



AFRUCA - AFRICANS UNITE AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

PRESS RELEASE

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AFRUCA HOLDS NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHILD TRAFFICKING

African community leaders are expected to make strong calls for the government to engage African communities in the fight against child trafficking in a conference to be held on Tuesday, 22 June 2004.

The conference, organised by children's charity AFRUCA - (Africans Unite Against Child Abuse) aims to provide a platform for the African community to deliberate on the increasing number of its children trafficked to the UK.

The event will also provide an opportunity for government and agencies working with trafficked children to have dialogue with the community about its role in the safeguarding of African children.

The event is taking place amidst continuous media interest in child trafficking following the deaths of Victoria Climbié and "Boy Adam". It is being held in the aftermath of the publication of the Metropolitan Police Service report of a scoping exercise carried out between September and November 2003 at Heathrow Airport. Termed "Operation Paladin Child", the research highlighted the disproportionate number of unaccompanied African children arriving in the UK. The conference also has resonance with the recent research report by ECPAT UK: "Cause for Concern?" which identified at least 10 African countries as sources of trafficked children in the UK.

Keynote speakers at the event include Harriet Harman QC, Solicitor General, Tarique Ghaffur, Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service, David Bull, Executive Director, UNICEF UK and Mende Nazir, a victim of trafficking and author of the book "Slave" which detailed her experience as a trafficked child.

AFRUCA Director Debbie Ariyo said:

“Child trafficking conferences are held every year but there has been no effort on behalf of the government to work with affected communities to solve the problem”.

“Child Trafficking is an international problem that must be addressed at the source. Many African communities in the UK can help to protect vulnerable children and safeguard victims of trafficking. Community groups have their own ways of working with children in need and their capacity must be strengthened. Faith groups in particular have a strong influence amongst Africans. Their role in helping to safeguard vulnerable children needs to be explored.”

Conference organiser, Abiola Sanusi said:

“Africans are tired of being portrayed negatively in the media. There are people who feel very strongly about child trafficking and who are willing to work to stop it. Such people can become Community Champions, sensitising their communities and drawing attention to the negative impact of trafficking on victims and on Africans as a whole”.

“By not engaging with communities on this issue, the government is letting a valuable resource go to waste”, Debbie Ariyo added.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. AFRUCA - Africans Unite Against Child Abuse is an organisation concerned about cruelty against the African child. Our aim is to promote the welfare of African children in the UK and in Africa.
2. “The Role of the African Community in Combating Child Trafficking” Conference is being held as part of a series of activities from 21 to 26 June 2004 to celebrate our third year in existence.
3. For further information and registration details visit www.afruca.org or e-mail festival@Afruca.org
4. For further enquiries and interviews:

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