

## ***THE QUEST FOR A COORDINATED GRASSROOTS RESPONSE***

**A REPORT OF THE EACR MEMBERS MEETING ON SDGs AND ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE, HELD ON THE 11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2015, AT PINECOTE HOTEL, KISUMU KENYA**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The East Africa Child Rights Trust network (EACR) would like to most sincerely thank a number of partners, friends, members and corporate entities who put in time and resources to ensure that our first EACR members meeting took off on a very successful note.

First and foremost is Impact Research and Development Organization (IRDO) and the Nyanza Initiative for Girls Education and Empowerment (NIGEE). From the very preparatory stages until the actual day of meeting, IRDO and NIGEE team led by none other than IRDO Director Prof Kawango, and NIGEE Coordinator Godfrey Okumu tirelessly worked with us in ensuring that conferencing and hotel facilities were in place, and visibility materials properly designed and developed. Without their technical and material support, the meeting would have been far from succeeding.

Mohads Foundation through its Director Mr Mohammed Abdi and the entire team from South Africa led by David Okwach were always at hand to encourage us even when we thought that now its not going to work. Their moral and material support was more than what money could buy.

Our own members in the EACR network including Joy Mboya of Joyful Sisters Foundation, Moly Apiyo aka "*Tuli Tilitu*" of Watoto Musiliye Foundation, James Ochieng aka "*Bam*" of the Kisumu Arts Ensemble and Collins Owuor of TEAM kept the preparatory stages alive through unwavering sacrifice and support.

The EACR delegates who attended the forum led by Kisumu County Director of Education Mr Charles Odongo were the very reason why our meeting met its ambitious targets. Some travelled from as far as Karamoja in Uganda to share their experiences on working with children. The experiences shared by delegates including partners from World Vision were most enriching. We salute all of you.

Last but not least, we cannot forget the detailed and energy draining planning and resource mobilization that came from within our own EACR team. Our Vice Chair Edwin Ochieng contributed both time, money and technical expertise to guide the entire process. He provided the needed spirit and support without which this meeting could not have happened. Of course we cannot forget the role played by the EACR board team and field team. They were exceptional in helping with preparations and actual meeting.

I wish it were possible to mention everyone by name. Nevertheless, we at the EACR team remain most humbled and encouraged that our meeting succeeded because of such friends and partners.

We thank you most sincerely and hope that this report will encourage you to keep being a part of our regional movement that seeks to consolidate action for children at the grassroots.

**Bernard Orimbo**

**EACR Director**

## 1. Introduction

The EACR Members meeting on ending child marriage and sustainable development goals was organised by the East Africa Child Rights Network (EACR) as a curtain raiser event in the run up to its launch. It also provided a forum for members to share about their work, learn about the SDGs and how it relates to their grassroots activities and meet new strategic partners including the county government.

This critical event was motivated by the recent global launch of SDGs, global and national efforts to end child marriage in the East Africa region and EACR's initiative to mobilize grassroots action on child rights. The forum was a one day meeting that specifically aims to address the issue of fragmented and disjointed grassroots response on programs targeting children and young people, harmful traditional practices such as child marriage, low understanding of SDGs among grassroots actors and how the goals link to their work; and finally embracing a new grassroots network that will highlight and coordinate their programs.

Deliberations and outcomes from the one day meeting were to directly contribute to increased understanding of SDGs, improved coordination among grassroots organizations and the introduction of a new coalition of child rights organizations and groups operating at community level. The outcomes specifically provided recommendations and concrete suggestions leading up to the development of a Grassroots Programme of Action (GPA) to effectively address issues of girls education, child marriage and other harmful traditional practices as well as sexual reproductive health (SRHR); it also discussed challenges affecting grassroots organizations working with children i.e. visibility, resource mobilization, documentation and coordination.

The one-day forum sought to courageously explore options for strengthening coordination, collaboration, and networking among grassroots CBOs, FBOs, CSOs and groups, as well as tested strategies to deepen collaboration with government, private sector and development/funding partners. The meeting ran for one day i.e. 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015, and featured participants from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

## 2. Background

Child marriage is a global problem that impedes the development, wellbeing and life options of the affected individuals, particularly girls. Child marriage curtails normal development childhood, reduces prospects for an education, compromises health and puts victims in touch psychosocial circumstances. In the past ten years child marriage has emerged as one of the neglected human rights violations and only recently started to receive some attention. Every year an estimated 14 million girls are married as children, as noted above effectively denied their rights to health, education and robbed of their childhood. If the world takes no concerted action to check these trends by 2030 some 15.4 million girls a year will marry as children<sup>i</sup>. Such is the impact of child marriage that it directly hinders the achievement of nearly all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In other words, no government will succeed in eradicating poverty or indeed in solving its development challenges unless it decisively tackles child marriage in all its manifestations.

It is significant to note that up to fifteen of the twenty countries globally with highest child marriage rates are found in Africa. In East Africa, slightly over 50% of girls in Uganda marry before they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, while 37% of girls in Tanzania are married off as children every year in Tanzania. Kenya is not doing any better with almost 3 out of every 10 girls likely to marry before reaching 18 years<sup>ii</sup>.

The implications of these high child marriage rates on a country's development are dire and call for immediate concerted and coordinated action among actors at different levels. Most importantly, the realization that child marriage occurs at family and community level, there is urgent need for community based actors to join hands in a coordinated framework and ensure that preventative and responsive actions are taken to stop the harmful practice.

### **EACR network, Grassroots actors and Coordination**

East Africa Child Rights Trust Network (EACR) is a regional institution founded in 2014 and registered in 2015 to provide a visibility platform for indigenous grassroots organisations working with children in East Africa. The network currently brings together 30 existing grassroots organizations spread across Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. EACR vision is a world that respects and listens to children; and allows them to grow in health and dignity. Its mission is to ensure that Africa's children grow to realize their dreams and ambitions in life. The Network regional office is based in Kisumu Kenya.

Many organisations making efforts to improve the lives of children in East African countries face numerous challenges including; lack of capacity, limited resources and networks and general difficulty showcasing their good work and efforts. Most importantly, coordinating their efforts and exchanging information to maximize the impact of their work has remained a mirage among these local organizations.

Grassroots organizations tend to have minimal understanding of the global and national development goals that directly affect their work. This limits their ability to engage directly and effectively with donors majority of whom operate in the national and global space. Grassroots initiatives to end child marriage and other traditional practices are thus severely impeded by this phenomenon, in spite of the fact that they remain the most critical actors on the implementing end.

## **3. Goal and Objectives of the Forum**

### **3.1 Goal:**

To strengthen coordination, collaboration, and networking among grassroots CBOs, FBOs, CSOs and groups on programs to end child marriages and other harmful traditional practices; raise awareness on the SDGs among grassroots actors and how the goals link to their work. The forum will also introduce participants to a new regional grassroots network that seeks to highlight and coordinate their programs in East Africa.

### **3.2 Objectives**

- To boldly explore options for strengthening coordination, collaboration, and networking among grassroots CBOs, FBOs, CSOs and other groups
- To introduce the new global development framework i.e. the SDGs, and demonstrate how

these link to their work at grassroots

- To provide a platform for information sharing, discussions and insights on current campaigns and initiatives by fellow participants; and enable sharing of promising models in the region
- To enhance community level advocacy action on ending child marriage and other harmful traditional practices in the region

## 4. Actionable Results of the Meeting

Deliberations and outcomes of the one day meeting produced the following results;

- i. Successfully developed and reached consensus on a three-year Grassroots Plan of Action (GPA) that will guide, standardise and coordinate the working of EACR members and their programs.
- ii. Formation of a technical team to coordinate and guide the network on GPA implementation. The meeting selected 7 members (4 ladies and 3 gentlemen) with each country having 2 members and Kenya having 3 members, being the hosting country.
- iii. Improved coordination and networking among EACR members, mainly as a result of knowing who is doing what where, and being joined by one action plan and coordinated from one agreed technical coordination team.
- iv. Increased understanding of the sustainable development goals and how they relate to EACR members programs on ending child marriage and other harmful traditional practices

## 5. Workshop facilitation

To effectively achieve the set goal and objectives of the meeting, the EACR meeting agreed to have Charles Macharia Kimani facilitate the meeting proceedings. Charles has experience implementing programs on child rights and child protection and is currently the Child Protection and Area Manager for Terre des Hommes in Dadaab, Kenya. He is also one of the EACR interim board members.

## 6. Workshop proceedings and outcomes

### Presentation

The forum was officially opened by the Kisumu County Coordinator of Children Services Mr Charles Ondongo, who also gave remarks on behalf of the Kenya government. He shared with the delegates about several policies and guidelines on child rights and child protection that the government of Kenya has developed and currently implementing.

Meeting participants presented about their programs on children and shared with the delegates some very life changing stories about their interventions on the ground. For instance, the Nyanza Initiative for Girls Education and Empowerment (NIGEE) came with some of the children from needy backgrounds but who are currently receiving education support through NIGEE program. These girls

gave compelling stories about their lives and how getting a chance to pursue education and escape from child marriage has given them a new hope in life.

Joy for Children Uganda through their Director Moses Ntenga gave a presentation about their programs on education and ending child marriage where they provide scholastic materials as well as raise awareness on the dangers of child marriage. They also chair the national chapter of the country's Girls Not Brides program. Lulu Rongo OVCRP and the Upendo VCT programs from Homa Bay County in Kenya shared about their impactful interventions on prevention of abuse, neglect and violence on children in areas where they currently work. They provided statistics about incidents of child abuse and neglect and some of the challenges they have to deal with on a regular basis with respect to case management.

Watoto Musiliye Foundation through their founder Ms Molly Apiyo (aka Tuli Tulitu) shared her personal experiences on helping children who have performed exceedingly well in national exams but are faced with dropping out of school due to inability to pay school fees and general poverty. She gave examples of some of these cases that her foundation has stepped in to support and see through school. Unfortunately due to inadequate funding support, she is unable to respond to many cases that come to her attention.

Karamoja Youth Empowerment Network from Uganda shared some of their challenging experiences on the ground, implementing programs on children and young people amidst heavy insecurity and lack of basic facilities such as education and health. Their story demonstrated what resilience of youth and community based organizations can achieve even where guns and fighting becomes the order of the day and hope for young people are nearly gone. They committed to be actively engaged with the network activities and hopefully receive capacity building support and any other support to effectively run their life changing activities in Karamoja.

Joyful Children Foundation made a presentation on team dynamics and best practice for upcoming community organizations and established organizations who may be struggling with issues of human resource management. They gave illustrations of what organizations should look out for to avoid staff fatigue, high turnover and strengthen team work and management skills. Their presenter, Joy Mboya, is a trained HR Specialist who has worked with international organizations as a HR expert for many years.

The Kisumu Arts Ensemble treated the meeting to entertaining and informative skits about ending child marriage and value of educating girls. This group has now signed up to be a member of the EACR and will be actively involved in EACR activities that target community mobilization and dialogues.

Kukimbisan Women Group from Kitale and upper North Rift region was equally represented at the meeting by their Chair lady Ms Angeline Kalabai. She gave heart rending stories about the difficulties they go through while intervening on girls and children who have been neglected or physically abused in the community; and the difficulties in terrain and a continuous insecurity that hampers any speedy and urgent actions on a child whose life is at risk. Nevertheless, the group has made some great progress on a number of cases of child protection that they have received including being able to evacuate girls and secure education opportunities for them while escaping child marriage and FGM.



Integrated & Sustainable Community Development Program (ISUCODEP), also made a lively presentation about their education activities for girls. They currently run programs around the critical issue of quality education for girls and boys. They also have sexual reproductive health programs (ISUCODEP) that focus on life skills and awareness raising.

The Integrated and Sustainable Community Development (ISUCODEP) team from Ramba, Homabay County, gave an inspiring presentation about their education programs that focus on increasing access, retention and completion rates while ensuring high quality learning takes place.

The T-GLCI group that focuses on environmental awareness and re-afforestation was ably represented at the meeting by its founder and chair Ms Rose Adhiambo. She gave a moving presentation on the economic value of planting trees and connected this with poverty eradication among rural communities in Kenya.

The Transform Empowerment for Action Initiative (TEAM) group was in attendance and gave a compelling presentation on governance, public accountability and citizens' participation. They gave examples of how their group has succeeded in highlighting serious issues touching on official corruption, impunity and neglect of duty among health officials which in some cases led to patients suffering because they do not have money to bribe officials so that their relatives can get the needed urgent medical attention.

## 7. CBO Limitations and Grassroots Coordination

The forum noted a number of limitations affecting operations, coordination and relationships among community groups and NGOs in their daily work. Among the limitations identified include:

1. Lack of a well-coordinated monitoring and evaluation framework which should form the basis for assessing the quality of operations, coordination and impact of services as a bloc and in relation to other stakeholders including government
2. Lack of resources to be able to develop and roll out interventions that cover not only their own impact areas but also other cross cutting issues such as child marriage and gender based violence
3. Operate with staff limited in numbers as well as in skills which affect capacity to roll out interventions, reduces quality of interventions and compromises impact
4. Operating in hostile and insecure environments that affect planning and implementation of activities e.g. Karamoja in Northern Uganda, Kitale and north rift valley both of which suffer constant conflicts from raids by bandits to attacks from rebels and other militia.
5. Weak leadership and coordination of activities among CBOs and NGOs that work with children at sub national level and community levels yet this is where issues are most concentrated
6. Lack focus in what they do oftentimes tending to branch into other programmes for which they have no capacity and or spreading thin limited resources thereby compromising impact
7. Lack of fresh data or evidence to back up their reporting and decision making.

## 8. Coordination and EACR Technical Team

The Forum was unanimous in its confidence in the role and importance of having a regional network that would ensure coordination among community groups and CSOs working towards promoting rights of children and effectively engaging with governments, other authorities and donors. While noting that network coordination may not be the final panacea, the Forum was agreed that the EACR network would improve leadership, facilitate sharing of information, data and experiences, support pooling of resources and sharpen a common voice among grassroots actors and groups.

To this end, the forum agreed to form a smaller technical team that would work with the EACR secretariat to ensure that members' issues and concerns are strongly captured in all network activities and programs. The technical team would have a maximum of seven individuals with a gender balance of 40-50% either gender. As well, each country would be represented by two members in the team with Kenya, having a one more member because it's hosting the secretariat.

The following were thus elected into the technical team.

### Kenya;

- i. Dancun Ochieng aka "Bam" – Kisumu Arts Ensemble
- ii. Molly Apiyo - Watoto Musiliye Foundation
- iii. Joy Mboya – Joyful Sisters Foundation

### Uganda;

- i. Moses Ntenga – Joy for Children Uganda
- ii. Shadrack Godan – Karamoja Youth Empowerment Network

### Tanzania;

- i. Koshuma Mtengeti – Children's Dignity Forum
- ii. Tarime Mindset NGO - TBC



## 9. Additional Resolutions from the EACR meeting

In addition to the resolutions stated in (5) above, the forum also noted the following;

1. EACR should plan to hold another regional forum in 2016 that will focus on identifying and launching East Africa's Regional Champions for Children. This forum may be held in Kampala Uganda and could coincide with the International Day of the African Child.
2. EACR should plan to roll out a fund raising event or events with the aim to mobilise and establish a strong independent funding base that is necessary for its recurrent expenditures and programs. The technical team, EACR secretariat and the board will discuss this further and advise on next steps.

## Annex I

### EACR MEMBERS MEETING PROGRAMME

Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015: *“THE QUEST FOR A COORDINATED GRASSROOTS RESPONSE”*

Facilitator and Rapporteur: Charles Kimani

TIME	ITEM	FACILITATOR/PRESENTER
8.30 – 9.00 am	Registration of delegates	Lawrence Ounda, EACR
9.05 – 9.15am	Introductions and welcome	EACR Vice Chair, Edwin
9.15- 9.30am	Opening Remarks	EACR Board member, Hon Phoebe Asiyo
9.30- 9.45am	Remarks / Welcome H.E. the Governor,	The County Director, Children Services Kisumu County
9.45 – 10.15am	Key Note Speech/Official opening of meeting	H.E. Governor Rev Moses Akaranga, Governor Vihiga County
10.15 – 10.45am	<b>TEA BREAK</b>	
10.45 – 11.55am	What is EACR?	EACR Trustee, Marceline Nyambala
11.00 – 11.10am	Nyanza Initiative for Girls Education & Empowerment (NIGEE)	NIGEE Coordinator, Godfrey
11.10 – 11.40am	Presentations by EACR Members	EACR Board, Charles Kimani
11.40 – 11.50am	Children’s Dignity Forum, Tanzania – <i>“Child Marriage and SDGs”</i>	CDF Director, Koshuma Mtengeti
11.50 – 12.00noon	Joy for Children, Uganda – <i>“Coordination among grassroots CBOs working with children; reality or mirage”</i>	JFC Director, Moses Ntenga
12.00 – 12.10pm	Child Marriage & SDGs	EACR Director, Bernard Orimbo
12.10 – 12.20pm	UNICEF/World Vision – <i>“INGOS and CBOs; how do we work?”</i>	
12.20 – 12.50pm	EACR Technical Coordination Team (ETCT)	Edwin (EACR) /Teresa (Upendo VCT)
1.05 – 1.35pm	Grassroots Plan of Action	Marceline (EACR)/ NIGEE/ISUCODEP/
1.35 – 2.05pm	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>	
2.05 – 2.10pm	Vote of Thanks,	KEWA, Moses Kidi
2.10pm	<b>DEPARTURE</b>	



## Annex II: EACR MEETING Attendance List

### EAST AFRICA CHILD TRUST FORUM ATTENDANTS LIST

NAME	ORGANISATION	CONTACTS	ID NO.	SIGNATURE
Bernard Ombao	EACR	0723677407	11779298	
Lawrence Ombao	EACR	0721619324	24821717	
Charles Ombao	Children's Defenders Kibera	072277602	2842444	
DUNGO SHADACK	ISVCO DEP	0710275522	13770877	
JOT MILDRED MBOYA	JOTFUL SISTERS FOUNDATION	0722372738	13067665	
WILLIAM Ombao	FAA	0723168775	22005750	
MARY MARIAM	EACR	0720005297	8132547	
CHARLES KIMANI	TEAM	0727421155	18952269	
MARIAM ABDALLAH	TEAM	0725250205	24612140	
Burni Ropem	Buddi The Youth Assoc	0703289203	00751239	
KWACHA RADALG	Kisumu Arts Ensemble	0723780726	22205701	
OTIENO KIRNO SUNE	Kisumu Arts Ensemble	0902660114	—	
CALABY BENARD	"	0727813333	24500347	
BODITH LINDA ACHIA	Kisumu Arts Ensemble	0722419781	22411003	
CHUNA SHADRACK ROGIEL	KA-EN	+254783715399	004361412	
ALICE OCHIENG	ALVANO CBO	0724553552	25252566	
ANGELINA KALABAI	Kukumbisana W.G.	0726521564	3800728	
PAULINE LWANDE	IRDO	0721328031	22612015	
Hellen Ombao	Wahitemaniya or	0725025678	11807027	
OCHIENG DANCAN	Kisumu Arts Ensemble	0720332169	21335019	
TERESA W. GWENGI	UPENDO	0717126621	4272046	
NIENGA MOSES	JOY FOR CHILDREN	0703653333	8001589	
SOPHYA OMBU	Lulu O.V.C.R.A.	0710735044	1502905	
OGANA V. JASH	CACOP-KENYA	0717574772	7118678	
ELIZABETH OTIENO	NIGEE	0733852413	21697099	
MARIONA JOAKIM	NOHA	0718047910	3305715	
EDWIN OCHIENG	EACR	0720808657	8182155	
JEANINE A. OUKO	St. Anne Mwanjao	0231744075	25411537	
ALICE GEDAH	World Vision	0200-823012	20105166	
ROSE OLOO	T-GLCI	0727969911	13890681	
KIDI MOKI	ICAB	0722257771	2497181	
GERNA JACKSON	SATERO WOMEN GROUP	0722257771	2550032	
JEANINE FOSTER	SARADA CBO	0720337294	13600578	
BEARON MAGARE	loudtalk Afrika	0710782962	30880095	
GEORGE KIM Ombao	Y-SWA	0706558216	22016645	
KEVINE OMOLU	STANDARD MEDIA	0725375974	25607559	

Registered as a Trust, #2487; Republic of Kenya



### Annex III: EACR MEETING Photo Gallery



Moses Ntenga of Joy Children Uganda making a presentation



Section of delegates listening keenly to plenary presentations

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EACR Director Bernard Orimbo welcoming delegates to the forum



The Kisumu Arts Ensemble treating delegates to infotainment scenes on child marriage





EACR Members & delegates having a joint photo session outside hotel



Moly Apiyo aka Tuli Tultu of Watoto Musiliye presenting at the forum



The County Coordinator of Children Services making remarks at the forum



NIGEE team presenting at the forum



#### Annex IV: EACR Action Plan to 2018 (draft)

THEMATIC AREA/OBJECTIVE	SUB-THEME	STRATEGIC ACTIVITY	LEAD PARTNER	SUPPORTING PARTNERS	TIME FRAME			ESTIMATED BUDGET IN KES
					2016	2017	2018	
EDUCATION	ACCESS	SOCIAL MOB, ADVOCACY, EVENTS	ISUCODEP, NIGEE	Plan, Save the Children, UNICEF, UNFPA,				
	RETENTION & TRANSITION	SOCIAL MOB, MEDIA CAMPAIGN, A-ACADEMY	ISUCODEP, NIGEE	Plan, Save the Children, UNFPA,				
	COMPLETION	SOCIAL MOB, EXCHANGE VISITS, A-ACADEMY	ISUCODEP, NIGEE	Plan, Save the Children, UNFPA,				
HEALTH	SRHR	EVENTS, SOCIAL MOB, MEDIA CAMPAIGN	Build Youth Africa	UNFPA, World Vision,				
	HIV/AIDS	ANNUAL EACR WALK	Upendo VCT	PEPFAR, UNICEF, UNFPA,				
	DRUGS & SUBSTANCE ABUSE	SOCIAL MOB, MEDIA CAMPAIGN, COMMUNITY DIALOGUES	IRDO, KSMU ARTS ENSEMBLE					



	MATERNAL HEALTH	MEDIA CAMPAIGN, SOCIAL MOB, HIGH LEVEL PANEL	EACR, IRDO	UNFPA				
	CANCER	SOCIAL MOB, MEDIA CAMPAIGN,	IRDO					
CHILD PROTECTION	CHILD MARRIAGE/TEENAGE PREGNANCY	INTER-COUNTIES FORUM, HIGH LEVEL PANEL, NATIONAL GIRLS SUMMIT, MEDIA CAMPAIGN , THEATRE FOR CHANGE, COMMUNITY DIALOGUES,	NIGEE, JOY FOR CHILDREN	Plan International, Canada High Commision, UNFPA, Save the Children				
	COMMUNITY BASED CP SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING	5-W MAPPING, TRAININGS,	EACR, Joy for Children, NIGEE	Save the Children, Plan International, UNICEF				
	GENDER BASED VIOLENCE	INTER-COUNTIES FORUM, HIGH LEVEL PANEL, NATIONAL GIRLS SUMMIT,	EACR, NIGEE,	UNFPA, Save the Children,				
	YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	EA YOUTH SUMMIT, KAMPALA UGANDA	Build Youth Africa,					
LIVELIHOODS	FAMILY/HOUSEHOLD INCOME SUPPORT	REVOLVING FUND FOR RURAL CHAMAS AND YOUTH GRPS??						
	ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION & PEACE	SOCIAL MOB, TREE PLANTING EVENTS, COMM DIALOGUES, MEDIA AWARENESS	T-GLCI	UN-HABITAT, UNDP				
TOTAL								

## **CROSS CUTTING ACTIVITIES**

*NOMINATION AND UNVEILING OF CHILD RIGHTS CHAMPIONS (KAMPALA UGANDA)*

*EA CONFERENCE ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (KISUMU, KENYA)*

*BASELINE SURVEY ON ALL 4 THEMES (COVERING ALL 3 EA COUNTRIES)*

*FUND RAISING EVENTS IN KENYA & SA*

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<sup>i</sup> Girls Not Brides website (September, 2014)

<sup>ii</sup> UNICEF, 2013 *State of the World's Children Report*