

Media Release



Africa's Hidden Shame

African children victims of family and community induced crimes
ACPF calls for a quick end to this “shameful practice”

7 NOVEMBER 2016, ADDIS ABABA: The African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) has kicked off its biennial International Policy Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia today, Monday, November 7th at the United Nations Conference Center. Its report, ***Crimes and Extreme Violence against Children in Africa: A Glimpse into Our Hidden Shame*** shows both the problem and the many solutions that can be enacted to protect children.

Many children in Africa are victims of crimes and extreme violence that are often fatal. However, these are seldom talked about or reported as they take place in absolute secrecy within domestic settings or only with the knowledge of an elite circle of community elders.

“Our two-day event is joined by eminent voices from the African Union, African Ministers, religious leaders, the media and the NGO community. The Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence against Children, the Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Chair of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child have also joined us on this important meeting” says Theophane Nikyema, the Executive Director of ACPF.

Says Mrs. Graça Machel, Chair of ACPF’s International Board of Trustees: “Our agenda cannot be more critical. Children are the future of our continent. And the future will judge us as much by our treatment of the vulnerable as by our development. This Conference is the first ever international conference on crimes and extreme violence against children. It has a special focus on children with albinism, those with disabilities, and children accused of being witches, who often are the victims of crimes and extreme violence.”

The report sees community perceptions of children with albinism and children with disabilities leading to a tragic number of cases of infanticide. According to Dr Shimeles Tsegaye, the author of ACPF’s, *The African Report on Children with Disabilities*, children with disabilities face extreme forms of violence, stigma and discrimination based on misconceptions about the cause of disability that are rooted in cultural beliefs and traditions. As a result, children may be subjected to violent acts to drive out “evil spirits” perceived to cause the disability.

The mistreatment of children with albinism is another major theme developed in ACPF’s report. It reports that infanticide is commonly practiced, particularly in rural areas, but often

goes unreported as it tends to occur in the home – the place where most children in rural areas are born, and where family bonds often demand loyalty over any apparent civic duty to report crime.

Children brutalised due to superstitions surrounding witchcraft also get extensive attention in the report: “Once a child is labeled a witch, he/she can be expelled from the community or killed or be subjected to violence, both physical and psychological, either to force confession or in the name of purifications. The child may also be subjected to punishments for supposed evil deeds, including beating, may be forced to undergo “exorcism” or “deliverance” rituals in which the indwelling spirit is induced or compelled to leave the victim’s body.”

But there are positive developments that receive deserved praise such as the Kenyan Witchcraft Act which imposes a fine and imprisonment on anyone who accuses or threatens to accuse any person with being a witch or with practicing witchcraft. Similar provisions are found in the Witchcraft Suppression Acts of South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The report proposes solutions to these horrendous problems. They include building information and knowledge, mobilizing families and communities, public dialogue and developing stronger laws and vigorous enforcement.

Says ACPF’s Executive Director, Theophane Nikyema, “We hope that this Report would trigger public anger and contribute to an Africa-wide dialogue and engagement to bring this shameful practice to a quick end.”

ENDS

AFRICA24 MEDIA will be providing live social media updates throughout the proceedings, timely news content, b-roll (visuals) to illustrate the issues, as well as edits of the various panels available for broadcast on TV and radio, and postings on websites and social media. They will also be able to arrange interviews with the participants during or after the conference.

- Please visit www.africanchildforum.org for a copy of ACPF’s report: ***Crimes and extreme violence against children in Africa: A glimpse into our hidden shame***
- Please visit www.africanchildforum.org/ipc for details of the programme of the Seventh IPC, ***Our Hidden Shame: Crimes and extreme violence against children in Africa***
- Follow the conversation on social media with the hash tag ***#ENDViolenceAfrica***

For further information and [access to the media materials](#), please contact:



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AFRICAN CHILD POLICY FORUM (ACPF)

Contact: Iman Ahmed

Ahmed@africanchildforum.org

T: +251116628192/96/97/99

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

AFRICA24 MEDIA

www.a24media.com

assignmentdesk@a24media.com

+254 739 404 016 /+254 723 686 315

Facebook: Africa 24 Media

Twitter: @a24media

Nairobi, Kenya