

LAUNCHING A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

A community of practice, is a term coined by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave, has been defined, in the article 'Communities of Practice', simply as a

'...[group] of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (Wenger, 2006, p1).

There are three characteristics which make up a community of practice: domain, community and practice. The domain is the common interest and activity that unites the different people that make up the community. The community is the development of those relationships through effective communication. The practice is the desired result of the community coming together to share ideas and experiences based on their mutual concern. When each of these elements exists, we have a community of practice.

Our coming together today should result in a community of practice on the street child, if we each actively strive to learn from each other.

AGREEMENT OF BEST PRACTICES

It should therefore be our desire to complete the day with agreement of best practices to implement in our various areas of work. For this outcome to be derived, the day's activities must be purposefully coordinated. We therefore encourage as much consultation and communication prior to the day as possible, so that when we come together, our time and resources will be effectively spent.

To consider best practices, you will need to reflect on your work, and the usual approaches you have adopted to common issues. Are they reactive or proactive, defensive or preventative, evidenced-based or emotionally driven... This honest reflection will enable each of us to come ready to share our experiences and challenges and make recommendations for best practices.



It is just as important to get the children's views... They can inform our practice

FAIR LIFE AFRICA FOUNDATION AT KURAMO BEACH

IDENTIFYING ISSUES AND CONCRETE SOLUTIONS

While a best practice model guides us on how to approach and deal with common situations in everyday practice, there is a need to locate the underlying issues and find solutions collectively. Someone once said, 'the first step to solving a problem is admitting that there is one'. I think the second would be in identifying where the problem is located, and dealing with the root (cause) and not the branches (evidence) of the problem.

The third outcome for the Street Child Awareness Seminar is therefore the identifying and resolution of issues. Through group work, participants from various organizations will discuss a specified subject area and its related topics, with the aim of presenting concrete solutions to the gathering. There will be responsibilities and duties for specific organizations or governmental institutions. There will be a need for creating awareness among the general public. There will also be a need to draft and implement a communiqué for professionals.

STREET CHILD AWARENESS SEMINAR

DISCUSSIONS ON THE CHILD

SERIES ONE

10/05/2011

THE CHILD

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, REDEMPTION OF CHILDHOOD, SURROGATE PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Looking at the destitute child on the street, hungry and rejected, you would never guess that he had rights! But in fact, not only does he have human rights (his most basic rights for existence), he also has citizenship rights (his social passport). However, even more essential are his **rights as a child**, which caters to his very condition of vulnerability! Yet, not only is he deprived of enjoying any of those rights, the poor child is abused, maltreated, exploited, victimized, demonized and held responsible for his condition...without a jury or a even an advocate to defend his cause. That is not right!

There are few who defend the rights of the child, and many who would like to point out their inferior perception of the child. These are often in the form of limitations; not to make decisions, to be told what to do and believe, and to accept whatever is dished out to them. The essence of **childhood** is that it is a vulnerable period in every human being's life, when they are growing into their own (mind, body and soul), prone to influence, and in need of nurture and protection. This is a time when they are supposed to learn from their mistakes, be free to play and explore the world, have unbridled hope and be empowered to reach every potential...should they dream it!

“...not only is he deprived of enjoying any of those rights, the poor child is abused...exploited, victimized, demonized and held responsible for his condition...without a jury...”



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THE CHILD ON THE STREETS IS A CHILD INDEED.

Children who are living and working on the streets are not out looking for fun, as we are often told to believe. They are children who have been denied a childhood in the home, and may have even been denied basic human rights, and been abused or neglected by those who were supposed to nurture and protect them. There is no child who would flee a loving home to live on the streets, where they will be treated as the scum of the earth or even as criminals. When a child runs away, it is often because he or she has no idea what awaits them and they are desperate to leave a bad situation. It is testament to how bad the home is, when a child victimized and abused on the street, still refuses to return home. The problem begins at home, and must be resolved from the home.

When the home has failed, due to family breakdown, death or poverty, it falls upon society to produce **surrogate parents and teachers** for the displaced children. In Nigerian society, there is a great dependence on the extended family, and a trust that the child will be well cared for by blood relatives. Unfortunately, this isn't so. Often the children on the streets have been through several family members before giving up on the home altogether.

It is therefore important to consider any alternative to the home that the child is offered, as this too may be rejected. It is often rejected because of a lack of genuine love and affection, understanding of the child's needs, wishes and interests, tolerance for the child's developmental stage, ignorance about the child's experiences and incompetence (lack of skill with children or even basic people skills). Hence, there is a great need to train and educate all care givers and guardians.

THREE KEY POINTS

- **Children have rights.** They have additional rights because they are vulnerable and in need of protection and guidance. These include the right to be heard, and have their wishes taken into account, and the right to play and recreation - because that is what children do.
- **Street children have lost their childhood.** They have had their fundamental rights denied, and every day on the streets, they suffer more harm to their humanity. The first thing caring organizations need to do when working with children is to recognize the need to redeem their childhood, rather than to correct their behavior, which is likened to dressing up a burnt cake.
- **Street children need caring guardians.** Surrogate means to 'stand-in'. A surrogate parent fills the shoes of the real parent by giving genuine care, showing unconditional positive regard, and ensuring that they promote the best interests of the child at all times. These responsibilities must not be taken lightly, for the end result of good nurturing is a gift to society – a well-balanced adult.

STREET CHILD AWARENESS SEMINAR

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH NIGERIA NETWORK OF NGOS

A Multi-Agency Forum to Discuss and Strategize on a Deep-Rooted Phenomenon

Thanks to our sponsors

(Individual sponsors include Mrs Orehime Iwuagwu, Mr Adefemi Adelekan, Mrs Folaseto Akin-Olugbade)



WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT...

The street child phenomenon is not peculiar to Nigeria, neither to Africa alone. It is a global problem, and every society where it rears its awful head must strategically, and unrelentingly, oppose it. This can only happen when all stakeholders and concerned citizens recognize that there is a problem, and resolve to commit their efforts and resources to eliminating it.

FAIR LIFE AFRICA FOUNDATION

www.fairlifeafrica.org

CONTACT US

2 Gbara Close, Off Maiyegun Beach Road, Lekki, Lagos |
08058711125 | cccinitiative@gmail.com |
www.fairlifeafrica.org

FAIR LIFE AFRICA OBJECTIVES

- To enrich the lives of the most impoverished in society;
- To support and empower the most vulnerable members of society, enabling them to live a fair life;
- To effect positive changes in their lives through social initiatives and programs.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING
PART IN THIS EVENT TO
COLLABORATE FOR
CHANGE**

**Please leave feedback and keep in
touch!**