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**THE 2nd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN AFRICA ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**  
**THEME: *'Taking Stock of the Status of Child Sexual Abuse in Africa since the First International Conference in 2007 held in Nairobi, Kenya'***

**12-14 March 2012**

**La Palm Royal Beach Hotel**

**Background Document**

**Introduction and Background**

In traditional African society, child sexual abuse was unheard of. It may, however, have been happening but the society at large had created a system where children were protected through many avenues, ranging from stringent taboos centered on relationships and living arrangements.

However, this is not the case today and the society has been invaded with all sorts of challenges. These challenges include broken families, unemployment, overcrowding, abject poverty, pornography, HIV/AIDS with its accompanied miseries, state of norm, drug and alcohol abuse, conflicts and civil strife, exploitation of information technologies, among others.

In traditional societies, parents were not only the primary socializing agents for children, but they were totally accountable when there was an indication that children were not being

protected. With time, the parents have abdicated their responsibilities to friends, teachers, religious groups and in some cases, to individuals they know very little about. Parents send children for errands at night or to strangers, oblivious of what can happen. The few studies that are emerging indicate that some of these parents even sell their children into prostitution for economic gain.

Based on the above, the African Network for the Prevention and Protection of Children Against Neglect (ANPPCAN) in September 2007 organized and held the First International Conference in Africa on Child Sexual Abuse in Kenya. This conference brought together delegates from Africa and the rest of the world to deliberate on the several sub-themes on child sexual abuse including existing knowledge on child sexual abuse, prevention of child sexual abuse, different forms of child sexual abuse, international experiences in treatment, prevention and interventions, role of policy and legislation in the fight against child sexual abuse and the role of the media in the fight against child sexual abuse. Discussions also touched on the best practices in the treatment of child sexual abuse, trafficking and sexual violence against children, how to form partnerships in the fight against child abuse and the role the community can play in the fight against child sexual abuse.

During the conference several observations were made. These included:

1. That, globally, 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence involving physical contact<sup>1</sup>.
1. Of all reported forms of child abuse in Africa a significant number have been sexual abuse cases.
2. Somewhere in Africa, 45% of children diagnosed as having been abused had been sexually abused.
3. In a certain community in Eastern Africa, 49% of sexually active primary school girls had been coerced into having sex.
4. Yet even these statistics represent a great under-estimation given the gross under-reporting and the ever changing nature of child sexual abuse.

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<sup>1</sup> World Report on Violence against Children, 2006

The most striking thing is that five years after the Pineiro report on violence against children<sup>2</sup> and the United Nations Secretary Generals Study on Violence Against Children child sexual abuse has remained almost a normal occurrence, with hardly any systems in place in many African countries to respond to the vice. . Children continue to be abused sexually in total silence. Because of lack of child protection systems, cases of abuse are handled in an ad-hoc sporadic and most uncoordinated manner. Many times, the process of receiving and handling cases of abuse is abusive and re-traumatizes children and their families. This is due to many factors including lack of capacity in those mandated to handle cases of child abuse.

Sexual violence and abuse occur in many different forms and may happen anywhere: at home, in school, at work, in the community, institutional care, vocational training centers as well as in cyberspace. In many countries in Africa, information technology is advancing and is putting large numbers of children at risk, as there is ample pornography in the internet. Children with computers and mobile phones, cannot only access pornographic sites with ease, but they are being lured through this technology into sexual exploitation.

Studies show that girls experience higher rates of sexual violence than boys; although in the recent past the number of boys is increasing. This reinforces male dominance and impedes female empowerment. According to UNICEF's State of the World's Children Report, 2011, evidence from 11 developing countries show a broad spread of experience of sexual or physical violence against females aged 15–19, reaching a height of 65 per cent in Uganda. The widespread acceptance of sexual violence as a normal feature of life, particularly by children, is a grave cause for concern.

Sexual abuse of children is an extreme form of gender based violence that reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and harmful traditional practices. Any one of these abuses lead to deep psychological scars, damage the health of women and girls in general, including their

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.unviolencestudy.org/>

reproductive and sexual health and in some instances, results in death. In regard to policies, many countries in Africa cannot claim any credit as they hardly exist. Attempts, on the other hand, have been made by some countries to put laws in place. But the outcry from the few studies that have been done, as well as, those practitioners in child protection, indicate that implementation of the same is a challenge. The reality is that by and large policies and laws relating to children are not implemented in many countries in Africa, posing problems in child protection efforts.

The impact of sexual abuse on children is devastating and requires skilled manpower to respond appropriately so as to yield results to the victim. This is a huge omission in Africa where the children who have been extremely violated end up with unskilled service providers who have no knowledge of sexual abuse and its impact. This is double tragedy to sexually abused children in the continent. One hears of cases where perpetrators negotiate out of court settlements with parents of the victims, leaving the victims with no recourse. In some cases the legislative systems are so defective that they favour the perpetrators than the victims. Yet in some cases, services responding to sexual abuse cases are highly centralized and difficult to access given the distances involved.

The First Sexual Abuse Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2007 drew up several recommendations that touched on the types and modes of interventions, the need for coherence between research, policy and practice, empowering of children, fostering links with the media, domestication of relevant instruments, and enactment of appropriate legislations, enforcement of regulatory provisions governing child care institutions, support to families to protect their children among others.

### **Relevance of the Conference on Child Sexual Abuse**

It is now almost four years since the First International Conference in Africa on Child Sexual Abuse was held in Nairobi in September 2007. Yet sexual abuse of children has continued unabated. It is for this reason that the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) Regional Office through the African Movement for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (AMPCAN) in Accra Ghana decided to organize the Second International Conference in Africa on Child Sexual Abuse as a follow up to the first

conference to review the progress made towards improving the situation of children who are at risk of sexual abuse or have already been abuse.

The Conference aims at offering an opportunity for stakeholders to reflect on what has been done in the various African countries on sexual abuse of children since the first conference and also deliberate and share on the necessary protective mechanisms and safe nets available against sexual abuse of children. It also aims at using the opportunity to mobilize and remind governments, communities and civil society organizations and others on their responsibility to protect children against Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) as well as of the need to accelerate efforts towards protecting children from sexual abuse. It will in addition bring together actors, stakeholders, researchers, practitioners, child activists, the media, policy makers and donors from all over the world to share and learn from each other on sexual abuse of children and young women

**The Conference has the following as its objectives:**

- 1. To assess the progress made so far in the various African countries on the issue of Child Sexual Abuse.*
- 2. To ascertain improvement in research and practice on Child Sexual Abuse in Africa*
- 3. To identify pertinent issues that hinder or enhance responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Africa*
- 4. To provide a forum for learning responses on Child Sexual Abuse globally*

**The Conference sub-themes are as follows:**

- 1. Building organizational capacity to manage Child Sexual Abuse in Africa*
- 2. The role of legislation and policies on Child Sexual Abuse*
- 3. Strategies on Child Sexual Abuse prevention*
- 4. Child Sexual Abuse in institutions of care and learning in Africa*
- 5. Good practices in research and practice on Child Sexual Abuse*

**Outputs of the Conference:**

- Book of abstracts*
- Space to sell merchandise*
- Conference report*

## **Organization of the Conference:**

- *The Conference will take the form of plenaries, workshops and seminars*

## **About Organizations**

### **African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN)**

The African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) is a pan African network that promotes child rights and child protection in Africa. It's mission is to enhance, in partnership with others, the prevention and protection of children from all forms of maltreatment, thus, ensuring that the rights of children are realized.

The organization was founded in 1986 in Enugu, Nigeria, during the First African Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect whose theme was Child Labour in Africa. It is registered as an international NGO and has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. ANPPCAN has observer status with the African Union (formerly Organization of African Unity, OAU since 1990) and similar status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights.

The organization has an extensive reach in Africa with 26 national chapters each providing specific services to children. The national chapters coalesce to form a strong child rights network in Africa through which the organization runs national as well as regional child protection programmes.

ANPPCAN conducts two types of activities, at the continental level since ANPPCAN is a continental body and at the national level as required by Kenya's legislation. The organization's activities are anchored on promoting the rights of children in Africa and fall into four broad areas, that is, research, documentation and monitoring, networking and establishment of chapters and capacity building.

Over time, ANPPCAN has also made grand achievements in the promotion of the rights of children and this has seen the organization receive international recognition. In this regard, the organization has been honoured for its exemplary work on children and awarded the Kellogg's Child Development Award, known as the Kelloggs Award, (2004) and the first African Union Award for Children's Champion in Africa (2006).

Besides, ANPPCAN has an unparalleled long history of lobbying and advocating for the rights of children. This is done both at the national and at the continental level. In this area, ANPPCAN picks immediate issues of concern affecting children and then mobilizes stakeholders to deliberate and seek solutions to the issue (s). This is done through national and regional and international forums or conferences. Issues such as orphaned-hood, street children, child sexual abuse, Early Childhood Education and development (ECD) children in armed conflicts, among others, have been discussed and a way forward found through such forums.

It's through such regional forums that ANPPCAN has been able to lobby and push for national and regional child protection instruments such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Also nation specific laws and policies have been enacted and implemented in order to accord the African child the necessary protection.

ANPPCAN commits to redouble its efforts in providing services to children in Africa and also work towards ensuring that a conducive environment as well as the necessary infrastructure, programmes and services is in place, thus, presenting children with opportunities for their full development.

### **African Movement for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (AMPCAN)**

AMPCAN is a non-governmental organization registered in 2008 with a mission to improve the welfare of Ghanaian children and to enhance opportunities for the development of their full potential. AMPCAN envisions a Ghanaian society in which the rights of children are upheld and valued. Consequently, it works in partnership with others to promote the rights of children and their protection from all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation

In pursuit of this mission, AMPCAN emphasizes awareness creation, research, advocacy, participation and partnerships, drawing on a rich pool of technical support and expertise from the ANPPCAN Regional Office, other African Chapters, local professional staff and others to spearhead child protection initiatives in Ghana.

Broadly speaking, AMPCAN seeks, among others: to act as a national centre for the protection and prevention of child abuse and neglect; to facilitate the promotion, defence and advocacy of children's rights in accordance with the UNCRC, the African Charter on the Rights and

Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) & the Children's Act; to collaborate and network with other like-mission organizations to create awareness on child abuse and child protection issues in Ghana; to provide legal aid and, where necessary, institute litigation for child victims of abuse and neglect or those in conflict with the law; to empower communities to protect their children from abuse and neglect; and to work to address the basic causes of abuse and neglect including poverty.

AMPCAN's current activities include work with schools to create awareness on child rights and participatory approaches to responding to abuse and neglect. This work is done through child's rights advocacy with school administrators and teachers, Child's Rights Clubs for children and youth, and referral to services such as legal support, counselling, medical and support services.

AMPCAN partners with Children International, the Ministry of Education, PLAN Ghana and other organizations to provide books to schools in vulnerable communities to enrich school libraries and to provide much needed school materials and access to updated technology.

AMPCAN cooperates with the Department of Social Welfare(DSW) in the regulation of residential care facilities in Ghana; contributing to the development and refinement of Minimum Standards for Residential Care Institutions and National Adoption Policy. Relative to this, AMPCAN has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with DSW to monitor the national deinstitutionalization program with the support of UNICEF. AMPCAN is a member of the National OVC committee that provides direction to programming and interventions for improving the situation of vulnerable children and youths in Ghana.

AMPCAN is the local affiliate of the African Network for the Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) a pan African network founded in 1986 to promote child rights and child protection in Africa. Through its Regional Office, AMPCAN participates in professional exchanges between 22 Chapters in Africa for skills development and hands-on training aimed to enhance practices in home countries. This activity has been supported by the Fredskorpet organization in Norway.



AMPCAN participates in the Girl Power Project funded by the Dutch Government. The project seeks to bring about significant change in the areas of protection, education, participation and economic empowerment for over 15,000 girls and young women in Ghana. This project targets selected communities in the Upper West, Eastern and Ashanti Regions of Ghana.

AMPCAN is a recognized representative of Child Helpline International and is working with other Ghanaian stakeholders to strengthen the child protection and referral systems in the country through reactivation of the Ghana Child Helpline. Partners for this project include DOVVSU (Ghana Police), Department of Children, DSW, Ministry of Education, UNICEF, members of the Child Abuse Network, and the NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child. The Ghana Helpline will provide a toll-free abuse response platform for the children of Ghana to be heard and assisted on abuse and neglect through emergency assistance, linkage to medical, justice, counseling (including peer-to-peer counseling), and networking of youth advocates.

AMPCAN seeks corporate partnerships in addressing the basic causes of abuse and neglect through participatory interventions that empower individuals, families and communities to enhance incomes, improve parenting and recognize and uphold the rights of the child.

**African Movement for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (AMPCAN), Ghana**

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