Witchcraft Branding, Spirit Possession and Safeguarding African Children

A Two Day International Conference

Venue: The Resource Centre
356 Holloway Road
London N7 6PA
Date: 8-9 November 2011

Supported by:
Conference Background

Increasing numbers of African children are suffering the consequences of being branded as witches or as possessed by evil spirits. This is particularly so in many parts of Africa and is equally a reality here in the UK. Accusations of witchcraft within a community can lead to a litany of abuses: physical, emotional, and sexual and neglect resulting in maltreatment, torture and in some instances, death. In some African countries, it has led to children being rejected by their families, forcing children as young as 5 years onto the streets where they are further exposed to other forms of abuse and exploitation. These children resort to a range of survival mechanisms including drug abuse and theft. In the UK, there have been many recorded cases of children abused and harmed by their families in the belief that they are witches. At least two cases of children killed as a direct result of witchcraft branding are known to have occurred in the country.

The need to understand the context within which this form of abuse occurs, identify the drivers of witchcraft branding and examine strategies to increase protection for vulnerable children has become necessary in order to protect children from continuous harm.

This unique and timely conference will attract participants from across Europe, Asia and Africa where different themes will be explored through Papers, Workshops, Presentations and Posters.

Conference Aims:

The conference will explore the issue of branding children as witches in all its dimensions looking at different factors underlying the phenomenon, its impact, different policies and strategies to tackle this growing problem. A focus will be put on the importance of religious beliefs given the role the faith organisations can play in enforcing the recommendations that will come out of the conference.

Outcomes expected:

1. Raise awareness by examining key concepts, laws, policies and practices around the issues of child branding and child protection
2. Promote discussion and information exchange on the various forms of faith related abuse, their prevalence and impact on victims
3. Explore strategies to increase protection for children who are susceptible to branding as witches
4. Identify strategies to increase dialogue and joint working between different stakeholders to help tackle the phenomenon of child branding.

Who should attend?

Academics, policy makers, practitioners in the Social Care, Educational and Health Sectors, social researchers, community and faith leaders, legal experts, human rights activists, crime prevention experts, representatives of EU, AU, UN bodies, Regional organizations and representatives of the media.

Invited Keynote Speakers:

1. Tim Loughton MP, UK Minister for Children and Families
2. His Excellency Godswill Akpabio, Executive Governor, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria
4. Debbie Ariyo OBE: Founder of AFRUCA

Conference Fee: £155 (per delegate)
Draft Conference Brochure

Conference Registration and Enquiries

Please complete attached booking form and return with your fee to Justin Bahunga, Policy and Network Development Officer, AFRUCA UK, Unit 3D/F Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP or via email: Justin@afruca.org

“Witchcraft Branding, Spirit Possession and the Safeguarding of African Children”

Conference Programme

Day One

8.45-10:00
Registration

10:00 - 10:30
Welcome and Introduction by Conference Chair - Prosper Tedam, Chair of AFRUCA UK

10:30 - 11:00
Keynote Speeches

- **His Excellency Godswill Akpabio**, Executive Governor, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria (tbc)
- **Tim Loughton** MP, UK Minister for Children and Families (tbc)
- **Ms. Bience Gawanas**, Commissioner for Social Affairs, African Union
- **Debbie Ariyo OBE**, Founder of AFRUCA UK and Nigeria

11:30 – 12.00
Coffee

12:00 to 1:00 - Paper Presentations

- **Mary Orjioke**, Director, Children’s Department, Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Nigeria: ‘Witchcraft Branding: Government Responses at the National level”.
- Uganda Government Representative (TBC)
- Democratic Republic of Congo Government Representative (TBC)
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1:00 to 2:00 – Lunch

2:00 to 3:00 - Film Screening

3:00 - 3:30 - Tea Break

3:30 to 4:30 - Discussion Panel and Summary of Day One

6:00 - 9:00 – Evening Reception for Conference Delegates

Day Two

Delegates go straight into workshops running concurrently

Workshop One - Witchcraft Branding - Theories and Practices

- Dr. Richard Hoskins - Researcher – ‘Witchcraft: Influences from non African Sources’
- Leo Igwe - International Humanist and Ethical Union - Faith and Witchcraft Branding
- Speaker ( TBC), Witchcraft and Theology
- Yasmin Rehman - Researcher - The World of Jinn: Islam and the Occult: a Burgeoning business model

Workshop Two – Witchcraft, Poverty and Social Exclusion

- (Speaker to be confirmed) NAPITIP Nigeria - Human Trafficking, Oath Rituals and Witchcraft Branding
- Harrison Matey & Enobong Etuk, Positive Impact Worldwide - Mitigating the Impact of Witchcraft: Poverty and Social Exclusion Among African Children,
- Justin Bahunga, Policy and Network Development Officer, AFRUCA UK – Immigration, Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK
- Romain Matondo, Co-ordinator, Congolese Family Centre - Witchcraft Branding and the Congolese Community in the UK.

11:00 - 11:30 - Coffee Break

11:30 - 12:30 – Workshops

Workshop Three - Improving Knowledge and Understanding of Witchcraft Branding:
The Role of Research

- Eleanor Stobbart - Independent Researcher - Child Abuse Linked to Accusations of Possessions and Witchcraft,
- Yemi Ademowo - Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, Nigeria - The Political Economy of Witchcraft Branding
- Bidi Broderick - Researcher – The Impact of Witchcraft Abuse in the UK
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Workshop Four - Government Responses to Witchcraft Branding
- Akwa Ibom State Nigeria, Combating the Stigma of Witchcraft Branding in Akwa Ibom (TBC)
- London Borough of Newham, UK Working with Families to Safeguarding Children

12:30 - 1:30 - Lunch

1:30 - 2:30 – Plenary (Chair: Francis Kaikumba Chief Executive, African Health and Policy Network)

Workshop Five - NGO Responses to Witchcraft Branding in Africa and the UK I
- Afrikids, Working with Traditional Communities in Ghana to Combat Witchcraft Branding – (Sally Eastcott)
- Stepping Stones Nigeria Advocacy Strategies for Combating Witchcraft Accusations: Lessons Learnt from the Niger Delta (Emilie Secker)

2:30 - 3:00 - Teabreak

Workshop Five - NGO Responses to Witchcraft Branding in Africa and UK II
- AFRUCA UK – Advocating for Policy and Regulatory Action to End the Branding of Children as Witches (Justin Bahunga/Teamirat Seyoum)
- Congolese Family Centre – Engaging the Congolese Communities in London to Address the Branding of Children (Romain Matondo)
- Churches Child Protection Advisory Group - Working with Faith Organisations to Safeguard African Children (Simon Bass) tbc

3:00 - 4:00 - Plenary (Conference Summary and Conclusions)

4:00pm - Conference Ends
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Conference Booking Form

Delegate Name and Contact Details

Name: ..............................................................................................................................................
Job Title: .......................................................................................................................................... 
Organisation: .................................................................................................................................. 
Address: .......................................................................................................................................... 
P: ...............................Country: ........................................................................................................... 
Email: ...................................................Telephone: ............................................................... 
Fax: .................................................................................................................................................... 

Please return completed booking form by post or fax to: 
Justin Bahunga, Policy and Network Development Officer, AFRUCA UK, Head Office Unit 3d/f Leroy 
House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP 
Email: justin@afruca.org  Fax: +44(0) 2077042266.  Telephone: +44 (0) 2077042261 

Please photocopy this form if you want to book more than one delegate place 

To book a Workshop, indicate your highest preference with 1 as most preferable and 3, least. 
There will be 2 workshops running concurrently. 

Workshop Details:

Workshop One - Witchcraft Branding - Theories and Practices

- Dr. Richard Hoskins - Researcher - Witchcraft: Influences from non African Sources’ 
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Workshop Two – Witchcraft, Poverty and Social Exclusion

- (Speaker to be confirmed) **NAPTIP Nigeria** - Human Trafficking, Oath Rituals and Witchcraft Branding
- **Harrison Matey & Enobong Etuk**, Positive Impact Worldwide - Mitigating the Impact of Witchcraft: Poverty and Social Exclusion Among African Children,
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- **Bidi Broderick** - Researcher – The Impact of Witchcraft Abuse in the UK

Workshop Four - Government Responses to Witchcraft Branding

- **Akwa Ibom State Nigeria**: Combating the Stigma of Witchcraft Branding in Akwa Ibom (TBC)
- **UK Government Department for Education**: National Action Plan on Witchcraft Branding and Spirit Possession
- **London Borough of Newham, UK**: Working with Families to Safeguarding Children

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- **Afrikids**, Working with Traditional Communities in Ghana to Combat Witchcraft Branding – (Sally Eastcott)
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If you do not send a cheque with your booking form you will automatically receive an invoice. We would normally charge an administrative fee of £8 for invoicing.

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