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**TACKLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING: CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS FOR A UK ACTION PLAN - SUBMISSION BY AFRUCA – AFRICANS UNITE AGAINST CHILD ABUSE**

Please find attached our contribution to the ongoing government consultation on proposals for a UK action plan on Human Trafficking.

We hope it would prove useful in efforts to put in place programmes and policies to help safeguard our vulnerable children.

Yours sincerely,

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**TACKLING HUMAN TRAFFICKING – CONSULTATION  
ON PROPOSALS FOR A UK ACTION PLAN**

**SUBMISSION BY**

**AFRUCA – AFRICANS UNITE AGAINST CHILD ABUSE**

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## 1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

### AFRUCA'S WORK ON THE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN TO THE UK

1.1 Established in May 2001, AFRUCA promotes the welfare of African children in the UK and in Africa. We are the most visible charity in the UK working specifically to combat the trafficking of African children into the country. Our work on trafficking imbibes a holistic approach, working closely with others to sensitise the community – in the UK, other countries in Europe and in Africa, support child victims of trafficking and influence relevant governments' policies and regulatory action.

#### 1.2 *Specific activities:*

- Increased awareness raising, sensitization and promoting attitudinal changes amongst the African community in the UK, in a number of European countries and in source countries in terms of the exploitation, abuse and the trafficking of children. AFRUCA believes that the most effective way of safeguarding children is by raising the level of awareness so that people can begin to see child protection and safeguarding as an issue that concerns and involves them.
- Increased collaboration with practitioners in raising the skills level of staff through taking part in various training activities and in drawing up relevant policies, strategies and protocols to ensure each agency is better able to support and meet the needs of child victims of trafficking.
- Continuous advocacy and lobbying to ensure governments are aware of and see the need for changes in the law so that children can be better protected, and that all those responsible for protecting them are supported and empowered to do so.
- Increasingly, providing support, counselling and befriending victims of trafficking to ensure they can get the help, support and services they deserve. We do this either directly when we are approached by the young people or those who know them, or indirectly working with various local authorities social services, the police, law firms and others.

#### 1.3 *Specific Achievements in the Area of Counter-Trafficking*

- In November 2002, AFRUCA held the first community meeting in the UK to raise awareness of the growth in the trafficking of African children in to the country. Over 100 members of the African community in the London area attended the event. We have published a report of the event "**Trafficking of African Children to the UK: Myth or Reality**" to further raise awareness of the issue.
- Since our establishment in 2001, we have **provided support to over 50 victims of trafficking** – either directly or indirectly via practitioners and others working with victims. This figure does not include cases of children we have heard of or

been told about but unable to reach because the anonymous reporter feels unable to disclose enough information to enable this happen.

- As part of our "**Denouncing the "Better Life" Syndrome**" Campaign, we held a series of media campaigns and a seminar in Lagos, Nigeria, in October 2003 to raise awareness among NGO colleagues, the media and other stakeholders about the high number of Nigerian children trafficked to the UK. We have produced a report of the Lagos event to highlight the key outcomes and this is available to read on our website at [www.afruca.org](http://www.afruca.org)
- AFRUCA is carrying out a feasibility study into **Phase Two of its Denouncing the Better Life Campaign in East Africa** next year. The planned programme will enable us to work with partner organisations in a selected East African country to raise awareness of the increase in the trafficking of East African children to Europe.
- AFRUCA's 2004 National Conference was focused on the **Role of the African Community in the UK in Combating Child Trafficking**. Over 200 members of the African community, practitioners and policymakers attended the event. The Conference Conclusions are available to read on our website.
- AFRUCA is currently researching the establishment of a **free Community Hotline for Child Victims of Trafficking**. The Hotline will enable those within the African community who know victims of trafficking and exploitation in the London area and are reluctant to contact the authorities to report such cases to AFRUCA for third party reporting to the Police and Social Services.
- AFRUCA has received funding from the Body Shop Foundation to develop its strategic work against the **Trafficking of African Children In Europe**. The one year project is the first step in our effort to develop multi-lateral co-operations in combating the trafficking of children among African community groups across Europe and specifically in Ireland, Belgium and Switzerland.
- To inform the Home Office consultation: "Tackling Human Trafficking: Consultation on Proposals for a UK Action Plan", AFRUCA, with support from the Home Office held **a series of consultative meetings** across London. The consultative meetings enabled us to gather views from members of the African community across the capital about prevention, identification, protection and rehabilitation of victims.

## **2 BACKGROUND TO AFRUCA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

2.1 AFRUCA's response to the Home Office consultation: "Tackling Human Trafficking – Consultation on Proposals for a UK Action Plan" is informed by the totality of our ongoing activities and the wealth of experience gained from working within our community, with practitioners and policymakers, with NGO colleagues in the UK, other European countries and in Africa, and most importantly with victims of trafficking themselves.

2.2 Specifically, our contribution has been significantly enriched by the participation of over 80 members of the African community from different backgrounds and nationalities in the consultative meetings held in February and March 2006. The four meetings were held in partnership with 3 other African led organizations as follows:

- Development Support Agency (West London on 27 February 2006)
- AFRUCA (North London on 9 March 2006)
- Centre for African Policy and Peace Strategy (South London on 21 March 2006)
- African Family and Child Support Group (East London on 23 March 2006)

2.3 Participants at the consultative meetings offered their viewpoint on a wide range of issues. In particular, their contributions provided further enlightenment on issues surrounding culture and the wider implications for child safeguarding and the fight against child trafficking.

2.4 We wish to show our appreciation to all our partner organisations and participants for their time, efforts, contributions and ideas. Based on their input we have been able to produce this submission, the contents of which we hope will help to make a difference in the lives of African children who are victims of trafficking, exploitation, abuse and harm.

### **3. TRAFFICKING OF AFRICAN CHILDREN TO THE UK: OUR RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION.**

#### **3.1 THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM**

*“Human trafficking is without doubt the new, modern day slave trade.”*

**- AFRUCA**

- 3.1.1 AFRUCA's response to this consultation exercise is premised on the fact that the trafficking of children is first and foremost a child safeguarding, child protection issue, rather than an immigration issue. For this reason, we are firmly of the opinion that efforts to tackle the trafficking of children and provide support for individual victims must abide by and correlate with UK child protection laws, regulations, rules and practices.
- 3.1.2 The trafficking of children in different African countries, between countries, regions and outside Africa to other continents like Europe is indeed a growing phenomenon. The scale of the problem is as massive as it is confounding. Experts in Africa have suggested that at least 10 million African children are victims of trafficking within Africa itself. Child trafficking has become a very profitable, multi billion dollar business for the organised syndicates and individuals involved, and competes with drug trafficking as the most lucrative form of organized crime worldwide. While there are no accurate figures to give a true picture, others have posited that the scale of present day human trafficking of Africans is fast approaching a par with the trans-Atlantic slave trade in which millions of Africans perished en route to the New World or ended up as slaves in the new Americas, the Caribbean and parts of South America. Human trafficking is without doubt the new, modern day slave trade.
- 3.1.3 The UK, through its historical links with a number of English speaking African countries, and also due to its reputation as the most multi-cultural country in Europe, has become home to a lot of African people. According to the 2001 census, there are over 587,000 Africans in the UK with 78 percent of these living in London. Africans are the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the UK overtaking African-Caribbeans and other ethnic groups. Over the past years, there has been a consistent growth in the number of separated African children arriving in the UK correlating with the increasing population of Africans in the country. The children and young people come in unaccompanied, or as unaccompanied asylum seeking young people or with others who are not their parents or immediate family members as privately fostered children. It is our firm belief that a significant proportion of such young people are victims of trafficking and that without appropriate intervention, most of them would end up as victims of abuse and exploitation at the hands of their carers and other people.

- 3.1.4 In addition to the UK being a destination country for victims of trafficking, it has also been identified as a transit country with children and young people trafficked to the UK en route other European countries for exploitative purposes. For this reason, the trafficking of African children to the UK needs to be seen in its wider context as a global, international phenomenon with repercussions for various governments and international institutions and the need to put in place the right framework to enable better safeguards for vulnerable children world-wide.

### 3.2. FORMS OF CHILD EXPLOITATION IN THE UK

***“I’m a house-girl in the day, a housewife in the night. When I say no, I get beaten”.***

*(\*Maria, victim of trafficking)*

*\*not her real name*

- 3.2.1 In the course of our work at AFRUCA and in our consultations with members of our community, we have come across or come to know of a wide range of children and young people trafficked for a variety of purposes. In addition to the children we have provided with direct support, there are other cases brought to our attention anecdotally by various members of our community. All the cases point to the multi-dimensional nature of trafficking and the varied experiences of the victims. Certainly, participants at the four consultative meetings recently held by AFRUCA and our partners concurred that child exploitation is indeed a big problem among the UK African community and that there is an active demand and supply chain that fuels child trafficking in the country.
- 3.2.2 Most of the victims of trafficking AFRUCA is aware of are exploited within the home in domestic servitude situations and as child carers. In addition, we know of other children and young people who were trafficked into the country purposely to be sexually exploited as prostitutes or for other sexual purposes. Added to the above is the use of children to claim state benefits. This constitutes child exploitation in as much as the children are being employed, on the one hand to defraud the state, and on the other hand when the state benefits received do not go towards their upkeep or used to meet their needs.
- 3.2.3. However, AFRUCA believes it would be misleading to view trafficking and the subsequent exploitation of children so simplistically. Child trafficking and exploitation is a very complex phenomenon. The key point that needs highlighting is the vulnerability of children and young people living away from home as separated children. In almost all instances of domestic servitude we have come across, children are not only exploited for their labour, they also suffer other extreme forms of abuse including physical, emotional, mental and in some instances, sexual abuse, as highlighted by the quote given by Maria (not her real name) above. They are also prevented from accessing the education system. Victims of benefit fraud, who are usually privately fostered are vulnerable as separated children and are therefore prone to abuse and other forms of exploitation as well. In almost all cases of children scape-goated as witches and

- who are made to undergo painful exorcism rites in certain traditional churches and communities in the UK, the victims are separated children being privately fostered (either legally or illegally) by other people. Children and young people exploited sexually are also usually victims of physical, emotional and other forms of abuse.
- 3.2.4 Some children are brought to the UK to work in markets or African shops. At one of our consultative meetings, an example was given of a shop in Peckham where children are seen on a regular basis working in the shop during times when they should be at school. In some instances, it is alleged that sometimes these children's passports are confiscated and there is always a threat of deportation as a way of gaining control over the victims and keeping them obedient and subservient.
- 3.2.4. It is imperative to highlight that whilst there has been a single case of a child trafficked into the UK for the purpose of ritual killing, AFRUCA is not aware of any other case of its kind in the country.
- 3.2.5. Most of the victims highlighted above are children and young people trafficked by people they know from their own countries or communities. Most victims of trafficking are exploited and suffer different forms of abuse at the hands of people in their own communities. Contrary to what is believed, most victims of trafficking are known to other people aside the exploiter or the trafficker. Most traffickers are also known within their communities. While trafficking itself is a hidden crime, the exploitation and abuse that take place as a consequence are known to other people who may or may not view these as such or feel unable or unwilling to act.
- 3.2.6. AFRUCA wishes to highlight reports by members of our community who are concerned about the high number of victims working for members of the diplomatic corps from African countries as domestic slaves. Due to the immunity from prosecution they enjoy, many people feel that some diplomats and other embassy staff abuse their positions by bringing from their countries workers who are extremely vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Their passports are taken from them neither do they have any recourse to the law nor safeguards to protect them from exploitation and harm. It is not certain that children are involved as victims.

### 3.3 IDENTIFYING VULNERABLE CHILDREN AT SOURCE

***“Nobody would leave their own country if they could have a good life there”.***

*(participant, AFRUCA consultative meeting on child trafficking, North London 9 March 2006)*

- 3.3.1 There is a demand and supply chain that fuels child trafficking in the UK. At the other end of the supply chain key push factors include poverty, illiteracy, conflict and the impacts of globalisation. In many African countries, particularly where HIV/AIDS is prevalent, there is a high number of child orphans, and it is not uncommon for these children to be abandoned by their extended families and for them to end up living on the streets. In such circumstances, it is not surprising that these children are vulnerable to exploitation and tempted by the idea of ‘a better life’ in the UK. Furthermore, even when a child still has living parents he or she may be trafficked with their parent’s consent, deceived by the perceived greater opportunities which they see for their child in UK. This is particularly the case in an increasingly globalised world where images and ideas of ‘a better life’ spread easily and quickly with limited attention to context, risks and realities.
- 3.3.2 We have worked with former street children – that is children who lived on the streets, and who were especially vulnerable and became easy preys because no one would miss them if they disappeared. While we have not worked with young people in this other instance, there are media and NGO reports from source countries about children in orphanages who are sold by unscrupulous minders to people who later disappear with those children. It is not certain if there have been cases like this in the UK.

### 3.4 HOW ARE CHILDREN BROUGHT INTO THE UK?

- 3.4.1 From our experience, most children are brought into the country accompanied by their trafficker or his/her agent and delivered to the person who ends up exploiting them. In many instances, they have been brought in using genuine British passports belonging to other children. There are cases where children have been brought in on other people’s passports or using other false documents. In other cases, children have passports with fictitious names and an accompanying visa procured for them.
- 3.4.2 We believe most of the African children trafficked into the country are brought in by individual “business people”, rather than by organised mafias although, this is also the case. Most young people are brought in as part of a group – for example as part of a family – thereby making it difficult for immigration officials to detect trafficking.

- 3.4.3 In a number of African countries, there are instances where orphans have been illegally adopted, and fears are rising about the true intentions of a number of adopters who end up taking children out of the country. It is increasingly difficult to trace these children and it is not impossible that some of them may be victims of trafficking here in the UK, although we do not have any confirmed instances of this. However, because it is becoming an increasing phenomenon across Europe, for example in Switzerland and Germany, it is doubtful that there are no instances here in the UK.
- 3.4.4 Children and young people continue to be brought into the country unaccompanied to claim asylum, with their traffickers knowing full well they will be looked after by the responsible local authority. In a number of local authorities across the UK, young people continue to disappear from care and in some cases have been sighted in other cities or other countries in Europe.
- 3.4.5 There are cases of re-trafficking reported across the country. A girl trafficked by her father from Nigeria was apprehended at Dover on the way to France disguised as a boy on a British passport. There are cases of children being passed from hand to hand between the UK and the Irish Republic which has a growing African, mainly Nigerian population. We feel that the easy transportation links between the UK and mainland Europe and lax immigration controls at some regional airports could be facilitating the re-trafficking of children.

### **3.5 AFRICAN CULTURE, CHILD EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE**

#### **There is a very thin line between culture and child abuse**

- 3.5.1 In section 3.2.5 above, we alluded to the fact that most victims of trafficking and exploitation within the African community are known to other people. However, such individuals may not view the situation as wrong or may feel unable or unwilling to act to protect the victim.
- 3.5.2 The issue of what constitutes child abuse and child exploitation in different African cultures was heatedly debated at all the four meetings held to feed into this consultative exercise. Questions were raised whether child trafficking was child abuse or whether domestic servitude was child abuse. Points were made about how difficult it was to interpret the issues because of culture. What might be seen as genuine fostering opportunity in an African context might be seen as abuse or trafficking in the UK context. In many instances, the exploiter may genuinely not feel they are exploiting the child because they have "saved" the child from a life of poverty in Africa and have them do no more work than they would be doing if they were still in Africa. For such people, it is difficult to convey to them the fact that a child is being exploited and that their activity is wrong and against the law.
- 3.5.3 Since domestic work in the home is a valid and accepted practice in many African households, the issues of social obligation and reciprocity all came to the fore as some argued that a child taking care of the house and helping with

household chores could be a form of expressing gratitude for the care and attention of the adult, especially when the adult is not a parent.

- 3.5.4 Another dimension is the practice of children living away from home which is quite common in most African societies. The rationale behind this is to enable children from poor indigent homes have access to good education and a better future through living with a better-off relative or member of the community. This practice has become commercialised and opened to abuse due to the unscrupulous activities of those who see this as an avenue to obtain children for exploitative purposes, their parents having been deceived in parting with their children in the hope of a “better life”.
- 3.5.5 Furthermore, attention was also drawn to the practice of using domestic servants as the norm in most African societies. This could also inform the need for certain individuals in the UK to look homeward for help around the home in the form of a child. Aside this cultural practice, participants at our consultative meetings pointed out that the use of children as domestic helps and for child care purposes is also fuelled by the high costs of accessing child-care, especially in the London area.

### **3.6 IMMIGRATION CONTROLS**

- 3.6.1 In all the cases we have dealt with over the years, we are concerned about the ease at which traffickers are able to procure false travel documents for their victims. Most people especially within the community who are concerned about this issue have fingered corrupt and unscrupulous civil servants and immigration officials both in the UK and in different African countries, as well as embassy staff, as being complicit in fuelling the growing child trafficking market. We feel this is an area that needs urgent attention if the fight against child trafficking was to be won.
- 3.6.1 In this instance, we are happy about the new Home Office directive for embassies to ensure that anyone applying for a UK visa for a minor for 28 days or more must have registered with the local authority prior to the minor being granted entry clearance. However, we are concerned about possible abuse of a loophole in this system since a similar requirement is not needed for those bringing in children for less than 28 days. It is not certain what sorts of safeguards are being put in place for such children.
- 3.6.2 We also applaud the new system for visas/vignettes endorsed on minors' passports to be accompanied by the names of their accompanied adults, although we feel a photograph of the adult should also be required to ascertain the true identity of adults accompanying children.
- 3.6.3 Despite the above, we would once again like to highlight the need to offer better protection for children travelling on EU passports, rather than the current focus on non-EU passport holders alone. This is because children trafficked on false EU passports are able to slip through the net at the ports of entry due to the limited immigration focus and safeguards for children in this category.

- 3.6.4 Attention has been drawn to the lack of awareness among airline staff of the risks of child trafficking and how to identify and protect victims. It is felt that staff on airlines that regularly fly to African and other source countries be made to undergo training in child protection to enable them develop the skills necessary to identify and safeguard victims.

### **3.7 UK LAW ON PRIVATE FOSTERING**

***“We have never come across anyone who is aware of the requirement for them to notify as a private foster carer” AFRUCA***

- 3.7.1 AFRUCA welcomes the recent UK requirement for all those who are looking after other people’s children for more than 28 days to register with their local social services as private foster carers. We believe this will help to track the movement of children and their carers and thus safeguard more children.
- 3.7.2 A significant number of African children from abroad living in the UK are privately fostered. As we have highlighted in section 3.2.3 above, a high proportion of these children are vulnerable and prone to abuse and harm. However, AFRUCA is concerned about the lack of concrete efforts made by local authorities across the country to reach out to new communities and familiarise them with the new requirement to notify if they are looking after other people’s children. In all our work within our community, in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Newcastle, we have never come across anyone who is aware of the requirement for them to notify if they are looking after children. None of the participants at our consultative meetings have ever heard of this requirement. We are therefore highly concerned about the continued lack of safeguards for African children in such arrangements.

### **3.8 PROTECTING CHILD VICTIMS IN THE UK**

- 3.8.1 AFRUCA welcomes the work done by a number of agencies across the UK, including Manchester City Council and the London Child Protection Committee to put in place protocols to aid practitioners in their work with children from abroad and victims of trafficking. We believe such mechanisms will go a long way to help raise the skills level of practitioners and enable them to intervene quicker in safeguarding vulnerable children.
- 3.8.2 However, we are concerned about the lack of efforts by majority of local authorities across the country to devise appropriate methods of identifying victims and protecting them from re-trafficking. In particular, we are aware, having worked with such young people, of the lack of adequate provisions made to cater for victims – that is children being looked after under section 20 of the Children Act 1989 and ensure they have access to the right support and protection. Local authorities across the country continue to report cases of

- missing children in their care. We are of the opinion that more needs to be done to safeguard victims and prevent re-trafficking.
- 3.8.3 Organisations like the Refugee Council and ECPATG UK are concerned about the lack of a central co-ordination point to collate information on missing children and to take responsibility for searching for missing children and protecting them from traffickers. AFRUCA shares this concern as we are of the opinion that children will continue to be at risk of re-trafficking if there are no safeguards put in place to protect them.
- 3.8.4 As a follow up to this, we are of the opinion that local authorities and other agencies need to invest in a menu of training programmes to help raise the skills level and competencies of staff to identify victims and provide them with appropriate level of support and intervention. At present, very few local authorities engage in such training to the detriment of the young people in their areas.
- 3.8.5 We believe that all children and other age disputed young people **MUST** have access to the right support and protection from government as victims of trafficking. The practice of denying children and young people help and support is inhuman and criminalises them rather than see them as victims who need help and support.
- 3.8.6 AFRUCA does not share the idea for children and young people to have reflection periods now or in future in order to decide if they wished to prosecute their trafficker. We believe they should have automatic right to state protection irrespective of whether they wished to identify and help with prosecuting their trafficker or not.
- 3.8.7 AFRUCA supports the idea of providing victims of trafficking who wished to stay on in the UK the opportunity to do so as this would enable them to rebuild their lives and move on from the past. However, it is clear that this system might be opened to abuse by others. We believe the onus should be on the Home Office, working in fairness and in tandem with key agencies, to ensure that genuine victims of trafficking do not lose out or are disfavoured if such a system were put in place. For this reason, we expect each case to be dealt with on an individual basis, taking into consideration all evidence relating to the trafficking, abuse and exploitation experienced by the individual as well as the reports of experts who have dealt with the individual and worked on the case.

### **3.9 RETURNING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

- 3.9.1 In relation to 3.8.7 above, we deplore the current practice of returning young people below the age of 18 years to their home countries, irrespective of the peculiarities of their individual cases, the situation in their home countries, and the risks or re-trafficking. Since most African countries do not have in place

strong child protection programmes. This means that most young people who are returned are bound to be re-trafficked or exploited. Young people who have been victims of trafficking should not be sent back to their countries for the reasons highlighted above, unless they specifically wish to go home.

### **3.10 THE IMPLICATIONS OF CHILD TRAFFICKING**

- 3.10.1 It has to be emphasised that the problem of trafficking should not be seen as existing in isolation. There are a lot of long term ramifications for victims as well as for government social policy. Aside the abuse and exploitation suffered, victims also have their future stolen by the inability to fully experience education, which as adults makes it difficult for them to break the chain of poverty experienced as children. The inability to trust others and to live a fulfilling adult life due to the abuse and exploitation suffered can have a devastating impact on victims. The long-term mental health issues brought about by post-traumatic stress as a result of their experiences also needs to be acknowledged.
- 3.10.2 Some of the victims we have worked with contracted HIV/AIDS from their abusers/exploiters thereby condemning them to a lifetime of illness and death.
- 3.10.3 A number of key social policy implications need to be highlighted. The growing crime rate among certain young people who were victims of trafficking need to be mentioned. These are mainly young people ejected at the age of 16 years or above by families who were exploiting them for benefits purposes. It means that as a measure of combating youth crime, child trafficking as a contributory factor needs to be acknowledged and addressed. This also goes for the growing problem of teenage pregnancy as well as the involvement of young people in prostitution.
- 3.10.4 The cost to the UK government of looking after victims of trafficking who contract HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Diseases must be phenomenal. Again this needs to be addressed at the policy level in efforts to gauge the impact of child trafficking on the wider public.

## **4. OUR RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the issues highlighted in this submission, we offer the following recommendations to the Home Office in its efforts to develop a UK Action Plan to tackle human trafficking:

### **4.1 PREVENTING TRAFFICKING AT SOURCE**

#### **4.1.1 MAKING IMPOVERISHMENT HISTORY**

- As poverty and social vulnerability are some of the root causes that spur the supply of children and young people for the purpose of trafficking, the UK Home Office should work in tandem with other government departments, including the Home Office and the DFID to tackle these issues as part of the broader UK international development agenda. The Home Office should also see the problem in the context of other global challenges such as poverty, conflict, corruption, underdevelopment and migration and therefore work with other UK government departments, African governments and international organisations to address these problems comprehensively.
- In particular, more efforts should be put in place to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic which is devastating parts of Africa and creating a generation of AIDS orphans. Apart from the suffering and hardship experienced, orphans are ready made sources of supply for traffickers. For this reason, there needs to be better collaboration with governments in Africa, for example Kenya, to address the problem of AIDS orphans and street children and help provide proper and effective intervention for displaced children and young people.

#### **4.1.2 DENOUNCING THE “BETTER LIFE” SYNDROME**

- Educational and awareness raising programmes and campaigns should be embarked upon in source countries, as a two-thronged approach involving a similar campaign to educate the UK African community. These campaigns should target people who are vulnerable to the allure or deception of traffickers and raise the publicity around the issue of the “better life” syndrome. In addition, there needs to be other strategies of intervention to reduce the level of ignorance and educate the society on the fundamental rights of children.
- The media in Africa should be encouraged to spread information for people to stand up against these practices. In addition, there should be a role for UK embassies abroad to work with local schools, non-governmental or community organisations as well as ensure that people are made aware of the risks, realities and challenges of living in the UK before being granted visas.

#### **4.1.3 SAFEGUARDING AFRICAN CHILDREN IN AFRICA**

- Most African governments do not have in place any programmes to support the protection and safeguarding of children in their countries and need to do so as a matter of priority. Although most African governments have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and have instituted laws to protect the welfare of children, there is very little in place to help domesticate these laws and ensure better protection for children. Very little will be achieved in efforts to prevent child trafficking if wider child safeguarding issues are not addressed.

#### **4.1.4 STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF RELEVANT AGENCIES**

- We call for better collaboration and capacity building for government officials, law enforcement officers, and the immigration service in source countries to enable them deal with the problem of human trafficking and protect victims.

### **4.2 ADDRESSING DEMAND IN THE UK**

#### **4.2.1 SENSITISING THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY IN THE UK**

- We are advocating for a mass sensitisation campaign among different African communities in the UK to highlight the need to work together to safeguard children from abuse and exploitation. Allied to this is the need to further educate members of our community about the laws and regulations governing child protection in the UK. We feel that efforts to address the demand for trafficked children will be unsuccessful without it being part of a wider community-led campaign to address child safeguarding issues in relation to culture and tradition.
- Some of these cultural issues that fuel trafficking can only be significantly raised and addressed internally by African Diaspora communities and organisations working on children's issues such as AFRUCA. As such these organisations should be supported to work with relevant authorities and agencies as well as African communities in the UK and abroad to create awareness, open debate and dialogue about the cultural issues surrounding trafficking, in order to generate a community-centred solution.
- A community based research project to determine emerging trends and highlight key issues need to be embarked upon to inform policy in this area.

#### **4.2.2 ENGAGING THE AFRICAN COMMUNITY IN PROTECTING VICTIMS**

- Most people who know victims of trafficking and who wish to help feel unable to contact the authorities for a variety of reasons, chiefly their immigration status. We suggest the establishment of a well publicised telephone hotline run by a reputable independent organisation which can be called by those who wish to make a referral for onward third party reporting to the appropriate authorities. This would help to address the seemingly apathy within the African community and help safeguard more victims.

#### **4.2.3 GOVERNMENT PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS**

- At present, there is no government department lead on child trafficking. We strongly believe that child trafficking is a child protection issue and not an immigration matter. The Department for Education and Skills should therefore be more proactive in addressing the issue of trafficking and in making efforts to see this as part of its “Every Child Matters” agenda.
- To ensure children who are trafficked are protected from traffickers and from being re-trafficked, we add our voice to the call for a national safe-house for child victims of trafficking. Such a facility will provide the children and young people with a safe environment and make it difficult for them to escape or to be reached by their traffickers and for them to receive appropriate level of help, care and support that is often disparate from one local authority to the other.
- Genuine victims of trafficking should be treated as vulnerable and potentially traumatised persons even if they are post 18 years old. For this reason, the UK government should in the first instance facilitate their stay in the UK and ensure they are availed access to health and basic social services to enable them settle down and rebuild their lives.

#### **4.2.4 WIDER POLICY ACTIONS**

- The main reason for the demand for child domestics is the high child care costs in places like London. It is felt that a review of child care policies in this regard would help to reduce demand and protect vulnerable children.
- It is imperative for the benefit system to be overhauled to make it more difficult to fraudulently use children to claim benefits. For those who are privately fostering children, there needs to be checks and balances to ensure the funds received are used to properly look after the children. In this regard, a collaborative approach with social services who are responsible for monitoring private fostering arrangements and notifications would be beneficial.
- We call for a more stringent punishment for convicted child traffickers as a deterrent to others who view child trafficking as a reliable way of making money.

- AFRUCA calls for action on the part of the UK government to look into using the Vienna Convention to address the problem of some diplomats bringing children and others to the UK to exploit them as domestic slaves.

#### **4.2.5 WORKING WITH PRACTITIONERS**

- AFRUCA calls for special training across the board for teachers, nurses, social workers, the police and immigration officers to enable them detect victims of trafficking at the best possible instance and therefore help to safeguard them from abuse and harm.

#### **4.2.6 RETURNING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING**

- While we believe genuine victims of trafficking need to be treated as such and given an opportunity to rebuild their lives in the UK, if the situation arises for them to return or be returned home, a reintegration package should be considered to assist them to settle back into their home country. This reintegration package, similar to the programme currently being run for returning asylum seekers by the IOM would ensure returning victims do not become vulnerable to exploitation yet again, and should include both economic and social empowerment initiatives. In this instance, working with local NGOs, government agencies and other reputable organisations would be a useful approach. It has been suggested that a pot of money set aside from the confiscated assets of traffickers should be used to fund such a re-integration programme.

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