

# FAITH ACTION FOR CHILDREN ON THE MOVE GLOBAL PARTNERS FORUM

October 16-19, 2018  
Rome, Italy



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 16 -18, over 185 participants and 85 organisations gathered at the General Curia for the Society of Jesus in Rome, Italy for the Faith Action for Children on the Move – Global Partners Forum. The Forum was co-organised by a partnership of 14 organisations including: ACT Alliance, ADRA International, Anglican Alliance, Arigatou International, Islamic Relief Worldwide, International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), Mennonite World Conference, Micah Global, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, World Evangelical Alliance, World Council of Churches, and World Vision International.

The purpose of the forum was to engage religious and faith-based organisations, communities and children to dialogue on issues facing Children on the Move. The forum also worked to build consensus and develop a high-level action plan around the three main themes:

1. Spiritual support for children and their caregivers to promote healing and resilience
2. Creating a continuum of protection for children on the move
3. Building peaceful societies, opposing xenophobia, racism, and discrimination

Learning Briefs summarized a compilation of current best practice, programme approaches, policy and advocacy efforts as well as gaps. Each theme guided part of our time together and were crucial to the development of the plenary, regional, and breakout sessions. Each plenary and breakout session was designed specifically to gather feedback on participants experiences to inform and revise the action plan.



Photo by: Marco Amato

Organisations both large and small came from over 30 countries to speak into the issue of violence against Children on the Move. The participating organisations included religious and faith-based

organisation as well as secular organisations supporting a range of committees outlined in the appendix.

## Forum Outcomes

The Forum concluded with an endorsement of the action plan, commitments from participant organizations, and an additional half-day meeting of the international organizing committee to plan the way forward as a movement of faith actors committed to addressing violence against children on the move. The focus of the work moving forward is finalizing the action plan, gathering organisational endorsement and implementing the action plan. Core work has been identified to be carried forward, which includes advocacy and high-level engagement, outreach to congregations and local faith actors, communications and resource development.

### Resources

[Forum Programme](#)

[Forum Brochure](#)

[Speaker Bios](#)

[Theological Foundation and Framework](#)

[Learning briefs and resource library](#)



## MAIN PLENARIES

Each main plenary session centered on one of the three theme identified in the literature review. During the plenaries, participants heard from experts in the field, faith leaders, and children on the move. The purpose of the plenaries was to inform and elicit feedback and conversation around the action plan.

### Opening Plenary



Jean Duff of Joint Learning Initiative for Faith and Local Communities (JLI), Esther Lehman-Sow, Director of Faith and Development for World Vision International and Mustafa Y. Ali, Secretary-General of Arigatou International welcomed participants to the forum as representatives of the co-organizers committee. Each panelist shared moving thoughts on what children on the move are experiencing in our world today and the motivation for Faith Action for Children in the Move forum.

In addition to the welcome from the co-organisers, we were welcomed by religious leaders. Rabbi Diana Gerson and Imam Yahya Pallavicini each expressed their faith imperative to protect children on the move and called for unity between different religions on this issue.

We were honored to receive a letter of welcome from the President of the Italian Republic, Sergio Mattarella who affirmed our mission at Faith Action for Children on the Move.

To follow the welcome, Dr. Ganoune Diop of the Seventh-day Adventist Church shared a theological and moral justification for the forum and Dr. David Boan of World Evangelical Alliance outlined the methodology of the forum and the purpose of pulling so many faith leaders, practitioners and organisations together to discuss this issue.

“It is estimated that approximately five billion people in the world profess a faith and consider themselves followers of an organized religion. Religious and faith communities provide much of the world's health care, education and social services to children. Together we have the reach, resources and capacity to provide protection, support and hope to the world's most vulnerable children.”

– Rabbi Diana Gerson

## Keynote Speakers

**Keynote Speakers:** Marta Santos Pais – SRSG on Ending Violence against Children, Cecelia Jimenez - SRSG on Internally Displaced Peoples, Dontella Parisi – Centro Astalli, Italy , Jawad Haidari – Centro Astalli, Italy and Marta Arias – Global Lead for the UNICEF Uprooted Campaign, UNICEF.

Each of the keynote speakers shared from their experience working on issues pertaining to children on the move around the globe. The speakers discussed the state of violence against children on the move in our world today. The specific needs of children who are internally displaced we addressed and the current situation children on the move are facing in Italy. Finally, we were honored to hear the story of Jawad Haidari who shared his experience migrating as a child on the move from Afghanistan to Italy.

“In responding to the challenging situation children on the move face on their journeys and in their places of arrival, faith communities have a special role to play. And indeed, they have been a powerful voice on behalf of children’s rights and best interests, and uniquely influential actors in countries around the world. Faith communities are defined by strong moral values, and are enjoined to the practice of compassion, solidarity and justice by their religious texts.”

Marta Santos Pais

## Plenary I: Spiritual support for children and their caregivers as a source of healing and resilience

**Moderators:** Atallah Fitzgibbon, Policy and Strategy Advisor, Islamic Relief Worldwide and Olivia Wilkinson, Director of Research, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities.

**Panelists:** Don Giovanni de Andrea – President, Salesiani per il Sociale, Osman Ahmed – Cultural Mediator, CIES and Paul Syndor – EU Director of International Association for Refugees

Children on the move face traumatic situations as they cross borders. Faith actors can provide spiritual support and foster resilience in children and their families on their journey. The panelists discussed the importance of welcome and walking with people as scripture calls us to do.

Osman Ahmed shared his experience as a child on the move and how being welcomed by the Salesians when he arrived in Italy was an essential turning point for him on his journey. He found solace in community and being able to ask questions. Paul Syndor highlighted this as well as stressed the idea of being in relationship with children on the move not just doing things for them. Each panelist emphasized the importance of

scripture to help people connect. Don Giovanni de Andrea focused on Matthew 25 and the Christian call to follow the example of Jesus, to welcome, clothe, feed, and serve the stranger. He also discussed the importance of building upright people of any faith, not arguing over whose religion is better, but understanding that all are called to love and care for one another. He emphasized how seeking to understand one another in love will help us support and serve children on the move.

### Speaker Highlights

“Welcome is essential. When a person has to start over from scratch, they need a welcoming hand.” – Osman Ahmed

“Do not be neutral. Embrace who you are and who God call you to be in your service, in your community.” – Paul Syndor

“When you are with children, the first thing to do is to be silent and listen. Listen to what they say with words but also with attitudes. Look at their Facebook posts, what they draw. Listening becomes basis for dialogue.” – Don Giovanni de Andrea

“The difference is what is done with people, not for people. As faith actors the added value we bring is working and walking together in relationship with refugees.”

Paul Syndor

## Plenary 2: Strengthening the continuum of protection for children on the move

Faith Actors are in a unique position to protect Children on the Move and their families. The panelists affirmed the role of faith leaders in strengthening the continuum of protection for children on the move. Each speaker brought a unique perspective and important expertise on this issue.

The speakers focused on the fact that faith actors are already present in communities before crises begin and will remain after the crises are over. Faith communities have a higher commitment to stay as long as possible in crises, even after funding is gone. Further, faith communities also move along with children on the move, making them a constant and consistent presence. Igor Mitrovic discussed how faith communities that are strong in the area of child protection must help all communities around them grow regardless of faith background or denomination. We must support one another to protect children well.

**Moderator:** Bill Forbes, Global Team Lead for Child Protection and Participation, World Vision International.

**Panelists:** Angelo Matouch, Country Director of World Vision South Sudan, Rebecca “Bec” Bromhead, Development Coordinator at Project Three2Six in South Africa and Igor Mitrovic, Country Director of ADRA Serbia.

### Speaker Highlights

“Working with faith groups is a given. When people hear bullets, they run for churches. UN agencies may not understand that. You must learn to talk to the pastor or priest. If you want to walk with the faith group you must go through them, because that is where the people are.” – Angelo Matouch

“Just as children on the move are crossing borders, faith crosses borders too.”

Igor Mitrovic

“Faith communities are better placed to understand and provide for the community.” –Bec Bromhead

“Faith communities are there already. A study on Jordan by Alistair Ager showed that there was no big UN or NGO presence initially. Those take weeks to get well set up and the politics can be very slow. Ager looked at who was there for the people who were staggering across the border. Where did they go first? To relatives, to mosques, to churches.” – Alistair Ager as quoted by Bill Forbes

## Plenary 3: Building Peaceful Societies and opposing xenophobia, racism and discrimination

**Moderator:** Rev. Caesar Garcia, Secretary-General, Mennonite World Conference.

**Panelists:** Alberto Quattrucci, Secretary-General of Incontri Internazionali Uomini e Religioni Community of Sant'Egidio in Italy, Nico Lotta, President of Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS), Nyamal Tutdeal, Founder of the NyaEden Foundation and Peter Prove, Director of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs, World Council of Churches.

Faith actors have a role in changing the rhetoric used to describe Children on the Move and their families and they have a mandate to peace. In this session, we heard from several faith actors from different regions and denominations on how to build peaceful societies and combat xenophobia in our world today. The narratives of our different faiths must define how we welcome and how we discuss Children on the Move. The speakers emphasized that we can only achieve peaceful societies in unity with one another. It was pointed out that we must not remain silent or indifferent to these issues. It was emphasized that xenophobia grows in silence.

As faith actors, we must combat these issues by creating community, living out our faith, and addressing the xenophobic trends, we are seeing on social media and around us. Our faith communities are based in a narrative of hope rather than fear. We need to live into our identity and narratives and begin to build societies that reflect the faith we proclaim.



“If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito in your room.”

Nyamal Tutdeal

### Speaker Highlights

“We are all migrants and sojourners on this journey. To refuse to receive is against the biblical structure.” – Peter Prove

“Indifference is the real enemy.” – Alberto Quattrucci

“As the church we don’t speak up enough, we are uncomfortable with being uncomfortable.” – Nyamal Tutdeal

“We have created resources to combat xenophobia. A book for children and a mobile app where users can experience the life of an African migrant.” – Nico Lotta

### **Main Plenary: Action Plan Recommendations**

- Involve and listen to children, not only their words but also their attitudes.
- Address current rhetoric that paints migrants as dangerous.
- Consider cultural dynamics, children on the move are coming from a variety of backgrounds and the action plan must be sensitive to those.
- Ensure that the action plan addresses the specific needs of each type of child on the move, (i.e internally displaced, migrant, refugee) each of these groups have differing situations.

## REGIONAL PLENARIES

The Global Partners Forum featured regional plenaries including the Americas, Southern Europe and the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Africa. In each session experts from each region shared their experiences as well as their thoughts on how to improve the action to meet the needs of the children on the move in each region.



Photo by: Albin Hillert

### **Southern Europe and the Mediterranean**

#### **Giovanni Fortugno – Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII**

Giovanni Fortugno shared his experience working along with his family to serve Children on the Move in Italy with the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII. The Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni provides support and shelter to migrant children when they arrive in Italy. The work of

Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni has deeply affected the lives of many children, including two of our other panelists, Ahmed and Maryama.

#### **Ahmed\* – Child on the Move, Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII**

Ahmed\* left Egypt on his own due to economic strife and danger after someone attempted to kidnap him. His family was poor so he was unprotected. When he arrived in Italy, he was able to find support and a home at the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII. Ahmed has been able to get an education, play football, make friends and build dreams since he arrived in Italy. Someday he wants to become a mechanic and help his family who are still in Egypt. The work of Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII has been transformative in Ahmed's life and future.

#### **Maryama\* – Child on the Move, Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII**

Maryama fled from Gambia at just 14 years old. Her journey to Italy was long and she faced many dangers along the way. She shared stories of how a driver took all of her money at gunpoint and she found herself with no place to stay. Thankfully, she met kind people who helped her along her journey. When she arrived in Italy, she found safety and a home at the Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII. She has been able to flourish with the support she has received; she now attends school and plans to study to become a pediatrician.

#### **Paolo Beccegato – Vicedirettore Vicario, Caritas Italiana**

Paolo Beccegato outlined the need to allow the spiritual dimension to emerge in our work. He also called for us to be inserted in communities and to walk with individuals. He expressed the need for

integral development to ensure that both physical and spiritual needs are met for children on the move. He also described the importance of real connection and encounter for children on the move to overcome barriers. Community is essential in the lives of children.

**Imam Yahya Pallavicini – CO.RE.IS Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italia**

“Real and concrete encounters with people help overcome barriers.”

Imam Yahya Pallavicini

Imam Yahya Pallavicini discussed the need for faith unity and child participation. He discussed how as religious and non-religious leaders we must find a way to work together to avoid extremism and confessionalism. We must be careful not to abuse our religious identities. Rather than compete we must come together with one another, when we compete we ignore the needs of children on the move.

*\*last names omitted for protection purposes*

## **The Americas**

**Laura Del Valle – Director, World Vision El Salvador**

Laura Del Valle described the situation for children in El Salvador. Children are flee from El Salvador due to the gang violence that affects their lives daily. Children who migrate away from El Salvador and are deported back are in a very precarious position. She stated that returning to El Salvador could be a death sentence for these children. The situation is particularly dangerous for girls. If a gang member decides to claim a girl as his girlfriend or wife there is little a girl can do about it. Girls have a very small chance for survival in this situation, if they refuse, they are in danger and if they accept it they are in danger. In her work with World Vision Laura is striving to comprehensively support and protect these children from harm.

**Pastor Mario Vega – Iglesia Cristiana Elim**

Pastor Mario Vega highlighted the need for Christian engagement because the danger so high for children on the move in El Salvador. He said that the church must engage through advocacy, sending letters, influencing media etc. He identified that creating civic pressure will influence laws and increase the support for internally displaced children. To protect children there needs to be unity between religious and non-religious entities working on child rights. Churches must not compromise but create synergy between groups and raise awareness for values such as compassion, solidarity and love.

### Rev. Dr. Dottie Escobedo Frank – United Methodist Church

“Inform, form, and perform – informing the churches of what is the current situation, form the churches so they can work with the children in their own communities, and have safe and friendly spaces to be nurtured and supported. We must involve the churches in advocating for better child protection policies and access to basic services. We need to spread this more and mobilize other actors to respond to the crisis.”

Rev. Dr. Dottie Escobedo Frank

Rev. Dr. Dottie Escobedo Frank describes the situation on the border of Texas and Mexico where the U.S. government is detaining Children on the Move. She discussed her work with “The Inn,” a place set up by the church to receive migrant children and families. She discussed the detrimental effects of child separation and described how children need people to listen to them both words and through what they are expressing in artwork and actions. She also highlighted how in the current U.S. political climate the church should draw upon its traditions of justice and speak out to change the narrative “from fear to faith”.

## The Middle East and Africa

### Mor Dionysius John Kawak – Archbishop, Patriarchal Vicar of the Archdiocese of the Eastern United States of America

His Eminence Mor Dionysius John Kawak expressed the need to reclaim the religious narrative, coordinate and cooperate well. He highlighted the need for Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) and discussed how CFS’s provided spaces for Syrian children on the move to play and develop. He noted that CFS’s also create environments to provide psychosocial support and spiritual support to children. They are spaces to listen to children and the Syrian Orthodox church recognizes these things. “Children are our critical responsibilities. They are important to Christ and we hope to turn compassion into action.”

“Children are our critical responsibilities. They are important to Christ and we hope to turn compassion into action.”

His Eminence Mor Dionysius  
John Kawak

### Betty Melky – Resurrection Church, Lebanon

Betty Melky shared from her experience working with Resurrection Church to provide education for refugee children in Lebanon. Their focus is building relationships and unity with children and parents, from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds. They strive to create community that is unified, healthy and focuses on the needs of children. Despite the fact that many of the children practice different religions, they have seen the role of the church in providing education as a way of overcoming differences and creating unity that fosters healthy growth and a safe place for children to learn.

### Frank Dimmock – The Outreach Foundation

Frank Dimmock shared his about his work in Africa with the Outreach Foundation. The outreach foundation focuses on psychosocial and spiritual support for children. He explained that in parts of Ethiopia 1 in every 5 children is a refugee. He stressed the importance of informing and valuing the input of children in our work. He also discussed how faith leaders need to be informed on psychosocial issues and on and trauma healing as an essential part of healing for children on the move. Children need to grieve and lament, faith actors can give them the space for that.

“Children on the Move need to feel safe. They need to feel counted, valued, recognized and documented. This is important for return but it is also crucial for identity.”

Frank Dimmock

### Mustafa Y. Ali – Secretary-General, Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC)

Mustafa Ali emphasized the role of child participation in our work. He pointed out the importance on engaging with and listening to the stories of children. The GNRC places an importance on amplifying the voices of children to speak into the issues that affect them. He voiced that we must have empathy and take our directives from the children themselves, allowing them to have input on what we are doing as faith actors and practitioners.

## Regional Focus: Action Plan Recommendations

- Involve and listen to children, not only their words but also their attitudes.
- Address family separation specifically.
- Emphasize the key role of faith communities.
- Consider the lens of a child; does the action plan reflect that lens?
  - o Ensure that the action plan includes listening to children and allowing them to be agents of change in their own lives.
- Address current rhetoric that paints migrants as dangerous.
- Ensure the action plan includes the role of faith groups in providing education.
- Ensure there is an emphasis on interfaith communication and collaboration to ensure that children are protected and supported by their communities.

## BREAKOUT SESSIONS

In addition to the main and regional plenaries, attendees participated in breakout sessions over the course of the three days. In each breakout, participants would hear from panelists, have time to discuss together and make specific recommendations to the action plan. The panelists came from a variety of backgrounds and organisations. Faith leaders, practitioners and children shared their experiences during this time. The breakout sessions also created space for participants to lean into the process more personally and enhance the action plan with their unique experiences and insight. This time was extremely valuable to the forum and was key in our development of the action plan.



Photo by: Evelyn Marquez

### **Breakout Session: Strengthening the continuum of protection for children on the move**

Room1	Room 2	Room 3
<b>Imad Madnat</b> , Vice President of Programs, ADRA International Panelists: <b>Agostino Sella</b> , President, Association Don Bosco 2000	<b>Jack Palmer - White</b> , Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Anglican Communion  <b>Emanuele Selleri</b> , Executive Director, Casa Scalabrini 634  <b>Mary Campbell</b> , Program Director, AMMPARO	<b>Rebeca Rios - Kohn</b> , Director, Arigatou International  <b>Carina Rossa</b> , Coordinator, Scholas Occurrentes  <b>Caroline Pinchbeck</b> , Director Communities and Partnership, Canterbury Diocese, Church of England

### Recommendations for Faith Actors:

- Create network with faith-based organizations, GOs and NGOs in their countries of origin, transit and destination for a holistic continuum of protection response;
- Build regional interfaith network in terms of expertise, advocacy;

- Empower children as agents of their own protection and transformation and as advocates for their peers' protection
- Establish continuum of protection for deported children
- Prepare the children and young people for autonomy through education and access to education.
- Interfaith literacy must be built so that faith actors can better work together for the protection of children.
- Faith communities must build an awareness of the migration situation.
- Faith communities must work together and with local authorities to ensure protection.

The long-term commitment of Faith Actors guarantees child protection.

Mary Campbell

### Recommendations for Action Plan:

- Make note of the specific vulnerabilities of girls and children with disabilities.
- Address education and access to education for children on the move.
- Make note of the agency of children on the move and their ability to advocate for themselves. Children as actors and agents of change.
- Address the specific needs of children in fragile contexts and in countries of origin.
- Include focus on addressing anti-migration narratives and
- Develop space for interfaith collaboration and conversation in order to build interfaith literacy.

### Breakout Session: Spiritual Support for children, families, and caregivers as a source of healing and resilience

Room1	Room2	Room3
<b>David Boan</b> , Director of Humanitarian Advocacy & Service, World Evangelical Alliance	<b>Sheryl Haw</b> , International Director, Micah Global	<b>Andrew Suderman</b> , Peace Commission Secretary - Mennonite World Conference
<b>Dag Pontvik</b> , Country Director, ADRA Italia	<b>Maria Franca Posa</b> , Responsabile dell'Area Minori, Caritas Roma	<b>Gaetano de Monte</b> , FCEI – Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia / Mediterranean Hope
<b>Vincent*</b> , Youth representative	<b>Zeina Zoueïn</b> , Partnering Program Manager, World Vision Lebanon	<b>Ivana Letizia De Stasi</b> , Italian Teacher, Mediterranean Hope - Casa delle Culture di Scicli
<b>Rev. Dirk Coetsee</b> , Managing Director, Petra Institute		<b>Maria Alejandra Andrade</b> , Theology and Network Engagement Manager, Tearfund
<i>*last name omitted for protection</i>		

## Recommendations for Faith Actors:

- Proselytism must not be the end-goal of the spiritual support given to children migrants and their families.
- Faith-based organizations' role is to help children on the move and their families to re/connect with their faith and belief, thus, facilitating their integration in the faith community;
- We must create and foster spaces of welcome that offer security and safety for children on the move to reframe their narrative.
- We must challenge the narratives that media creates for children on the move today.
- It is important that we build interfaith literacy so that we can better work together to support children as faith actors.
- Faith actors do more than just provide services; we accompany children throughout their journeys.
- The stories of children on the move are evident throughout scripture (Jesus as a migrant child) it is important for faith actors to recognize and live into the legacy of our faith.

Caring for and accompanying children on the move entails a deep understanding of the person in her/his entirety (body, mind and spirit), which implies meeting their basic needs and fundamental rights to life, family, education, food, clothing and shelter.

Maria Franca Posa

## Recommendations for Action Plan:

- Spiritual support cannot replace psychosocial support but can be developed within the framework of psychosocial support.
- Include intergenerational dialogue; this must be a whole of family approach to ensure that children are not segregated from adults.
- Listen to children and allow their input.

## **Breakout Session: Building Peaceful Societies and opposing xenophobia, racism and discrimination**

Room1	Room2	Room3
<b>Marikki Rieppola</b> , Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers Panelists:	<b>Comm. Jane Paone</b> , Senior International Social Justice Coordinator (Europe), Salvation Army	<b>Maria Lucía Uribe</b> , Director Arigatou International Geneva, Secretary General Interfaith Council
<b>Francesca Agus</b> , Asilo Monumento ai Caduti Monserrato	<b>Hna. María Antonia Bobadilla</b> , Scalabrinianas: Mision con Migrantes y Refugiados (SMR)	<b>Major David Cavanagh</b> , General Secretary Italy and Greece, Salvation Army
<b>Carla Lianas</b> , Asilo Monumento ai Caduti Monserrato	<b>Rachid Jamal</b> , Country Director, Islamic Relief Italia	<b>Dr. Gelly Aroni</b> , Head of the Independent Department for the Coordination and Monitoring of Refugee Affairs, Greece

### **Recommendations for Faith Actors:**

- Educate and mobilize faith leaders and the faith community on the sensitive issue of violence and discrimination against children, particularly against migrants and IDPs;
- Enhance other faith and interfaith dialogue and exchange (ecumenical, intra Christian, interfaith and other civil society groups);
- Identify the root causes of displacement (e.g. access to influence perpetrator groups causing displacement in origin countries);
- Encourage the development of violence prevention plan and support its implementation;
- Motivate leaders to use the language of peace to combat xenophobic messages and develop concrete actions to build more peaceful societies;
- Use mass media and social networks to convey messages of peace by opposing hate speech, and monitoring violence in public entertainment and social media

### **Recommendations for the Action Plan**

- Address nationalism and the issues that stem from it must be included in the action plan.
- Children as peacebuilders
- Address the role of social media in proliferating and combatting racism and xenophobia; this issue must be addressed.
- Ensure that the action plan is being implement in high-level areas and on the ground.

## MOVING TO ACTION

**Moderator:** Dr. Azza Karam – UNFPA/UN Taskforce for Religion and Development

**Panelists:** Anna Riatti – UNICEF, Andrew Claypole – SRSG, Jesus Perez Sanchez – UNHCR, John Baxter Brown, CEO Global Connections and Dr. Mohammed Sammak, KACCID/Center for Christian/Muslim Dialogue.

In our final plenary session, we focused on the next steps of implementation and moving to action. We heard from representatives of the International Advisory Committee as well as high-level leaders from faith-based initiatives.

There was genuine excitement from the panelists to see so many faith-based organisations gathered together to address the issue of violence against children on the move. The speakers recommended that we begin to listen to children more and better and that we create a space where policy meets the narratives of children. They also recommended that we continue to grow partnerships, name the challenges clearly and document work effectively. The panelists expanded on each of the three themes and gave recommendations for continued work in this session.

“We are not mosquitos; we are too large to fail.”

Verena Knaus

### Speaker Highlights

“Imagine if Jesus came back today. Where would he be heading? The opera house or the refugee camp?” – Dr. Mohammed Sammak

“Xenophobia, sometimes pushed by prominent figures on both sides of the Atlantic – becomes open mic for all kinds of discrimination – all faith needs to pay attention to this.” – Jesus Perez Sanchez

“Two ears and one mouth means we need to listen twice as much as we speak.” – John Baxter Brown

“Keep documenting the best practices of your good work and keep sharing, only with sharing can we reach the level of standard that we have to keep up with.” – Anna Riatti

## CLOSING CEREMONY

At the end of the Forum the action plan committee presented the action plan to the entire forum. The committee worked tirelessly throughout the forum to implement the suggestions that came out of each plenary session. After presenting the plan several organisations stood to make verbal commitments expressing how they planned to implement the action plan into their work for children on the move and how they would move forward from the forum.

To close religious leaders offered prayers for children on the move everywhere. Each faith leader represented a different faith or denomination and offered words of wisdom and a prayer from their tradition. At the end of the ceremony, all participants were invited to sign a banner as a symbolic gesture of personal commitment to continue working towards ending of violence against children who are migrants, refugees and internally displaced.



Photo by: Evelyn Marquez

## FORUM TAKEAWAYS

- Faith communities are catalysts for combatting xenophobia, providing protection and spiritually supporting children on the move.
- Faith has no borders as children on the move migrate across borders the faith community must lean into its purpose and support these children and their families.
- We must continue to dialogue, support and listen to one another as people of different faith backgrounds working to end violence against children on the move.
- We must learn to listen to the voices and attitudes of children and their families coming from these situations.
- We must understand that children have a role in this story and they must be able to participate as agents of change.

"We are guilty of many errors and many faults,  
But our worst crime is abandoning the children,  
Neglecting the fountain of life.  
Many of the things we need can wait.  
Right now is the time his bones are being formed,  
His blood is being made,  
And his senses are being developed.  
To him we cannot answer 'tomorrow'  
His name is Today."

Gabriela Mistral as  
quoted by Alberto Quatrucci

### Next Steps

Action Plan commitments, endorsements and implementation. In the coming months we will be

- Engaging with partners and non-partners with the action plan at various events, conferences and meetings. – Continuous
- Disseminating our fully developed action plan with requests for endorsements and commitments. – November/December 2018
- Developing an implementation plan for the action plan – January 2019.
- Consulting with children and creating child friendly materials.
- Meet with Faith Action for Children on the Move Partners – October 2019

## APPENDIX 1: ACTION PLAN

### Final Draft Plan for Faith Action for Children on the Move

**Introductory note:** The initial draft of this text was developed based on discussions at workshops in Geneva (May 2018), New York (July 2018), and Rome (July 2018). It included comments and feedback received from partner organizations, the international advisory committee members, and other individuals and organizations through the end of September. During the [Global Forum on Faith Action for Children on the Move](#) participants discussed the draft version and proposed amendments and additions reflected below in the final draft to be presented to the Forum for review and approval. We recognize that children on the move encompasses different experiences of boys and girls who migrate with parents or caregivers, alone or who are left behind, who seek refugee status and who are internally displaced. This plan represents the road map for Faith Action partners to respond and scale up action for children<sup>1</sup> on the move.

Partner organizations are now sharing this document widely and planning specific programmatic and advocacy activities to strengthen faith action for the care and protection of children on the move. For more information or to join the collaboration, please contact Andrea Kaufmann who is providing coordinating support to the implementation of the action plan at [globalpartnersforum@wvi.org](mailto:globalpartnersforum@wvi.org).

### Principles

1. We recognize that children are the hope of humanity, and must be protected and empowered to experience life in its fullness and to transform the societies in which they live.
2. We believe that life is sacred and that children, who are vulnerable, demand the highest protection of their human rights.
3. We embrace the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols; and in particular, the general principles of non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; to participate; and respect for the views of the child.
4. We will empower children and youth to share their experiences and needs, and involve them in decision-making, co-creating and designing programmes, activities, and interventions.
5. We recognize that the periods of early childhood, childhood, and adolescence are critical stages in the process of growth and development of the person; children need to be nurtured to grow holistically: physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, and in safety.
6. We affirm that parents and caregivers are a first and essential point of reference for children, and acknowledge the need to include a family's well-being to support them in their efforts to protect and raise children in a safe, caring, and loving environment.
7. We will ensure opportunities for intergenerational dialogue and listening to children.
8. We recognize that girls and boys on the move experience significant and distinct vulnerabilities and are at increased risk of all forms of violence; we affirm that it is an urgent moral responsibility to protect and empower children in complex and challenging environments.
9. We highlight children's resilience, capabilities and power to overcome negative experience and thrive, and we recognize children on the move as partners and agents of change for building peaceful societies, for helping communities change behaviour, and for ending violence against children.

<sup>1</sup> Under age 18

10. We recognize that spiritual support to children on the move, their families and their caregivers enhances healing and resilience.
11. We believe that faith actors have a significant role to play in reducing conflict and promoting peaceful, inclusive and sustainable societies for children and their families, and highlight the important role of faith actors in empowering marginalized children and groups including women, minorities, LGBTQ and people with disabilities in periods of displacement.
12. A faith-based response to displaced people and children on the move entails a distinctive depth of compassionate accompaniment of people in the midst of crisis and suffering, which goes beyond the kind of response that a humanitarian agency is able or mandated to provide.
13. We believe that as faith-based organizations and actors we are stronger together, together we can reach the most vulnerable, and together increase our positive impact for children on the move.
14. We also recognise that partnering among different beliefs and religious traditions enhances respect for freedom of religion.
15. We acknowledge that religious narratives and communities sometimes have been and are used as vectors for violence and exclusion. We condemn all violent, xenophobic and discriminatory narratives and reaffirm the need to speak up with words of solidarity, welcome and love. We welcome intergovernmental, governmental, or other civil society parties to support us in our agenda towards peaceful societies, free from all violence. We wish to walk with them in solidarity with immigrants and all those who are on the move.
16. We acknowledge that migration is a symptom of other systemic oppressions and will work to address root causes of displacement.
17. We recognize that 2019 represents a unique juncture in the history of international protection for children and displaced populations including the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the formal implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration; the 20th Anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; as well as the Sustainable Development Goals review process. We will work to continue to contribute and influence relevant international bodies and processes.

We acknowledge that faith-based organizations and religious leaders have not always acted in the best interest of children, including children on the move. Therefore, we *share commitment to*:

- Ensuring our organizations establish the strongest safeguards to prevent, detect, address and speak out on instances of violence against children by our leaders, members, staff, and anyone else;
- Ensuring that organizations partnering to protect children on the move will foster respect for each other, promote freedom of religion and expression for all, and to provide access to support to children on the move in their own religious tradition;
- Fostering a spirituality that helps children engage with themselves, others, nature and what they call God, Divine Presence or ultimate reality. A spirituality that strengthens children's own religious beliefs and worldviews, enhancing their resilience, their sense of purpose and belonging to their communities;
- Enabling children to become active partners in the implementation of the Action Plan;
- Working within and across our own organizations and networks towards greater collaboration, action, generation of evidence, and advocacy in the areas outlined below;
- Creating safe spaces for children within our religious communities to share their views and be heard.

## **I. Providing spiritual support to children, families and caregivers as a source of healing and resilience**

*Spirituality supports children's resilience during displacement. Religious meanings, networks, and places can have an impact on the development of the individual and collective identity of children on the move. Psychosocial support that does not recognise children's spirituality, as well as their questions about their own faith traditions and other traditions, will miss a crucial part of children's lived experience. We recognize children have an innate capacity for spiritual development, and we acknowledge that religious communities play an important role in nourishing children's spirituality in ways that are respectful of their religious beliefs and cultures.*

- I.1.** Provide spiritual support and accompaniment (respecting children's beliefs, religions and traditions) and activities that promote prevention of violence, healing and increased resilience, in particular with children who are survivors of violence and have been subjected to trauma.
- I.2.** Empower children as key actors in their own spiritual development and that of their peers.
- I.3.** Provide spiritual support and accompaniment (respecting their beliefs, religions and traditions) to families and caregivers who are survivors or witnesses of all forms of violence so they may provide a consistently safe, loving and supportive home for their children and a conducive environment for their development.
- I.4.** Adapt faith-sensitive guidelines and resources for working with children on the move for spiritual and psychosocial support, mental health, and building resilience.
- I.5.** Enrich psychosocial, mental health, and resilience programmes with a sensitivity to faith and spirituality. This includes training faith actors and caregivers, where appropriate, to provide support to children on the move, particularly to survivors of all forms of violence, according to their faith traditions.
- I.6.** Promote faith literacy, interfaith awareness and collaboration so as to best serve children in multi-faith contexts.
- I.7.** Support the establishment of and access to safe spaces for worship and/or help connect children to places of worship, according to their wishes, so faith actors can assist in strengthening children's sense of belonging and identity.
- I.8.** Support the establishment of safe and friendly spaces for children with age-appropriate activities to protect them from violence and support them in healing and resiliency.
- I.9.** Draw on the relevant existing recommendations of religious bodies concerning principles for encouraging and supporting religious practices as they relate to children on the move and in displacement, especially unaccompanied children.
- I.10.** Build further evidence on the impact of spiritual nurture as a source of healing and resilience for children on the move.

## **2. Strengthening the continuum of care for child protection**

*Faith actors' grounding in local communities allows them to build the community's trust in and ownership of child protection mechanisms. Faith actors build bridges – between faith actors, government actors and other organisations, and with the host community – that are crucial for the success of child protection programmes for children on the move.*

*Community and grassroots initiatives need capacity training, resources, and support from broader networks in order to effectively contribute to the protection of children on the move. Religious networks, which span countries and regions, support faith actors to provide for children on the move and advocate for continued protection.*

- 2.1.** Raise awareness of the dangers children on the move face, provide information on preventative and responsive measures and, when possible, refer children to safe places along the way.
- 2.2.** Equip faith actors in and across countries of origin, transit and destination to strengthen the child protection system and services, including the areas of psychosocial support, mental health, resilience, spiritual nurture, and referral mechanisms.
- 2.3.** Empower and support faith actors to advocate for and serve children on the move to ensure access to healthcare, early child development and quality education services in a way that respects and integrates the child's traditions and religion.
- 2.4.** Support and scale local programs for children on the move and host communities. Build capacity in community-based protection, gender, psychosocial first aid, child rights, and humanitarian standards with faith actors.
- 2.5.** Promote adherence by all actors to best-practice international standards including the Minimum Standard for Child Protection (CPMS).
- 2.6.** Ensure protection and support for vulnerable caregivers.
- 2.7.** Promote coordination amongst child protection systems, referral mechanisms, and formal and informal actors including faith actors internally and across borders.
- 2.8.** Protect children on the move through countries of origin, transit, and destination from all forms of violence including the promotion of safe corridors and prevention of human trafficking.
- 2.9.** Support and improve relationships and communication between faith actors and other agencies serving migrant and refugee populations, especially children.
- 2.10.** Work towards the full protection of children on the move throughout their journey, including through the promotion of humanitarian access and protection of child rights, particularly the most vulnerable, including girls and children with disabilities.
- 2.11.** Advocate for family preservation and reunification, effective child protection mechanisms, and an end to child detention in all its forms.
- 2.12.** Serve as bridges among faiths, government actors, other organizations, and host communities to strengthen the overall child protection system.
- 2.13.** Build evidence on the role of faith actors in strengthening the continuum of protection.

### **3. Building peaceful societies and opposing xenophobia, racism and discrimination**

*An awareness of the embeddedness of religion in social, cultural, political, and economic realities will help all actors to understand the nuances of faith partnerships. For example, though faith actors may work to combat xenophobia that affects children on the move, they may simultaneously perpetuate other social norms that negatively affect children. Because children on the move are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, faith actors are compelled by their beliefs to speak out for the protection of children and advocate for better practices, especially among people of the same faith. By speaking out for children on the move and raising awareness of their needs and migration journeys, faith actors can shift attitudes and behaviours towards children to enhance their protection.*

- 3.1.** Welcome and listen to children on the move and their families, provide protection and promote integration as an expression of hospitality and an opportunity to welcome the stranger.
- 3.2.** Design and implement projects and initiatives aimed at promoting respect for and understanding of minority groups, including those with different beliefs, faiths, and religions to reduce violence, xenophobic narratives and nurture peaceful societies.
- 3.3.** Maintain high standards of protection, including against bullying, oppose xenophobia and racism in educational settings, curriculum and other systems where faith actors are highly engaged.
- 3.4.** Work with leaders and local faith communities to advocate for durable solutions, encourage a whole of society approach (multisectoral) and promote diverse partnering and collaboration for children on the move.
- 3.5.** Challenge narratives of fear. Provide faith-based alternative narratives to xenophobia and build bridges between host communities and refugee populations, locally and globally.
- 3.6.** Recognize children as peacebuilders themselves. Support child and youth-led programs that include host community and refugee or displaced children to build relationships and challenge xenophobia.
- 3.7.** Speak out against injustice where children are victims of violence and at risk of displacement or trafficking, including crises and forgotten conflicts.
- 3.8.** Raise awareness of the impact of displacement on child development, the increased vulnerability experienced in early childhood and adolescence, and the issues children on the move face, including all forms of violence, discrimination, exclusion and marginalization.
- 3.9.** Leverage social media and use of technology to challenge exclusive narratives and promote positive narratives. Equip religious leaders to engage in social media.
- 3.10.** Create safe spaces for dialogue for people with diverse perspectives on migration within and across faith communities.
- 3.11.** Create space for religious education about other religions and learning from people of different faith traditions.
- 3.11.** Challenge the elevation of national identity and national borders above the recognition of the God-given dignity of every human being.

#### **4. Working Together**

- 4.1.** Share expertise, evidence, and project models and approaches which support children on the move.
- 4.2.** Continue mapping current initiatives undertaken by faith actors with children on the move and strengthen the evidence base for what is working, what is not, and where we can do more together.
- 4.3.** Identify a common language to frame coordination within religious communities and with secular organizations.
- 4.4.** Align outreach, communications, and advocacy work, including the development of awareness raising materials to end violence against children on the move. Share positive stories of hope, love, and children as active agents of change.
- 4.5.** Strengthen joint advocacy on the unique contributions of faith actors and faith based organizations to protection children on the move based on the evidence of impact across all the pillars. In doing so, we will reclaim the faith narrative.
- 4.6.** Call for action at all levels—global, national and local—to end violence against children on the move.
- 4.7.** Continue and deepen coordination with local, national and international faith bodies, states and United Nations actors and mechanisms, especially in the framework of the adoption of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Sustainable Development Goals, and other global and regional mechanisms.
- 4.8.** Develop multi-stakeholder partnerships with faith communities, NGOs, governments and other actors that can help strengthening our actions, close the silos and build bridges of trust for common action.
- 4.9.** Create a virtual mechanism for communicating, sharing and coordinating initiatives related to the action plan.
- 4.10.** Coordinating organizers will meet in a year to revisit progress against action plan.

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#### **Additional Resources**

[18 Commitments on Faith for Rights adopted in Beirut 2017](#)

“Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World” (Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches, World Evangelical Alliance)

JLI Learning Brief: [Continuum of Protection for Children](#)

JLI Learning Brief: [Spiritual Support](#)

JLI Learning Brief: [Peacebuilding and Combatting Xenophobia](#)

[Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes.](#)

## APPENDIX II: PARTNERS AND PARTICIPANTS

**International Organising Committee:** ACT Alliance, ADRA International, Anglican Alliance, Arigatou International, Islamic Relief Worldwide, International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD), Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI), Mennonite World Conference, Micah Global, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventists, World Evangelical Alliance, World Council of Churches, and World Vision International

**Local Host Committee:** ADRA Italia, Unione Superiori Generali, Associazione Papa Giovanni XXIII, Casa Scalabrini 634, Caritas Internationalis, Caritas Italiana, Caritas Roma, Centro per la Protezione dei Minori della Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Centro Astalli, Chiesa Cristiana Avventista del Settimo Giorno, Comunità di Sant'Egidio, CO.RE.IS – Comunità Religiosa Islamica Italiana, Don Bosco 2000, Esercito della Salvezza -Comando Italia & Grecia Quartiere Generale del Comando Roma, FCEI- Federazione delle Chiese Evangeliche in Italia/Mediterranean Hope, FMSI - Fondazione Marista per la Solidarietà Italiana, Islamic Relief Italia, IIMA – Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice, Salesiani di Don Bosco, Salesiani per il Sociale, Scholas Occurrentes, VIS – Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo, World Vision Italia

**International Advisory Committee:** Azza Karam, United Nations Interagency Task Force on Religion; Cecilia Jimenez-Damary, UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs); Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children; UNICEF; UNHCR

**Additional Participating Organisations:** AICT (Tanzania), AMMPARO (USA), Apostoli (Greece), Asilo Monumento ai Caduti Monserrato (Italy); ChristenUnie (Netherlands), Church of England, Church World Service (Serbia), Compassion, Cristiana Elim Internacional (El Salvador), Ecumenical Commission for Human Development (Pakistan), Episcopal Church of South Sudan, Department for the Coordination and Monitoring of Refugee Affairs (Greece), HIAS (USA), International Association for Refugees, International Justice Mission, Jordan Hashemite Charity Organization, Life Foundation (Pakistan), National Committee for Christian-Muslim Dialogue (Lebanon), Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, New York Board of Rabbis, Nyaden Foundation, Petra Institute (South Africa), Resurrection Church (Lebanon), Search for Common Ground, St. Andrew's United Church of Cairo, Syriac Orthodox Church, Tearfund, The United Methodist Church (USA, TX), Three2Six Project (South Africa), Uganda Catholic Church Arusha West Nile Diocese, USAID