

# Transforming Lives

THE POWER OF INVESTING IN CHILDREN

Annual Report 2023/2024



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Learning session at the SDGs Academy for Children in Kenya.

## 1.0 FOREWORD



### Transforming Lives: The Power of Investing in Children

In a world where the future is shaped by the actions we take today, investing in children stands as one of the most profound and impactful commitments we can make. Poverty has a damaging impact on the lives of children, both now and for their future opportunities. This makes the need for decisive action to eradicate child poverty more urgent than ever.

Arigatou International – End Child Poverty is dedicated to ending childhood poverty, advancing children’s rights, and enhancing their overall well-being. Our 2023/2024 annual report, *“Transforming Lives: The Power of Investing in Children,”* encapsulates our journey, achievements, and the unwavering belief that every child deserves a chance to thrive.

### Investing in Children Works

The significance of investing in children cannot be overstated. Research consistently shows that early investments in children’s health, nutrition, education, and well-being yield substantial returns, both for the individual and society as a whole. Investing in children, particularly in early childhood, delivers enormous outcomes throughout their lives. It is also widely understood that prioritising these positive outcomes is the best and most robust pathway to fulfilling the promise of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

This investment is more than a **moral imperative**; it is a strategic social and economic investment in our collective future, ensuring sustainable development, peace, shared prosperity, and human security for all. By addressing childhood poverty and ensuring access to rights, we can break the cycle of poverty and create a more equitable society.

Tackling child poverty is an investment in human potential, promoting child rights and well-being while addressing the needs of fast-changing societies. Societies must make the best use of available potential, which requires investing in children. This is not just a vision but a tangible reality we strive to achieve every day.

### Our Commitment and Achievements

At End Child Poverty, our commitment to transforming lives is unwavering. Over the past year, we have implemented and supported signature initiatives and advocacy actions aimed at improving the lives of children, especially those in

“Transforming Lives: The Power of Investing in Children,” encapsulates our journey, achievements, and the unwavering belief that every child deserves a chance to thrive

This investment is more than a **moral imperative**, it is a strategic social and economic investment in our collective future, ensuring sustainable development, peace, shared prosperity and human security for all

vulnerable communities. From providing access to **quality education** and **nutrition** to **advocating for sustainable peace and development**, our efforts have made a significant impact. We have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of investing in children and are inspired by the resilience and potential of the young lives we touch.

This report reflects these milestones, highlighting key areas of focus for the year: **meaningful children’s participation, climate change, safer communities, and education**. We demonstrate how working with children in various spaces through events, processes, and campaigns showcases investing in children as a pathway toward achieving sustainable development.

One of our key initiatives, the SDGs Academy for Children, reached over **4,700 children**, including those in Sri Lanka and Kenya, with education on sustainable development. Through our Right to Peace Programme, we reached over **1,300 people** in communities in Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, and Tanzania through peace actions led by youth and faith actors. By cultivating strategic alliances, we mounted advocacy efforts and accompanied faith actors’ engagement leading up to the pivotal **2023 SDG Summit**. We are especially proud of the spaces created to meaningfully involve children and amplify their voices. These and other achievements highlighted in the report are a testament to the power



Africa Children Summit, April, 2023, Nairobi, Kenya

of collaboration, the dedication of our partners and team at Arigatou International, and the generosity of our donors.

### The Power of Collaboration

Our work would not be possible without support and collaboration. Together with other organisations, communities, and individuals, we form a powerful network committed to creating a brighter future for children. The collective impact of our efforts is amplified through partnerships, enabling us to reach more children and communities in need. We are deeply grateful for the trust and support of our sister initiatives at Arigatou International, members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), partners, and donors, whose contributions form the backbone of our work. Your investment in our mission is an investment in real change, and we are honored to have you by our side.

### Looking Ahead

As we look to the future, our resolve to end childhood poverty and advance children's rights remains stronger than ever. End Child Poverty is committed to expanding our programs, reaching more children, and advocating for policies that prioritise their well-being. We are dedicated to ensuring that children are at the heart of everything we do. While the challenges are significant, so are the opportunities. By continuing to invest in children, we can create a world where every child has the chance to reach their full potential.

In conclusion, *"Transforming Lives: The Power of Investing in Children"* is not just a title; it is a call to action. It reminds us that the choices we make today will shape the world of tomorrow. At End Child Poverty, we are dedicated to making those choices count. We invite you to join us on this journey, to be part of the change, and to witness the incredible impact of investing in children.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our mission.

Sincerely,



**Fred Nyabera**

Director, Arigatou International—End Child Poverty

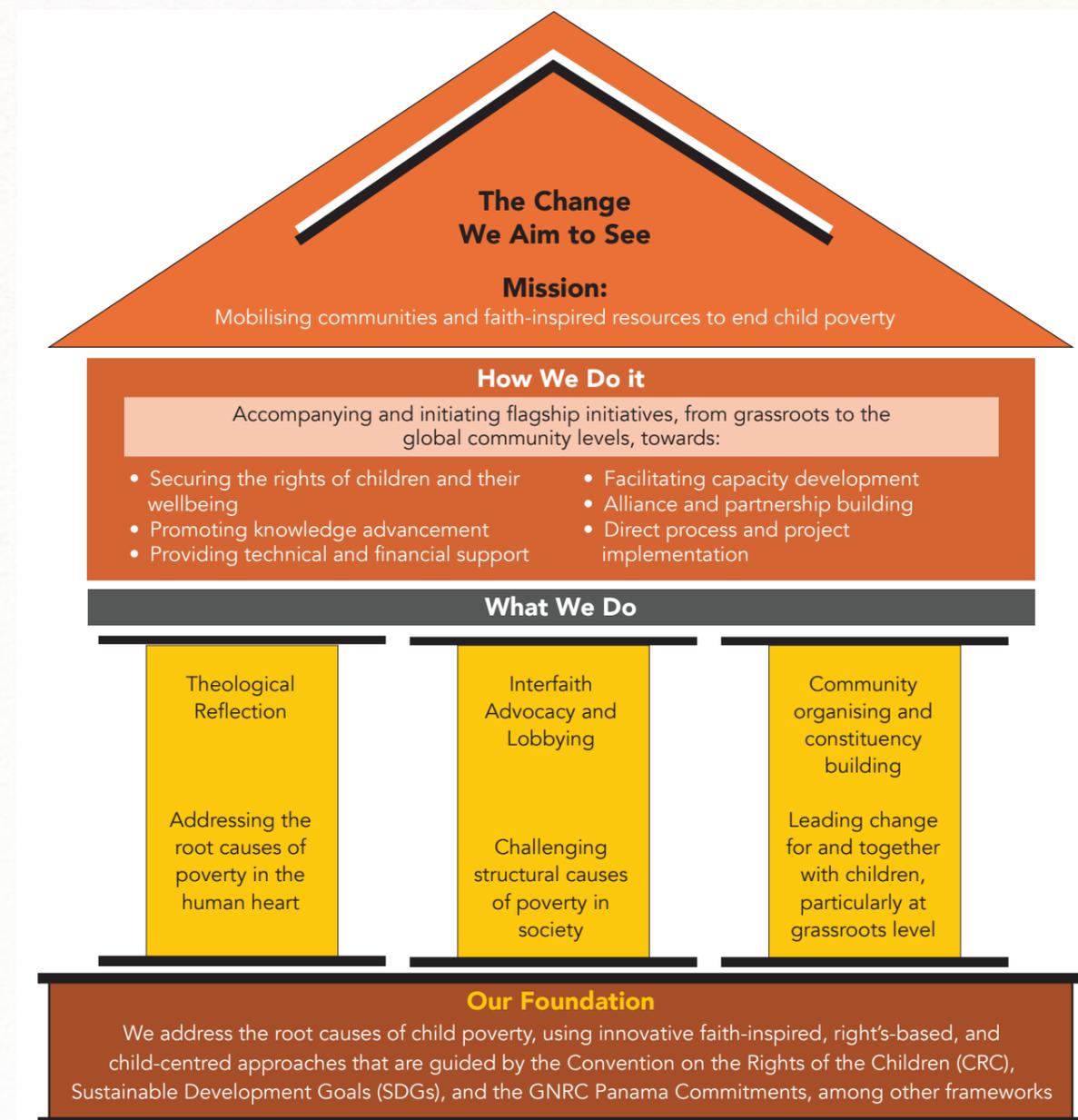


## 2.0 ENVISIONING A WORLD FREE OF CHILD POVERTY

End Child Poverty is the interfaith initiative of Arigatou International, which mobilises communities and faith-inspired resources to overcome poverty that affects children, for the dignity and wellbeing of every child.

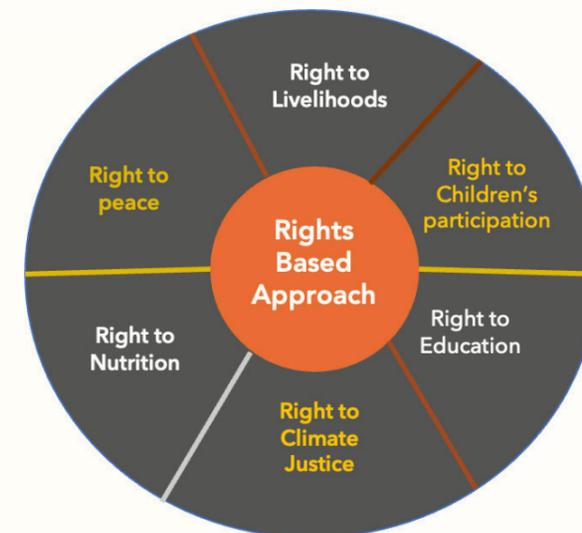
### Our Approaches

End Child Poverty addresses the root causes of poverty in the human heart, and the systemic structural causes of poverty in society. Our multi-pronged approach is faith-inspired and rights-based, and it puts children at the heart of all that we do.



□ **A faith-inspired approach:** We mobilise communities towards theological reflection, interfaith advocacy and lobbying, and community organising and constituency building – all geared towards ending child poverty. Together, we develop flagship initiatives from grassroots to global levels, to actualise these processes. We further promote knowledge advancement relevant to ending child poverty. At the core of this work are faith communities and faith-inspired resources.

□ **A rights-based approach:** Our work is guided by a rights-based approach, anchored on universal rights frameworks including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Panama Commitments on Ending Violence Against Children. For this strategic period, our efforts were focused on securing the children's rights to meaningful participation; adequate nutrition; quality education; equality and inclusion; climate action; peace; and overall sustainable development and livelihoods for their caregivers.



□ **A child-centered approach:** Our work is designed to respect and respond to children's rights, needs

and abilities, with view to overcome child poverty and promote children's wellbeing. Guided by our Arigatou International global ethos, we are "All for Children."

### Our Key Institutions

Through End Child Poverty, Arigatou International has established the **End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre** and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Academy for Children**. Both provide safe spaces for learning, innovation, community mobilisation and community building.



□ **The End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre:** This is a regional and global hub for research, networking, resource repository, and knowledge dissemination dedicated to addressing child poverty. The Knowledge Centre, with its physical location at the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement headquarters in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and its online presence on the End Child Poverty website, aims to enhance the capacities of organisations working to reduce child poverty worldwide. The Knowledge Centre is collaborative initiative of Arigatou International—End Child Poverty and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.



### Key Achievements of the End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre

- 

Global launch event of the Knowledge Centre during the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP), 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014.
- 

Establishment of the Meethotamulla Children's Empowerment Centre and supporting its ensuing activities, led by the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.
- 

Supporting the COVID-19 pandemic response in 2020/21, including awareness raising efforts.
- 

Establishment of the Model Classroom of the SDGs Academy for Children and supporting its various programme activities.
- 

Cultivating partnerships and collaboration with various national, regional and global organisations.

- **The SDGs Academy for Children by Arigatou International:** Intentional about investing in children by providing meaningful safe spaces for their participation, we conceived the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Academy for Children by Arigatou International. It is a safe space and a programme to teach children sustainable development, and spur innovation by and together with children, towards realising sustainable development. It aims to provide children with easy-to-use, multi-faith learning tools on the United Nations (UN) Agenda 2030 for sustainable development, and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We believe that achievement of the SDGs will be a breeding ground for a sustainable world with children's wellbeing at the core.

sustainable world, in which everyone has their right to fulfill their potential.

- Interaction with the SDGs Academy for Children content is categorised into 4 age groups: for children below 6 years, children aged 6 to 9, 10 to 13, and 14 to 17 years.

The **virtual and physical spaces** of the SDGs Academy for Children provide models for collaborative co-creation and innovation by children. These spaces, both physical and virtual, enable the delivery of the SDGs Academy for Children programmes.

- Visit the virtual SDGs Academy for Children, through our End Child Poverty website: [SDGsforChildren.online](https://SDGsforChildren.online)

### More about ... The SDGs Academy for Children

- The SDGs Academy for Children adopts the **Global Development Education** (GDE) approach, which uses action learning to enable children to develop knowledge, skills, values and attitudes needed for securing a just

- The virtual and physical spaces of the SDGs Academy for Children are organised into 5 hubs: the **Knowledge** Hub; **Capacity** Hub; **Innovations and Solutions** Hub; **Faith and Dialogue** Hub; and the **Fun and Media** Hub.

- These 5 hubs of the SDGs Academy for Children correspond to the 5 P's of the SDGs:

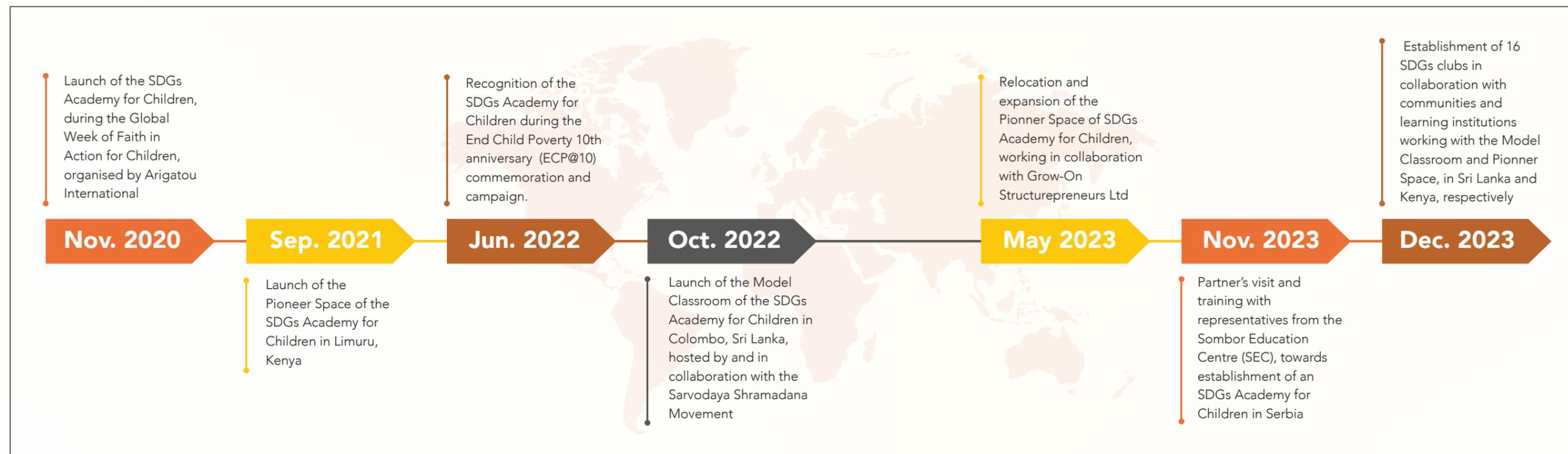
**People, Planet, Prosperity, Partnerships, and, Partnerships.**

- Led by End Child Poverty, Arigatou International has currently established 2 physical spaces of the SDGs Academy for Children, the **Pioneer Space**, in Limuru, **Kenya**, in collaboration with Grow-on Structurepreneurs Ltd; and the **Model Classroom** in Colombo, **Sri Lanka**, in collaboration with the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement.
- Efforts are currently underway to establish the 3<sup>rd</sup> physical space, the **School of Goodwill**, in Sombor, **Serbia**, in collaboration with the Sombor Education Centre (SEC), a member of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Serbia. Establishment of multiple physical spaces of the Academy, uniquely positions participating communities to respond to local issues, while leveraging our development and innovation model.



Learning session at the SDGs Academy for children in Kenya.

**Key milestones: Physical spaces of the SDGs Academy for Children**



### 3.0 CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE OF TRANSFORMATION: Investing in Children's Participation

Arigatou International fosters and promotes meaningful children's participation and empowerment, as fundamental right of each child. This right is espoused in the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC), which places great emphasis in prioritising the best interests of children and involving them to the fullest extent possible in decision-making processes. In addition, our mandate is oriented towards securing the wellbeing, and protecting the inherent dignity of every child. These principles form part of the core foundation of shaping our End Child Poverty work, which recognises the importance of ensuring effective and meaningful engagement of children.



Learning session at the SDGs Academy for Children in Sri Lanka.

We recognise that investing in children constitutes meaningfully providing safe spaces for them to share their voices, empowering and supporting them to develop actions towards ending child poverty and achieving their wellbeing in general. Overall, we view meaningful children participation as investing in children as well. Investing in integrating and mainstreaming children's agency, and cultivating efforts towards the meaningful participation of children, can lead to highly beneficial results.

*By involving children, working for and working children in developing solutions to address poverty, we all stand a better chance of eradicating child poverty everywhere.*

To realise such gains, we have created specific avenues for children to learn, grow, interact with one another and their wider community, and to engage in actions leading to the eradication of child poverty. These flagship initiatives include the **Children's Solutions Lab (CSL)**, established in collaboration with Arigatou International—Ethics Education for Children, and our emerging **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Academy for Children** by Arigatou International. Furthermore, we emphasise the meaningful inclusion and participation of children in our community mobilisation, including the **"Together We Can End Child Poverty Worldwide" campaign**, which entails the global commemoration of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP), 17<sup>th</sup> October.

#### Why is Meaningful Child Participation Important to End Child Poverty?

- **The right of every child:** At its core, meaningful child participation entails actively involving children in decision-making processes that affect their lives. This is a fundamental right of each and every child. Meaningful participation forms the bedrock of rights-based approaches to working with children and their communities, combined with other tenets such as accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment and legality.
- **Shaping the future:** The future we are shaping is driven by the actions we take today. As such,

nurturing positive and ethical values in children - such as empathy, kindness, compassion and critical thinking - will equip them to tackle the root causes of poverty in the human heart - including

fear, ignorance, hatred and greed. Moreover, we can maximise this present opportunity to enable children to live sustainably today, so that they can continue to do so in the future.

- **All-of-society solutions:** Child poverty is pervasive and multi-dimensional. In every country globally, there are expressions of child poverty. Child poverty not only affects children, but its adverse impacts ripple throughout all of society. Children constitute nearly half of the global population of people who are multi-dimensionally poor. This all-of-society challenge, requires an all-of-society approach in developing workable solutions.

#### Children's Solutions Lab

The Children's Solutions Lab is a meaningful child participation space and process, supporting young people in taking ethical actions to address child poverty in their communities. The Children's Solutions Lab provides opportunity for children to lead, develop and implement local ethical solutions tackling child poverty, with support from adults and wider community around them.

First launched in during Arigatou International's **Global Week of Faith in Action for Children** in 2020, the Children's Solutions Lab has resulted in more **120+ solutions** proposed by various children's groups from over than **35+ countries** globally. As a result, Arigatou International has so far supported **11 children's groups** in 2 phases, to lead their innovations in **Armenia, Cuba, Brazil, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Niger, Peru, Serbia** and **Zimbabwe**.

The supported solutions have included providing mobile or digital education access to children from marginalised communities and rural areas; advocating against child marriage and teenage pregnancy; advocating for the construction of toilets and improved sewerage systems in



school and urban slum settlements; establishing community gardens; and, provision of gifts, donations, counselling, and other forms of psycho-social support to children impacted by conflicts and poverty.

“

*"The Children Solutions Lab was an amazing experience for us, and there was great impact. We realised that with helping other people and bringing a smile on their faces, we too would feel good about it."*

— Arshuk, boy, 15 years, participant with the Home of the Sun, a Children's Solutions Lab group from Armenia.

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The Children's Solutions Lab is jointly spearheaded by the End Child Poverty and Ethics Education for Children initiatives of Arigatou International. In the past year, we collaborated towards:

- Accompanying implementation of the phase 2 of the Children's Solutions Lab, towards

successful completion of the actions by 6 children's groups from Armenia, Brazil, Ghana, Malawi, Niger and Zimbabwe.

- Co-hosting the phase II close-out process, including hosting a webinar for children and accompanying adults to share their experiences and lessons.
- Producing "Best Practice Cases: Empowering Children to Bring Positive Change to Their Communities", a story collection highlighting the children's perspectives and transformative impact of the Children's Solutions Lab since its inception in 2020.

To date, more than **1,500+ children** have participated or otherwise directly benefited from the Children's Solutions Lab through its various

phases – from designing to implementation of the child-led solutions.

Furthermore, children offer unique insights and solutions based on their lived experiences. Children can provide firsthand insights that adults might overlook, leading to more effective and targeted interventions. Through listening to children and embracing their participation, communities can leverage children's imagination, ideas and innovations, and maximise their individual and collective potentials. Engaging children can further strengthen community bonds and promote social cohesion, thereby building resilience to the root causes of child poverty and its effects.

- **Aligned to faith-inspired values:** The recognition of the inherent dignity and potential of each child, is one of the deeply held and widely shared values among many faith traditions and beliefs. As a interfaith initiative of Arigatou International, End Child Poverty leans on these positive values to influence how we relate and interact with children. Investing in deliberate spaces for children to meaningfully engage in building a better world, enables us to honour these values and to affirm their dignity.

- **Empowered to change:** Investing in the meaningful participation of children towards eradicating child poverty, has a high potential in empowering children. It recognises their voice, fosters a sense of agency and responsibility, and can help children develop confidence and leadership skills. Empowered children are more likely to become active and engaged citizens in the future, carrying forward these positive outcomes.

**"Seen, Heard, Engaged": The Africa Children Summit 2023**

The inaugural Africa Children Summit was unique space entirely designed for and by children to be "Seen, Heard and Engaged", seeking to amplify children's participation in societal life

and continental policy outcomes. The summit enabled children to discuss pertinent matters concerning them such as education, climate change, violence against children, online child protection, and health, and possible solutions. The summit welcomed policy makers, public official, members of civil society organisations, and parents and caregivers, to listen to and dialogue with the children.

Held in **Nairobi, Kenya** from 10<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> April 2023, this summit brought together over 400+ people from **9 countries** (Mali, Kenya, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), and over **400+ additional participants** joining virtually from a host of countries across Africa and beyond.

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*"Child participation is our right and not a privilege; nothing for us without us. We would like to be partners in decision making. However, we are concerned that we are not included in decision making on matters that concern us, especially children in hard to reach places, in vulnerable situations and children who are out of school. We are concerned that adults are not aware of the importance of children participation so they are not able to involve us. ... Children should be given time and opportunity to meet various leaders who influence policies that concern children. This way children can give them their views and they will be put into action."*

*Excerpt from the Inagural Africa Children Summit, 10th – 12th April 2023, Outcome Statement, developed and presented by children.*

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Africa Children Summit, April, 2023, Nairobi, Kenya.

Notable advocacy engagement included integrational conversations between the children and the Vice Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Prof. Phillip D. Jaffé, the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children (SRSG VAC), Dr. Najat Maalla M’Jid, and officials from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Wellbeing of the Child (ACERWC). The SRSG VAC, Dr. Najat M’Jid, emphasised that, "Children are the present and the future. We are here as duty bearers to not only to listen but to take into account all the matters you (children) have put across," continuing to state, "... children are not

a problem that needs to be solved, they are a strong human capital that should be invested in".

From planning the event, to leading the session discussions, and developing the summit's outcome statement, the process was led by children, with support from accompanying adults. The host and main anchor of the Africa Children's Summit 2023 was Mtoto News International, with support from several co-sponsoring organisations, including Arigatou International.

“... children are not a problem that needs to be solved, they are a strong human capital that should be invested in”

❑ **Improved policy outcomes:** When children are involved in the decision-making process, the policies and programmes designed with their inputs can better align with their actual needs, challenges, abilities and interests. Such informed and responsive interventions are more likely to be resource-effective and sustainable, thus securing a higher chance of success.

**Africa Union Child Participation Platform**

Led by the Africa Union Commission (AUC) and Mtoto News International, Arigatou International—End Child Poverty co-hosted a children’s interactive consultation for the African Union Child Participation Platform (AUCPP). This AUCPP consultation provided a safe space and structured mechanism to engage with the policies, accountability mechanisms, and reflect on some the processes of the Africa Union related to child participation and safeguarding. The AUCPP consultation resulted in:

- The children proposing a roadmap for their 2024 activities within the platform
- Children’s validation of the draft Africa Union guidelines on child participation and child safeguarding.

- Children electing their AUCPP coordination and leadership team from various regional economic blocs of the Africa Union.
- Gathering children’s recommendations targeted towards enhancing meaning children’s participation and safeguarding at the Africa Union – including calls for the to children’s parliaments to be domiciled within the respective National Parliamentary systems, and provisions for financing child participation in policy-making processes within the respective national budgets.

Held from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023, at our **SDGs Academy for Children Pioneer Space, in Limuru, Kenya**, this convening brought together over **60+ children** and adults from **13 African countries**. The 4-days consultation further engaged several collaborating organisations to facilitate the sessions and accompany the children, including, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Vision, Plan International, and Child Fund International.

“When children are involved in the decision-making process, ... their inputs can better align with their actual needs, challenges, abilities and interests”



Coimbatore Peace festival by Shanti Ashram, India.



Trilateral partnership of regional faith based organisations side event at the high level political forum in New York, 2023.

❑ **Modelling a workable approach:** Arigatou International—End Child Poverty emphasise meaningful children’s participation, practically implementing this in our strategies and programming, as a way to positively model that it works. We share children’s recommendations and the lessons we are learning with other community actors, to continue mobilising actions that lead to child poverty eradication.

**India Poverty Solutions**

India Poverty Solutions is an innovative **initiative driven by children and youth**, aiming to unite communities and find simple, yet effective solutions to end child poverty. The core principle of this initiative is to empower children and youth to lead the way in developing and implementing poverty-alleviation solutions within their communities, It is built on the foundational commitment to empower ‘children as agents of change’.

The program offers various solutions to address child poverty, focusing on children’s rights to **education, health, participation, food, protection, and wellbeing**. One of practical approaches of the programme involves the institution-wide advocacy on inform children the impact of poverty in a child’s life, and to activate

children to establish their own traditional savings mechanism known as the “*anundiyaalor hundi*.” Through this system, young people collectively save money over a designated period of time - usually 100 days – after which they decide where to invest their savings outcomes. With support from participating organisations, the young volunteers then manage the allocation of their funds towards members needs, their families, and supporting the various solutions aimed at ending child poverty. This approach fosters a sense of collective responsibility among families and communities, empowering children and youth to realise their potential and make a positive impact with the resources available to them.

Starting in **Coimbatore**, the program has now expanded to **16 other states** in India, with currently **141,449 young volunteers** from various faith traditions and across different sectors joining hands to participate in the savings mechanism, and to led in the implementation of the solutions. In the past year alone, **14,436 children** were reached through the advocacy actions of the programme, with **1,125 children** directly engaging in the practical savings mechanism of the initiative, as “**Poverty Solutions Ambassadors**”.

India Poverty Solutions is supported and anchored by **Shanti Ashram**, a member of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) India. It was launched in 2012 jointly by Shanti Ashram and Arigatou International — End Child Poverty. Since inception, we have worked with

Shanti Ashram and other partners to provide seed funding towards supporting and scaling-up this impactful initiative. Resultantly, this model has been successfully replicated in Nepal, led by the Peace Service Centre (Shanti Sewa Ashram).



“We learn about the SDGs in my school but here (at the Academy), I have learnt more about them (the SDGs) and the actions we can take to achieve and understand the SDGs, like creating the sustainable village”  
 – Jeremy, child from Kenya at the SDGs Academy residential learning camp

## 4.0 CLIMATE ACTION: INVESTING IN A LIVEABLE PLANET

More than ever, climate change and its devastating effects are rife, including its severe impact on children and child poverty in particular. Further, it has become evident that climate change and its negative impacts threaten to pull back gains made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The impacts of climate shocks can be direct, including physical damage to homes, destruction of household livelihoods and disruption of water or energy supplies; or indirect, such as causing households to reduce spending on education, healthcare and food. In addition, climate shocks can lead to massive displacement, consequently causing migrant children to become more vulnerable to poverty and deprivation.

While climate change is a global issue and needs collective effort to address it, people living in poverty and especially children, bear the greatest brunt of its effects. Studies have shown that the impacts of climate change will not be evenly felt around the world - people living in the poorest countries will be first and most significantly impacted. This is because communities living in poverty are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards, are often more dependent on natural resource-based livelihoods such as agriculture, and have fewer resources to cope with climate impacts. Moreover, it is widely observed that child poverty is both a driver of vulnerability as well as a result of overall climate risk, creating a cycle from which it is hard to escape.

The Global Coalition to End Child poverty in its policy brief, **“A Disproportionate Burden: Children In Poverty Bearing The Brunt Of The Climate Crisis (2023)”** establishes that the climate crisis is

threatening children’s rights and wellbeing, while jeopardising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Threats to realising Goal 1 of the SDGs – ending extreme poverty everywhere, including ending extreme child poverty and reducing multidimensional child poverty by at least half by 2030 – are particularly imminent. The paper dissects the intersection between climate change and child poverty and notes that it is increasingly evident that it is impossible to tackle climate change without considering child poverty, and vice versa. It is evident that more needs to be done to avert the dire impacts of climate change, and there is need to involve every voice and sector in these efforts.

Within the reporting period, we collaborated with our partners in supporting meaningful children participation in climate change actions and discourses. Further, Arigatou International—End Child Poverty was involved in championing for the voices of faith communities on climate change, informed by the influential role of faith communities in shaping values, beliefs, and actions.

“The child is calling for us religious leaders to do more, to do our best”  
 – The Right Rvd. Julio Murray, Archbishop and Primate, Anglican Church of Central America



### Africa Children's Climate Summit

Recognising the imperative need to meaningfully involve children in the discourse on climate change, the **Africa Children's Climate Summit** was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2023. More than **250 children** from various East, West, and Southern African nations participated in-person, while other participants joined virtually. The Africa Children's Climate Summit marked a significant milestone in providing a safe and inclusive platform for children to express their perspectives, visions and recommendations regarding the climate crisis, while effectively amplifying their voices on the global stage. It culminated in a set of recommendations presented to policymakers.

“

*“Climate change is a pandemic. The best people that give solutions to climate change is us - children. Climate change is affecting us, and we are more vulnerable due to our age. It is time for us to offer solutions.”*

— Phillipa, girl from Sierra Leone participating at the Africa Children's Climate Summit.

The Africa Children's Climate Summit was spearheaded by Mtoto News International and received support from diverse partners,

including Arigatou International, among many others. To enhance the children's grasp of climate change, we partnered with Mtoto News International to publish and disseminate child-friendly versions of climate education booklets, “An Africa Fit for Children: Our Voice in the Fight Against Climate Change.”

This Africa Children's Climate Summit was convened at the cusp of the landmark **Africa Climate Summit and Africa Climate Week**, which took place from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> September in **Nairobi, Kenya**, co-hosted by the Government of the Republic of Kenya and the African Union Commission (AUC). These events brought together thousands of actors including Heads of State and Government, policymakers, civil society organisations, the private sector, multilateral institutions, children and youth, with the aim to harness discussion and foster collaboration, towards designing and catalysing actions to tackle climate change in Africa. Convened under the theme, ‘Driving Green Growth and Climate Finance Solutions for Africa and the World’, these events were as part of a series of high-level regional engagements leading up to the COP28 (The 2023 UN Climate Change Conference).

### Localising faith-based actions in addressing climate change

Through the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) Africa Voice, we secured a high-level advocacy side event at Faith Pavillion of the COP 28, “Localising Faith Action for Human Security in the Face of Climate Change: An African Perspective.”

The advocacy event focused on exploring African perspectives on the nexus between climate change and human security, while showcasing local initiatives and best practices by faith communities in addressing climate change impacts and promoting human security in the continent. It sought to facilitate dialogue and partnerships among faith communities,



Africa children climate summit, September, 2023, Nairobi, Kenya

policymakers, and practitioners; generating high-level policy recommendations for transformative actions in addressing climate change. Faith actors further committed to promoting education and awareness among their congregations and communities, to spur informed behavioural change.

The PaRD Africa event brought together diverse stakeholders, including faith leaders, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society representatives, whose discussions and reflections culminated in a joint advocacy statement, **The Interfaith Call to Action for Climate Policies in Africa**.

### What is .... COP 28?

The 2023 United Nations Climate Change Conference / Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), otherwise known as COP28, was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 30<sup>th</sup> November – 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023. On 3<sup>rd</sup> December, world religious leaders, scientists and global political officials came together for the inauguration of the first-ever Faith Pavilion at a COP, to discuss the role of faith communities and religious institutions in addressing the climate crisis. It was on this purview that the PaRD Africa Voice advocacy side-event was organised.

“

*“The fate of our planet and the well-being of future generations depend on the choices we make today. ... Together, we can and must build a future where the Earth is healed, where justice prevails, and where all life flourishes. Let our faith guide our actions, and let our actions inspire transformative change.”*

— Excerpt from “The Interfaith Call to Action for Climate Policies in Africa”, joint advocacy statement issued by the PaRD Africa Voice at the COP 28, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023

Overall, accelerated collective action is urgently needed so that the climate crisis does not plunge the most vulnerable further into the depths of poverty. Rather, society should protect children living in poverty and their communities, through relevant policy reforms and actions, and most importantly, involving of children as agents of change in combating climate crisis.

### What is ...The PaRD Africa Voice

The PaRD Africa Voice is a regional expression of the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD). PaRD is a multi-lateral, multi-stakeholder platform of national, regional and global organisations across various sectors, including faith-inspired organisations, governments, intergovernmental organisations, private and public sectors. It seeks to promote sustainable development through inclusive dialogue and cooperation. Through the PaRD Africa Voice, we aim to engage religious actors and leverage their influence, values, and networks to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Arigatou International—End Child Poverty provides leadership within the PaRD Africa Voice, and was instrumental in organising the aforementioned COP28 side-event, as well as sponsoring the participation of faith actors to attend it. We also represent Arigatou International in the global PaRD Steering Board.



*We pray for the children who experience violence at home, that you grant wisdom to those around them so they can protect them from all harm*  
 – Children prayer, Nicaragua



## 5.0 EDUCATION NOW: INVESTING IN BETTER EDUCATION FOR ALL CHILDREN

Education plays a crucial role in breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering children. Quality and inclusive education has been deemed as one of the fastest and surest ways to pull children and entire communities out of poverty. Access to education directly corresponds with the levels of development, as evidenced by measures such as the Human Development Index, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Multidimensional Poverty Index. Indeed, following the theme of the **International Day of Education in 2023 - To Invest in People, Prioritise Education**. Well put, to invest in children is to invest in education and by extension, sustainable development.



Learning session at the SDGs Academy for Children in Sri Lanka.

We believe that education not only provides knowledge, but also equips children with the tools to exercise their rights, improve their well-being, and contribute to society. With the growing shocks brought on by climate change, violent conflicts, and the residual impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the adverse impacts to education are rife globally. These global upheavals and opportunities necessitate innovative solutions investing in children’s education and outcomes leading to overcoming child poverty. For the vast majority of children at risk, helping them access and stay in school is both a practical and strategic need.

for Sustainable Development, we actively promote innovative initiatives to ensure access to education for at-risk children. Our efforts focus on advocating for quality, universal basic education for all children, with a particular emphasis on those in vulnerable situations such as conflict-affected areas, children living as refugees, as orphans and on the streets.

Our End Child Poverty **Better Education** programme aims to promote this universal children’s right to education, by mobilising communities towards the provision of **scholarships**, including through payment of tuition or school fees for children; **supporting teachers and volunteers** to provide quality education, including supplementing teachers’ allowances or salaries; and, provision of

By aligning with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the 2030 Agenda

**school supplies** such as books, school uniform and **nutritious meals** for children, through a school-based meals programme.

In addition, we seek that faith actors benefit from the knowledge we gather, document and share, on relevant good practices related to securing quality education for all children.

### 5 years on, the Meethotamulla Children's Empowerment Centre

In Sri Lanka, the Meethotamulla Children's Empowerment Centre serves children, their families and wider community in the area of Meethotamulla, which initially started as an urban slum settlement, with an estimated 200 children from 140 households. The particular area had a massive, open dumping ground, which affected the overall safety health of the residents. The collapse of the garbage dump in 2017, destroyed houses and devastated the lives of the residents. During the rainy season, children were unable to access the schools around them, due to flooding. Drug use and violence was also rampant in the area. These factors, coupled with other forms of poverty, negatively affected the children.

It was in response to these challenges that the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement (Sarvodaya) and Arigatou International – jointly through our End Child Poverty Knowledge Centre – established the Meethotamulla Children's Empowerment Centre in 2018, led by the community members.

Today, through resettlement programmes by the government of Sri Lanka, the residents of the slum were relocated to different housing areas. The children continue to use and benefit from the Children's Empowerment Centre. Within the reporting period, more than **1,110+ children** received **supplementary classes** in Sinhala, Tamil and English languages, as well as Arts, Science and Mathematics, provided by volunteers from Sarvodaya and the local community at the Centre.

The Centre further facilitated mentorship for the children and conversations on life-skills. In addition, **1,125+ children** benefitted from **educational material** donations, and **90 children** benefitted directly from receiving educational **scholarships**. Our aim is to sustain support until the children reached complete their secondary school education. The Centre remains a prime example of a practical community solution that uses locally available resources and knowledge.

## Education for Sustainable Development

In collaboration with our partners, we delivered over **30+ learning and awareness sessions** at the **SDGs Academy for Children**, reaching **4,738 people**, majority of whom were children. These sessions were mainly delivered from and through the physical spaces of the Academy – the Pioneer Space in Kenya, the Model Classroom in Sri Lanka, and the SDGs Clubs in both countries.

The SDGs Academy for Children have been meaningful spaces in which children have shared their voices and taken actions to combat climate change. Learning and training sessions at the Academy have been intentionally modelled to provide opportunities for children to take actions towards tackling climate change. From **tree planting** sessions with children at the Pioneer



School visit in Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya.

Space in Kenya, to **sea turtle conservation** and **beach cleaning** activities with children at the SDGs Clubs in Sri Lanka, the SDGs Academy for Children has supported children in not just being recipients of climate change efforts but being part of those efforts.

Similarly, training sessions were organised at the Pioneer Space, on **Robotics and Drones** technology, and how these can be used towards the realisation of the SDGs. Through critical and design thinking processes, children were guided to

develop models of sustainable cities, to demonstrate their understanding of how these technologies can be put in practice.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) prioritise education - formal, informal and non-formal education - as a means to end all forms of poverty, and as an end goal in itself. With less than 7 years left to realize the Agenda 2030 and its SDGs, we need to consider – **are we on track to achieving education for all?** The SDGs Academy for Children and our overall Better Education Programme continues to respond to this clarion call.



*For the achievement of the SDGs, we must consider the ability of local actors to connect the local to the global, and the global to the local and this is exactly what religious communities are capable of doing*  
– Khushwant Singh, Head of Secretariat, International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD).





## 6.0 SAFER COMMUNITIES: INVESTING IN PEACE FOR ALL

There is sufficient evidence that child poverty can easily be attributed to the growing conflicts. End Child Poverty strongly believes that peace is a prerequisite and a necessary condition for the redress of poverty. Our focus has majored on empowering communities to transform violent conflicts, as well as advancing Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) and Social Cohesion. We believe that building peaceful societies is a step closer to ending child poverty.

### Regional Peace Programme

Through the Eastern Africa Regional Peace Programme (RPP), we work towards promoting **freedom of religion or belief** (FoRB), fostering **social cohesion**, and **preventing, countering, and transforming violent extremism** (P/C/TVE). We accomplish this through constituency building, promoting advocacy actions, research and knowledge sharing, and fostering networking

**and Social Cohesion”** the forum fostered discussion and learning around the linkages between FoRB, youth economic development and peace. It included exposure visits to the Pioneer Space of the SDGs Academy for Children and Tetu Farm in Limuru, Kenya. The visits bolstered practical learning about sustainable development, youth enterprise and the circular economy.

In the year, End Child Poverty supported youth leaders and faith actors to facilitate 7 interfaith and intergenerational dialogues, alongside grassroots peace actions, in **Kenya** (Mombasa and Nairobi), **South Sudan** (Juba), **Tanzania** (Dar es Salaam and Unguja–Zanzibar) and **Uganda** (Kampala). The peace actions spanned from community-led interfaith visits to various places of worship; community town-hall with policy makers; interreligious dialogue between minority and majority faith groups; social media training for content creation on peace; to workshops on economic empowerment and livelihoods for women. These interventions reached more than **1,200+ people directly**, including **107 children**.

Further, we organised and facilitated our RPP **6<sup>th</sup> Regional Youth in Action Forum**, bringing together **25 youth leaders** from Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania, from 19<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> May 2023, in Nairobi, Kenya. Convened under the theme, **“Youth in Action: Youth Economic Development for Peace, Freedom of Religion of Belief (FoRB)**

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*“Youth in Action was a life-changing experience that has given me new perspectives, skills and connections. One of the most impactful aspects of the program was learning about Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). I realised how important it is to respect and protect the rights of people from different faiths and backgrounds, and how diversity can enrich our society. I also learned how to advocate for FoRB in my own community and beyond, and how to engage in constructive dialogue with people who have different views.”*

— Ms. Zainab Ahmed, youth leader, Youth in Action Kenya

”



Interfaith dialogue in Zanzibar, November 2023.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Regional YIA Forum was preceded by the **Eastern and Southern Africa Young Leaders Learning and Exchange (Youth Exchange)**, led by the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) Eastern Africa Regional office, in collaboration with the ACT Church of Sweden, Arigatou International—End Child Poverty and other partnering organisations. The exchange forum brought together **42 youth leaders** from **13 countries** in the Eastern and Southern Africa regions, with the primary objective of peer-peer experience sharing among the youth on peacebuilding, advocacy for economic justice and responsible resource governance, as well as enhancing their knowledge on opportunities for increasing sources of livelihood. Both forums served as opportunities to collaborate with fellow RPP partners, while expanding spaces for youth to lead peace advocacy actions.

The Eastern Africa Regional Peace Programme (RPP) is both a programme and a nested partnership

spearheaded by the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) and 6 other organisations, including Arigatou International—End Child Poverty. The current RPP reach covers 12 countries in the East, Great Lakes and Horn of Africa region, being Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. The 8 RPP nested partners are the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), African Council of Religious Leaders—Religions for Peace (ACRL—RfP), Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa (FECCLAHA), Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR), International Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Development in Africa (IPHRD – Africa), Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) regional office, and Arigatou International—End Child Poverty.



Youth In Action forum in Kenya, 2023.



Let's extend our thoughts and feelings to every child who is going through immense suffering in in conflicted affected areas

– Venerable Galkande Dhamananda Thero, Executive Director, Walpola Rahula Instituter for Buddhist studies



## 7.0 PARTNERSHIPS: INVESTING IN THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Collaboration is the hallmark of Arigatou International—End Child Poverty. We cultivate strategic partnerships to amplify advocacy, as well as our other key actions. Together, we tackle the underlying causes of poverty in society, such as inequitable resource distribution, corruption, poor governance, violence against children, and violent conflicts. Our aim was to influence policy and social change, through high-level ‘upstream’, and grassroots-level ‘downstream’ actions.

In 2023, we were proactive in furthering partnerships that open doors to new possibilities, while at the same time closely working with current partners.

- **Partnership for Programme implementation:** Joint programming and provision of technical support, particularly with grassroots partners including GNRC members and other partners.

### Project Nutrition+

Project Nutrition+ is a **community level process** that is aimed at improving the wellbeing of families. The project focuses on whole families with specific focus on the most vulnerable to malnutrition. It aims to improve the wellbeing of families by integrating sustainable farming practices, nutrition education, and health outcomes at the household level. The project specifically targets vulnerable families, with a focus on children and mothers. It addresses the high rates of undernourishment in the East Africa Region, where approximately 30% of children suffer from stunted growth. Currently active in **Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda**, Project Nutrition+ provides nutrition education, trains clergy and farmers in sustainable agricultural practices, supports seed banks, and offers assistance to families with children under 5 years old to combat malnutrition.

Project Nutrition+ is a collaborative effort between the **Organisation of African Instituted Churches (OAIC)** and Arigatou International—End Child Poverty. Since commencement in 2012,

the Project Nutrition+ has mobilised and trained more than **8,000+ families** of smallholder farmers on agriculture that is linked to positive nutrition outcomes.

- **Partnership for Advocacy:** Participation in advocacy platforms and processes, development of policy agendas, endorsement of relevant advocacy inputs such as policy briefs and statements, and, engaging in advocacy campaigns.

### Advocacy for Adequate Social Protection and Decent Work

The **Global Coalition to End Child Poverty** comprises over 20 organisations dedicated to raising awareness about children living in poverty worldwide, and supporting global and national efforts to alleviate child poverty. Arigatou International—End Child Poverty aims to spotlight the work of faith communities and



support meaningful children's participation within the Coalition.

As part of the global efforts to commemorate the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (IDEP), on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023, we joined members of the Coalition in preparing and issuing an advocacy statement, **"A Call to Action to Expand Social Protection and Care Systems and Promote Decent Work to Address Child Poverty"**. This advocacy statement was aligned to the IDEP 2023 theme, 'Decent Work and Social Protection – Putting Dignity in Practice', and it was launched through an IDEP online global event organised by the Coalition. It is widely accepted that critical policy levers for investing in children and tackling child poverty are expansion of inclusive social protection, including child benefits, paid parental leave and enabling access to decent work for adults who bear responsibility to provide for children. Collectively, we called upon governments, businesses and the international community to:

- Expand access to inclusive social protection, including child benefits.
- Promote inclusive childcare and parental support systems, including paid parental leave and accessible and quality childcare for children and families in poverty.
- Promote a decent work agenda, including ensuring every worker has access to social



protection and adequate living wages, and young people receive relevant education and training opportunities.

We believe that securing favourable outcomes for children, as called for in the Coalition's advocacy statement, moves us closer to actualising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), besides squarely tackling some of the underlying causes and drivers of child poverty.

- **Partnership for Funding and Resource Mobilisation:** Securing funding and relevant resources to initiate, sustain, replicate or scale-up relevant actions addressing child poverty.

#### Scholarships at Amani Village of Hope, Kenya

The Amani Village of Hope in Siaya County, Kenya, provides wholistic care and housing for children affected by poverty and multiple vulnerabilities, including children who have been abandoned or neglected, children living with HIV/AIDS, and orphaned children. More than 120+ children currently call this safe space a home. In partnership with Arigatou International—End Child Poverty, the Amani Village of Hope provides more than 20+ scholarships annually, to enable children access to primary and secondary school education. Together, we have also raised funds to increase the number of scholarships provided, bringing in additional funding partners such as the Family Bank Foundation, in Kenya.

- **Partnership for Knowledge Advancement:** Participation in advisory and consultative forums, as well as knowledge, learning, experience, and information sharing platforms.

#### FoRB Learning Platform

Through our work in advancing social cohesion and freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), we are contributing knowledge resources to faith and civil society actors, including providing learning courses on the same. In this work, we have

benefitted from and collaborated with the FoRB Learning Platform to deliver the experience.

The FORB Learning Platform provides free-to-access courses, learning resources and training materials for individuals, communities, organisations and decision-makers. The learning platform aims to contribute to building a social, political and legal culture of freedom of religion or belief for all.

- **Partnership for Constituency Building:** Mobilising individuals and organisations to actively participate, including through co-funding relevant initiatives, building networks, and supporting capacity enhancement for institutional strengthening.

#### The Road to the 2023 SDG Summit

The **Africa Interfaith Initiative/ Faith Leaders Initiative on the Sustainable Development Goals (AFLI)** is a collaborative platform that promotes the involvement of faith communities and leaders in shaping the development agenda within and beyond Africa. Arigatou International—End Child Poverty is currently hosting the

Secretariat of the initiative, which is co-convened by the Organisation of Africa Instituted Churches (OAIC).

Within the reporting period, we supported AFLI efforts in mobilising faith actors' engagement in the **2023 SDG Summit** (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Summit), to be held in **New York**, from 18<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> September 2023. The platform believes that faith actors' participation in such fora is key to inspiring faith, hope, and transformative action for the SDGs.

As such we co-organised the platform's **Africa Faith Actors Consultation** in Nairobi, Kenya, on 5<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> September 2023, together with several AFLI participating organisations. This pre-summit consultation aimed to leverage the expertise, experiences, and collective strength of Africa Faith voices to inspire faith and hope, promote moral and spiritual imperatives, and amplify African voices at the 2023 SDG Summit. The pre-summit brought together more than **90+ representatives of AFLI participating organisations** including faith leaders, women, children and youth, and **20+ representatives of partners** from



Africa Children Summit, April, 2023, Nairobi, Kenya.

religious communities and other faith-based organizations, UN agencies, governments and civil society.

□ **The Tri-Lateral Partnership of Regional Faith-based Networks for the SDGs** is a partnership that involves faith-based networks from Africa, including AFLI, and similar platforms from Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean regions. Recognising the power of interreligious cooperation, the Trilateral Partnership has emerged as a catalyst for the faith engagement with the 2030 Agenda.

In line with this goal, Arigatou International collaborated with other organisations within the Trilateral Partnership, to organise and led a high-level parallel event during the 2023 SDG Summit on 18<sup>th</sup> September, in New York. This side-event was a build up of the AFLI pre-summit and similar faith actor's consultations held in other regions. Coupled up with the development of actionable recommendations and strengthened collaboration, the event stirred a collective motivation and strength, aimed at ultimately driving impactful and sustainable progress towards realisation of the SDGs.

Through these and similar platforms, we remain steadfast in supporting efforts by faith actors to actualise sustainable development and invest in building networks for the same.

Going forward, Arigatou International—End Child Poverty will continue to work with existing partners to promote and advocate for the wellbeing of children through the thematic areas; leverage on the influence of faith leaders to support and advocate for local, national, regional, continental and global level transformative actions; mobilise youth to tap into their demographic dividends to be agents for transformative actions; and explore new collaborations with strategic organisations and networks to address emerging dynamics that affect the wellbeing of children.



*Let's lift children's voices to the ears of decision makers*  
– Seidel Frederique, Programme Executive for Children's rights and WCC - UNICEF Partnerships manager.



## 8.0 TOGETHER WE CAN: INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

As we reflect on the past year at End Child Poverty, we are reminded of the profound impact that investing in children has on their present lives and future prospects. Our commitment to this cause is unwavering, and our efforts have yielded significant achievements, despite the challenges we face.

### Hope Amidst Challenges

In the past year, we **expanded our flagship initiatives**, most notably our SDGs Academy for Children, which reached over 4,000 people, including children, providing them with the knowledge and skills to advocate for their rights and contribute to sustainable development. Through strategic partnerships with more than 26 organisations, we amplified opportunities to listen to children and support their innovations. Our support for the Africa Union Child Participation platform consultations, the Africa Children's Summit, and the completion of the second phase of the Children's Solutions Lab, are testament to our dedication to **empowering young voices**.

Furthermore, we led and accompanied **high-level advocacy** at global, regional, and country levels, in collaboration with various stakeholders. This includes supporting faith actors' advocacy actions related to the 2023 SDGs Summit. Our communication

platforms have been instrumental in **sharing stories of change** and disseminating relevant information about ending child poverty. Additionally, we provided **technical programmatic support** and accompaniment to partners, including members of the Arigatou International's Gobar Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), the Africa Interfaith Initiative / Faith Leaders Initiative on the Sustainable Development Goals (ALFI), and our Youth in Action and faith actor's networks under the Eastern Africa Regional Peace Programme .

Despite our best efforts and those of many others, child poverty however continues to grow. According to statistics by the Global Coalition to End Child Poverty, an estimated **1 billion children are multidimensionally poor**, affected by the nexus of conflicts, climate change, hunger, and food insecurity. **45% of children in developing countries suffer at least one deprivation**, with Sub-Saharan Africa and South-East Asia experiencing the highest rates of monetary and multi-dimensional child poverty. **In the European Union countries, 24% of children are at risk of poverty and social exclusion**. These statistics underscore the urgency of our mission and the demand for continued and enhanced efforts. The wins we have collectively scored need to be consolidated and multiplied.

We have always been cognisant of the fact that ending child poverty and achieving sustainable development is daunting. However, we are confident that by working side by side with children and molding



“ This investment is more than a **moral imperative**, it is a strategic social and economic investment in our collective future, ensuring sustainable development, peace, shared prosperity and human security for all ”

robust partnerships, we can significantly alleviate child poverty and realise sustainable development.

### Future Goals

Looking ahead, we must shape sustainable development for future generations. The impact of emerging opportunities, including the increased use of data-driven technology such as artificial intelligence, must be considered. We advocate for robust social security systems and social protection floors that respond to the needs and rights of children and young people. Advocacy at national and community levels is crucial, and we emphasise the importance of working

together with children to find and develop solutions to combat child poverty. Meaningful child participation is key to our approach.

### A Call to Action

As we move forward, our commitment to investing in children remains steadfast. We call on policymakers, private and public sector organisations, and faith communities to join us in this vital endeavour. Together, we can ensure that every child reaches their full potential and contributes to a brighter, more sustainable future for all. Investing in children works, and your support is crucial in making this vision a reality.

Thank you for your continued dedication to ending child poverty. We remain indebted to you for your steadfast support in creating a better world for all children.

Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can end child poverty!

“

“I like the functioning of the Academy especially the sessions with children, it's much like how we work at Sombor Education Centre”

— Ivana Barac, GNRC Contact person, Serbia

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## 9.0 ABOUT US: ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL

### Arigatou International

Arigatou International works with people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds to promote children's rights and well-being at all levels — from the grassroots to the global. Arigatou International has 4 global initiatives: Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), Ethics Education for Children, Prayer and Action for Children, and End Child Poverty.

### Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

A global-scale interfaith network of organizations and individuals specifically dedicated to securing the rights and well-being of children everywhere, envisioning a world where every child survives and thrives.

### Ethics Education for Children

An initiative that advances values-based education for children with a transformative approach to interfaith and intercultural learning, placing children at the heart of all that we do and how we do it.

### Prayer And Action for Children

An initiative bringing together diverse religious leaders and faith communities to influence and advocate for the policy, social, and behavioral changes needed to end violence against children.

### End Child Poverty

The Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty (End Child Poverty) mobilises communities and faith-inspired resources to overcome poverty that affects children, for the dignity and wellbeing of every child.

We envision a world in which, each child lives free of poverty. A world where every child lives in dignity, and their rights and wellbeing are protected, promoted, and upheld.

We believe that together, we can end child poverty worldwide. As such, we work with communities, both individuals and many other like-minded organisations, to make this hope a reality.



*The shortest path to eradicating poverty in the long term is by starting with today's children*  
– Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President, Arigatou International.



## APPRECIATION

We are deeply thankful to all of you for making ending child poverty a reality and doable endeavor. We understand that the challenge of alleviating child poverty is daunting, but with you along the way, we keep making progress to guarantee every child a world free from poverty.

We appreciate each of you for your support, accompaniment, and encouragement. THANK YOU! Specifically, we thank all children whose ideas, actions, innovativeness, and recommendations inspired us throughout the year, to continue working to build meaningful child participatory spaces.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, especially members of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and faith communities around the world. We always welcome and cultivate partnerships for we know we cannot walk this journey alone.

We further thank our sister Arigatou International initiatives - the GNRC, Ethics Education for Children, and Prayer and Action for Children. Special thanks to our team in our headquarters in Tokyo and the Myochikai community for their tireless support.

Finally, hats off to the dedicated and talented staff members and volunteers working with End Child Poverty.

Thank you!



Partner learning and exchange visit at the SDGs Academy for Children in Kenya.

## MEET THE TEAM



Learning session at the SDGs  
Academy for Children in Kenya.





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