

Press Release

Rome, 16 November 2022

## **Groundbreaking Resource to Protect Children from Violence and Promote Their Holistic Well-Being**

On 18 November 2022, a consortium of 22 civil society and faith-based organizations, academia, multilateral organizations, and individual experts, will launch an innovative Toolkit for the protection of children from violence and the promotion of their holistic well-being, focused on nurturing the spiritual development of children in the early years.

Early childhood lays the foundation for health, well-being, learning and productivity throughout a person's life, and it has an impact on the health and well-being of the next generation. Yet, in silence and secrecy, many young children suffer from the diverse forms of violence inflicted upon them, and very often violence is justified and condoned by social and cultural norms in their communities.

A distinguishing feature of this Toolkit is the linkage it makes between spiritual development and the protection of children from violence. It makes this case by presenting research on the impact of violence against children in the early years, and by describing how nurturing children's spiritual development acts as a means to promote safe, respectful, violence-free environments, build positive relationships between parents, caregivers, educators and children, and equip adults in these roles to create empowering experiences for children. This in turn creates the conditions to nurture children's spiritual development.

*"The cause of nurturing the spiritual development of children is an opportunity to protect children from violence. At the same time, it is also an opportunity for healing — for restoring and affirming the dignity of those children whose sacred right to freedom from violence has been violated — and for collaboration to support their flourishing and well-being,"* underlined Rev. Keishi Miyamoto, President of Arigatou International.

The Toolkit aims to help equip faith actors to engage actively in the protection of children from violence in early childhood by supporting parents, caregivers, educators and communities to nurture children's spiritual development and take an active role in addressing violence in early childhood.

*"With the influential role of the faith communities, the toolkit can be used to break the silence and stigma around violence against children. It can also be used to question the social and cultural norms that condone violence against children in all settings, including in the circle of trust,"* said Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, and a member of the International Consortium.

The spiritual development of children, addressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is an under-researched and under-invested area in child development. This Toolkit is a unique contribution to further understanding, investment and awareness

about the critical importance of including the spiritual development of children as part of their holistic development and well-being. The 22 members of the Consortium have committed to implement the Toolkit and initiate a systematic process of monitoring and evaluation in several locations around the world that will help create evidence on the contribution of this area to the protection of children from violence.

The Toolkit will be launched in Rome during the Symposium on Child Dignity – A Call to Action for Children on the Move that will take place on 17 – 18 November 2022, in the framework of the celebration of the [Annual World Day of Prayer and Action for Children](#). The symposium is being organized by Arigatou International, UNICEF and 20 other partners, and hosted by the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, through the support of the Institute of Anthropology, Interdisciplinary Studies on Human Dignity and Care (IADC) and the Centre for Interreligious Studies.

Click [here](#) to register for the live streaming of the launch and to download the Toolkit.

For further information, contact

Ms. Paula Ananias  
Communications Officer  
Arigatou International - Geneva  
E-mail: [p.ananias@arigatouinternational.org](mailto:p.ananias@arigatouinternational.org)  
[childspiritualdevelopment.org/](http://childspiritualdevelopment.org/)