SPOTLIGHT ON AFRUCA

AFRUCA
Children’s Champions!

1st Edition
Volume 2, 2014
Welcome

Dear Friends/Supporters

2013 has been a very good year for us at AFRUCA. We held a very successful week long activities in London and Manchester to raise awareness on the issue of human trafficking in June. In October, we convened a Summit on African Families in London with over 400 people in attendance. The major aim of the Summit was to discuss the various issues affecting African families in the capital.

In November, we successfully trained our first set of Children’s Champions who are part of our community volunteering project, funded by Department of Education (DFE) to help raise awareness on child protection within the Black/African community as part of efforts to tackle the overrepresentation of African children in the child protection system. Our work in the UK over the past thirteen years has shown that one of the major reasons for Black/African children entering into care is as a result of limited knowledge of positive parenting.

Parenting is not an easy task. Most parents want the best for their children and work hard to bring them up and improve their life chances. Some parents require support to perform this role effectively especially when they are newly migrated to another country like the UK with different values, beliefs, culture and laws than the ones they are used to. We look at some of the difficulties parents face raising children here in the UK and provide some tips on positive parenting.

Our AFRUCA Centre for Children and Families carried out a number of activities during the last months of 2013. One of these major activities was a consultative meeting in Leeds, Yorkshire. The major aim of the meeting was to discuss the progress of our “Working with Faith Organisations to Safeguard African Children in Yorkshire Project”. The meeting was very successful with very positive outcomes in terms of us expanding our work in the Yorkshire area.

Hope you enjoy reading!

We Wish You a Very Prosperous 2014!

Debbie Ariyo OBE
(CEO/Founder AFRUCA)
National statistics show that children from the Black/African community are disproportionately represented in the care system. Mixed and Black or Black British children make up approximately 9% and 7% of the looked after population respectively.

The 2011 Children in Care England statistics show that 4,520 (7%) Black or Black African children were looked after in comparison to 3090 (5%) of Asian or Asian British children. In comparison to the overall population of these two groups, it is quite clear that there is an over-representation of Black/African Children in the care system.

The black population is estimated to be about 2% of the UK population making the children in care more than 3 times the percentage of the Black population in the UK.

The major reasons cited for Black/African children entering the care system or coming to the attention of social services in the UK have been linked to abuse and neglect (48.3%), absent parenting (20.6%), parental illness or disability (12.1%) and family crises (13.5%).

A broader view of this, shows that the reasons why Black/African children are overrepresented in the social care system are linked to both macro and micro factors.

“The reasons why Black/African children are overrepresented in the social care system are linked to both macro and micro factors”

The macro factors include; historical treatment of groups, immigration, marginalisation, and racism, long term social and economic impacts related to poverty, unstable housing, reliance on welfare, drugs and alcohol abuse, imprisonment, low education attainments and low paying jobs.

The micro factors have been linked to discriminatory practices of reporters (police, teachers, child welfare workers and health workers), lack of cross-cultural competence, lack of understanding of cultural attitudes and practices within families, unavailability and appropriateness of support services and lack of parental understanding of child development and child protection issues in the UK.

The foundation of AFRUCA in 2001 was a direct response to these concerns. Its projects have targeted key stakeholders, practitioners and policy makers working with Black/African children and families. However, its work is focused primarily on members of the Black/African community especially parents and faith leaders. Hence, the name of the organisation AFRUCA: Africans Unite Against Child Abuse.
AFRUCA’s work in the African community in the last 13 years has demonstrated that the key problem with regard to child abuse in the community has been ignorance of the laws and regulations about child protection, but also and more importantly, limited knowledge about positive parenting based on a better understanding of child development and the various needs and challenges children face at each stage of the development process.

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In facing the challenges of child development, parents tend to fall back on practices from their own upbringing. Unfortunately, some of these practices are physically and emotionally harmful to children. In response to this concern, AFRUCA has developed a range of Safeguarding Materials for parents and others.

Most importantly is the newly developed: "Manual on Child Protection for African Parents in the UK" a unique publication which aims to educate parents on child protection issues in the UK. This publication is available in both English and French to make it easily accessible to many people in the African community across the country.

Another unique solution to this problem is the need to fully engage members of the African community itself in efforts to help prevent abuse towards children. For this reason, AFRUCA has developed an innovative project working to encourage members of the community to volunteer to become “Children’s Champions—advocates speaking out on behalf of children. In this edition of our newsletter, we have focused on our new project—AFRUCA Children’s Champions and you can read more about this on pages 5 to 12.
AFRUCA’s first ever Children’s Champions Training of Trainers which held on the 9th and 10th of November 2013 ended on a very satisfactory and high note. A lot of planning had gone into play to ensure every Champion left a lot more informed and better equipped than when they arrived on the programme. Everyone left the training more charged up to help protect children from abuse and harm.

No doubt, everyone was at various levels of understanding of the issues at hand, and everyone arrived with differing skill sets to apply in their newly embraced volunteering role. What made it most interesting was the opportunity for participants to share and learn from one another’s experiences and understanding, whilst aligning with what is to be the structured delivery of AFRUCA’s Child Protection Training. It was a time to garner new knowledge, and gain new skills in order to be able to make an impact on the community.

Despite our Children’s Champions originating from different countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe, it was a unifying experience with everyone taking on board the responsibility of taking ownership of our problems. We had a few men at the training which is a much welcome change in an area that predominantly involves women. Our Champions came from a range of personal and professional capacities like Social Workers to Stay at Home Parents, Teachers, Solicitors, Students, Faith Leaders, Civil Servants, Charity Workers, TV and Radio Presenters, etc., all from across London, Essex, Bedfordshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, Hertfordshire and Portsmouth.

For AFRUCA as an organisation, it was a point when we empowered people at the grassroots level to do what we strongly advocate at an organisational level. It was a point when 23 selfless people joined in redesigning what we will come to know as the beautiful pattern of the fabric of life of our children.

Here’s a big Thank You to our first ever set of Children’s Champions!!!

Comments from our Champions:

“It gave me a better understanding of why African children are in care”

“All the information given has been useful to enable us as Children’s Champions to go out and train others. It has also acted as an eye opener for us as members of the African community”

“I appreciate the time given participants to reflect, contribute and challenge”

“The facilitator was very interesting and full of humour. She delivered the training very well and made it impactful”

“I loved the delivery and it encouraged me. So many interesting discussions. It was brilliant”
Meet Our Children's Champions

I BECAME AN AFRUCA CHILDREN'S CHAMPION BECAUSE:

"Having been a child in care, and raised by a foster parent with a harsh and unloving style of disciplining me, I am passionate about empowering young people and helping them to develop into their full potential. Being a Children's Champion for AFRUCA is one of the many ways that I am enabled to do this".

"I could no longer afford to stand on the sidelines and expect change to just happen. I had to be part of the change for our African children. While I have no power to change past mistakes, I have the conviction of a better future for our children. Culture can longer be an excuse for wrong-doing."

"In order to become a more effective platform to disseminate information & awareness within our community. The disproportionate statistics relating to African children being taken into care are alarming, and 'we' need to understand, intercede & make a positive impact in our society - for the sake of our children & our families."

"I want to be part of the change that needs to happen in the UK African society"

"I wanted to do something that would be beneficial to my community.

"Children, I believe, are the future of tomorrow. I decided to be a Children's Champion because of what I have gone through personally and will not want to see others go through the same. I wish to make parents aware and know the importance of child protection".

"I want to help other African Dads and Mums to be better parents for their children without reinforcing (conflicting) African cultures and religious practices. But through love and good parenting skills, they will bring up their children in the right way without allowing Local Authorities to take their children on (and) interfere in their family lives".
Children's Champions Training PHOTOS
Q: Who are AFRUCA Children’s Champions?
AFRUCA Children’s Champions are members of the African community willing to volunteer their time to undergo an intense training in child protection, cultural practices and their impact on safeguarding children here in the UK. The Champions then facilitate a minimum of one workshop for groups of about 25 people, training them in the various issues and offering tips to promote better parenting and relationships with their children.

Q: Why we need Children’s Champions?
According to recent statistics, there is an overrepresentation of Black/African children in the care system and AFRUCA has risen up as a community organisation to rally round 100 volunteers of Black/African origin, from London and across the South of England, to help spread child protection knowledge and reduce the numbers of Black/African children being taken into care. We intend to create a ripple effect of Champions raising awareness and providing relevant materials to people who will in turn share their new knowledge and promote child safeguarding practices within the wider community.

Q: What qualifications do I need to become a Children’s Champion?
Although no formal qualifications are required, every Champion must have a good understanding of African cultural and religious issues and the link with child exploitation and abuse. Our Champions must also have experience of parenting or working with children, must be able to communicate effectively in English and one other language, and must be computer and internet literate.

Q: Can I become a Children’s Champion?
If you have a passion to lead change in the Black/African community here in the UK and have an interest in child welfare, you can become a Children’s Champion. You will however need to provide two satisfactory written references to confirm your suitability for the position and be willing to undergo a DBS check.

Q: Would you pay me for this?
The role of Children’s Champion is a voluntary one but all travel expenses incurred during the two-day training and facilitating child protection workshops will be reimbursed.
Q: When can I start?
An application can be initiated immediately by sending in a copy of your CV with full contact details of two referees. As soon as satisfactory written references have been received as well as the result of the DBS check, applicants will be registered to undergo the next two-day training event and can begin to facilitate workshops immediately.

Q: I want to do this so that I can deliver the training in my faith organisation.
That would be a fantastic idea as many Black/African people frequently converge at faith groups and will most likely be more receptive to community development initiatives there. It should be a welcome addition to faith organisations’ aims to promote the welfare of children and acceptable parenting practices.

Q: Can I and my partner become AFRUCA Children’s Champions?
There is no express policy against partners/couples becoming Children’s Champions so we would welcome all interested persons who have the right background and the abilities to champion the safeguarding of children, and are willing to commit their time occasionally to the project. Each person will undoubtedly come on board the project with diverse skills-sets and will deliver the training to workshop participants in their own unique style. Applications from couples will definitely be considered.

Q: What training will I receive?
You will receive intense two-day training in child protection, cultural practices and the impact these have on safeguarding children here in the UK. You will also be equipped with the skills and materials to enable you confidently facilitate training to workshop participants.

Q: What will be required of me after the training?
After the two-day training, you will be expected to facilitate a minimum of one child protection workshop to a group of 25 people or more, and will be supported by a member of staff to ensure that the workshop delivery is smooth and consistent with AFRUCA’s standards. Our experience so far is that Champions look forward to facilitating more child protection workshops after their first event as it is a deeply enriching and rewarding experience, knowing that they have become leaders of change in the community and have the power and means to shape the welfare of children. We are happy to have every Champion facilitate as many child protection workshops as can be organised as we know the impact will, without doubt, reduce the numbers of Black/African children being taken into care.

“BECOME AN AFRUCA CHILDREN’S CHAMPION TODAY”

For further information about this project and on how to become an AFRUCA Children’s Champion please contact: iro@afruca.org
1. Criticise behavior not your child.
2. Calm parents have calm children.
3. Allow children some control choices. Let them have some input into decision making in the family. They will feel more valued.
4. Reward good behaviour with praises, hugs, kisses and love.
5. If someone else has made you angry do not take it out on your child.
6. Spend time at the end of each day to talk to your child.
7. No one is too old to apologies. Say sorry when in the wrong.
8. Never compare your child to another child.
During the last months of 2013, the Centre carried out a number of activities. On the 30th of November, the Centre held an awareness raising session on child trafficking in association with the Mountain of Fire Church in Manchester. The session was well attended by over 30 people.

We also facilitated four child protection training sessions for African parents/carers, faith leaders and workers in association with the Mount of Zion church in Leeds, Mountain of Fire Church in Manchester, the Voice of Revival Church in Leeds, and the Eyes of God Church in Manchester respectively. There were over 70 people in attendance at the four training sessions. Most of the participants stated that they had a better understanding of child protection and child safeguarding. They indicated that early intervention by organisations such as AFRUCA is crucial to help build the capacity of individual parents, communities and faith organisations. One faith leader at one of the sessions commented that “I feel more confident because I have volunteers who are aware of what is needed to develop and implement child protection policy”.

Additionally, on the 26th of October, we held a key consultative meeting in Leeds, Yorkshire. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the progress of our “Working with Faith Organisations to Safeguard African Children in Yorkshire Project”.

We also discussed what other issues the Yorkshire project should be tackling and examined the gaps that we as an organisation can help to meet in Yorkshire. Furthermore, we looked at how we can strengthen our work with faith and community groups in the region. We had very positive outcomes from this meeting. First, it helped us to establish new relationships with two organisations in Hull, an area that has never received any of our services. Also, it gave us the opportunity to hear from two very influential faith leaders in Leeds about the impact of the projects we run in association with them.

In addition, on the 8th of November we took part in the Yorkshire and Humber LSCB regional conference on Safeguarding Children. The theme of the conference was “Working with Diversity in Faith, Culture and Communities”. Justin Bahunga, Projects Co-ordinator at AFRUCA presented a paper at one of the workshops titled “Child Abuse Linked to Belief in Witchcraft or Juju”.

To find out more about our Centre for African Children and Families please call: 01619534712 or email: info@afruca.org
AFRUCA Summit on African Families in London

The Summit on African Families in London held on the 12th of October was a huge success. We had over 400 people in attendance including various stakeholders within the African Community. Some of the Special Guests at the event included; Richard Taylor OBE, Meg Hillier MP, Simon Hughes MP, Betty Makoni CNN World Hero and Lydia Taiwo author of A Broken Childhood I&II. We also had special guest performances by Jessie Appiah, Jessica Chukwu and the Uganda African dance trope.

We had six workshops during the course of the Summit these included; an intergenerational forum between parents and children, Child Protection Safeguarding and Physical Chastisement in African Families, Young people Gangs, Guns and Knife Crime, Domestic Violence in African Families, Mental Health of African Parents and their Children. Some of the key outcomes from these workshops included;

- The need for parents to develop new skills in bringing up their children here in the UK without resorting to physical chastisement.
- The need to create supportive networks and groups to protect those at risk of domestic violence including children.
- The need for all Africans to educate themselves about various mental health conditions and to know how to access available services.
- The need for more parents to be involved in their children’s education and to participate actively in their various school activities.
- The need for more members of the African community to work hand in hand with the police and other agencies to help address gangs, knife and gun crime.

The key outcome of the Summit was the need for better collaboration between statutory agencies and the community to help address the issues that were covered at the different workshops. Participants felt that the African community is capable of working in tandem with other agencies to solve key problems rather than, being invited as passive onlookers. People felt that the event signified a community willing and able to lead change across London and that the Summit needed to become a yearly affair.

“People felt that the event signified a community willing and able to lead change…”

For us at AFRUCA, we are going to liaise with key agencies to intimate them with the event and its key conclusions. These include the sexual exploitation of girls in gangs, use of juju and witchcraft to control, and recruit gang members as well as the issue of domestic violence and the harmful impact it has on children.

To read the full report please visit: www.afruca.org
Upcoming Events 2014

Pencil it In

Conversations with AFRUCA
Children’s Champions
London (Free Event)
January 24

AFRUCA Children’s Champion
Training Day 1
(Closed session)
February 1

AFRUCA Children’s Champion
Training Day 2
(Closed session)
February 2

Conversations with AFRUCA
Children’s Champions
London (Free Event)
February 20

Training Course: Child Abuse Linked to Belief in Witchcraft or Juju
London
February 21

Training Course: Child Abuse Linked to Belief in Witchcraft or Juju
Manchester
March 20

Training Course: Female Genital Mutilation as a Child Safeguarding Issue
London
March 25

For further information please contact: training@afruca.org or visit our website: www.afruca.org
AFRUCA Thanks our Funders

For Supporting our Anti-child Trafficking Project

For Supporting our work in tackling Witchcraft Abuse

For Supporting our work with faith Organisations to Safeguard Children in Yorkshire and Greater Manchester

For Supporting our work

For Supporting our work on Child Protection

For continued support of our programmes and events

And All Our Amazing Volunteers
AFRUCA
Africans Unite Against Child Abuse

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on all Networks.

WWW.AFRUCA.ORG

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