

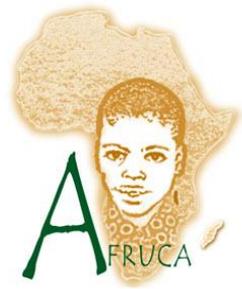
Child Abuse linked to a Belief in Witchcraft and Juju.

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Project Coordinator

November 8, 2013

About AFRUCA



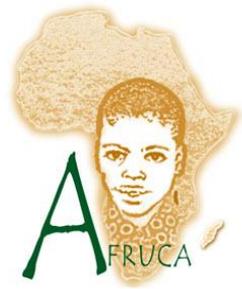
The premier charity promoting the welfare of African children in the UK.

5 Key Work Areas:

- Awareness raising on Children's Rights.
- Policy and Advocacy.
- Education, Research and Advisory.
- Community and International Development.
- Support for Individuals and Families in Crisis.

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The Rights of the Child

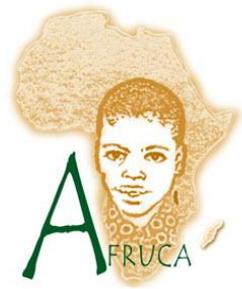


Children have the right to be protected from “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”. They must be given proper care and support by those looking after them.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
Article 19

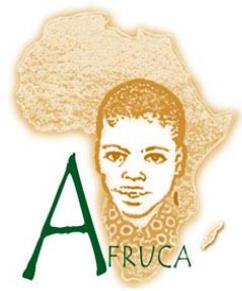
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Workshop Outcomes



By the end of the workshop, participants would have:

- Gained new knowledge and understanding of how witchcraft branding and abuse are manifested through different belief systems and practices.
- Become more informed about the risk factors and indicators of abuse linked to faith or belief
- Gained new understanding of the short and long term devastating effect of branding children as witches or possessed by evil spirits AFRUCA
- Better equipped with useful tips on how to engage with and support children victims of witchcraft branding.

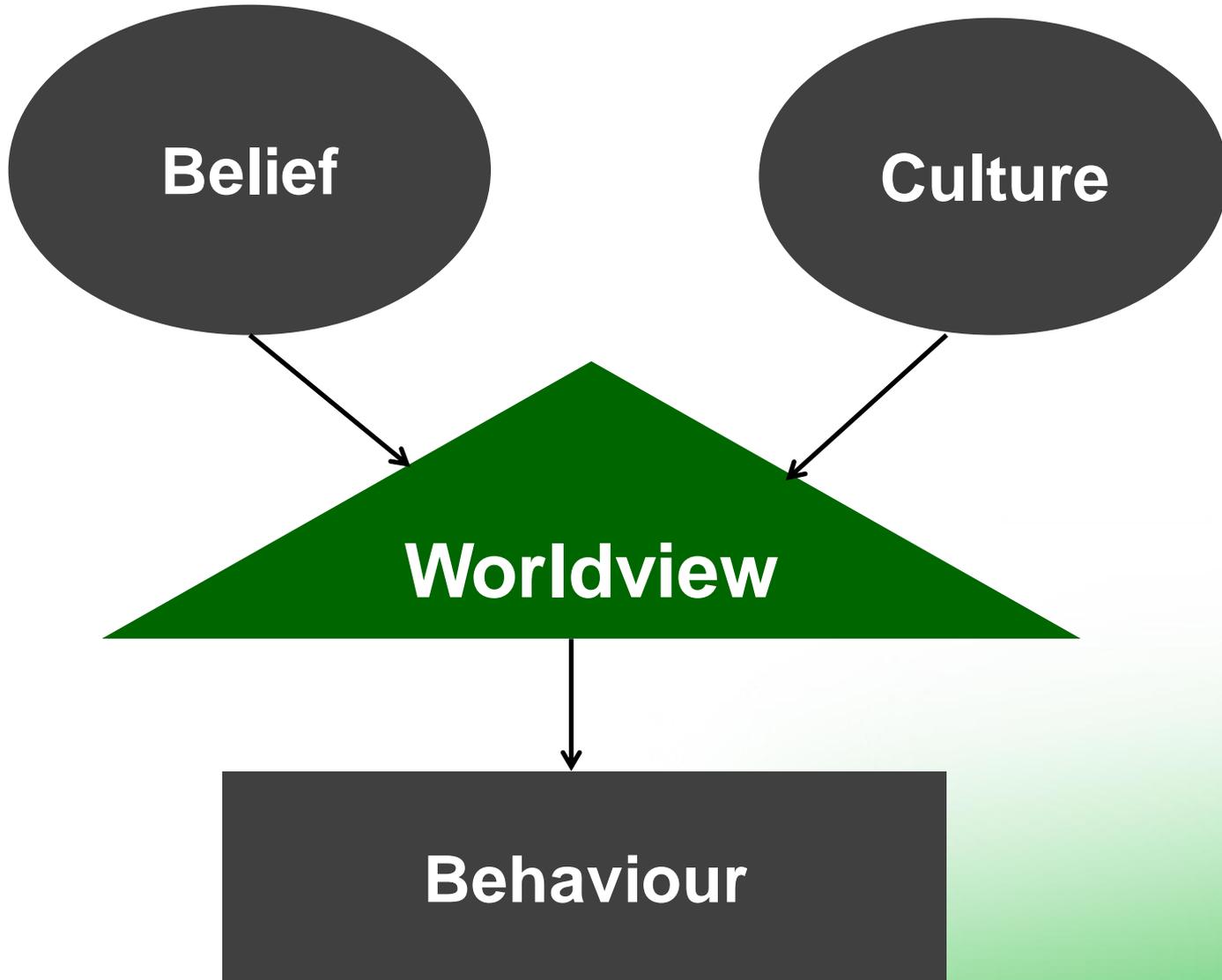
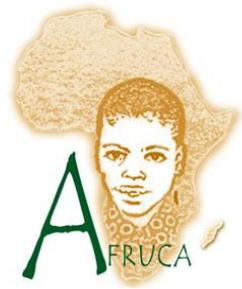


What are Beliefs?

Beliefs are shared ideas people hold collectively within a given culture; and these beliefs are also the basis for many of the culture's norms and values. Some beliefs are so strongly held that people find it difficult to cope with ideas that contradict their beliefs.

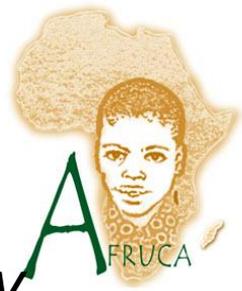
Andersen and Taylor (2006)

Belief and Behaviour



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What is Witchcraft ?



Witchcraft: *“the exercise or invocation of alleged supernatural powers to control people or events, typically involving sorcery or magic”.*

Spirit possession: the takeover of a person’s being, both mind and body, by an external non physical force called “spirit”. Can be good or bad.

Known by various names: Kindoki in the Congo, Djiin in Tanzania and North Africa, Azen in Benin, Aje in Yorubaland, Obeah in the West Indies.

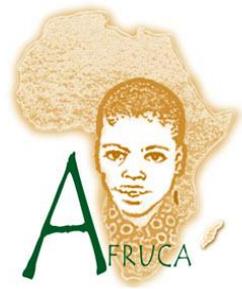
A witch: someone with alleged mystical power to harm others i.e. is an enemy of society.

Deliverance and Exorcism: expelling, or attempting to expel, one or more evil spirits.

Revocation: reversing the impact of a juju spell.

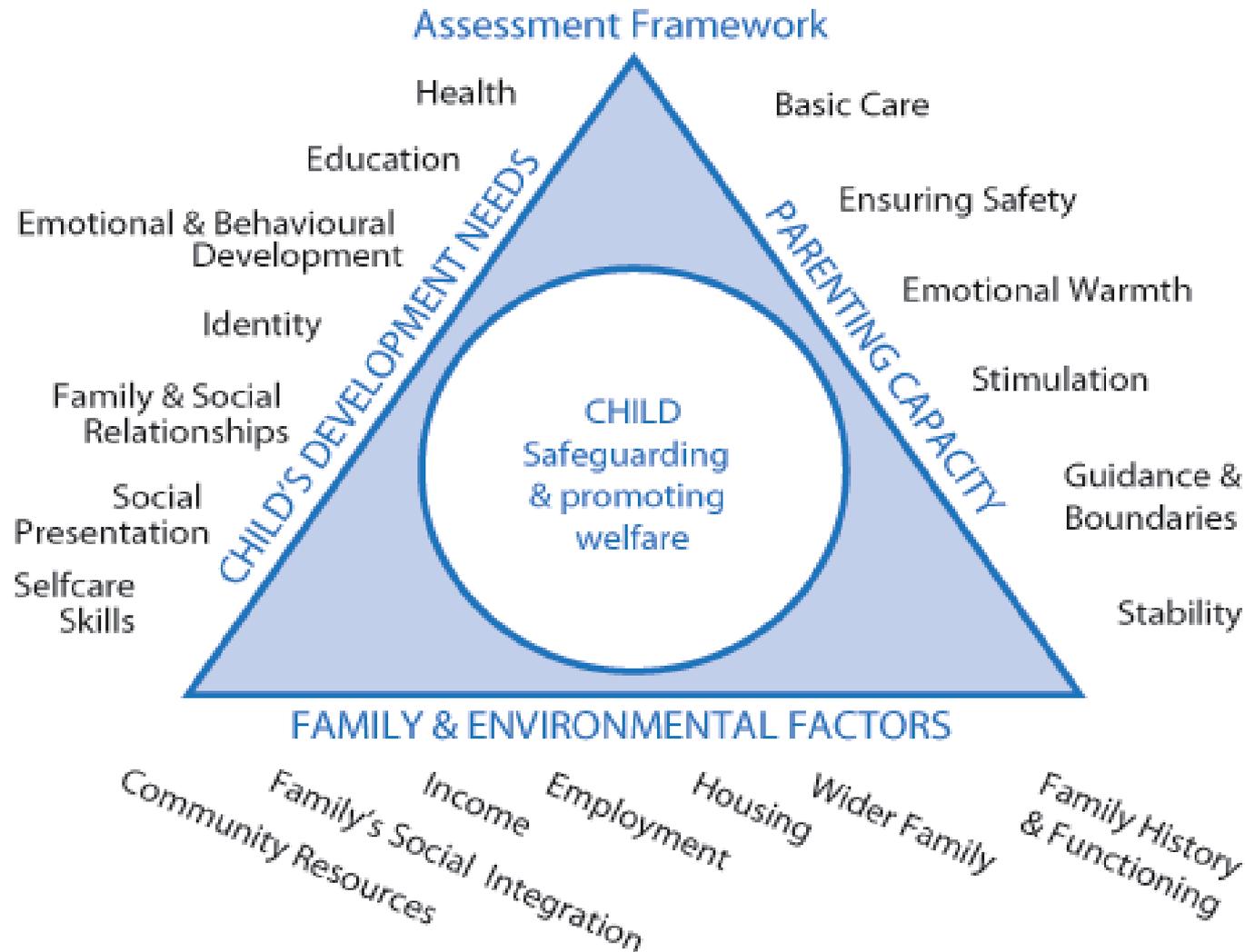
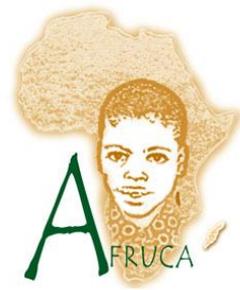
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Witchcraft: the Global context



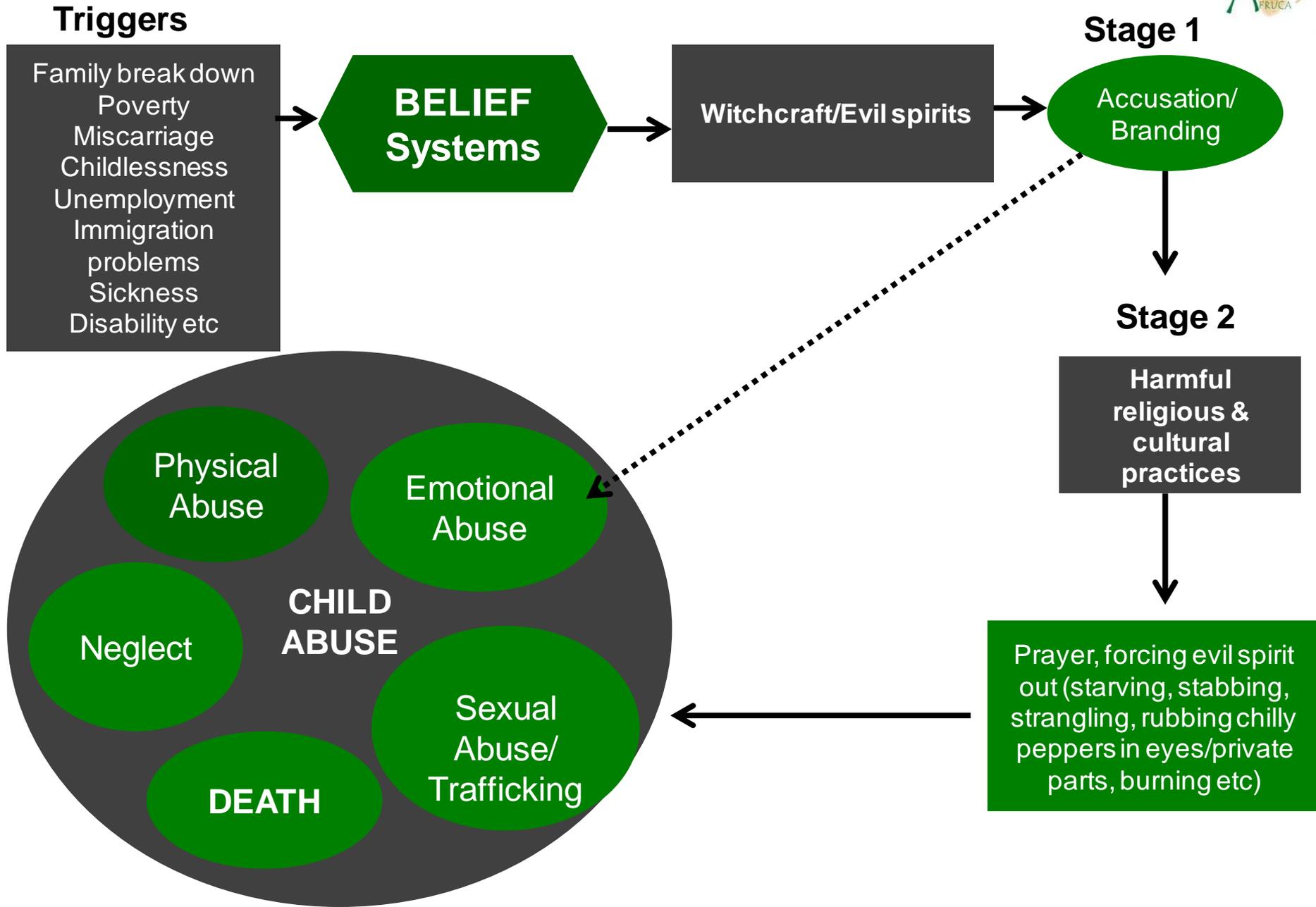
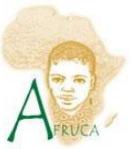
- Belief in witchcraft and spirit possession is not a new phenomenon and is not confined to any continent, country, culture, religion or community.
- In Europe and North America between 40,000- 60,000 executions of witches occurred from 1480 – 1750.
- Witches were thought to be the cause of famines, the plague, deaths, and all sorts of misfortunes.
- In the UK in Lancaster trials of the Pendle witches in 1612.
- In Africa: a belief that nothing happens without a supernatural intervention

Assessment Framework

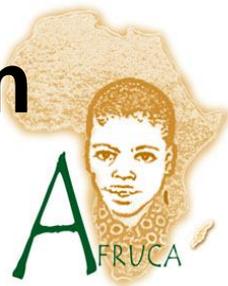


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Process of Witchcraft Abuse



Witchcraft Abuse and Significant Harm



Stage 1

EMOTIONAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE :accusation/branding

Stage 2

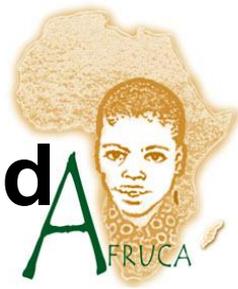
EMOTIONAL AND/OR PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE : isolation, for example, not allowing a child to eat or share a room with family members; telling a child they are evil or possessed

PHYSICAL ABUSE: beating, shaking, burning, cutting, stabbing, semi-strangulation, rubbing chilli peppers or other substances on the child's genitals or in the eyes, method of praying- could be physical, deliverance which is harmful

NEGLECT: in the form of failure to ensure appropriate medical care, supervision, regular school attendance, good hygiene, nourishment, clothing to keep the child warm

SEXUAL ABUSE: children abused in this way may be particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation; they feel powerless and worthless and feel they will not be believed if they tell someone about the abuse.

Indicators of children at risk of being branded as witches or being possessed



- Children with disabilities (physical or learning disabilities)
- Children that have nightmares
- Children that sleepwalk
- Children that bed wet
- Albinos or children with vitiligo
- Children living away from home (private fostering)
- Children living with a step parent or relatives
- Children whose parents have been branded as witches

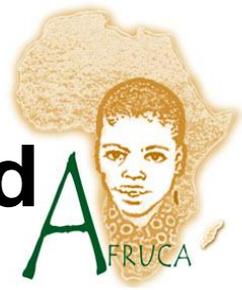


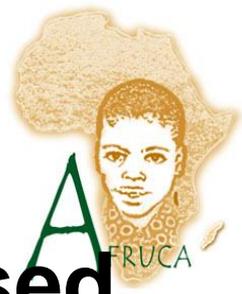
Child with vitiligo

Indicators of children at risk of being branded as witches or being possessed

(contd.)

- Children with challenging behaviour
- Precocious children and left handed children.
- Children who are living within a polygamous setting
- Children living in families affiliated with faith groups that strongly believe in witchcraft and in forceful forms of deliverance/exorcism.
- Children who have or are experiencing abuse in other ways
- Children in situations where there have been changes in the family dynamics.
- Children in environments where there is domestic violence.

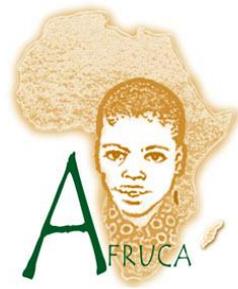




Indicators of children at risk of being branded as witches or being possessed (contd.)

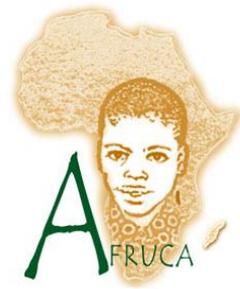
- Children living within family structures where determining exact relationships of the various actors in the child's life is difficult.
- Children living within families disillusioned with life or that have unfulfilled expectations.
- Children living with families where there are concerns over the mental health of the carers.

Indicators of Children who are affected by witchcraft abuse



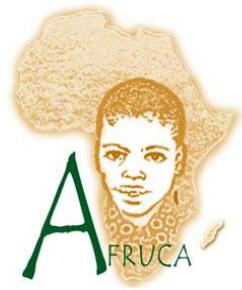
- A child's body showing signs of physical abuse such as marks, bruises or burns.
- A change in a child's demeanour e.g. becoming confused, withdrawn, disoriented or feeling isolated, etc.
- Deterioration in a child's personal care and well-being, e.g. loss of weight, always hungry, looking unkempt, poor attendance or withdrawal from school.
- Parent or carer not having a close bond with the child.
- Deterioration in a child's performance at school.
- A child reporting that they are or have been accused of being 'evil' or a witch.

Indicators of Carers who brand children as witches and abuse them.



- Has poor attachment or a weak bond with the child (e.g. Victoria Climbié).
- Perceives the child as “bad”, “different” or “evil” or frequently complains about the child(Child B).
- Has a strong belief in witchcraft or evil spirits(Kristy Bamu).
- Is linked to a place of worship known to perform abusive deliverance/exorcisms.
- Persistently avoids routine child services and treatment.

AFRUCA's Work against branding children as witches



Key issues.

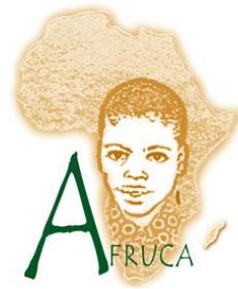
- I. Accusations of witchcraft and spirit possession can have a devastating psychological impact on children and families and can lead to ostracisation of a family. It is emotional abuse before other forms of abuse take place i.e. physical abuse and neglect and obviously put the victim at risk of sexual abuse.
- II. Lack of a holistic service package which addresses the mental health, faith and social needs of victims .
- III. A gap in knowledge among some professionals about witchcraft branding and its impact.

AFRUCA's Work Against Witchcraft Branding



- **Policy and Advocacy:** to influence policy and practice; Campaigning: call for regulatory action to better protect children at risk or victims of faith based abuse.
- **Specialist training courses** for frontline staff on African cultural and religious practices and provision of expert advice on cases
- **Child Protection Training and Family Support Services.**
- **Working with Faith Groups** in Yorkshire & Greater Manchester.
- **Production/dissemination of education material i.e.** Production of a manual on “What is Witchcraft Abuse?.”
- **Dove Project:** supporting children and families affected by abuse linked to faith or belief

Supporting Children and Families affected by Abuse linked to faith or belief



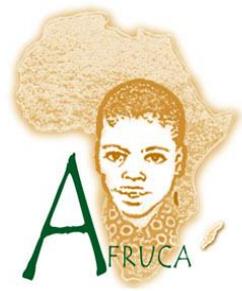
-Key elements-

1. Team Around the Child

- ✓ CAMHS practitioner
- ✓ Social Worker
- ✓ Afruca project coordinator,
- ✓ A faith and/or community mediator as need arises

2. Reflective Process:

- i. Social worker (SW) has concern
- ii. SW contacts Dove project and fills Dove Project referral form
- iii. TAC Meeting
- iv. TAC draws plan of Action
- v. AFRUCA staff facilitates implementation of action plan.



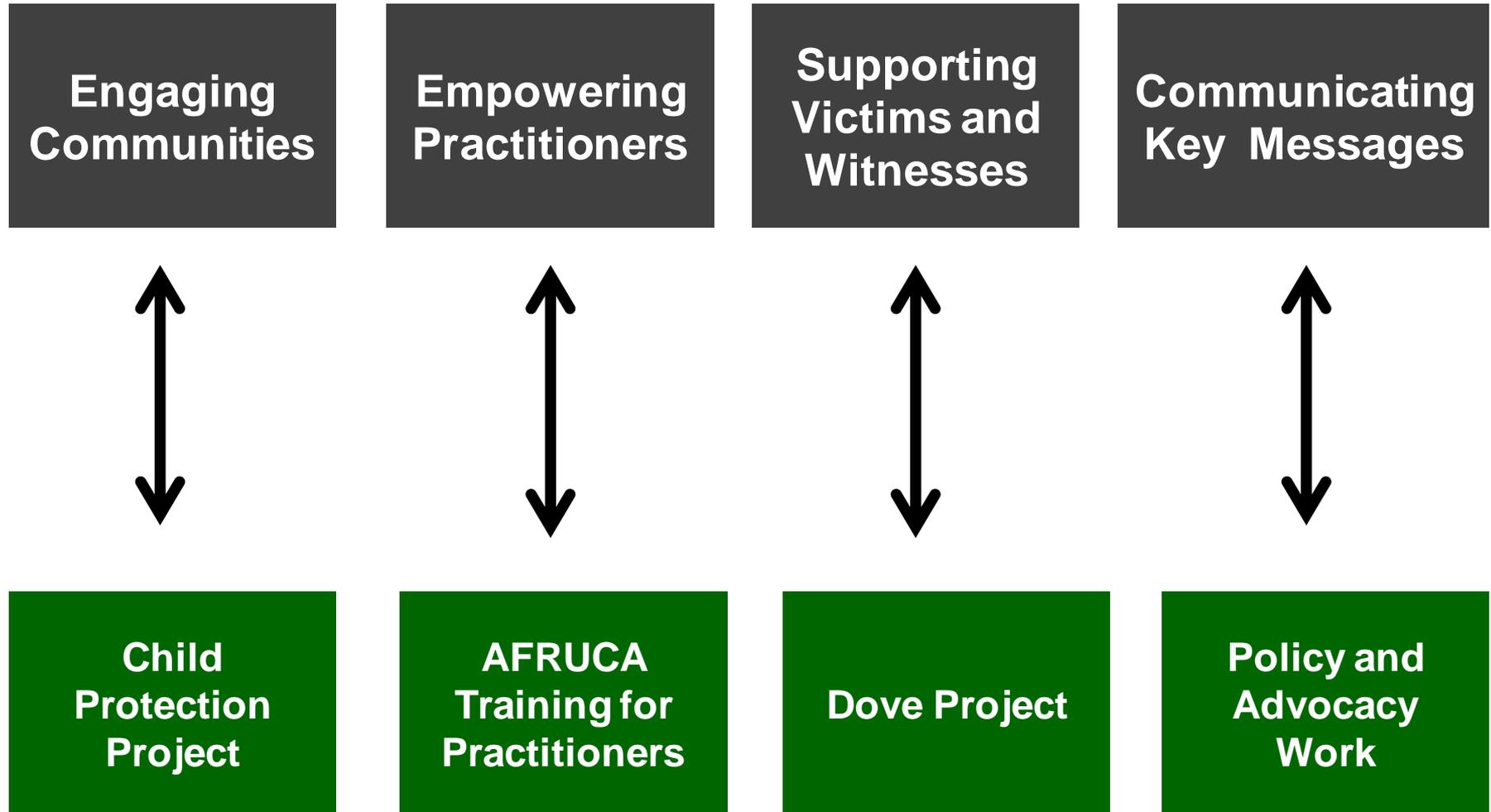
Supporting Children and Families affected by Abuse linked to Faith or Belief (contd)

Key elements (contd)

3. Awareness raising

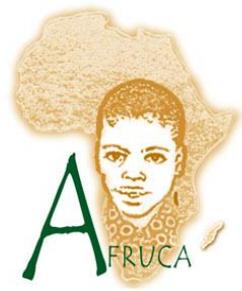
- What is witchcraft branding
- Children at risk
- Indicators of witchcraft abuse
- Supporting victims

National Action Plan to tackle child abuse linked to Faith or Belief



AFRUCA's link to the National Action Plan

Practitioners Response and Duty to safeguard children from witchcraft abuse/branding

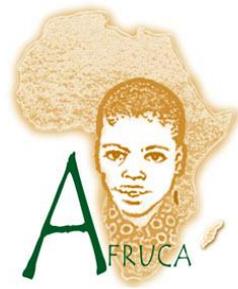


- Believe the Child. Understand that calling a child as a witch can be emotionally traumatising
- Talk to the child away from adults.
- Do not be afraid to challenge child abuse no matter what culture or belief system the child comes from.
- Information sharing between professionals and agencies is important in child safeguarding.
- Seek help from bonafide organisations like AFRUCA.

Africans Unite Against Child Abuse

AFRUCA

Africans Unite Against Child Abuse



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