



A call for a 'Peaceful World for our Children'

World Day of Prayer and Action for Children India 2023

In a lecture delivered in London in 1931, Mahatma Gandhi spoke famous words that are often-quoted today. **“If we are to reach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with children.”**

With these words, Gandhiji was not shifting the responsibility for our world to its children, but expressing his belief that we have much to learn from the wisdom of our children. He was also acknowledging the significance of children for the future of our world and our obligation to nurture them with love and wisdom, to protect them from violence and to ensure their flourishing.

As we gather here in Mani Bhavan, a place sanctified with the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, we remember his prophetic words again, mindful of the suffering our children experience in this moment with ongoing wars in Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan and in other parts of our world. The impact of war on children is devastating. They are the casualties of direct violence and the diseases that accompany war. War disrupts their education, displaces them from home and community and forces them into camps with deplorable living conditions. War makes children more vulnerable to violence of all kinds, including sexual assault. This we acknowledge together as a global community convened to observe the **World Day of Prayer and Action for Children 2023, in India.**

Prayer and Action for Children require that we lift our voices and unite across our traditions against war, violence, and suffering. We call for and support all measures that protect children from harm and grant them access to the precious resources that they need for life and well-being. Our children are the blessings of the divine. We honour children as blessings by acting to protect them from all the harmful and devastating consequences of war and violence. We cannot honour the divine and be indifferent to violence and suffering inflicted on our precious children. The protection of our children from violence and suffering is one of the primary obligations required of us by the different faith traditions to which we belong. Our work for children is rooted in this sacred obligation and measured in the way we concretely make this world a more peaceful and safer place for our children to live, grow & progress.

- **Our commitment to Prayer and Action for Children: Echo's Mahatma Gandhi's expression of hope for children and for a peaceful future. It also reiterates our parental and community responsibilities.** Gandhi spoke of the home as a university and every parent as a teacher. The fact is that we cannot expect our children to be the instruments of peace-making if the way of peace is not practiced in our homes and communities. Our children learn what it means to be human from those human beings who are significant in their lives and who are their exemplars. These include parents, caregivers, educators, and other members of the community.

- **Our commitment to Prayer and Action for Children: Invites us to nurture peace in our children.** We will nurture peace in our children if we cultivate and express peace in our own lives, in our relationships with each other and with our children. We will nurture peace in children by exemplifying it deeply in ourselves and by cultivating relationships with them that are loving, gentle, joyful, playful, and respectful of their dignity and sanctity.
- **Our commitment to Prayer and Action for Children: Holds us accountable to do more** for our children who were the invisible face of the recent COVID 19 Pandemic. Over 1.5 billion children were affected by the pandemic. The impact still continues, and urgent investments have to be made to ensure that the basic needs of children, including food security, holistic health, quality education and reducing violence against children, are properly met. We commit to building an ecosystem that will leave no child behind and inspire us to do ‘all for children.’

The World Day 2023 launched from India, the first held in the Global South, is an opportunity to address these complex issues from a global as well as a local perspective.

We are grateful that, this year 2023, we commemorate the World Day of Prayer and Action in India, the land that, from ancient times, taught us the ethic of non-violence (ahimsa) and gave us some of its greatest exemplars.

We commit ourselves to the holistic well-being of the world's children.

We lift up our voices and our prayers for the children who are the victims of war in every part of our world where war rages.

We call upon the parties in these conflicts to do all that is necessary to protect the lives of children and to end violence and suffering.

We pray for our world to be led from war, violence and suffering to a more peaceful world for all our children.

