



CHILDREN'S RESOURCES with guest presenter:
Dr. Miranda Forsyth of the Australia National University

IN RELATION TO FOOD INSECURITY with presenters:
Stephanie Mooney of Amplifying Voices
Rev. Jean-Paul Aruna of Laissez Vivre les Enfants
Karalyn Hingston of Food Plant Solutions

SCWA Coalition

Multi-Agency Forum online Oct 2022

Edition: February 2023 (English)

Our Forum

The SCWA Coalition host the multi-agency forum to provide an opportunity to connect and explore diverse facets of the issues of child abuse linked to faith and belief, and specifically that of accusations of witchcraft made against children

Agencies, organisations, and individuals who are working with these issues are welcome to join, and to contribute experiences and insights.

Each forum focuses on a different aspect of this issue. We invite professionals with relevant expertise to help explore these in some depth. Our key emphases are:

- improving insights into the complex dynamics behind child witch accusations; and
- providing practical positive interventions to improve the lives of children affected.

And so, we seek to help their families and communities become safe places for children.

Our Topics and Speakers

CHILDREN'S RESOURCES

Dr. Miranda Forsyth of the Australia National University is a researcher professor working in Papua New Guinea with a team seeking to address Sorcery Accusation Related Violence.



IN RELATION TO FOOD INSECURITY



Stephanie Mooney
of Amplifying Voices
is a member of the
SCWA Coalition
Steering Committee.



Rev. Jean-Paul Aruna
of Laissez Vivre les Enfants
works in the D.R. Congo
to educate communities
and safeguard children.



Karalyn Hingston
of Food Plant Solutions
works in many nations
to enhance food security
with use of local plants.

Topic 1 – CHILDREN'S RESOURCES

Focus and areas for dialogue:

- to address the inter-generational transfer of harmful attitudes and practices, which leads to the perpetuation of child witch accusations; and
- to empower and equip children with understanding of the issue so that they can be positive agents of change

Presentation:

We began with a presentation by **Dr. Miranda Forsyth** of the Australia National University (ANU), who has been working with a team in Papua New Guinea (PNG) to address what they refer to as Sorcery Accusation Related Violence (SARV):

- <https://www.stopsorceryviolence.org/>

One of her colleagues, a Lutheran missionary called **Anton Lutz**, was struck by how children treated SARV as 'normal'. He created a book called "Peter and Grace Make a Difference" to enable children to examine accusations and the beliefs around them more critically, with a view to challenging them and preventing the inter-generational perpetuation of the problem. The book has been beautifully illustrated by a local artist. A teacher's handbook was created to help teachers to use the book as effectively as possible in schools, and there are also posters and a colouring book to go with the resource. These can all be found online here:

- <https://www.stopsorceryviolence.org/peter-and-grace-make-a-difference/>

The book was then made into a short film, involving local children not just as actors but in the creative process. The film has had over 50,000 views and can be watched here:

- <https://youtu.be/hcvuFNfZm50>

These resources have been effective in promoting conversation and reflection, and in encouraging adults and children to think more critically about accusations and about witchcraft as an explanation for sickness, misfortune and death.

The team there are asking the PNG government to distribute hard copies of the book and handbook for use in schools. There is not much impact data yet, although early discussions around the film have indicated that this is an effective way to engage.

If after looking at the resources you have further questions or feedback, or if you are in a position to share similar children's resources with the PNG team, please contact Dr Forsyth as she is very keen to share ideas.

- Dr. Miranda Forsyth « miranda.forsyth@anu.edu.uk »

Discussion:

We looked at some sample pages from the resource and discussed the parallels with the approach used in SCWA's adult training course "The Heart of the Matter", particularly the "How do you know?" exercise in Module 2 Activity 2.

SCWA's "The Heart of the Matter" course can be found here:

- <https://stop-cwa.org/resources/45>

We then moved on to discussion about children's resources more broadly, and ideas about how to make them as effective as possible.

- Do you have examples of children's resources that are effective (on any issue)? If so, please could you share them with us? Thank you.

Responses to the PNG resource were all extremely positive. Particularly noted was the inclusion and involvement of the youth and children themselves in creating the film. Naturally, this already began to engage them and prompt conversations around the topic.

Experiences of other resources

Two other resources were mentioned:

- **Touch Talk** (published by Tehila in Zambia): a very effective resource. Simple, linked to child protection policy and process, so that children know what to do and where to go if they are being groomed or abused. It works well in combination with other resources, like SCWA's "The Heart of the Matter". It is important to use the children's resource with adults too so that the training is comprehensive. The idea ensures that not just adults are trained in child protection, otherwise children are left behind and do not know what to do to protect themselves. Inclusion of children in such training empowers them directly. "Touch Talk" is easily understood and readily communicated to others in the community.
- **Safe Environments for Children** (published by Viva): this child protection resource has children's exercises and activities in it. However, it is important to think about simplicity and ease of presentation and use.

What is distinctive about children's resources?

- Simplicity, not particularly of the message, but of the way it is presented.
- Use of pictures and colour to engage the audience.
- Animated cartoons are often more effective than books in connecting with children. They are more readily absorbed by children, especially when they aim to counter a negative (harmful) belief or practice that has become accepted as normal.

How can we use children's resources effectively?

- We need to normalise positive truths about children. The challenge is to address harmful beliefs (that have become normalised) by promoting and normalising more positive attitudes and practices. We must ask ourselves how to connect with children

in such a way that we make normal the beliefs and practices that are positive, not the ones that are negative.

- We observe here a principle (used in The Pavement Project resource, for those familiar with it) which has echoes in the PNG resource, which is to present characters in the story in such a way that children can project themselves with their own thoughts and feelings onto the characters shown. More than empathy, this makes it possible for children to recognise and identify so closely with the characters that they make the experience of the characters their own.
- Need to inspire confidence in facilitators so that they can deliver the content. This requires clear guiding instructions to facilitator, and also allowing time and space for conversation, interaction, and for children to express their views too.
- We commented on the need for resources for churches, schools, and other contexts. For example: **The Heart of the Matter** was designed with church leaders and members in mind, but has also been used effectively with schools, churches, community leaders, the police, local authorities, and health workers.
– « <https://stop-cwa.org/resources/45> »
- Noted that Nollywood is a powerful influence, and many films promote and reinforce the negative stereotypes and false narratives which drive accusations of witchcraft against children. We need counter-cultural films to address the issue and to overturn the narrative that children are witches and agents for harm. It doesn't have to be big budget productions.
- We need a positive image of children in the media (film, advertising, and so on), as this would change attitude faster. Actively seeking to engage and connect with Christian film-makers or animators who could be engaged around this issue would be helpful. We can begin with simple steps.
- SCWA and Amplifying Voices does We do have a short film available in Lingala. We would welcome further thoughts about how this film could be adapted for other contexts, including Nigeria.
- – « <https://amplifyingvoices.uk/2019-4-16-i-am-not-a-witch> »

As you look through these resources, please feed back to us any ideas you may have.

Please also share with us any other children's resources you may have encountered.

Topic 2 – IN RELATION TO FOOD INSECURITY

Focus and areas for dialogue:

- to explore the link between food insecurity and witchcraft accusations; and
- to identify and access possible tools for addressing food insecurity in the medium and long term: including **Let's Grow!** resource from the Bethany Children's Trust, and the **Food Plant Solutions** resources on nutritious indigenous plants and partnerships (all specific to particular countries or regions).

Presentations:

1. **Stephanie Mooney** introduced the topic and shared a report by UK Aid authored by Olivia Jenkins and Eunice Agbenyadzi and published in May 2022, which gives some evidence of reported accusations in D.R.Congo and Tanzania, together with anecdotal evidence from our collaborators. This appears to be an underreported issue, so the actual situation is undoubtedly worse, as children are blamed for times of hardship and they are vulnerable when there is competition for limited food resources.

- The UK Aid report is accessible here:
 - <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/search/node?keys=report+81>

There are no speedy solutions. Raising the profile of child witch accusations, particularly through the media, and holding discussion groups can be helpful. Providing support for families under strain is also important. This encourages people to have their eyes and ears open to spot cases where children are being accused.

Radio drama can be very effective. Amplifying Voices is updating and putting into Kiswahili a radio drama and podcasts to use as conversation starters and to encourage people to critically reflect on normalised behaviours. Child witch accusations are both hidden and normalised, so they are not recognised as abusive. So, raising awareness can help to change this and to give people confidence and courage to act.

2. **Rev. Jean-Paul Aruna** presented an introduction to the training resource "Let's Grow!" which can be downloaded free of charge from the Bethany Children's Trust website following a simple one-off registration process.

- <https://www.bethanychildrenstrust.org.uk/resources>

Rev. Aruna described the impact of extreme poverty and food insecurity. This results in suspicion of supernatural forces at work, and this is expressed in the form of witchcraft accusations. Let's Grow! helps communities and individual families to grow their own nutritious food. It has been well received by communities and individuals. It has immediately resulted in dozens of individual gardens and more than a dozen community gardens.

"It is a strong and powerful tool which touches communities directly and promotes food security."

3. **Karalyn Hingston** of Food Plant Solutions then presented their educational resources. Their focus is on a community's natural heritage: their local food plants. These are often very high

in nutrients and adapted to the local environment and more resistant to disease and pest pressures. The resources describe what local plants are available and how to use them.

Food Plant Solutions also provides technical info, posters, and brochures. They also work in partnership with local organisations to use local expertise. They are a resource for in-country providers. Empowerment of local communities is fundamental to their approach.

Food Plant Solutions educational resources can be found here:

- <https://foodplantsolutions.org/programs/>

If you have particular questions or suggestions, Karalyn can be contacted directly here:

- Karalyn Hingston « info@foodplantsolutions.org »

Carolyn Gent,
Chair, SCWA Coalition Steering Committee.

Connecting with SCWA

This paper is published by the SCWA Coalition.

Further papers, research, and resources can be accessed via our online resource hub:

- stop-cwa.org/resources

If you have experience and expertise on this issue and wish to connect or collaborate with us, or if you wish to receive an invitation to attend future events, please get in touch via « forum@stop-cwa.org » giving your contact details.

Thank you.