


# Children and the Kingdom of God:

A Listening Exercise





This report presents the findings from a Listening Exercise with 193 children across six countries to understand their perceptions of the Kingdom of God and the impact on their agency. The children participated in drawing, photovoice, picture card activity, and focus group discussions. The central question was: What is the Kingdom of God to children? Four sub-questions directed the exercise: a) What are the children's perceptions of the Kingdom of God? b) How does a "Kingdom of God" function in a community? c) What can children do to build the Kingdom of God? and d) How can adults help children to be Kingdom builders? The key findings are as follows:

First, the children hold three distinct perceptions of the Kingdom of God, each shaping their worldview and community engagement. Those who perceive the kingdom of God as a present reality actively engage with their community. Conversely, those with a "not yet" view exhibit less urgency, while children with a "between times" (here and not yet) view grapple with the disparity between God's promises and the harsh realities they face. A significant finding is that children who hold the first view do not distinguish between the sacred and the secular. To them, the same values guide life in the Kingdom and on earth (... on earth as it is in heaven; Matt 6:10).

Second, data analysis revealed that 11 Sustainable Developmental Goals (SDGs) were evident in communities where God is King. People in the Kingdom of God look out and care for each other. Nature acts kindly in its seasons, trees bear fruits, and there is enough food for everyone. In describing the Kingdom of God, the children left an important message: poverty and hunger can be eradicated. Surprisingly, the children did not mention God's divine intervention. Instead, it is the people who love God and are willing to share their food and resources so that no one is in need. This description reflects the church in Acts 2: 42-47.

Third, the children did not see themselves as having extraordinary powers to be Kingdom builders. They were living out their childhood. Some children saw themselves as small and helpless (like the Mustard seed), while others opined that being small means having growth potential. The data highlighted five essentials for children to become Kingdom builders -- a) a safe and stable space for living; b) food, clean water, and health care; c) literacy and knowledge; d) coping skills to manoeuvre life challenges, and e) know God's Word and have godly values. This finding could imply that spiritual ministry to children living in difficult circumstances must begin with physiological provisions.

Fourth, adult involvement is crucial in nurturing children to be kingdom builders. Facilitating children to be Kingdom builders is a long-term commitment to Christian care and nurture involving the five essentials. These five essentials can be further developed into initiatives for Christian discipleship of children in faith-based humanitarian aid.

The Listening Exercise helped us understand how children think about God, His Kingdom, and personal and community well-being. The children attest that when God is present as king or leader of their community, nature will be at its best, and humans will flourish. There will be harmony in the community and home. People will be happy. The children's role in Kingdom building is to live out their childhood, while the adults must ensure the essentials for growth are present.

