SPOTLIGHT ON AFRUCA

AFRUCA Children’s Champions
Congratulations.
OUR CHAMPIONS, OUR STRENGTH!

The idea of appointing “Children’s Champions” is actually a very simple concept with potentially high results. The notion of “train a few to train others and create a ripple effect” is one that many charities have employed to deal with a particular problem that could be solved by communities themselves—a sort of self-help concept which also has a basis in the adage: “It takes a village to raise a child”. It is very gratifying to see that three years after we commenced this programme with funding from the Department for Education (DFE), the results have been phenomenal.

148 champions were trained in three years delivering training sessions in partnership with over 100 Organisations reaching over 3,000 people across the South of England. I believe this is a great achievement bearing in mind the fallacy that “African people do not like to volunteer”. This programme has proved that this sort of stereotyping is totally wrong. Not only did our Champions all undertake the intensive two day training programme, they also delivered training courses right across the South of England. Some of our Champions made it their personal missions to do a lot more—meaning many of them actually delivered a lot more sessions than originally agreed.

Our Champions have helped to reach the inner caucus of the African community across the South of England. They delivered training courses in different cities—Plymouth, Reading, Milton Keynes, Northampton, Bristol, Chelmsford, Southampton, all over London, Portsmouth, Exeter, Luton, Tilbury and so on. Under this programme, our champions proved that there is no hard-to-reach community—it is all about making efforts to reach out to people. The number of people trained across this geographical area in the three years of the programme easily surpassed the target figure agreed with the funders. The work of our Champions has truly helped to increase our profile and reach as an organisation.

The key outcomes of this programme which are really gratifying to see came directly from the feedback we received from various training participants. The imparting of new knowledge about how to parent children positively, the knowledge gained about alternative ways to instil discipline without beating children; the benefits of being close to your children, have positive relationships with them and the ability to identify what constitutes child abuse and how to protect children are all very positive outcomes of this programme.

Of course the work itself has impacted the Champions themselves. Some claim volunteering this way and helping to change lives has made them improve their own strengths as parents. Some champions decided to pursue related interests, gain new skills as a result of this programme. At least one champion commenced a Bachelor or Masters degree in Social Work as a direct result of this role. For others, the knowledge and skills gained helped them to apply for and secure new positions.

While we look forward to continue working with champions in new and other ways beyond this grant funding, I can only say a big thank you so much to the stars of AFRUCA. You have indeed been our strength, our champions!

Debbie Ariyo OBE

The idea of appointing “Children’s Champions” first came up about 10 years ago when we submitted a funding proposal to a government department which was rejected. However the concerns we had about the high number of children going into care were not abating. In fact, the situation became worse with an increasing number of people moving to other cities across England and more child abuse cases coming to the fore. Many agencies and their staff did not have the cultural knowledge to intervene successfully in many of the families they were working with. It then became imperative for AFRUCA to act in a concerted way to ensure we could Chief Executive help address the situation.
AFRUCa Child Protection Volunteering Project

The AFRUCa Child Protection Community Volunteering Project (also known as the Children’s Champions Project) was initiated in April 2013 with funding from the Department for Education (DFE). The backdrop of the project was the need to address the over-representation of Black/African children in the child protection system. The first round of funding for the project ran from April 2013 to March 2014. Consequently, successes drawn from the first two years of the project enabled AFRUCa to gain funding for another year from April 2015 to March 2016.

The Project is divided into three broad aims;

- To enable Black/African community members to adopt more efficient and appropriate parenting practices and build their capacity to address child protection issues.
- To enable families involved in the child protection system to keep their children safe from harm.
- To improve the ability of practitioners (including children’s services staff and health professionals) to support families through training and capacity building.

Therefore, the Project provides training for Children’s Champions volunteers who then lead child protection workshops for other members of the Black/African community, family support for families involved in the child protection system, and specialist training for practitioners including but not limited to social workers, the police, health and education professionals.

Since inception, we have trained 148 Children’s Champions volunteers who have gone on to train over 3500 members of the community thereby creating a ripple effect of child protection within the Black/African community. We have also trained over 700 practitioners to increase their knowledge and skills when working with Black/African children and families as well as supported and worked with over 30 families in London, Manchester and South of England.

Success Factors and Challenges

The project has recorded high satisfaction rates by participants who have attended training sessions and an echo of the need for the project. We have exceeded most of the project outcomes, especially regarding the training for practitioners. Practitioners have lauded the culturally sensitive nature of our training courses towards meeting their needs and increasing their knowledge and skills. The major successes include;

- Increased awareness of child protection issues and UK legislation among Champions and subsequently workshop attendees.
- Adoption of more positive parenting practices by workshop attendees.
- Increased capacity of members of the Black/African community to examine and address child protection issues.
- Increased skill and knowledge base of practitioners working with Black/African children and families.

Although the project has been a tremendous success, we also encountered a few challenges such as poor attendance rates at some of the community sessions. Even though the project is coming to an end in March, we intend to continue to engage our Champions in other ways including running community training events on a smaller scale, engaging them in our Working with Faith Organisations to Safeguard African Children Project and Anti-Trafficking programme project.
Project Statistics

148
CHAMPIONS

128 Female
20 Male

Where our Champions live...

Champions Countries of Origin
Meet Our Champions
Class of November 2013
Meet Our Champions
Class of February 2014
Meet Our Champions
Class of June 2014
Meet Our Champions
Class of October 2014
Meet Our Champions
Class of November 2014
Meet Our Champions
Class of July 2015
Meet Our Champions
Class of November 2015
Pastor Jide Macaulay

“I decided to train for the AFRUCA Children’s Champions simply to help foster a better understanding of child abuse in the African communities, the ignorance of child protection guidance upheld in the rhetoric of culture, tradition, religion and law has become preposterous and I could no longer sit back and do nothing. The two Day training was an excellent package of ideas which can only be strengthened by the participants passion for change, it improved my knowledge of Child Abuse.

The impact of the project has meant that I think outside the box, I have extended these learning to other constituencies of my work, as a parent, faith leader and tutor in educational institutions. Facilitating workshops depends on the audience, I am mindful when speaking to mostly women audience to avoid a sense of patriarchy, however delivering these trainings has been a source of empowerment and fulfilment of duty.”

Anthonia Macgregor

“My first contact with AFRUCA convenor was in a church where I was captivated after listening to talks on what the organisation does. Prior to this meeting I have been looking at various things I could do to sup-

However my decision came up after attending another seminar by the same organisation. I then filled a form to become a Champion. Not too long, I was invited to a two-day training which gave me a deep insight of what AFRUCA does and also its great contribution

The training increased my public speaking and presentation skills. I became more confident in delivering trainings in different places such as churches, schools and other areas. The knowledge and delivery of these trainings gave me better skills in parenting my children and others around me. Additionally, my facilitating of training enlightened most parents who gained knowledge and cultivated better parenting skills in caring for their children. Thus preventing them losing their children into care. Overall my delivery of training gives me satisfaction seeing and hearing that a lot of parents have now adapted the skills gained from these training into parenting their children appropriately and reducing the number of children going into care. In other words many of places where training had been facilitated are now requesting a comeback and inviting others to attend and also some parents and singles are now signing up to become facilitators.”

Daniel Gunn

“My concerns about the African Child in the UK and in Africa before getting the valuable training from AFRUCA to become a Children’s Champion has not changed. The highly educating and informative training was an important first step that improved my public speaking and evidential in facilitating workshops in African communities around London, attending seminars and also updated my knowledge on child safeguarding issues in general as I believe was for many Children’s Champions. It is rather disappointing to hear funding for the CC Project is short lived. However, it would be necessary to review the national statistics on child protective care in the UK to inform ourselves of how to take further

As mentioned before, there are so many factors involved in the fate of the African child in the UK, some are cultural, education and societal, therefore, the CC Project will have to continue if we do understand how serious our problems and that of our children are.
Rijole Bitata
“I decided to become a Champion because I am concerned about children going into care and how some parents are ill educated about practices that are considered part of tradition and culture. I am a teacher and I felt the need to find a platform which allowed the two day training was beneficial in so far as having the opportunity of putting what I learned to test in front of fellow champions to be. It has opened my eyes as to the vast majority of parents in the community that despite of all the negatives press are looking for alternative parenting styles. I am not a parent. However, the experience has been really positive, I have done two workshops and I found that people in the community are very receptive to the information within the presenta-

Ekanem Robertson
Joining AFRUCA as one of the first set of Children’s Champions was a proud moment for me but I had only a slight glimpse of what this project would become. It has opened my eyes to what many African children had to and still endure in the name of good upbringing. I too have been enlightened. I remember having a conversation with our AFRUCA CEO Debbie Ariyo OBE, long before she started the programme.

To be honest, at the time, I could not see how one could bring up a child without a good dose of beating, on well deserved occasions. Debbie looked at me in horror and we laugh about it, now. But in truth, it is so amazing how one’s mind can be set in one particular way, when one knows no other way. Indeed, I for one, have learnt so much.

And so it is that I have to say that, I have enjoyed and been proud of my association with AFRUCA. My involvement with AFRUCA has afforded me the opportunity to learn to teach and to meet such dedicated people. I am very sorry to hear about present funding challenges and impending closure of the organisation because I know that the work still needs to be done. People have started hearing more about AFRUCA. I am being approached by people I spoke to two years ago, to undertake training.

My mind turns to the migrant issues in Europe, including the U.K., people with all sorts of cultural leanings are migrating over the water as a result of war and economic challenges and with each influx of people the need for organisations like AFRUCA increases.

I pray that the closure of this programme will not be cause for regret when the count of victims likes Baby

Oladapo Awosokanre
I have gained a lot being an AFRUCA Children’s Champion especially the opportunity of facilitating and delivering sessions to diverse groups with the most challenging one to a Somali community with a translator. Having knowledge of child protection and positive parenting has helped me...
WE HAVE WORKED WITH OVER 100 HOST ORGANISATIONS

Places we have reached...

Southampton
Milton Keynes
Barking & Dagenham
Devon
Boxley
Brent
Greenwich
Bromley
Westminster
Plymouth
Hounslow
Chelsea
Merton
Redbridge
Wandsworth
Essex
Camden
Hammersmith
Islington
Enfield
Fulham
Croydon
Bristol
Kensington
Hertfordshire
Ealing
Portsmouth
Luton
Southwark
Newham
Kent
Reading
Oxfordshire
Hackney
Lewisham
Lambeth
Workshop Participants Feedback

Really learnt a lot about beating/speaking negative into children’s lives

The event was very useful & informative with examples used to explain in details what happens in difficult situations with people from different ethnic background.

The audience contributed well to the discussions, it was well delivered because it got the audience thinking about the discussion.

I learnt a lot of things that I didn’t know before. I feel more knowledgeable after the training event.

Event was informative. Some misconceptions about the laws surrounding, childcare was addressed on the downside. The time allowed was adequate.

Spear the rod and spoil the child does not mean beating, it could mean disciplinary by talking and reasoning with a child.
Our Children’s Champions in Action
Way forward for AFRUCA Children’s Champions
IN THE WEST MIDLANDS PROJECT

Oladapo Awosokanre
Project Coordinator—
Working with Faith Organisations to Safeguard African Children in the West Midlands

In its work to promote the welfare and rights of African children, AFRUCA is aware of the strong role that faith organisations play in the lives of many Africans. Hence, it has been making efforts to reach out and work in partnership with various African faith based organisations to help strengthen their skills and knowledge of child protection and safeguarding. This is well evidenced by our work across the UK but mainly in the North and South of England where AFRUCA have undertaken successful faith-based projects especially in London, Greater Manchester and across Yorkshire.

Working with faith organisations to safeguard African children in the West Midlands is a project to promote increased knowledge of child safeguarding practices and child protection among African faith and community organisations. The project is funded by the Big Lottery Fund for three years starting from 14 December 2015 to the 13th December 2018.

Our Targets

- Child Protection training to equip African parents and faith leaders. This involves 30 training sessions engaging 750 parents and carers (10 sessions, 25 participants per session and 250 participants per year) organised in faith establishments and community settings.

- Faith Leaders’ Summit to allow key stakeholders (faith leaders and workers) to discuss progress on different elements of the project. This involves organising 6 stakeholders meeting tagged ‘Leaders’ Summit’ targeting 180 faith leaders and workers (2 summits, 30 participants per summit and 60 participants per year).

Champions’ Involvement

- Facilitate Child Protection and positive Parenting training across the West Midlands
- Facilitate safeguarding training for children and young people across the West Midlands
- Assist with event planning and implementation

Benefits to Champions

- Specialised Train-the-Trainer opportunities in facilitation, project and event management and safeguarding.
- Gain facilitation experience with different age categories and black ethnic groups.
- Opportunity to know new places in the West Midlands.

Get a copy of the leaflet above for more information
WHAT WE DO

- Our referral service is aimed at helping trafficked children and young people access specialist legal advice, health, education, housing, social care services and welfare benefits.

- A dedicated Victim Support Worker provides emotional and practical support, and assists in navigating the legal and social service systems.

- Regular opportunities for young people to come together and provide peer support, such as our Survivors Forum and Summer Empowerment Programme, which give young people an opportunity to socialise, learn new skills and work together to improve their self-esteem, confidence and skills.

- Provide therapeutic services through our dedicated psychotherapist, who provides one-to-one sessions to young people. Recognising the damaging impact of trafficking and exploitation on victims, and ongoing lack of services, we provide young people with a safe place to work towards resilience and empowerment.

- Advocate on behalf of young victims for improved access to services and quality protection to prevent re-trafficking or further denial of rights. We work closely with crime prevention agencies, social services and legal experts in the investigation of cases, often acting as an expert witness in immigration and criminal cases involving the trafficking of young people into the UK.

- Actively contribute to policies and best practices to counter human trafficking and protect victims. We regularly present at various national and regional conferences, and are members of key working groups.

- Community engagement and awareness to help improve knowledge and understanding of the issue of human trafficking and how to help protect and identify victims. We work with African communities to enhance their understanding of trafficking in their communities, while also training statutory agencies on issues which affect African victims.

HOW TO GET INVOLVE

We are always interested in hearing from Champions who would like to get involved in our work to prevent trafficking. We are particularly keen to work with people who would like to get involved in providing community awareness sessions, or who have contacts with communities or groups who may be interested in hosting an event. We regularly hold events for young victims of trafficking, so if you have any skills or experience which could be included, let us know.

Laura Cremen
Anti Trafficking Programme Manager

AFRUCA is recognised as a leading organisation working with victims of trafficking in the UK and is the only organisation to provide specialist support to victims of African descent. We work with young Africans aged 12-25 who have been victims of child trafficking, and have supported almost 300 children and young people in the past six years. With our specialist knowledge and experience in the area of child trafficking, and links with African communities countrywide, we fill a vital gap in services. We understand key cultural issues, such as witchcraft and juju, and are regularly involved in providing awareness sessions and trainings to educate key stakeholders and communities on this horrific crime. We work holistically, from individual support to input into national policies, to prevent the trafficking of children and young people into the UK, protect their rights when here and promote their wellbeing moving forward.

Get a copy of the leaflet above for more information.
AFRUCA
Africans Unite Against Child

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WWW.AFRUCA.ORG

AFRUCA is a UK registered charity number 1093027 and a company limited by guarantee number 4306536.

AFRUCA promotes the Rights and Welfare of African Children in the UK and in Africa.