



PRESS RELEASE

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2001 – 2009 AFRUCA Celebrates Eight Years of Promoting the Welfare of African Children

On its 8th anniversary, AFRUCA outlines its achievements promoting the rights and welfare of African children in the UK and in Africa

AFRUCA – Africans Unite Against Child Abuse was established in May 2001 to campaign against the abuse and exploitation of African children. Since then we have gained recognition as the premier charity working to promote the rights and welfare of African children in the UK.

“Many African children in the UK experience a multitude of challenges that affect their ability to flourish and grow. Our main focus has been to ensure we can work successfully with others to address those challenges for the benefit of our children” said Debbie Ariyo, AFRUCA Founder and Executive Director.

AFRUCA has played a leadership role in addressing the trafficking of African children to the UK and is known to be very active in this regard. Over the years, our work on child trafficking has imbibed a holistic approach, working with others to highlight the issue, influencing government policy through knowledge gained from working in the community as well as through the provision of direct support to victims. At least over 40 young people have directly benefitted from our work in this area. With new funding from Comic Relief, we are now able to expand the menu of support and assistance to reach more victims of trafficking in the London area.

AFRUCA is deeply concerned about the disproportionate number of African children who are experiencing abuse and harm and who are ending up in Local Authority care across the UK. Most children who are removed from their parents are due to allegations of culture-related child abuse and other practices harmful to children. In tackling this growing problem, AFRUCA has launched an England-wide prevention and early intervention project aiming to help improve the knowledge and understanding of African parents in Child Protection as well as the rules and regulations governing how children are brought up in the UK. With funding from the Big Lottery and the Government Department for Children and Families, this project operates in London, Manchester, Newcastle and Liverpool. So far, since June 2007, over 500 parents from a wide range of African backgrounds have benefited from our training programme across London alone.

In addition to working with parents to improve their parenting skills, AFRUCA also provides intensive support to families in crisis who are experiencing a breakdown in relationships. This area of work has enabled us to intervene successfully in over 30 families across London and the South East since June 2007. This element of our work has been boosted by our recent success in winning a tender from Thurrock Council in Essex to establish a Service Office offering a menu of support services for Black African families at risk in that area.

Aside working with families and within the community, AFRUCA is actively engaging with practitioners to help improve their knowledge and skills so they can intervene successfully when working with African families. In April 2007, we launched a National Training Programme for Practitioners working with African children across the UK by offering a menu of training courses to help broaden their knowledge and skills in intervening in and assessing families. So far over 400 practitioners have taken part in our training programme. Our knowledge and expertise in child protection work with African children is highly valued and respected by agencies and their workers across the country. This is evidenced by the level of demand for AFRUCA's intervention and expert advice in case assessment. In 2008, AFRUCA was commissioned by Southwark Council to help review its child protection work with Black African families. Our work has helped to highlight key gaps in service provision which we expect to be addressed by the Council.

In recent years, there has been a lot of attention paid to the plight of children and young people accused as witches or as possessed by evil spirits. Many children across the UK suffer untold physical and emotional harm as a result of accusations of witchcraft. In 2007, AFRUCA launched a community consultation to gather views on whether branding children as witches should be a criminal offence. Majority of respondents supported our proposal for the criminalisation of child branding. Through our Safeguarding African Children Network, we continue to work with the relevant community and faith groups and other agencies to address this very important issue.

AFRUCA is very proud of our achievements in supporting African children and their families across the country, in helping to keep families together and in helping to support victims of trafficking. As we continue to expand our work across the UK, with a Regional Office in Manchester and a Service Office in Thurrock, Essex, it is our hope that we can continue to make a difference in the lives of African children in the UK and help to address the root causes of the problems they experience.

However, it is important to note that our intervention in the past eight years has not been limited to the UK. In partnership with Youth Alive, a children's charity based in the North of Ghana, AFRUCA is also working to help meet the needs of over 300 street children each year in that country through the provision of access to education, training and health care. In Nigeria, we are working with partners in the East of the country to address the horrific problem of "baby factories", a fertile ground for child trafficking and exploitation. On the issue of child trafficking itself, we are actively engaging with local groups to conduct advocacy campaigns. In 2004, AFRUCA held a series of awareness raising campaigns as well as an international conference in Lagos, Nigeria to highlight the growing number of Nigerian children trafficked to the UK and the need for urgent intervention. Based on our growing activities across the continent, AFRUCA is now seeking to develop a physical presence in Africa.

In celebrating our 8th year of supporting African children and promoting their safety and well-being, we wish to acknowledge the overwhelming goodwill and support we have received over the years from our various partners, including other African community organisations, government local authorities and other agencies, Safeguarding Boards, our funders and sponsors, other charities across the UK and in Africa and most importantly the children, young people and the families that make our work worthwhile.

From 22 to 26 June 2009, AFRUCA will hold a series of events in London and Manchester to celebrate its 8th anniversary. Please visit our website at www.afruca.org for further information.

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