



A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

Understanding accusations of child witchcraft



Why use this activity?

- To introduce the topic of the abuse of children and the part played by accusations of witchcraft made against children (Part 1)
- To identify some supposed signs which lead to accusations of witchcraft against children (Part 2)
- To gain a better understanding of normal child development, and the effects of trauma on development, and to see that the supposed signs which lead to accusations of witchcraft are in fact part of normal child development, particularly if the child has suffered from abuse or trauma (Part 3)

Preparation: guidance for a facilitator

Please read **Tool A1: Revealing the harm caused by witchcraft allegations against children** before using this activity. We also suggest that you carry out **Tool A2 - How did Jesus respond to children?** before carrying out this activity.



A brief description

This activity includes three parts. Parts 1 and 2 contain discussion questions. In Part 3, the group builds a 'wall' (using pieces of paper as bricks), to explore child development, and the impact of neglect, abuse and trauma on a child's development and behaviour.



You will need

- Paper and pens
- A few large pieces of paper
- 'Bricks' (pieces of paper with words written on them) for Step 3. See the end of the tool for the words you will need to write on paper in advance.



Time taken

2-3 hours

Awareness-raising

Children & youth

Climate & environment

Conflict & peace-building

Corruption & governance

Disaster risk management

Discrimination & inclusion

Food & livelihoods

Gender & sexual violence

Health & HIV

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Migration & trafficking

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What to do

Part 1: Are children accused of witchcraft in our community?

- Divide the participants into smaller groups.
- Explain that children today are not all treated in the way that Jesus treated them. Refer back to **Tool A2 - How did Jesus respond to children?** if you have carried out this activity. Ask the groups to discuss the following question:
 - What types of problems do children in our communities face, which put them at risk?
- Ask a representative from each small group to share their answers with the whole group. Answers may include poverty, lack of schooling, lack of clean water, etc. Write the answers onto a large piece of paper.
- Then ask the questions:
 - What sorts of abuse are experienced by children living in our community?
 - Why?

You may need to explain the word 'abuse'. Abuse refers to actions that risk, or result in, harm, injury or death to children. Abuse is often carried out by an adult or older child who has responsibility for, or is in a position of trust or power over, the child. Abuse can be committed in different ways: physically, sexually, emotionally and spiritually.
- Allow time for the small groups to discuss the questions, and then ask a representative from each group to share their answers with the larger group.
- Now ask the group:
 - Are children being cast out of their homes and families?
 - If so, why?

Again, allow the small groups to discuss amongst themselves first, before sharing with the larger group. Accusations of witchcraft may be among the answers that are given. If no one has mentioned it, ask whether it is something that happens in the community. Ensure that you speak of it as "accusations of witchcraft against children" - and not "child witches", or "witchcraft", etc.
- If the discussion has shown that accusations of witchcraft against children do happen within the community, move onto Parts 2 and 3.

Part 2: What are the supposed signs which lead to accusations of witchcraft made against children?

- Ask the small groups to discuss:
 - What supposed signs are used to justify an accusation of witchcraft made against a child?

A2 UNDERSTANDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD WITCHCRAFT

- Allow time for the small groups to discuss, and then ask people to share their answers with the larger group. Write the answers onto a large piece of paper. The answers may include: bedwetting, a physical disability, a learning disability, bad behaviour, disobedience, temper tantrums, etc. Explain that we will look at whether these so-called signs (which lead to suspicions of witchcraft and accusations against children) are trustworthy, and whether we can rely on them.

Part 3: Understanding child development

- This activity focuses on some of the impacts of abuse and neglect on child development. It doesn't look at disability (sometimes used as a reason to accuse a child of witchcraft). To understand more about disability, please read **Tool A1: Revealing stigma towards people with disabilities**.
- Explain that we are going to examine some fundamental needs which children have in order to ensure their full development. This includes their physical development, but also mental, emotional, social and spiritual aspects.
- Divide the participants into four groups. Each group is given the paper 'bricks' which represent the things a child needs at a particular age (0-2 years, 3-6 years, 7-11 years, 12-18 years).
- Ask the members of each group to read the words on each 'brick' representing the child's needs at that age for healthy, complete development. Start with the group which represents 0-2 year olds, then the group for 3-6 years, then 7-11 years and finally 12-18 years.
- Then ask the groups to build a 'wall' by sticking up each paper 'brick' next to the age range indicated. Start with the group representing the age group 0-2, then the group for 3-6, then 7-11, then 12-18. You could stick the paper onto a wall, or you could lay the paper bricks flat on the floor, The wall could look like this:

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A2 UNDERSTANDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD WITCHCRAFT

| | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Awareness-raising | Children & Youth | 12 - 18 yrs adolescence | friends | education | private life | spiritual help and prayer | love | direction, guidance |
| | | | acceptance, affirmation | food and clean water | independence, responsibility | shelter | limits and boundaries | discipline |
| Climate & environment | | 7 - 11 yrs childhood | prayer | affirmation, acceptance | protection, security | spiritual nurture | love and care | education |
| Conflict & peace-building | | | discipline, boundaries | shelter | food and clean water | fun and play | friends | teaching, guidance |
| Corruption & governance | | 3 - 6 years young childhood | food and clean water | fun and play | discipline, boundaries | hugs and loving care | spiritual nurture | security, safety |
| Disaster risk management | | | friends | exploration | protection | shelter | acceptance, affirmation | stimulation |
| Discrimination & inclusion | | 0 - 2 years infancy | exercise | stimulation | protection and care | upholding child in prayer | play | company |
| Food & livelihoods | | | love | hugs | safety | milk, clean water | hygiene needs | food |

Note – this is simply one example of what the wall could look like.

- Encourage the group to spend a few minutes looking at the ‘wall’ and point out some of the needs mentioned. Explain that the ‘wall’ represents the life of a child who feels secure, and whose needs are being met.
- Asks the participants to imagine that the child lives in a household with parents who are negligent and violent. Which of the fundamental needs of the child that we see on our wall would not be met?
- Ask for volunteers from the participants to remove some bricks, explaining why they have chosen these particular bricks. More and more holes will appear on the wall. The underlying structure of the life of the child is becoming less secure. What will be the consequences of the absence of these bricks? The wall would eventually fall. The life of the child will be destroyed.

A2 UNDERSTANDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD WITCHCRAFT

- Ask the participants to imagine the consequences for a child who is neglected, mistreated or traumatised in this way. Write these consequences down onto a large piece of paper. The consequences might include:

Physical consequences:

- malnutrition
- delayed growth
- delayed development
- neglected appearance
- tendency to wet the bed
- headaches
- trouble sleeping
- loss of appetite and energy

Mental consequences:

- lack of schooling
- late intellectual development

Emotional consequences:

- increased aggression, fear and mistrust
- temper tantrums
- loss of confidence
- other signs of anxiety
- fear of being abandoned, isolated and rejected

Spiritual consequences:

- being deprived of their identity in Christ as a child who is precious and loved by God
- being crushed by the lie that they are not lovable, nor accepted nor important

Social consequences:

- withdrawal
- loss of the ability and the desire to form relationships
- mistrust of others, especially of adults

In this activity, we are looking at the impact of neglect and trauma on child development. However, it is important to emphasise that sometimes a child can display one or more of these signs without necessarily experiencing neglect or trauma. Sometimes, occurrences such as temper tantrums or bedwetting are just a normal phase of childhood development that children go through.

- You should now have two large pieces of paper: one with supposed signs of child witchcraft, and one with the consequences of neglect and trauma in a child's life. It is likely that all of the 'signs' are also in the list of consequences. Show the lists to the group.

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A2 UNDERSTANDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD WITCHCRAFT

- Explain that sometimes parents and other adults interpret the signs of negligence and abuse as signs that the child is 'witch'. Explain that sometimes, even children in loving secure homes display some of these behaviours!
- These behaviours which are often treated as 'signs' of witchcraft are in fact normal behaviours, especially (but not only) when a child has been traumatised. Because of this lack of understanding, the child is often accused of witchcraft and driven away.
- Ask the question: "Is this an appropriate response?" and emphasise the reply "No!" On the contrary, we should help the child, protect him, value him. The 'wall' of his life must be rebuilt by meeting his fundamental needs.
- Bring the activities to an end by praying with the group.



Notes

This activity is adapted from *The Heart of the Matter*, a 5-day training resource developed by the Stop Child Witchcraft Accusations Coalition - <https://stop-cwa.org>



Finding out more

- Stop Child Witch Accusations (2017) *Roots, realities and responses: lessons learnt in tackling witchcraft accusations against children* - <https://stop-cwa.org/resources/31>
- Stop Child Witch Accusations (2017) *A Call to Action: Responding to beliefs that harm children* - <https://stop-cwa.org/resources/10>

Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing the harm caused by witchcraft allegations against children [A1: Children & youth-3]
- A2 – How did Jesus respond to children? [A2: Children & youth-5]
- B – Christ's victory over evil and fear (Bible study) [B: Children & youth-4]
- B – How Jesus responded to people with evil spirits (Bible study) [B: Children & youth-5]

A2 UNDERSTANDING ACCUSATIONS OF CHILD WITCHCRAFT

A list of words to be written onto paper 'bricks'

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>12-18 years</p> <p>friends education private life spiritual help and prayer love direction, guidance acceptance, affirmation food and clear water independence, responsibility shelter limits and boundaries discipline</p> | <p>7-11 years</p> <p>prayer affirmation, acceptance protection, security spiritual nurture love and care education discipline, boundaries shelter food and clean water fun and play friends teaching, guidance</p> |
| <p>3-6 years</p> <p>food and clean water fun and play discipline, boundaries hugs and loving care spiritual nurture security, safety friends exploration protection shelter acceptance, affirmation stimulation</p> | <p>0-2 years</p> <p>exercise stimulation protection and care upholding child in prayer play company love hugs safety milk and clean water hygiene needs food</p> |

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