

**PRAYER AND ACTION FOR
CHILDREN**

**ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL
NEW YORK**

REBECA RIOS-KOHN

WEBINAR

March 4, 2020



Faith and Children's Rights:

A Multi-religious Study on the
Convention on the Rights of the Child

World Vision



Bahá'í
International
Community



World Council
of Churches

Religions for Peace

JOINT LEARNING INITIATIVE on
FAITH & LOCAL COMMUNITIES



Shanti Ashram

Gandhian center for development, learning and collaboration



INTERFAITH
ALLIANCE
FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

CRC Study:

Purpose

- Commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the CRC's adoption
- CRC Study from a multi-religious perspective from 7 religions is a unique contribution



Timeline

2019

Side event during the
Human Rights Council
Session in Geneva

National Consultations
with Children held in
Bosnia & Herzegovina,
India, Tanzania, Sri Lanka
and Uruguay

February

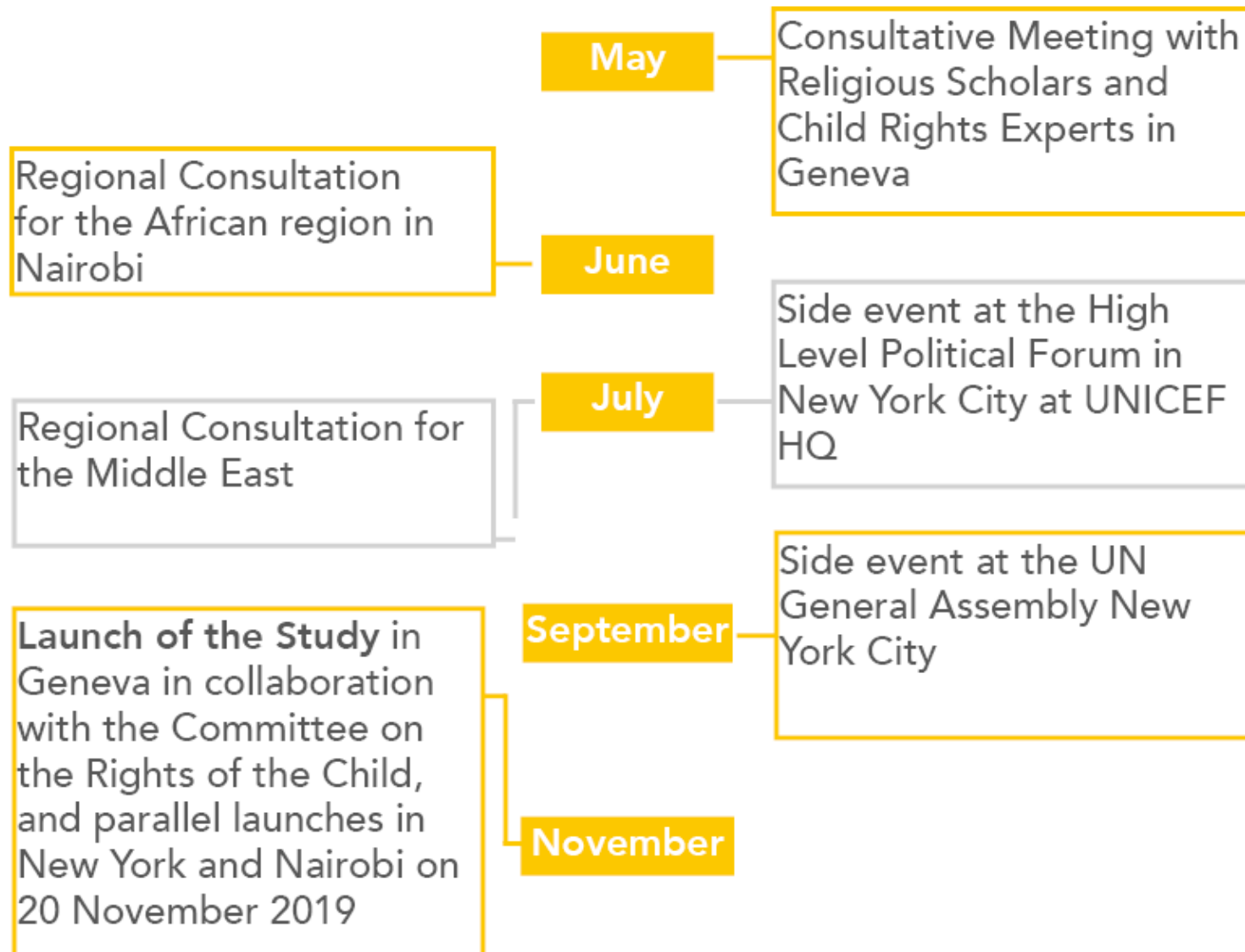
1st Meeting of the Study
Team in Tokyo

March

Regional Consultation
for Latin America in
Montevideo

April

Consultation in New York



CRC Study:

Aims

1

- **Multi-religious perspective** from a diversity of religious traditions, drawing primarily on the experience and traditions of 7 religions namely, Baha'i Faith, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Sikh Faith.



CRC Study:

Aims

2



- Addresses **common values** inherent in all the major religions which are reflected in the CRC's guiding principles.

CRC Study:

Aims

3

- Highlights the **important role played by religious leaders and faith communities** from their contributions during the CRC's ten-year drafting process, to their advocacy for its adoption by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and subsequent ratification by U.N. Member States, and to their promotion of the treaty's implementation during the past thirty years.



The CRC Study also...



- Reviews questions initially raised about the CRC by ratifying States including reservations and also raised by religious leaders consulted for this Study.

The CRC Study also...



- Highlights selected examples of the valuable contributions by faith communities in different parts of the world to the CRC's implementation, and identifies best practices, lessons learned and recommendations.

CRC Study: **Methodology**

- Diverse experts form writing team with research assistance
- Desk review of existing literature
- Consultations with diverse religious leaders and scholars in different regions of the world
- Focus Groups with Children held in 7 countries
- Survey sent out through the Global Network of Religions for Children
- Written contributions received from diverse religious groups

Nov. 19, 2019

Launching and Dissemination



- Presented to the international community in Buenos Aires, Geneva, Nairobi and New York
- Collaborated with **UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**
- Presented to **faith based organizations** and their networks – 2019-2020

Nov. 20, 2019

Launching and Dissemination



- Disseminated on the **Arigatou International Websites** and updated
- GNRC and World Day of Prayer and Action for Children, Ethics Education for Children

KEY FINDINGS

Shared Values

- The sanctity and dignity of human life is at the heart of the world's major religions and is also enshrined in the body of international human rights instruments including the Convention on the Rights of the Child



Respect for the value of human life and human dignity is a fundamental principle found in all religions

- The belief that all humans, including children, deserve respect and dignity without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, ancestry, gender, socio-economic status or other status is held in common. Religious texts can be found in the major religions in support of this principle.



Dignity of the Child

- All the major religions value the dignity of the child in their scriptures and beliefs. This was well articulated at the eighth Religions for Peace World Assembly (2006) in Kyoto, Japan where delegates came together, stating:
- *"We find strong consensus across our religious traditions about the inherent dignity of every person, including children. This requires that we reject all forms of violence against children and protect and promote the sanctity of life in every stage of a child's development. We believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children and we commit ourselves to take leadership in our religious communities and the broader society."*



Principles linking the CRC with religious values

- A fundamental belief in the dignity of the child.
- An emphasis on the family as the best place for bringing up children.
- High priority given to children and the idea that all members of society have rights and duties towards them.
- A holistic notion of the child and a comprehensive understanding of his or her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.



Importance of the Family

- All the religions examined for this Study recognize the importance of the family as the most valued unit of society. This relationship creates duties and obligations for parents and the family to safeguard the rights of the child, including the right to survival and development, health, education, protection and family life.
- In all of the religions considered, the family is underscored as fundamental for the care and protection of children.



Statement by Religious leaders

“Children thrive and grow in trusting relationships with people who love and care for them. Ideally and for the most part, this happens within families including foster families. Sadly, it cannot be denied that the home is often the place where many abuses against children occur. A key finding is that families therefore need support to grow to become peaceful, safe sanctuaries for children and this is beyond what the state, through its institutions and services can provide to ensure such protection and care necessary for their wellbeing.”

2017 Panama Declaration of the Global Network of Religions for Children
5th Forum on Ending Violence Against Children: Faith Communities in Action



The CRC and the Family

- The CRC gives utmost importance to the family as the “fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children.”



Questions Raised by Religious Leaders

- How do we protect children when there are groups using religion to promote violence?
- How do we unite religions for children's rights, and how do we promote non-violence, which is in keeping with our religious values and teachings?
- How do we ensure that our places of worship are safe spaces in the most vulnerable times?



The spiritual development of the child

- The spiritual development of the child is recognized in Article 27 of the CRC which stipulates that states recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
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- The CRC does not specify what constitutes spiritual development but rather leaves the child's spiritual life and the cultural and spiritual nurturing to the child's family and their religious group or affiliation.



Consultations have led to Self-Examination

This self-examination within religious communities has raised the following questions:

1. Are all children truly listened to?
2. Are all children protected by our religious leaders or religious communities?
3. Are they given space and opportunities to genuinely participate in the life of the community and in the houses of worship?
4. Are there practices within the community that are contrary to the religious values or based on cultural norms that are harmful to children?



CASE STUDIES

- **Religious Leaders and Communities Working to Protect Children from Violence – Chapter 4**
- Presents examples selected from the many distinctive contributions that religious communities have made to the improvement of children's lives and thus, to the advancement of children's rights around the world.
- Features practices from diverse regions of the world and religious communities, along with lessons learned from each. Many of these important achievements, particularly those aimed at ending violence against children, are not well known and are deserving of wider attention.

ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL & GNRC

- Will work with other partners to promote the further implementation of the CRC including through inter-faith dialogue and collaboration



THANK YOU

- We thank the 120 religious leaders and representatives of faith-based organizations who participated in the consultations and provided valuable experience, and diverse perspectives and raised important questions and concerns.
- We are grateful to the 103 children from diverse traditions who participated in the children's focus groups in the 7 countries to discuss how the CRC affects them, and who readily asked questions, provided their views and relayed their concerns.
- The outcomes from the consultations with religious leaders and the focus groups with children helped to shape the Study and provide the added value of real-life experiences.

NEXT STEPS?

Thank you!
ARIGATOU!

BACKGROUND MATERIALS FROM ARIGATOU INTERNATIONAL :

The GNRC Fifth Forum Declaration (the Panama Commitments):

https://gnrc.net/en/?utm_source=day

The GNRC 5th Forum Report (Panama Forum):

https://gnrc.net/en/?utm_source=day

CRC Study: *Faith and Children's Rights*:

<https://arigatouinternational.org/en/>

Executive Summary of the CRC Study: *Faith and Children's Rights*:

<https://arigatouinternational.org/en/>