Inter-faith initiative to end Violence Against Children in Swaziland
In November 2010, members of eight faith organisations met at Ezulwini to discuss the role of religious organisations in the national response to violence against children. Following detailed discussions, leaders of the organisations committed themselves and their organisations to national efforts to stop violence of any form against children. The Ezulwini Declaration was born out of this historic meeting. The leaders signed a pledge, by which they declared full commitment to:

1. Preventing all forms of violence against children;
2. Providing immediate protection and care to children who are survivors of abuse;
3. Creating safe spaces for information sharing and participation for all parties concerned.
THE PLEDGE

Sharing a deep concern about the high rates of violence as reported in the National Study on Violence against children in Swaziland (2007) and as reported on a daily basis by NGOs, the Royal Swaziland Police and the media;

Expressing a serious concern at the continuing high levels of violence against children, particularly the victimization of albino children, and the sexual violence against children in an environment of high HIV prevalence rate:

Reiterating that all children, without discrimination, have fundamental human rights, and that violence against children, whether physical, emotional or sexual, is a gross violation of these fundamental rights, of their human dignity, physical and mental integrity that cannot be condoned under any circumstances;

Noting with deep concern the increased vulnerability of many children to sexual exploitation, especially sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, as a result of increased poverty, food insecurity, weakening family ties due to premature deaths from HIV and AIDS;

Firmly believing that the pervasive violence directed at children in their homes, schools, communities, places of care and other settings is intolerable and must stop;

Fully acknowledging that the progress achieved in reinforcing the national response to violence against children including, but not limited to the following: enactment of legislation on trafficking, inauguration of Toll-Free Line to report trafficking and abuse cases, opening of the first Child-Friendly Court in the country, establishment of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse units in police stations, increased efforts of the Children's Unit of the Directorate of Public Prosecutions to bring perpetrators to justice, efforts of the Ministry of Education and Training and the Teaching Service Commission to systematically investigate reported cases of abuse in school settings, establishments of the National Children's Coordination Unit and the vigorous work of Non-Governmental Organisations;

Recognising the invaluable contribution of all community caregivers, Lihlombe Lekukhalela, community leaders and all other community structures in preventing and responding to violence against children;

Inspired by the teachings and values of our faith; the principles of our national Constitution; the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

Strongly believing that faith-based organisations, government institutions, international organisations, families, teachers are all individually and collectively responsible and mutually accountable to ensuring that every child lives in a Swaziland free from violence;

Fully realising how influential religious communities are in society, and the positive impact our values and principles can have in creating safer environments for children and that our contributions as faith-based organisations is integral in ending violence and promoting a safe environment in our communities and in the society at large;

We hereby declare our full commitment to:

1. Prevent all forms of violence against children;
2. Provide immediate protection and care to children who are survivors of abuse
3. Create safe spaces for information sharing and participation for all parties .

We, the participants of the “First National Day of Prayer and Action for Children in Swaziland” held at Ezulwini on 19-20 November 2010, representing faith-based organisations in the country, call for action by all members of our faith groups to take immediate steps to end all forms of violence against children, especially girls and vulnerable children and to provide the necessary support to children who have fallen victim to this scourge. We further pledge our commitment towards a strong national response to violence through effective implementation and monitoring in 2011 of the action plans against violence developed on the occasion of this First National Day of Prayer and Action for Children in Swaziland.

Adopted at Ezulwini on the 19th November 2010.
As a follow up to the Ezulwini Declaration, in 2011 the eight groups began rolling out their respective programmes to prevent violence against children, with the support of a consultant, Rev. Absalom Dlamini.

These included incorporating child protection sessions into their existing programmes and conducting training sessions for ministry and programme workers in their respective gatherings.

In 2012, the groups developed short verses and statements which promote child protection in their respective congregations.

In 2013, the groups pledged to support a national immunization campaign which targets to reach out to all children under 5 years in all communities. The leaders undertook to use their influence and platforms to encourage communities and their followers to immunize their children.

The coordinator of the initiative, Rev Absalom Dlamini is also continuing with his regular consultations and monitoring of progress.

FAITH-BASED ORGANISATIONS’ PLEDGE TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Swaziland, 19th November 2010

“We, representing Faith-based organisations in Swaziland, call for action by all members of our groups to take immediate steps to end all forms of violence against children and to provide the necessary support to children affected by this abuse.”

SIGNATORIES TO THE PLEDGE:

Next Steps

As a follow up to the Ezulwini Declaration, in 2011 the eight groups began rolling out their respective programmes to prevent violence against children, with the support of a consultant, Rev. Absalom Dlamini.

These included incorporating child protection sessions into their existing programmes and conducting training sessions for ministry and programme workers in their respective gatherings.

In 2012, the groups developed short verses and statements which promote child protection in their respective congregations.

In 2013, the groups pledged to support a national immunization campaign which targets to reach out to all children under 5 years in all communities. The leaders undertook to use their influence and platforms to encourage communities and their followers to immunize their children.

The coordinator of the initiative, Rev Absalom Dlamini is also continuing with his regular consultations and monitoring of progress.
State parties shall take necessary measures to protect the child from:
All forms of torture or inhumane or humiliating treatment in all circumstances and conditions, or his/her smuggling, kidnaping or trafficking in him/her; all forms of abuse, particularly sexual abuse.

**Article Seventeen**
Convenant on the Rights of the Child in Islam

“... I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ... And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ... See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven”.

**Matthew 18:1-6, 10**
CARE Foundation
International Terbaracle

“Lord, we thank you for the gift of children. We ask you to enable us to focus on them. We appeal to you to remind us that children are not our possessions in the sense that we possess other things. So, we commit them to your love and care, even as we pray that you will make us worthy adults and parents. All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”.

**A prayer of commitment**
Council of Swaziland Churches

“... I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ... And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. ... See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven”.

**Matthew 18:1-6, 10**
CARE Foundation
International Terbaracle

“Lord, we thank you for the gift of children. We ask you to enable us to focus on them. We appeal to you to remind us that children are not our possessions in the sense that we possess other things. So, we commit them to your love and care, even as we pray that you will make us worthy adults and parents. All this we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen”.

**A prayer of commitment**
Council of Swaziland Churches

“Heavenly father we repent of all sins committed through child abuse in this country, cultivate in us a mind-set shift in as far as the child rights are concerned. We pray for the healing( emotionally& spiritual) of all those children that have been victims of abuse and the repentance of all abusers in Jesus Christ’s name.”

**A prayer of commitment**
League of African Churches Swaziland

“When you assign chores to your son and daughter, assign him/her in the name of the Lord. Love your child the lord has given you in pain and suffering.

**A commitment of love**
Nazareth Baptist Church

“Dear Heavenly Father, we pray that You help our society to protect the rights of children. We repent for not acting on behalf of all children. We repent on behalf of perpetrators of abuse. We ask for your forgiveness, healing, reconciliation and protection.”

**A prayer for forgiveness**
Swaziland Conference of Churches