



ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (AACC) CONFERENCE DES EGLISES DE TOUTE L'AFRIQUE (CETA)

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31st March, 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

RE: ENCOURAGEMENT TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) brings greetings of peace in the midst of much anxiety and unrest due to COVID-19. In these days of concern about global health, we must not forget children, but rather create a safe world for them. In 2019, the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), published the findings of the “Out of the Shadows” index to help to end sexual violence against children. Sexual violence against children encompasses both child physical sexual abuse like rape and non-contact sexual abuse such as exposure to sexual language and images. The index has revealed that child sexual abuse and exploitation are universal problems that affect every country, regardless of social-economic status. With support from Ignite Philanthropy, AACC and WCC carried out workshops organized by the National Councils of Churches in two focus countries (Nigeria and Tanzania) with the following objectives:

- Nurturing of ‘champions’ from churches with potential for action in collaboration with the national action plan and UNICEF
- Analyse what the “Out of the Shadows” data expresses, to urge for an effective response to these finding at the government level and support actions in culturally sensitive ways to achieve results through churches and inter-religious partners where appropriate
- Adaptation of church-sensitive advocacy, posters and stickers with helpline toll-free numbers, to be made available and disseminated throughout congregations through participants.

Since then, a leaflet has been developed which churches in Africa can use to raise awareness about the “Out of the Shadows Index” in churches. Churches are free to *adapt* the leaflet or *develop their own*, and offer helpline numbers which their members can use to report cases of child abuse. They can do this in collaboration with their governments and other organizations dealing with children.

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PRESIDENT: Rt. Rev. Arnold C. Temple • **GENERAL SECRETARY:** Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki

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The risk of child abuse is likely to increase during this period when children are out of school and are confined in homes to minimise the risks of COVID-19. Churches are well placed to raise awareness of threats of child sexual abuse, put in place preventive measures, and support victims, especially among the most vulnerable, now and beyond the current situation. It is for this reason that we are sharing the following resources to help churches protect children against physical and emotionally traumatizing abuse:

- A **leaflet** with key findings from the “Out of the Shadows” Index and the role of the church to end child sexual abuse (*see attached*)
- A **link** which individual countries can call for help if a child is abused or under threat. Churches are encouraged to raise awareness about these national child helplines, for which the numbers can be found here: <https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/child-helplines/child-helpline-network/>.
- **UNICEF updates** on COVID-19 to Civil Society Partners-*see attached*. Please continue to visit the UNICEF website for updated information about COVID-19

We encourage you to use these resources in your churches to supplement what you already have. As spiritual leaders, you are best placed to lead this initiative. We can all work together to end sexual violence against children. In this we continue the work of the Lord himself to safeguard children and heal the wounded.

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki
General Secretary
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