Forum** (EAYCF) organized by Lamukani Youth Forum; and Engaging youth in in countering violent extremism implemented by a partnership between the Semi-Arid Health Initiative and Silver Lining Kenya.

## B. EAST AFRICA YOUTH CONSULTATION FORUM

By: Lamukani Youth Forum



This event was co-organized by the Lamukani Youth forum, Kenya in partnership with Arigatou International-End Child Poverty, BOSCH Alumni Network, and other partners. The week-long virtual consultation which took place from 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> August 2020 brought together nearly 200 youths over the entire period. The EAYCF provided an open platform for critical conversation on how to empower youth from East Africa through knowledge building, training support and strengthening partnerships. In line with the global theme, “Youth Engagement for Global Action” the conversations highlighted ways in which the engagement of young people at the

local, national and global levels is enriching national and multilateral institutions and processes, as well as draw lessons on how their representation and engagement in formal institutions can be significantly enhanced, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The consultations reflected on the impact of COVID-19 context in East Africa and how the youth are at the centre of both the effects of the pandemic as well as efforts to fight the pandemic. There was a general observation that the youth across East Africa had played an integral part in supporting their communities in the fight against COVID-19, thus their engagement at both local and global levels have been visible, with regards to the pandemic. From raising awareness by providing verified information and training about the pandemic, offering food donations and hygiene material, the impact of the youth in the fight against this disease could not be overlooked.

**Understanding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** this session enabled participants to further understand and be part of implementing the SDGs. Delivered by a facilitator from Arigatou-End Child Poverty, the facilitator took the youth through a consistent flow of understanding the goals using the steps of Discover, Engage, Advocate, and Monitor for impact (DEAMi).

**#Discover** enabled participants understand “what is the post-2015 development agenda (Agenda 2030) & SDGs?”; **#Engage** - How do I connect my (our) work to the Global Development Agenda? **#Advocate** – What opportunities are available for advocacy towards youth engagement? **#Monitor** for Impact – How do I know progress is being made? The conversation around the SDGs concluded with a take-at-home exercise (see appendix).

The session underscored the importance of youth engagement in global action by situating actions and activities within the global goals, particularly the 17 Global Goals. This way, they would be cognizant that they are contributing to the global



agenda 2030 and also help them be systematic in their engagement at both local and global levels. As an example, the facilitator explained the work of Arigatou International – End Child Poverty and how it situates its overall Children program within SDGs 1 – End Poverty, and its Regional Peace Programme within SDG 16, specifically SDGs 16.1 and 16.2.

**Youth engagement in public policy and decision-making processes** – The consultations, also focused on the need to have young people engaged in governance and policy-making processes. This focus area came with the reality of the overwhelming population of the youth around East Africa, thus if policies and governance structures were to be established for them, then they have to be engaged in such developments. These consultations gave youth an opportunity to voice their concerns and challenges encountered with regards to meaningful engagement in policy formulation and decision making such as the education system not promoting critical thinking skills which are crucial for growing leaders; limited access to inclusive education especially in rural Uganda where large number of young people are unable to communicate in the English language. Furthermore, the process of youth engagement in policy making processes is marred by politics mainly in form of tokenism where youth are lured into accepting policies once they have been offered some tokens in of money of property by older politicians. To address these challenges, the youth recommended establishing and or strengthening existing legal frameworks for youth engagement in East Africa, fighting corruption and thus create a level playing field for the youth, and provide support to young people through mentoring and capacity building.

## C. ENGAGING YOUTH IN PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

By: Semi-Arid Health Initiative

Youths from the Semi-Arid Health Initiative and Silver Lining Kenya (both former cohorts of the Youth In Action programme) jointly brought together over 20 young people in Garissa, Kenya in an activity where they were enlightened on countering violent extremism through the use of local theatre and arts with the aim to effectively bring out the local push and pull factors among them. This activity was informed by a growing concern that the rise in violent extremist activities had been growing and more so among the youth who mostly feel left out in the devolved system of governance in the region, especially in matters concerning employment, recognition of their efforts in building the community economic, political and social development. As a result, most of these youth are lured by available push and pull factors into the cycles of violent extremism. The activity brought together religious leaders from the Christian and Muslim faiths, government officials and local leaders who openly engaged the youth and provided them a safe space to speak about and present; mainly through art and theatre, the challenge of violent extremism, from their perspective.

The youth, together with other stakeholders observed that the more youth and their peers are actively engaged on preventing and countering violent extremism, the more the gap of misconception gets reduced and the more the multiplier effect of positive understanding amongst youth of the value of peaceful co-existence and stability to their society and to their own wellbeing and progress.

They therefore urged that:

1. Arts and theatre are strong tools and very ideal form of community engagement among the Pastoralist community of Northern Kenya, given their high illiteracy coupled with their culturally known trait of being an oral society, the use of local arts and theatre as a medium for communication is an effective tool to influence and clarify values as they relate to preventing and countering violent extremism.
2. There is need to support mental health mentorship activities for youth in the region to help them think positively and shun extremist thoughts.
3. There is need to have a structured engagement of youth in the region through preventing and countering violent extremism and Leadership development programmes that takes them through a person-



al development engagement process such as induction to responsible citizenship, both psycho-social counseling, career development counseling and basic skill development as is appropriate.

## D. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN ACHIEVING THE GLOBAL GOALS

By: Youth In Action – Tanzania



### Tanzania

End Child Poverty partnered and supported youth from Youth In Action Tanzania, who are also members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) in co-organizing this forum in collaboration with the Global Peace Foundation and other partners. This forum aimed at reflecting at the role and progress made by young people in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The forum also provided opportunity for experience sharing among the youth on some of the transformative initiatives they were undertaking to support their communities against the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This virtual forum was attended and facilitated by Gerald Acho from Arigatou International – End Child Poverty, who encouraged the youth to be determined and work towards earning opportunities competitively not waiting to be handed opportunities just because they are youth. The facilitator encouraged them to use the available opportunities to transform their communities, giving an example of the Youth In Action programme, where hundreds of youth from the Eastern Africa region had been trained and were actively supporting their communities to promote peace by preventing, countering and transforming violent extremism. While emphasizing similar sentiments as the facilitator from ECP, a former Youth In Action cohort and member of the GNRC, Venance Temu encouraged fellow youth saying,

*“We have a program of recruiting peace Ambassadors across East Africa Region, enrolling them in an intensive training of peace building and conflict resolution and mentoring them in their field work of promoting peace through social activities. In-line with that, GNRC believes that, Children is an important group for the society to invest and protect in achieving Sustainable Development Goals. My call to fellow youth, let’s take action to promote peace and protect the future generation of children for Sustainable Development”.*

## E. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL AND PEACEBUILDING PROCESSES

By: Siraad Initiative



### Somalia

Arigatou International — End Child Poverty supported Siraad Initiative in Hargesia Somaliland in organizing a forum with over 20 young women on Youth engagement in political and peacebuilding processes. This forum aimed at equipping the youth with knowledge and an understanding of the political landscape in the country. The forum enlightened youth on their right to political participation and the need for them to uphold and promote peace in their community, amid political activities. This forum also created a safe space especially for young women to express themselves on matter peacebuilding and politics in their community.

One of the young women, Hafsa Omer, opined, *"Peace means to me that people can live, gather and work together so that they can get better solution to issues affecting us. Also, peace is caring, peace is loving each other."*



## F. INTER-GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE ON POLICY, YOUTH INCLUSIVENESS & BUILDING PEACE

By: African Children and Youth Network for Human Rights



The **African Children and Youth Network for Human Rights** /*Réseau des Enfants et Jeunes Africains pour les Droits Humains* (REJADH) from Somalia organized an open discussion with between 22 youth and local decision makers to converse around issues regarding policy change, youth inclusiveness and building peace. This discussion was a significant step towards including young people in the country's political processes, which for long had been lacking, according to the youth. This open discussion is in line with the Arigatou International Panama commitment 10 which stresses the importance of working towards generating a political and social will within the legislatures and policy pathways in order to protect children from violence.

At large, the activity probed up a youthful, wide-ranging table of discussion around issues regarding wider participation in policy formulation and the importance of making informed, inclusive decisions to ensure that legislation and policies adopted prevent and protect children from violence as well as promote their basic human rights to live at peace free from poverty. The discussions also voiced concerns to challenge the patriarchal structure of the Somali social and political settings and raised awareness on how young people can lobby for a change, thus promoting commitment 7 of the Panama commitments on ending violence against children.

At the end of the discussion, the youth were inspired having had access to information about their role in building peace, preventing violence against children and fighting poverty. The discussion also helped build and strengthen synergies among the youth and local decision makers and other organizations, thus promoting cohesion among all of them.



## G. DIALOGUE ON THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF SUSTAINING PEACE

Uganda Elections 2020

### Uganda

In commemoration of International Youth Day on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2020, three youths from different faith communities representing the Uganda Youth Interfaith Network-UYIN, the youth arm of Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCUG) were hosted on Next Radio talk show. The youths talked about involvement of youths, and the opportunities and challenges of sustaining peace before, during and after the country's upcoming general elections. The talk-show, which was streamed live on Next Media Television, presented an opportunity for young representatives of faith communities to reach out and to encourage fellow young people in the country to work for a peaceful 2020/2021 election process.

The talk-show was in line with the IYD 2020 theme of, "*Youth Engagement for Global Action.*" The inter-faith youth representatives further highlighted the ways in which young people in Uganda are working towards building peace despite the challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Youths were urged to reach out to fellow youths, neighbors and strangers with a gesture of peace and love as a sign of the Uganda they want to build for themselves and the generations to come.



The dialogue, social media interaction and live phone-in sessions of the talk-show indicated that Ugandan youths are available and willing to actively and peacefully engage in the Uganda 2020/2021 general elections. An opinion poll held conducted on social media during the event indicated that 54% of the young people who responded are committed to vote, and work for peace in the elections. UYIN representatives on the show also shared their experience with the COVID-19 pandemic and the various interventions that they employed to keep safe, support fellow youth and their communities, as well as inspire the youths who were listening-in to be more resilient, innovative and of positive mindset even amidst uncertainty due to COVID-19.

## CONCLUSION

Meaningful youth engagement at local, national and global levels is a key pathway towards achieving sustainable development and gaining much needed progress across communities. Thus, this year's theme for the International Youth Day would not have come at a better time than now, when the power, skills and knowledge of the youth is needed to achieve the 'Decade of Action'. At the same time, with the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic, the youths remain vibrant constituency to support communities and even in global spaces towards ending the pandemic, which has undoubtedly threatened to roll-back gains on the sustainable development. Overall, youth engagement is not just an option but a necessity.

## APPENDIX: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: HAVE YOUR SAY

Your local community is in a town-hall meeting with your area Member of Parliament (MP) and other local development officials to talk about the activities and actions being taken towards achieving Sustainable Development. In which specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do you think progress is being made or talked about when you hear any of the 10 statements below?

SN	STATEMENT	SDGs
1	Number of people, and proportion of men, women and children of all ages living on less than \$1.25 a day in our community has been reduced by 50%	
2	The Government has built and upgraded 20 education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provided safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for students	
3	Parliament is integrating climate change measures into our national policies, strategies and planning to strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters	
4	We have doubled the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment	
5	The community is providing robust service and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into local strategies and programmes	
6	Next year, we hope to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value in the community	
7	There is enhanced partnership for sustainable development through multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. This has been achieved through encouraging and promoting effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships. Thus, comprehensive data collection, monitoring and accountability has greatly improved	
8	We have substantially reduced corruption and bribery in all their forms by developing effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels. Particularly by ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Furthermore, the security agencies have significantly reduced illicit financial and arms flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets and combat all forms of organized crime	
9	The Electricity and Energy company has doubled the rate of improvement in energy efficiency by facilitating access to clean energy research and technology, including renewable energy, energy efficiency and advanced and cleaner fossil-fuel technology, and promoted investment in energy infrastructure and clean energy technology	
10	Ministry of Environment has almost achieved access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations  In addition, water quality has greatly improved by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials into water bodies in the community	

















## About Regional Peace Programme

The **Regional Peace Programme** (RPP) was established by NCA and the nested partners in 2016.

The RPP programme is being implemented by NCA and 6 regional partners based in Nairobi: Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relation (HIPSIR), All African Conference of Churches (AACC), African Council of Religious Leaders (ACRL), International Center for Peace, Human Rights and Development (IPHRD), and Arigatou International (AI), who are facilitating the RFLF and the Youth In Action (YIA).

Through RPP Ariagatou International - End Child Poverty established Youth In Action which brings together young people within the region to work on issues of Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism. We have also built partnership with youths working on addressing gender based violence in an effort to examine the link between conflict/violence and gender based violence.



**"Young people should be at the forefront of global change and innovation. Empowered, they can be key agents for development and peace. If, however, they are left on society's margins, all of us will be impoverished. Let us ensure that all young people have every opportunity to participate fully in the lives of their societies."**

— Kofi Annan —

### **End Child Poverty**

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