

# GLOBAL CHILDREN'S FORUM ADDIS ABABA 2023



Children Everywhere Walking with Jesus



<https://gcf.community>

# ROOTS & RHYTHMS

In a world often overwhelmed by chaos and uncertainty, the importance of coming together as the body of Christ — to nurture our faith, unite our hearts, inspire growth and ignite boundless love — is relevant now more than ever before. It was a joy to connect as a Global Children's Forum in November in Addis. Around 110 people from 25 countries across Africa and beyond, met to explore what is possible to do together that we cannot do alone.

Through thought-provoking and engaging discussions, we were encouraged to deepen our understanding about the heart of God for children through the theme of **Families on Mission**.

Reflecting on our family journeys in the time together in Addis allowed us to explore many lessons, discover principles, and consider how to apply this to our daily lives. Being a family on mission should be intentional and begins with each of us. *Think about being a family on mission using the metaphor of a tree.*

- **Roots:** What supports your family?
- **Trunk:** What are your priorities and values as a family?
- **Branches:** What are your family rhythms? What do you love to do together?
- **Fruit:** What positive fruits are you producing as a family?

All in all, Christ is the centre of our households. **The word of God encourages us to create family rhythms and traditions to pass on faith.** As we read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 we discover the gift that every day offers us to connect with God in the rhythm and pattern of daily life.





# TEAM REPORTS



*"Having attended previous gatherings, I consistently departed with a renewed vision, yet found myself grappling with the challenge of staying connected to the Vine, maintaining clarity in my vision with Him, and synchronising efforts with fellow colleagues. In my initial gathering, there was a strong desire to sustain the connection through platforms like WhatsApp, yearning to learn about the practical applications of what we had acquired and collaboratively worked on. However, after a few months, I inevitably slipped back into the routine of day-to-day demands.*

*This time around, as an active participant, it was evident that many work groups had been diligently engaged in their tasks for an extended period prior to arriving in Addis. It was invigorating to introduce fresh perspectives and energy, witness the progress made, and potentially contribute to something that is in continuous development. I am eagerly anticipating the ongoing growth of these groups and excited to see what unfolds after the completion of these initial commitments. Take a moment to explore the noteworthy commitments and ongoing efforts within the larger community, bridging organisations, diverse giftings, and cultural nuances. It's truly awe-inspiring to witness how God utilises us as vessels, reflecting His image to make a profound impact on a broader community."*

**Valerie Gill de Abreu — Brazil**



# Global and Regional collaboration

We focussed on connecting global movements and networks to address the core question: *How can we unite and collaborate around seeing families on mission and children everywhere walking with Jesus?*

Next steps for the global team include:

- **Developing tools and a theological paper** to engage leaders and gatekeepers.
- Establish a **pilot initiative in Europe**

Next steps for the regional team include:

- **Mapping** alliances, networks and organisations in Africa
- **Organise a connecting event** with the Association of Evangelicals in Africa

## Lausanne — children and families

We want to see a strong network in Africa connecting children's leaders and influencers with ideas, resources, and each other in order to see children everywhere walk with Jesus.

**We will share our success story as in how families (own and others) impacted us in our childhood to become followers of Jesus.** We celebrate these stories as we look at the topics and themes that can be transformational as we work towards plans for the Lausanne 4 gathering.



## Lausanne — children at risk

We focused on children at risk, and thought about how "family" can be a complex topic for many children. We considered the barriers to being a family on mission for children at risk.

Our goal over the next 18 months is: to **create a set of comic stories that involve children in at-risk-contexts** in the stories, all engaging in mission.





# Sport and Play

Sport and play are central to childhood and are some of the most effective ways of making disciples. We've seen the impact already in families through initiatives like **Family.Fit**. As a group we will:

- **Produce videos of the games** already created and add more games
- **Finalise the booklet for FamilyGames**, making it available for every family on mission

# Parenting

This group set out to **evaluate and establish guidelines and support for parents**. In pursuit of the vision to see children everywhere walking with Jesus, there is a priority focus on ways to **build connections with children**. Also to explore ways to **use daily routines**, rhythms and occasional activities to interact with children in ways that grow them as disciples of Jesus.

# Child Safety

Globally, child safety is a pressing issue. As we walk alongside children and teenagers helping them on their journey from brokenness to wholeness, child safety plays a critical role in this process.

Outcomes from the group, with a particular focus on Africa, include:

- Create an initial booklet **introducing Child Safety** as the first resource in this area
- **Develop a further range of tools**, such as animated videos, advocacy tools, sermon outlines, community campaigns etc.



# Academia

The focus is to see more academic institutions including children, youth and family as a topic of serious reflection and equipping in their ministry programs, towards seeing children and families everywhere walking with Jesus from brokenness to wholeness. In order to see the dream realised, we identified the need for *a clear advocacy message, globally usable academic curriculum as well as globally written and accessible academic resources*. Next steps include:

- **Asset mapping** academic programs and resources
- Launching a **GCF pilot journal** to encourage and disseminate robust global thinking and research around children and families and
- **Creating academic resources** to supplement GCF's Brokenness to Wholeness curriculum for use in academic settings.

# Gen-G (Generous Generations)

The Gen-G vision is to ignite and cultivate a global movement of children who joyfully demonstrate God's love through radical, biblical generosity, thereby healing the world through their giving. This work-group collaboratively explored a range of initiatives including:

- Creating and finalising a **Digital Gen-G Test Box** with 5,000 children participating in each region — globally
- **Development of digital tools**, such as an app, expanded website and Leaders Toolkit



# Leadership Experience (LE)

This workgroup sought to collaboratively explore how to effectively multiply regional expressions of LE, particularly in the African setting, and adapt the curriculum for academic settings. Together we did the following:

- Celebrated the **transformation in the lives and ministries** of alumni
- Tackled potential **solutions to the barriers of finances and promotion**
- Began **planning a global LE in the Asia-Pacific** region and two other regional LEs





# THE BIRTH OF A MOVEMENT

A wonderful development over the last year has been the emergence of **Gen-G** (Generous Generations). This exciting initiative is focused on cultivating generosity among children and youth, with a special emphasis on families developing generosity together. **Gen-G Adventures**, an immersive experience for children and youth led by leaders or parents, have been created and were tested by the team in Ethiopia. Valuable feedback has been gathered to refine six of these adventures for large-scale testing. A Digital Test Box is now being finalised. Our test phase will launch in January 2024. We aim to reach 5,000 children in each region of the world by March 2024.

**The Gen-G website is in development.** Our landing page is at <https://generousgenerations.org> This will be followed by the launch of a dedicated Gen-G app by the end of 2025, offering an immersive and accessible experience for a wider audience.

Collaboration is a cornerstone for Gen-G, engaging with other GCF work group leaders to foster collective impact. The aim is to make generous thinking among children an integral part of ministry, and it will be exciting to explore ways to best serve other work groups in integrating this message. In a commitment to growth, new activities are being developed to complement the existing Gen-G Adventures, providing audiences with a diverse range of experiences. In addition, a Leaders Toolkit will offer a comprehensive resource to guide leaders on this transformative journey.

During the time in Addis Ababa, we encountered inspiring stories of children's generosity. These acts of generosity, though seemingly small, had a profound impact and inspired the families involved to live more generously. These stories exemplify generous Families on Mission, and by God's grace there are many more waiting to be told...

**The Gen-G work-team**



*One of the best encounters I have had over my 35 years attending international ministry events. Coming away with the knowledge that children are the future of the gospel and we have developed people and resources to enable that to happen.*

*This was my first meeting and was way more strategic and collaborative than I had imagined.*

# GCF PEOPLE

## Mentorship as a catalyst... for Kingdom multiplication

As an emerging African leader, the opportunity to serve as a facilitator at the Global Children's Forum in Addis Ababa in November 2023 was a humbling moment. The invitation to facilitate this international event highlighted the importance of diverse perspectives in global forums. As I reflect on the past event, I acknowledge the transformative impact of mentorship and the Leadership Experience (LE) course in shaping my ministry and personal life.

The foundation of my journey towards serving as a facilitator was laid through mentorship engagements, where seasoned Godly leaders generously shared insights. (I would say literally emptying themselves into me.) This mentorship has played a pivotal role in honing my leadership skills, fostering self-confidence, and imparting a deeper understanding of the intricacies involved in facilitation in an international space. Complementing this mentorship, the LE course provided a structured framework for leadership development. The course equipped me with essential leadership principles, communication strategies, and cross-cultural people skills. As I reflect on this journey, it is clear that mentorship and a comprehensive leadership education are not just personal investments but essential components in shaping leaders who can navigate the complexities of facilitating global forums with cultural acumen and a collaborative spirit.

In envisioning the future of emerging African leaders, my fervent desire is to see a generation of individuals empowered with the skills, vision, and resilience necessary to address the continent's challenges and propel it towards sustainable and effective ministry. Mentorship stands as a beacon in this aspiration, offering a powerful avenue for nurturing and developing the potential within young African leaders. The essence lies not only in imparting knowledge but also in fostering a mindset that embraces innovation, inclusivity, and a deep understanding of the diverse ministry terrains across the continent. Children everywhere walking with Jesus.

**Sam Munyiri — Kenya**





# SURVEY THE LANDSCAPE

**A collective vision and narrative highlighting the crucial concept of Families on Mission** is emerging within movements and networks focused on children, youth, and families. While the vision is clear, many grapple with practical implementation steps. Although we align on priorities, a gap persists in understanding the actionable measures required. To address this, initiatives like a booklet for church leaders and a theological paper are in progress to provide clarity and support.

Amidst these efforts, it is evident that **what we truly need are practical steps**. The initial survey conducted during our collaborative sessions at the Forum serves as the foundation for more in-depth research. This research will play a key role in delineating actionable strategies around five agreed-upon priorities:

- engaging the church
- cultivating qualified leaders
- producing quality materials
- establishing effective models, and
- empowering younger leaders.

The survey outcomes have revealed clear pathways, drawing out the strengths inherent in our GCF family, to guide us in realising the vision of **every Christian household actively participating in mission and positively impacting broader communities**. Please add your thoughts and explore the insightful summary of the survey findings through this [link](#). Do let us know what you think. Together, we plan to transform this vision into tangible, impactful actions.

# FAMILIES ON MISSION

There has been growing momentum around the needs of families and how we can best serve them alongside serving their children. The forum added to this commitment **to see families embracing what it means to think and act missionally**. Given time to reflect on the needs around us in Africa, and as we come together as Kingdom partners, we began to imagine how we could see God transforming the way that families walk with Jesus, serving the Kingdom and living as salt and light, agents of transformation in their communities. **Imagine the impact on communities, cities, nations and even the continent!**



## São Paulo Statement on Families on Mission

God has created us to be in **communities**, the smallest of which are **households**. These combine with other families to form larger communities (villages, cities etc.).

**Together, Christian homes form churches.**

All these Christian families are called to be '**on Mission**': shaping both the lives of their own families and the lives of others, being **salt** and **light** in society and calling each other to **reflect the image of God**.

What if **every Christian household** embraced being on Mission?  
What if **all Churches** supported those households to be on Mission so that the Church became what God intended the Church to be, **together impacting wider communities**?

What if, together, Christian households were like '**cities on a hill**', shining light and bringing hope to others?

Such a vision calls for all Christian homes to be '**Families on Mission**', reflecting the purpose, identity, and calling of Christian families.

We pray that we will let the love of Jesus into our homes to share His light with others.



# LIVING AS LIGHTHOUSES

As the curtains fall on the inspiring Global Children's Forum (GCF) in Ethiopia, the momentum gained propels us towards an even more ambitious mission. The resounding success and collaborative spirit experienced during the gathering in Addis Ababa fuels our collective aspiration for what comes next. The vision on the horizon is nothing short of transformative — **a commitment to equip one million families on a shared mission across Africa**. Dreaming beyond that, we step forward collaboratively with others carrying the challenge to see not just one million, but **raising one hundred million families transformed through a Kingdom-focused journey with Jesus through Africa and beyond**.

The hope is to foster an environment where children everywhere can walk with Jesus. **This vision transcends boundaries, calling for unity and collaboration among families, communities, and churches**. The narrative that unfolds beyond the GCF Ethiopia gathering is one of empowerment and collective impact. It is an invitation for families from diverse backgrounds to join forces, creating a movement dedicated to guiding and accompanying children on their journey of faith.

**The goal is to imprint a legacy of love, understanding, and acceptance on the spiritual landscape of Africa, where each family becomes a beacon of hope for the next generation.** This envisioned bookend symbolises not just an end but the beginning of stories that will resonate across the continent, shaping a future where children walk with Jesus and carry the torch of faith into the generations to come.

