



AFRICA FAITH AND JUSTICE NETWORK NIGERIA

Report of Policy Briefing on Ending Child Marriage and Domestic Servitude in Enugu State

Date: 22nd September 2025

Venue: Jubilee Hall, Ground Floor, Holy Ghost Cathedral, Enugu State

1. Background & Context



Child early and forced marriage and domestic servitude remain pressing social and human rights issues in Nigeria, particularly in states such as Enugu where cultural practices, poverty, and weak enforcement of laws often contribute to the exploitation of children. These practices deny children, especially girls, their right to education, health, and safety, while perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Recognizing the urgency, the Africa Faith and Justice Network Nigeria (AFJN-N), in collaboration with

government institutions, civil society, faith leaders, and traditional authorities, convened a **Policy Briefing on Ending Child Marriage and Domestic Servitude on 22nd September 2025.**

This forum brought together policymakers, service providers, community leaders, and advocates to deliberate on sustainable solutions, strengthen accountability, and mobilize **collective action** in protecting children.

2. Objectives of the Policy Briefing

The policy briefing was convened to achieve the following:

- Review and strengthen existing legal and policy frameworks to address child marriage and domestic servitude.
- Present AFJN's **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** and **Community Monitoring System (CMS)** as tools for community-led child protection.
- Mobilize multi-sectoral collaboration to ensure **community-driven solutions**.
- Secure **commitments from traditional, religious, and government leaders** towards policy enforcement and awareness campaigns.
- Adopt practical recommendations that ensure the rights and dignity of children in Enugu State are upheld.



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3. Program Flow

1. **Arrival & Registration** – 9:00 – 10:00 AM
2. **Opening Prayer** – 10:00 AM
3. **Welcome & Introductions** – Barr. Amaka Ilodigwe warmly welcomed participants and introduced guests.
- 4.



5. Presentation of AFJN Mission and Vision – Sr. Theresa Anyabuikwe highlighted AFJN's mission to create just societies by addressing systemic injustices and safeguarding human dignity.

6. Goodwill Messages from:

- *Mrs. Esther Mbah* – Ministry of Gender Affairs
- *NAPTIP Zonal Commander* (represented)
- *Mr. Elekwas Chimezie* – Chair, Child Protection Network (CPN), who stressed:

“Children who grow up in an environment of chronic fear and anxiety struggle with brain development and a healthy future.”

- Representatives from FIDA Enugu State and Human Rights Commission emphasized legal protection and survivor-centered approaches.

4. Key Presentations

4.1 Guest Speaker – Her Worship, Mrs. Ifeoma Nwagbara



- Defined the **legal status** of a child, minors, and early marriage.
- Explored the **health impacts** (increased maternal mortality, obstetric fistula, poor nutrition).
- Highlighted **social impacts** (school dropouts, loss of childhood, intergenerational poverty).
- Stressed the **psychological consequences** (trauma, fear, loss of self-esteem).
- Called for:
 - Implementation of **Community**

Monitoring Systems (CMS).

- **Safe and accessible reporting mechanisms** at community level.
- **Community sensitization campaigns** to challenge harmful cultural norms.

4.2 Second Speaker – Hon. Mrs. Lizzy Odum



- Addressed **legal implications and challenges**:
 - Survivors and reporters face **fear of reprisals**, harassment, and stigma.
 - **90% of reported cases** in Enugu State do not reach conviction due to **political interference and weak enforcement**.
- Reviewed provisions in the **Child Rights Act** and **VAPP Law**, noting that penalties exist but implementation is poor.

- **Recommended**:
 - Strengthening **judicial and law enforcement capacity**.
 - Establishing **whistleblower protections**.
 - Building trust between communities and law enforcement.

5. Panel Discussions



The panel included representatives from the Police, Ministry of Health, NAPTIP, Human Rights Commission, and Ministry of Gender Affairs.

Issue Raised	Discussion Highlights	Recommendations
Weak reporting systems	Citizens lack confidence in reporting cases due to fear of retaliation and Stigmatization.	Establish community-based reporting hotlines and whistleblower protections Like Youth Advocate
Limited awareness	Families and communities unaware of legal implications of child marriage/servitude.	Increase advocacy, town-hall meetings, and media campaigns.
Lack of survivor support	Survivors left without shelter, psychosocial support, or legal aid.	Create survivor support centers and link with social welfare schemes.
Weak enforcement	Political interference and poor police follow-up weaken cases.	Train police/judiciary, enforce penalties under the Child Rights Act and VAPP.
Cultural norms	Traditional beliefs promote early marriage and servitude.	Partner with traditional/religious leaders to change narratives.

6. Outcomes & Achievements



- **Adoption of AFJN MoU:** The Child Protection MoU was moved by the CPN Chairperson and seconded by Traditional Rulers.
- **Commitments from Stakeholders:** Ministries, traditional rulers, and CSOs pledged to champion CMS and awareness campaigns.
- **Strengthened Multi-Sectoral Collaboration:** Links were established between Police, NAPTIP, health sector, and civil society for ongoing joint interventions.
- **Community Engagement:** Participants resolved to take the advocacy to grassroots, ensuring household-level awareness.

7. Way Forward



Scale up **policy briefings and town halls** Ndeabor LGA in Enugu State.

Provide **training and resources** to implement CMS at community level.

Strengthen collaboration between **faith leaders, traditional rulers, and government agencies**

Monitor adoption of the MoU through Follow-up feedback Bi-annual review meetings.



8. Conclusion

The Policy Briefing on **22nd September 2025** was a landmark event that united **government authorities, civil society, faith leaders, and traditional rulers** in Enugu State. With over 75% of invited stakeholders in attendance, the forum produced actionable recommendations, renewed commitments, and culminated in the **adoption of AFJN's MoU on Child Protection**.

This milestone demonstrates that **when communities, governments, and faith leaders work together, child marriage and domestic servitude can be eliminated**



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