



Press Release Saving Africa's Witch Children Awarded BAFTA

The Channel 4 'Dispatches' film - Saving Africa's Witch Children – that featured the work of the UK registered charity, Stepping Stones Nigeria has won the prestigious BAFTA* award at this year's ceremony in London, which was held at the Royal Festival Hall on 26th April.

The film featured graphic coverage of children being horrifically abused due to the belief that they are 'witches' in Akwa Ibom State in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. It's broadcast caused widespread international outrage and led to the Akwa Ibom State Government enacting the Child Right's Act, outlawing the stigmatisation of children as 'witches' and arresting a number of pastors known to be profiting from falsely stigmatising children as 'witches'.

Speaking after the award ceremony, the Stepping Stones Nigeria Programme Director, Gary Foxcroft, expressed his view that the people who deserved the award most were in fact the members of the organisations – the Child Rights and Rehabilitation Network (CRARN) and Stepping Stones Nigeria Child Empowerment Foundation (SSNCEF) – that work tirelessly to provide support and hope to children stigmatised as 'witches' in Nigeria. "Inspiring individuals such as Sam Ikpe-Itauma, Lucky Imoh Inyang and their staff are the real heroes and the ones who truly deserve the award. The Akwa Ibom State Government also deserve credit for the positive interventions that they have made since the film was broadcast", said Gary. "However, the fact remains that the vast majority of people in Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a whole believe that children can be 'witches' and until this changes then abuse of children's rights due to this belief are always likely to take place", he further stated.

Despite the success of the film and the impact that it has made a significant number of people still wish to discredit it and question its authenticity. Stepping Stones Nigeria believes that these accusations further highlight the depth of the belief in witchcraft that still exists, not only in Nigeria but also in the UK, and calls for a widespread public awareness campaign to be initiated in order to counter such superstitious beliefs.**

* See - www.bafta.org/awards/television/tv-awards-winners-in-2009,108,GAL.html

** Stepping Stones Nigeria and Mboho Akwa Ibom State (UK & Ireland) will be holding the Child First Conference: Preventing Abuse of the Nigerian Child Today at the Brunei Gallery in London on 30th May.

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