



IFFAMPAC

Africa

Newsletter

The IFFAMPAC Africa newsletter is a platform upon which families of missing persons from armed conflicts share their problems.

- ✓ IFFAMPAC Meheba refugee trip
- ✓ IFFAMPAC Book Donation
- ✓ Family Identification
- ✓ International Women's Day celebrations

Families waiting to be identified by IFFAMPAC at Meheba Refugee Camp

On 2nd -4th May 2009 IFFAMPAC undertook a special assignment to visit Meheba Refugee Camp located in the northwestern province of Zambia, Africa. Meheba Refugee Camp has a long history of hosting refugees from Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, DRC Congo, Ethiopia and Sudan. According to the statistics there are about 16,018 refugees residing in the camp.

The purpose of the Meheba assignment trip was to broaden the IFFAMPAC identification program of families of missing persons in Africa and donate education materials such as exercise books to help enhance prospects of a bright future for the families of missing persons from armed conflicts.

IFFAMPAC's identification program revealed that there are thousands of families of missing persons from armed conflicts in this refugee camp, especially refugees from DRC Congo, Burundi, Rwanda and Somalia.



According to IFFAMPAC findings, these families are faced with trauma and stress; as a result, it has contributed to low self-esteem. This signifies the need for concerted efforts from NGOs, family associations, donors and other stakeholders to work closely with IFFAMPAC, to help redeem the families of the missing who are now living as refugees. There are high levels of illiteracy and ignorance among the families of missing persons in Meheba Refugee Camp; as a result, tolerance and understanding among themselves is very difficult.



African children from families of missing persons waiting to receive education materials

Therefore, as IFFAMPAC, we also undertook counseling to enable them to realize the need for them to live as one family, as opposed to hurting each other. The families of missing persons in Meheba Refugee Camp are in need of social recreational activities as a way of promoting unity among themselves and keeping them focused. The families lack recreational sporting materials such as footballs, netballs, basketballs, jerseys, television for entertainment, and other social recreational amenities.

We observed problems of early marriages at the age of 16 years among the families; as a result the population is increasing at a faster rate, thereby promoting poor parenting and family structures. The major reason of early marriages in the camp are that girls are being neglected, do not go to school, and most of the time are encouraged by their own parents to get married. Therefore, there is need to launch awareness in these families of how early marriages hinder social development.

IFFAMPAC Education Support for African Families

While in Meheba Refugee Camp, IFFAMPAC donated education materials in the form of exercise books to primary school pupils coming from refugee families of missing persons. We identified the neediest families to benefit from IFFAMPAC book donation program. IFFAMPAC desire is to inspire families of missing persons to take education for their families as a golden opportunity for human transformation and a key to solving most of their social & economic problems. We view their children as a foundation of their future, hence the need to promote education at a family level.



IFFAMPAC always strives to promote the education of families of missing persons from armed conflicts as a fundamental human right and a requirement for social justice among these vulnerable families.

Most school-going children lack school shoes, books and other supporting educational materials. They also lack proper nutrition and usually attend school classes without eating.

PROMOTION OF UNITY AMONG FAMILIES OF THE MISSING IN AFRICA



Elders posing for the photo after a meeting with IFFAMPAC Africa Representative

In order to promote unity among families of missing persons in Meheba Refugee Camp, IFFAMPAC held a special meeting with the elders, who are also refugees. Elders were encouraged to network with IFFAMPAC and join a family association as a way of promoting concerted efforts towards addressing social problems faced with families of the missing in the camp.

The elders will, therefore, join the family association as a way of supplementing IFFAMPAC efforts in serving the families of the missing. It was discovered that families of the missing persons in Meheba Refugee

Camp lack tolerance and see each other as enemies, especially since they come from different countries with diverse ethnic and cultural norms and tribes. Hence, bridging this gap is the major success factor of unity and peace in diversity among the families in Meheba Refugee Camp.

IFFAMPAC SPEAKS AT INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY SEMINAR IN AFRICA

On 6th March, 2009, IFFAMPAC was privileged by the Great Lakes Women Refugee Association in Zambia to speak at the International Women's Day special seminar entitled "Focus on Women's Refugees: Challenges and Opportunities." The seminar took place at Alliance Francaise, in Lusaka-Zambia, Africa.

IFFAMPAC was represented by Mr. Evans Lombe, Africa Representative, and invited speakers included the president of Great Lakes Women Refugees in Zambia, Mrs. Nkunda Esperance, and the guest of honour was Mrs. Francoise Le Bihanthe, the French Ambassador to Zambia and Malawi.



Mr. Lombe stated that IFFAMPAC has continued to play a major role in organizing and strengthening family associations, which create a support network of families of missing persons from armed conflicts. Mr. Lombe further stressed the need for women refugees to be integrated in a streamlined process for educational, social and economic reintegration back into society, so that they can resume their valuable contributions to both national and international development.



Women refugees dancing to African traditional music



Far right is IFFAMPAC representative & speakers

Mr. Lombe informed the audience about the program on family identification of the missing persons from armed conflict in Africa. Success stories of family reunification were shared, and the representative invited volunteers and other stakeholders to join and support the efforts of IFFAMPAC in Africa.



celebrations

He stressed the need for family associations to be responsible for uniting families of missing persons, as it is the only way to develop a unified voice when it comes to lobbying.

Mr. Lombe further said that the efforts of IFFAMPAC are instilling a sense of hope among the families of missing persons in Africa. The identification of families of the missing persons from armed conflicts is a cornerstone of hope and justice of the families. The program of family identification strives to generate advisory information that sharpens the future of these families.

African cultural performers spicing up women's day

Who Are the Families of Missing Persons in Africa?

In armed conflicts between recognized military forces, the dead and wounded are usually carefully recorded. Sadly, this is not the case in less structured confrontations such as rebellions, religious hostilities, “ethnic cleansing,” internal security operations, and even some international peacekeeping missions.

Many people caught up in these events disappear and remain unaccounted for. Some have been taken prisoner or seized by the state or rebels; many are the accidental victims of crossfire or the explosive remnants of war such as landmines; others may be hiding in fear for their lives; and some are minors separated from their parents when they fled the violence. Adults, children, citizens, and visitors can all be missing persons from armed conflicts. They are people in the wrong place, at the wrong time.

As the president of IFFAMPAC has stated: “When men disappear in armed conflict, women often find themselves suddenly the head of the family. But they do not have the education, the emotional support, or the opportunity for employment they need to provide for their children or other dependants. Worse, laws in many countries prevent women from inheriting land and gaining access to bank accounts. In the case of a missing person, no death certificate is issued and, without it, the wife is unable to claim the use of family funds. As a result, thousands of children have been sold, abandoned, or given away and women left homeless.”

Who Is IFFAMPAC?

IFFAMPAC is the shortened name of our organization. The full name is The International Federation of Family Associations of Missing Persons from Armed Conflicts. We unite family associations worldwide, providing families with a global support network. We act as a link to other NGOs and governmental agencies to address the social, economic, and legal problems that surviving family members face post-conflict. When requested by the families, we meet and negotiate with governmental officials to provide information on missing family members, and we work on behalf of families to develop favorable national judicial reform to address the surviving family’s needs.

The Role of IFFAMPAC

IFFAMPAC is a registered international NGO (non-governmental organization) which holds special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

We are currently drafting a model international law to define the status of surviving families.

We are also developing best-practice guidelines for governments to address the issue of surviving family members who need assistance. This is an ongoing project. The law will also promote international standards, instruments and best practices to help identify and investigate missing persons.

IFFAMPAC will continue to be the voice of families of missing persons in Africa and other families of missing persons globally.

Why Support, Donate & Fund IFFAMPAC Works in Africa?

In Africa, IFFAMPAC has begun to get an accurate accounting of the surviving families and their missing family members. Our approach gives us a unique understanding of the overall problems that families face, and will enable IFFAMPAC to represent them effectively at forums such as the United Nations and international conferences with governments, agencies, and other NGOs. The planned project for building schools, teaching skills and building recreation centers for these families is a cornerstone for the fulfillment of fundamental human rights for the basic unit of society, which is the family.

IFFAMPAC welcomes donors to become part of the project implementation team. We do not work in isolation. As a team we can realize success. We welcome volunteers and other organizations to affiliate with us. We also welcome in-kind donations.

For donations and any other assistance, please contact the following persons:

1. Ms. Jane Durgom-Powers at: jed-p@iffampac.org
2. Mr. Evans Lombe at: africa@iffampac.org
3. IFFAMPAC: info@iffampac.org

A Brief History of IFFAMPAC

Below is a brief list of the history and accomplishments of IFFAMPAC.

1970s: Our president first became involved with the issue of people who have disappeared and their families. She worked directly with families around the world, helping them to set up family associations. She began drafting national laws and reforms to assist surviving family members.

February 2003: The ICRC Conference on the Missing revealed the need to unite and coordinate the work of the numerous associations of affected families in many parts of the world. Our president addressed the conference.

April 2003: IFFAMPAC was incorporated in the USA.

March 2006: IFFAMPAC was appointed to the United Nations Working Group on Persons who are unaccounted for in connection with events in Kosovo.

May 2006: The United Nations Economic and Social Council granted IFFAMPAC Special Consultative Status.

December 2007: IFFAMPAC was approved for association with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI).

March 2008: IFFAMPAC opened a Kosovo branch office in Pristine.

June 2008: IFFAMPAC opened an African branch office in Lusaka, Zambia.

September 2008: IFFAMPAC presented a workshop at a prestigious UN event at 60 UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, France.

December 2008: IFFAMPAC president and founder was the Featured Speaker at the United Nations World Family Summit +4 in Cairo, Egypt.

March 2009: IFFAMPAC president and founder was the Featured Speaker at the United Nations in New York.

If you would like more information on the issue of missing persons from armed conflicts or if you can help us continue our work by assisting us to obtain further funding, to make a donation, or to volunteer – please contact us at: info@iffampac.org

Your donations of funds or services will help us to act as an advocate and link for family associations, and enable IFFAMPAC to account for the missing and their families. Donations are US tax deductible.

IFFAMPAC is a 501(c)(3) organization.

If you would like more information on this issue, or if you can help us to obtain further funding, please contact us at:

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