

A Day To Remember (Day of The African Child)



On June 16, 1976 thousands of South African school children took the streets to protest against the Apartheid government for human rights and an end to the violence. The Soweto uprising started as a peaceful demonstration against the *Afrikaans Medium Decree* of 1974 that forced all black students to learn Afrikaans and English as the main languages of instruction. This was described by Desmond Tutu as “the language of the oppressor”.

There was a mass student rally at Orlando Stadium. When the Police arrived shots were fired. The first person shot was Hastings Ndlovu and the second was 12 year old Hector Peterson who’s body became a symbol of the violent regime and police brutality. Bottles were thrown and stones were tossed at the police patrolmen who began opening fire causing chaos and eventually over 500 people died mainly school children. Since that tragic day happened we now celebrate the day better known as Youth Day in South Africa or the Day of the African Child across the world.



This day has been adopted by the organisation of African states the African Union (AU) not only as a commemoration of that tragic and pivotal day; but as a day to celebrate children in African and to promote their rights and well being.

On this day throughout Africa school children will be celebrating in some way. Many schools will declare a no uniform day and encourage students to attend in African address. The film *Sarafina* may be shown. There may be a half day holiday. All schools will conduct an assembly focussing on children and reflecting on the theme for the current year. In some communities children will take on adult roles for the day such as teacher, policeman, nurse, banker etc.

All over the world we need reminding that childhood is precious, and that children are the future of humanity, and that we who are adult have a sacred responsibility to do our very best for them.

For these reasons **One World Link**, the community friendship link between Warwick District UK and Bo District, Sierra Leone, has chosen to mark this day and give it special attention. We rejoice that so many of our children are learning about each other and finding a common humanity in an ever inter-dependent world.

Action Aid runs a campaign called ‘**Send My Friend to School**’ which we involve schools in prior to our Day of the African Child celebration- giving them the opportunity to teach about Democracy through taking part in the campaign to enable more children around the world to access education.

ONE WORLD LINK

- ❖ Linking the people of UK and Africa through a local friendship since 1982
- ❖ Supporting school children to learn about each others lives across the continents
- ❖ Bringing people together
- ❖ Spreading understanding of Sierra Leone and Africa generally

To learn more visit www.oneworldlink.org.uk