



Interactive Knowledge Update

Ms. Ornella Barros

Head of Global Advocacy at Arigatou International

**will lead us in exploring
'Institutionalising Children's Participation
and Accompanying Age Transition'**

Date: 28th October 2025 @Shanti Ashram

Interactive Knowledge Update

The Mahatma Gandhi Institute for Peace, Leadership and Development (MGIPLD) at Shanti Ashram stands as a living laboratory for values-based education, rooted in the Gandhian vision of integral human development. It serves as a vibrant space where reflection meets action—nurturing young minds, professionals, and community leaders to embody peace, justice, and sustainable living in their personal and social spheres. The *Interactive Knowledge Update* sessions at MGIPLD are not merely academic exercises; they are shared journeys of learning and unlearning. In the spirit of dialogue and collective inquiry, these sessions invite participants to explore timeless truths, scientific evidence and contemporary challenges alike. Each interaction becomes a moment of awakening—where the wisdom of experience, the curiosity of learners, and the spirit of service converge to deepen understanding and inspire transformative leadership for a more compassionate world.

Why Institutionalising Children's Participation and Accompanying Age Transition is critical to our work with CHILDREN ?

Children's participation is most transformative when it is rooted in structures that last. It means when listening to children becomes part of how communities, institutions, and societies make decisions. This session will explore ways to move from isolated participation avenues toward sustained, accountable systems that recognize children as active contributors to the common good. By embedding participation in policies, programs, and organisational culture, we can create environments where every child's perspective genuinely influences action and outcomes.

The discussion will also examine how participation evolves as children grow older. What happens when those who have long been engaged in child-led initiatives reach adulthood? How can we accompany them and support them as they transition into new roles and life stages? Together, we will reflect on how intergenerational collaboration can make participation a lifelong journey where children's voices inspire empathy and truthfulness, guide collective action grounded in service, and nurture the shared pursuit of justice and peace.



Profile of the Global Speaker: Ms. Ornella Barros *Head of Global Advocacy Arigatou International*

Ornella Barros, a Colombian child rights advocate, embodies a lifelong commitment to empowering children as active participants in shaping a just and compassionate world.

With over fifteen years of global experience, her work bridges advocacy, interfaith collaboration, and child-led governance—affirming that children are not merely beneficiaries of protection but co-creators of peace and transformation.

As Head of Global Advocacy at Arigatou International, she leads Prayer and Action for Children, fostering spaces where moral imagination meets social action. Her writings and initiatives echo a deeper philosophy: that nurturing children's voices is not only a matter of rights but a sacred responsibility toward rehumanizing our shared future.

Shanti Ashram has worked closely with Ms. Barros in organizing the Global Day of Prayer and Action in India and around the world.

Shanti Ashram's 3 decades of dedicated service with Children

The first steps

Over the past three decades, the story of Shanti Ashram has unfolded like a living testament to what compassion, courage, and community can achieve together. Born from the Gandhian dream of building a just and peaceful world, the Ashram began its journey in 1991 with a small circle of 25 children in Vaikalpalayam under the Bala Shanti Programme, lovingly envisioned by *Mrs. Minoti Aram*. What began as an act of faith soon grew into a movement—a space where every child's dignity is upheld, every family's voice is heard, and every village becomes a partner in collective progress.

Achieving a milestone

Through the years, this small beginning blossomed into a service ecosystem reaching over 115,000 children, weaving together the threads of education, health, nutrition, food security, ethics education, interfaith cooperation, and peacebuilding into a single tapestry of hope.

Every Child Matters

At Shanti Ashram, every child matters — not for what they possess, but for who they are and the promise they hold within. Each child carries a spark of possibility that, when nurtured with love, guidance, and dignity, can illuminate families and communities alike. To affirm that every child matters is to affirm the very essence of our shared humanity — that no child is invisible, and every child deserves to grow, to dream, and to flourish.

Active participation

At the heart of Shanti Ashram's work beats a profound belief: children are not only the future—they are the present architects of change. Their laughter, questions, and dreams have become the guiding rhythm of the Ashram's journey. Here, child participation is not a programme—it is a philosophy. Children learn to speak for themselves, to lead with empathy, and to build bridges across differences. Their courage and curiosity shape communities that learn to listen, care, and act together. Across 100 service villages, this living model of development has taken root—sustained by partnerships with over 200 local and global organizations, grounded in field experience, and inspired by the enduring ideals of *Dr. M. Aram*

Programme

03.30 pm	Moment of Silent Reflection Welcome Expectations on child participation and expected take away from the session Ananya
03.40 pm	Introductory session Mr.Vijayaragavan Gopal, Head, Youth Leadership Programme Ms. Deepalakshmi, Head, Bala Shanti Programme Introduction of the Speaker
03.50 pm	Exploring " <i>Institutionalizing Children's Participation and Accompanying Age Transition</i> " Ms. Ornella Barros Advocate, Child rights Head, Global Advocacy at Arigatou International
04.50 pm	Reflections from Shanti Ashram Child Volunteers Vedika, Chinmayan, Kavya, Sai Nithin Arunachalam, Laya Q & A
05.15 pm	Concluding Remarks Dr.Kezevino Aram, President, Shanti Ashram

"To every child — I dream of a world where you can laugh, dance, sing, learn, live in peace and be happy."

Malala



Session 34

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**Shanti Ashram jointly organized with
Partnership platform**



Ethics
Education

