



December 2017

END CHILD POVERTY: PEOPLE OF FAITH TAKING ACTION!

Mission Report Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

SUMMARY

Arigatou International's Interfaith Initiative to End Child Poverty (End Child Poverty), in collaboration with the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) and ICAN Malaysia (Malaysia), organized a 3 days meeting from 15th to 17th November 2017. It consisted of planning, review, strategy sessions and field visits between End Child Poverty Staff — *Fred Nyabera*, Director, *Ms. Stacy Ndung'u*, Consultant and ICAN Malaysia, *Shazmin Rafeeq*, Founder as well other members and volunteers.

The main intention of the visit was to strengthen the End Child Poverty Arigatou International's supported programs in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia by reflecting on progress and planning for future collaborations.

Objectives:

- Show support for GNRC members addressing violence against children as a follow up to the GNRC 5th forum

- Encourage on going projects working towards ending child poverty
- Listen to the voices of children supported by End Child Poverty's grassroots initiatives – especially the Rohingya refugee children.
- Strengthen collaborations between people of faith taking (and willing to take) action to end child poverty

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

ICAN and Arigatou International's End Child Poverty

A common interest between Arigatou International's End Child Poverty and ICAN Malaysia sparked the need for a strategy meeting that would increase collaborations with the aim of working together to put an end to child poverty and violence against children.

The connections and links as follows:

End Child Poverty mobilizes faith inspired resources to end child poverty by utilising on three main strategic approaches to realise its vision, these include:

1. Engaging in theological reflection and action so as to mitigate the root causes of poverty in the human heart
2. Supporting and engaging in interfaith advocacy and lobbying against structural causes of poverty in society
3. Advancing flagship and grassroots initiatives, which aim to promote children's access to quality education, transform violent conflicts and promote the empowerment of children and their caregivers.

ICAN Malaysia a GNRC Member, supports all the above mentioned strategic approaches of End Child Poverty with the aim of providing a helping hand to the neglected and deprived section of the society (poor individuals, with a focus on children) in every aspect by involving all the other abled societal classes and to create an environment of humanitarian and brotherhood among all societal classes through various programs including education support.



Linking the Mission to the GNRC 5th forum Commitments:

Challenged by the global epidemic of violence against children, leaders and members of the world's religious and spiritual traditions, girls and boys, women and men, from 70 countries, together with representatives of governments, the United Nations, and international and grassroots organizations, met in Panama

City, Panama for the 5th Forum of the Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC), from 9-11 May 2017. The participants resolved to do all that they can to end violence against children by pledging to 10 commitments; of this, the visit responded to the following:

01

Listen to children with empathy and respect, welcome their wisdom and gifts, and continue to work side-by-side to address violence against them;

06

Strengthen local communities by offering education in positive parenting and ethical values to help families and children develop empathy, become more resilient, and grow spiritually;

08

Embrace internationally agreed strategies and mechanisms to address violence against children, including the Sustainable Development Goals 16.2 on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children; 5.2 and 5.3 on ending violence against women and girls; and 8.7 on ending economic exploitation of children;

09

Strengthen cooperation and partnerships across Arigatou International initiatives, the wider religious and spiritual communities and strategic players at local, national, regional and global levels;

10

Work to generate greater social and political will for legislation, policies, and increased funding of programs to protect children from violence.

ABOUT ICAN MALAYSIA

The "I Can Chapter " was started with the project named "I CAN FEED THE POOR" initiated by the students of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The project provides aid to people who live below the poverty line.

Since October 2012, ICAN Malaysia has received tremendous response received from interested people of faith as well as other stakeholders of the society especially students. With the growing response and people's zeal to contribute for this noble cause the organization focused on expanding its operations beyond helping the poor and needy people.

A Person of Faith Taking Action

Shazmin Rafeeq



We believe in the philosophy "Give A Man A Fish, and You Feed Him For A day; Show Him How To Catch Fish, and You Feed Him For A Lifetime." The focus of the organization is not just helping the poor people with their basic needs but also to make them self-reliant by providing them with required training and guidance accordingly. Instead of considering poor people as burden or liability for the society, with our help, training, assistance and guidance these poor individuals will start contributing to the society in every aspect.

Primarily, the organization's main driving force is to build the capacities of students who volunteer on a regular basis. At secondary level, other classes of the society volunteer in various aspects as per their convenience.

OUR RESOLVE TO END ALL VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



Fred Nyabera

*Director, End Child Poverty
Arigatou International*

As part of our Right to Education and Strengthening of the Women Care Givers programmes and our resolve to end all violence against children, we are partnering with ICAN to support a community learning center that provides education and social skills to the Rohingya refugee children in Kuala Lumpur. Rohingya, a persecuted minority, has faced decades of harsh treatment in Myanmar. To escape from this severe repression, a number of Rohingya and their children flee to Malaysia. It is upon this back drop, that we made a fact - finding visit to Kuala Lumpur to assess the situation of children refugees supported by our partners and to identify areas where Arigatou International could be of concrete assistance.

The Madrasah Pelarian Rohingya team and ICAN are to be commended for the significant efforts that they have made so far in trying to provide basic education and nutrition to refugee children under their care. However, more support and action is needed to tackle child labour, child poverty, child marriage and lack of access to quality and relevant education to the refugee children in Malaysia.

Visits and Areas of Exposure

- Madrasah Pelarian Rohingya
- Madrasah Hashimiah Tahfiz Al-Quran & Anak Yatim
- International Islamic University Malaysia

Introduction Meeting to the Malaysia Team



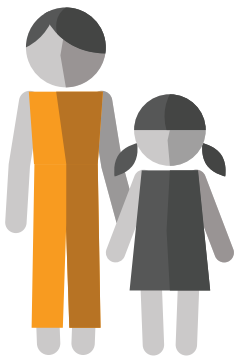
The mission immediately begun with an introduction meeting where Arigatou International's End Child Poverty team met with the ICAN Malaysia team and discussed on the refugee crisis in Malaysia. Some of the main problems and possible solutions in ending the crisis discussed were:

Problems	Solution(s)
Early child marriage due to poverty	Education & economic empowerment of children, youth and caregivers.
Limited or no access to education	

Visit(s) to Madrasas

End Child Poverty visited two of the madrasas that are supported by Arigatou International;

1. Madrasah Pelarian Rohingya
2. Madrasah Hashimiah Tahfiz Al-Quran & Anak Yatim



One third of the girls in the developing world are married **before** the age of 18.



Brother Sadek Mohammad,
 Founder, Darul Eslah
 Rohingya Academy
 A Person of Faith Taking Action



End Child Poverty is currently supporting ICAN Malaysia to run a Sunday art class for the children and week days extra tuition classes in the Madrasa. The programme is run by the volunteers.



Volunteers, ICAN Malaysia

The Gaps/Problems

Immediate

- Water filters to ensure the children drink clean water.
- Air conditioner so as to protect the children from being exposed to extreme weather conditions and ensure continuity of learning.
- Additional books for the children's library so that they have access to more useful books that will enhance their knowledge.
- Support the teachers; the teachers are currently on a zero pay basis and it is important for them to be appreciated and as a result this will ensure commitment.
- Basic need for the children.



Long Term

- The children get into school very late (in reference to their age), for example a ten year old is in grade 2.
- Ensuring sustainability of the education: The school can only provide education up to a certain age, after that there is no plan/strategy for those who leave.

Visit to the International Islamic University Malaysia

The International Islamic University Malaysia also known as IIUM or UIAM, is a university in Malaysia. IIUM aims to become a leading international centre of educational excellence which seeks to restore the dynamic and progressive role of the Muslim Ummah in all branches of knowledge and intellectual discourse.

One of End Child Poverty's strategic approach is incorporating evidence, policy change and action. Collaboration efforts between Arigatou International and the university would ensure the later is achieved.



Fred Nyabera, Director End Child Poverty presented the interfaith guide to End Child Poverty to Dr. Bachir Soualhi, Special Assistant to the Rector and Prof. Dr. Dawood A. Al-Hidabi, Director of International Networking and Scholarships, Director of Islamic Body for Quality and Accreditation.



Possible Areas of Collaboration:

- Children and peace building/ child protection
- Knowledge generation
- Advocacy for policy and social change

Follow up Action:

- A round table meeting on children
- A joint five year action plan
- Community based research
- Empowering women care givers



A FOCUS ON WOMEN CARE GIVERS

Immediate Response by End Child Poverty

The WORTH program is an economic empowerment savings-led, micro-credit program, designed by PACT, for women in 1998/9. WORTH builds on Pact's award-winning Women's Empowerment Program (Nepal) which demonstrated that large numbers of women can quickly move from illiteracy to

being literate, income producing, socially active members of their communities. It is Innovative, highly sustainable, scalable social enterprise for hard to reach communities.



The program takes into account that poverty and its effects are mostly, cyclic. A poor child is unlikely to eat well, be healthy and get an education. Consequently, they are more at risk of exploitation and various forms of abuse, that further lead to poverty through crime, child pregnancies and the inevitable misfortune list goes on and on; for themselves and the world at large.

The WORTH program is a program that focuses on empowering women to help fellow women to change and improve their lives by putting an emphasis on self-dependency. It trains women to start small businesses, as well as develop and manage successful and profitable village banks by mobilizing their own available resources.

HOW WORTH WORKS

1. Women learn together (functional literacy, and other social issues) while they save together.

2. Using their literacy and skills, members learn how to launch and manage a village bank.



5. Groups help launch other groups and play key roles in community action and raising awareness.

4. Groups learn about how to involve themselves financially and emotionally in the lives of others e.g. orphans and vulnerable children – v+ parenting.

3. Women borrow from their group savings to begin micro-businesses. Interest on loans is distributed as dividends to bank members.



Increased educational attainment of women and girls accounts for about **50%** of the economic growth in OECD countries over the past 50 years.

—OECD Report

The WORTH trainings aim at ensuring that women create flourishing and lucrative village banks which are then supported by a well-staffed organizational structure with which in turn help them manage their day to day needs.

Arigatou International's End Child Poverty in partnership with ICAN Malaysia is planning to conduct a WORTH training early 2018.

Invitation to the Interfaith Harmony and Tolerance Conference

Arigatou International has been invited to attend and present at the interfaith harmony and tolerance conference scheduled to take place in February 2018 during the World Interfaith Harmony Week.

About the World Interfaith Harmony Week

The World Interfaith Harmony Week is based on the pioneering work of The Common Word initiative. This initiative, called for Muslim and Christian leaders to engage in a dialogue based on two common fundamental religious Commandments; Love of God, and Love of the Neighbour, without nevertheless compromising any of their own religious tenets. This formula includes all people of goodwill. It includes those of other faiths, and those with no faith.

It is hoped that this initiative will provide a focal point from which all people of goodwill can recognize that the common values they hold far outweigh the differences they have, and thus provide a strong dosage of peace and harmony to their communities.

END CHILD POVERTY AND ICAN MEETING

A meeting between representatives from Arigatou International and ICAN Malaysia volunteers as well as partner stakeholders was held.

The meeting:

1. Officially introduced new members to Arigatou International and its initiatives
2. Helped members understand Arigatou International's structure as well as different areas of focus

Achievements

1. Participants appreciated the visit and the time set apart to listen by End Child Poverty's Director to visit, spend time and listen to the children affected by poverty in Malaysia.
2. The volunteers were highly motivated to continue with the work (and service) they are doing for and giving to children.
3. The GNRC members were encouraged and agreed to continue developing country-based plans, which will feed into the overall GNRC plan.



19.5% of the world's children live in extreme poverty

Conclusion

1. Deliberate effort will be made to empower women through various programs such as the WORTH training scheduled to take place in 2018.
2. The GNRC members were encouraged and agreed to continue developing country-based plans, which will feed into the overall GNRC plan.
3. Strategic planning and research that will give clarity to the overall project(s) will be conducted
4. Communication among the GNRC members and with the secretariats of the GNRC and End Child Poverty, will be more frequent.



Recommendation

The GNRC Members from ICAN Malaysia (including volunteers and the team at large) have a notable desire and passion to serve the children, however they acknowledge the need for capacity enhancement that will give them access to reach decision makers with the aim of translating what they are doing to programs. The Arigatou International Nairobi office should respond to the expressed capacity enhancement need.



ICAN Volunteers

Arigatou International would like to extend gratitude to the ICAN Malaysia team lead by Shazmin Rafeeq who hosted the team from Arigatou International – Nairobi.

“...I hope, I dream, I am thankful”

A message from young aspiring Doctor Ashit Bin Abdul.

SCRIPT FOR ASHIT

Assalamualaikum and good morning,

My name is Muhamad Ashit Bin Abdul Ghafar. I am 15 years old. In my family, there is my mom, my dad and I. I was born in Myanmar and was raised there until I come to Malaysia when I was 9. The people in Myanmar was fighting and I had to leave. We came here by boat. There were about 200 people in that boat. It was a long journey. We arrived in Thailand and stayed there for a month and then we enter Malaysia. Malaysia's immigration then caught us and we were brought to a camp site at Ipoh. We stayed there ~~at~~ for another 3 months before coming here at Ampang. I have lived here in Malaysia for 5 years ~~at~~ already. My father earns money by cutting grass and he is the one supporting us. I ~~really like~~ ~~it~~ really like living here in Malaysia but I hope one day, I can go to United States. I want to achieve my dream by going there. I want to be an engineer at day time and a doctor at night time. That is my story. I am thankful that we have the Sunday class as I can meet the teacher and learn new things. Thank you very much.

**“As long as poverty, injustice
and gross inequality exist in our
world, none of us can truly rest.”**

—Nelson Mandela

Arigatou International - End Child Poverty

Arigatou International – Global Network of Religions for Children
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