Advent campaign raises the plight of children accused of witchcraft

Monday 1 December, 2014

The Stop Child Witch Accusations coalition urges social media users to lend their voices to children's stories this Advent, and highlight the appalling abuse linked to witchcraft accusations.

SCWA are inviting the UK public to stand in solidarity with children who have suffered harm due to accusations of witchcraft – a phenomenon that is on the increase all around the world, including here in the UK.

Susie Howe of SCWA (and The Bethany Children's Trust) explains: "Throughout Advent we are asking people to join us in sharing children's stories and calling for a STOP to child witchcraft accusations and persecution. Christmas Day will be the fourth anniversary of 15-year-old Kristy Bamu's death. Kristy was accused of witchcraft, tortured, and eventually drowned in an 'exorcism rite'. It was a case that shocked the UK public. Yet four years on, thousands of children around the world still endure horrific abuse and stigma because they are falsely accused of being witches. As we mark the anniversary of Kristy's death at the end of the campaign, we're hoping people will have listened to the stories of children who still suffer, and heard how children, churches, and community leaders are working to end this phenomenon and bring about change."

SCWA is a coalition of organisations working with community and church leaders particularly in the D.R.Congo and Nigeria to understand the roots and realities of this form of abuse, to care for children harmed by accusations, and to empower community-led change. The campaign is endorsed by **former Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Rowan Williams**, who says: "The appalling phenomenon of brutality against children accused of 'witchcraft' has to be eradicated. When this is done in the name of Christian faith, it is a particular horror, a blasphemy against the One who called children to himself … I pray that we may see totally transformed attitudes."

The campaign will run from 1st to 25th December on Facebook and Twitter. **Emilie Secker of SCWA (and Stepping Stones Nigeria)** explains: "It's really easy to join in on social media – like, share, and post your own STOP tweet with the hashtag #STOPCWA. You can find out much more about the issue, and how churches and communities are responding at www.stop-cwa.org. Let's raise our voices together to say STOP!"

>> ENDS

CASE STUDIES

The Advent campaign will feature individual stories from children accused of witchcraft, and their journey to healing and restoration: details and photos on request.

More in-depth stories, facts, figures, and feature material are also available on request. An SCWA roundtable took place in August in Kinshasa, a ground-breaking event with local community and church leaders, child care practitioners, theologians, and children's rights advocates all in attendance. A report on the roundtable and the establishment of action/working groups are all also available on request.

ADVENT CAMPAIGN DETAILS

Follow the campaign on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SCWACoalition

Or on Twitter at www.twitter.com/stop_cwa

Tweet a STOP message: take a photo of yourself making a stop sign with your hand, write a short STOP message, and tweet it using hashtag #STOPCWA

CONTACTS / AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW

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