

About AFRUCA

AFRUCA - Africans Unite Against Child Abuse was established in May 2001 to promote the welfare of African children.

We work in the four thematic areas of child's rights, policy development and advocacy, research and education and community development.

Background to the Conference

The Role of the African Community in Combating Child Trafficking Conference was held as part of a series of activities in June 2004 to celebrate AFRUCA's third year in existence.

The conference took place as a response to the growth in the trafficking of African children in the UK for a variety of purposes. It sought to explore the role that different African community groups in the UK could play in combating the trafficking of African children to the country.

Conference Aims

- To examine the extent, causes and impact of child trafficking on victims
- To develop strategies for further community participation in combating child trafficking
- To provide a platform within and with the African community regarding its role in the safeguarding of African children.

Keynote Speakers

Harriet Harman QC MP Solicitor General
David Bull, Chief Executive, UNICEF UK
Detective Chief Superintendent Peter Spindler, Metropolitan Police Service
Dayo Akinmoyo, Special Adviser to the President of Nigeria on Human Trafficking and Child Labour
Damien Lewis, Co-Author "Slave"

Conference Chair

Jacqueline Williams, Treasurer, Akin Mama Wa Afrika

Conference Conclusions

The conference concluded that there was adequate evidence to support the claim that African children were trafficked to the UK for different purposes ranging from domestic servitude, to benefit fraud and onward trafficking to other countries in Europe. Most of the evidence presented came from the work of professionals including the Metropolitan Police Service, social services, lawyers, charities and others who worked with victims in other capacities.

Below is a synopsis of other significant conclusions and recommendations emanating from the conference.

1. UK - Working with communities

The conference highlighted:

1. The need for a mass sensitisation campaign by charities and the government to raise awareness of the issue of child trafficking and child exploitation and promote the new legislations on private fostering and people trafficking in the UK.
2. The need for a comprehensive research on child trafficking within the African community in the UK to determine the emerging trends.
3. The need to engage with leaders of faith groups who have a lot of respect and power within the community and who can help to educate their various congregations on child protection and child welfare issues.

4. Aside education campaigns among faith groups, engaging with them to commit resources into safeguarding and caring for victims of trafficking, for instance by funding or part-funding a safe-house for victims of trafficking.

5. Building the capacity of charities to enable them work in the area of counter trafficking.

6. Setting up a forum of key stakeholders within the African community, for instance a community counter-trafficking forum, to help inform policies and develop protocols towards safeguarding victims of trafficking.

2. UK Policy Actions

The Conference called for:

1. Compensation for victims of Human Trafficking, especially children, out of the confiscated assets of convicted traffickers.
2. A review of policies on child-care to benefit those with child-care needs. It was felt this would help to reduce the need for child domestics.
3. The development of a Whistle-blowing/protection policy for those who "out" and help to prosecute traffickers.
4. The establishment of a safe-house by the UK government for child victims of trafficking to protect them from the hands of known traffickers and from the risks of re-trafficking.
5. Special training for social workers, the police and immigration officials to enable them recognise and protect children at risk and involving the community in doing so.
6. The need to consider child trafficking not as an immigration problem, but as a child protection issue. The Department for Education and Skills should be more proactive in addressing this and in making positive efforts to engage with the community.

7. UK Asylum system should be geared towards providing better protection for victims of trafficking.

8. The establishment of a government Commission for Trafficking in Persons. Such an agency, as the one set up by the government of Nigeria, would have key responsibility for engaging with stakeholders within and outside the UK, and working with the Crown Prosecution Service to prosecute offenders. The commission could also take the lead in funding and running a safe-house for trafficked children in the country.

3. Policy - The UK and other countries

The conference asked for:

Source Countries

1. Collaboration and capacity building for Government officials, law enforcement officials and the media in source countries to enable them deal with the problem of human trafficking and protect victims
2. Mass Awareness campaigns in source countries to alert people to the risks of private fostering, people smuggling and facilitation. This is what AFRUCA has termed denouncing the better life syndrome.
3. The UK to play a more proactive role in preventing and ending corruption, poverty and conflict in Africa.

Europe

1. Synchronising UK laws on child trafficking with those in other parts of Europe to benefit/safeguard victims and punish traffickers
2. Better community links with other parts of Europe to propagate the counter-trafficking message. A conference on the role of the African community in Europe in combating child trafficking, as a way forward.