



AFRUCA – AFRICANS UNITE AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

PRESS RELEASE

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CONFERENCE CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION TO ADDRESS LINK BETWEEN WITCHCRAFT AND CHILD TRAFFICKING

A two day conference organised by AFRUCA – Africans Unite Against Child Abuse has ended in London with a call for urgent action to explore the link between the branding of children as witches, child abandonment and the risks of child trafficking with a view to devising better safeguarding mechanisms for vulnerable children.

The call was made in response to evidence presented at the event highlighting the growing spate of child branding in many African countries and the subsequent abandonment and rejection of such children by their families. Ending up as street children, experts at the event expressed concern that many become easy prey and targets for child traffickers, abusers and exploiters.

Conference speakers from Nigeria and Malawi highlighted the growing spate of child branding, child abuse and abandonment in their countries. Congo DR, Angola, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Togo, Benin as well as Cameroon and Central African Republic were also identified as affected countries.

The conference: "Modern Day Slavery of African Children in the UK: Addressing the Demand and Supply Nexus" held on 25 and 26 July in London aimed to explore the steady increase in the number of African children trafficked into the UK for various purposes as well as the supply issues fuelling the trade in African children.

Delivering the keynote speech at the conference, UK Minister, Vernon Coaker, identified child trafficking as "a despicable crime, a modern day form of slavery where individuals and criminal networks seek to profit from the trade, abuse and exploitation of others".

AFRUCA Director and conference Co-Chair Debbie Ariyo said: "The growing number of children from African countries ending up in terrible exploitative situations in the UK is quite disconcerting. It is more worrisome to contemplate that innocent children branded and tortured as witches and abandoned by their own families are likely being trafficked into the UK to be further abused and exploited."

The conference called for urgent research to examine the link between child branding, child abandonment and child trafficking to identify trends, developments and the implications for governments in Africa as well as the UK.

While acknowledging the issue as a new phenomenon with serious safeguarding implications for victims and affected countries, the conference also called for a conference on Witchcraft Abuse and Child Trafficking in Africa as a first step towards understanding the phenomenon.

To enable better collaboration between practitioners and experts in the UK and in Africa working on counter trafficking issues, the conference proposed the establishment of a UK/Africa Forum on Child Trafficking as a melting pot of ideas, information sharing and dialogue between experts and practitioners in the UK and affected African countries.

Other speakers at the event included Chris Beddoe, Director of ECPAT UK, Nick Kinsella, Chief Executive of the UK Human Trafficking Centre, Mrs Carol Ndaguba, Chief Executive of NAPTIP, the Nigerian Anti Trafficking Agency, Millie Odhiambo, Director of the Cradle Foundation for Children in Kenya, DeoGratias Yiga, Director of the African Network for the Protection and Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Uganda, Gary Foxcroft, Director, Stepping Stones, Nigeria as well as Ken Williams Mhambo, Director of ANPPCAN in Malawi.

Note to Editors

1. AFRUCA – Africans Unite Against Child Abuse is the premier charity promoting the rights and welfare of African children in the UK.
2. The “Modern Day Slavery of African Children in the UK: Addressing the Demand and Supply Nexus” Conference was held on 25 to 26 July 2007 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Act abolishing the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.
3. Recent research by the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre (CEOP) identified children from African countries, including Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Ghana, Togo, Guinea Conakry, and Burundi as victims of child trafficking in the UK for domestic servitude, sexual exploitation as well as forced labour.
4. The UK has witnessed cases of children branded as witches and subsequently tortured and abused by carers as punishment as well as in exorcism rites. A recent DFES report identified 38 cases of witchcraft and ritual abuse in the country with most of them children from different countries in Africa.
5. For interviews and enquiries, please contact:

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