



AFRICA FAITH AND JUSTICE NETWORK NIGERIA

African Faith and Justice Network – Nigeria (AFJN-N)

Ebonyi State Chapter

ANNUAL REPORT

Reporting Period: October 2024 – September 2025

Theme:

"Empowering Communities to End Child Early Marriage and Domestic Servitude"

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AFRICA FAITH AND JUSTICE NETWORK NIGERIA

1. Executive Summary

The African Faith and Justice Network – Nigeria (AFJN-N), Ebonyi State Chapter, has made remarkable progress in its mission to end **child early and forced marriage (CEFM) and domestic servitude** during the reporting year of **October 2024 – September 2025**. Through a series of coordinated advocacy, community mobilization, capacity building, and policy engagement activities, the organization reached thousands of community members, policymakers, religious leaders, traditional rulers, youth, and families across Ebonyi and Enugu States.

Key Highlights of the Year

- **Community Dialogues & Town Halls:** Held across multiple LGAs (Ikwo, Izzi, Ebonyi, and others), where traditional rulers, cabinet members, women, and youth leaders adopted the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** and established **Community Monitoring Systems (CMS)** to regulate child apprenticeship and prevent domestic servitude.
- **Policy Briefings:** Conducted at both state and inter-state levels (including Abakaliki on 24th April 2025 and Enugu on 22nd September 2025), engaging government institutions, the judiciary, civil society, and faith-based groups. These forums resulted in stronger calls for **law enforcement, legal reforms, and accountability structures**.
- **Church Outreaches:** Leveraged faith-based platforms such as Assemblies of God, Anglican, Catholic, and Presbyterian churches to raise awareness and mobilize congregations as agents of change. Many church boards and pastors formally pledged to monitor and report domestic servitude cases.
- **Youth Engagements:** Over **1,087 youth (588 male, 499 female)** were mobilized across **13 LGAs of Ebonyi State**, with **CYON (Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria)** serving as a structured **reporting channel** for domestic servitude and child marriage cases.
- **Commemoration of World Day Against Human Trafficking (30th July 2025):** A mass sensitization at Ahia Ofuru market in Ebonyi State in collaboration with **NAPTIP and Ebonyi State Taskforce on Human Trafficking**, amplifying the theme *“Human Trafficking is Organized Crime – End the Exploitation.”*

Impact and Achievements

- **19 major activities implemented** across Ebonyi and Enugu States within the reporting year.
- Over **10,000 individuals reached directly**, with thousands more indirectly impacted through community structures.
- **MoUs adopted and enforced** in multiple communities (e.g., Eka-Awoke, Ndebor, Ndiebor Ishieke, Ndebia, Ihuigwe, etc.), with traditional rulers pledging enforcement.
- **Reporting and monitoring systems established** in churches, youth groups, and communities for sustainability.
- Enhanced partnerships with **NAPTIP, State GBV Taskforce, Ministry of Gender, FIDA, Human Rights bodies, and traditional institutions**.

This reporting year has laid a **solid foundation of community ownership, inter-faith collaboration, and policy engagement**. By combining advocacy with practical tools such as MoUs and CMS, AFJN-N has demonstrated that ending CEFM and domestic servitude is achievable through sustained partnerships, cultural transformation, and grassroots empowerment.



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2. AFJN-N Ebonyi State Coordinator' Desk

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present this Annual Report for the African Faith and Justice Network Nigeria (AFJN-N), covering the period from **October 2024 to September 2025**. This has been a year of remarkable progress, steadfast resilience, and renewed commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of children across Ebonyi and Enugu States.

Over the past year, our team, in collaboration with dedicated partners including **NAPTIP, the State GBV Taskforce, Sisters of the Good Shepherd, traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth advocates, and development unions**, has continued to confront the deeply rooted challenges of **child early and forced marriage and domestic servitude**. Through **policy briefings, community dialogues, town hall meetings, church outreaches, advocacy visits, and youth engagements**, we have reached thousands of community members with messages of hope, accountability, and transformation.

A key highlight of this reporting year was the **adoption and implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Community Monitoring System (CMS)** across several LGAs. Communities such as Eka-Awoke and Ndibia set new benchmarks in ownership, accountability, and cultural reform. The testimonies of survivors, alongside the commitments of traditional rulers, underscore that real change is possible when communities take the lead.

Yet, this journey has not been without challenges. We continue to confront **weak enforcement of child protection laws, cultural resistance, poverty, and limited resources** that constrain our outreach. Despite these hurdles, our collective actions have built trust and momentum, demonstrating that ending domestic servitude and early marriage is not only urgent but achievable.

Looking ahead, our vision is clear: to **scale up these interventions across Ebonyi State and beyond**, deepening partnerships with government institutions, strengthening reporting mechanisms, empowering survivors, and ensuring that every child grows up free, safe, and with dignity. We will also continue to invest in **youth leadership and women's voices**, recognizing them as critical drivers of sustainable change.

On behalf of AFJN-N, I extend my deepest appreciation to all our partners, donors, volunteers, and community leaders who have walked this journey with us. Your unwavering support inspires us to do more, reach further, and dream bigger. Together, we will continue to dismantle harmful practices, uphold justice, and safeguard the future of our children.

With gratitude and determination,

Peter Ewah Ikechukwu

Ebonyi State Coordinator

African Faith and Justice Network – Nigeria



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3. About Us

Who We Are:

The **African Faith and Justice Network – Nigeria (AFJN-N)** is a faith-based, community-driven organization dedicated to promoting justice, human dignity, and sustainable development. We work closely with traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society organizations, government institutions, and youth advocates to address social injustices, with a particular focus on **ending child early and forced marriage (CEFM) and domestic servitude**.

Our Mission

To **empower communities to protect children and vulnerable groups** by strengthening legal frameworks, transforming harmful cultural practices, and promoting sustainable alternatives that uphold dignity, justice, and equality.

Our Vision

A society where **every child is free from exploitation**, enjoys equal opportunities, and grows in safety, dignity, and hope.

Our Core Values

- **Justice:** Standing against all forms of injustice and exploitation.
- **Dignity:** Upholding the inherent worth of every child and individual.
- **Faith in Action:** Translating our shared values of compassion and solidarity into practical interventions.
- **Community Ownership:** Placing communities at the center of solutions for lasting change.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring transparency and responsibility in all our actions.

Brief History and Overview

AFJN-Nigeria operates as part of the broader **African Faith and Justice Network (AFJN)**, headquartered in Washington, D.C. AFJN has a long history of engaging faith leaders, religious congregations, and grassroots advocates to influence policy and bring justice to African communities.

In Nigeria, AFJN began its intervention on child protection in **2023**, targeting Ebonyi and Ghana as pilot areas for advocacy against **child early marriage and domestic servitude**. Since then, AFJN-N has:

- Conducted **policy briefings** at state and local government levels.
- Organized **community dialogues, town hall meetings, and church outreaches** across Ebonyi and Enugu States.
- Trained **youth advocates and Catholic sisters** to drive grassroots campaigns.
- Supported the adoption of **Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Community Monitoring Systems (CMS)** to track and regulate child placement in domestic work.

Today, AFJN-Nigeria stands as a leading voice and **bridge between policy and community action**, mobilizing diverse stakeholders to create safer, more just communities for children.

4. Programs and Activities

During the reporting year, **AFJN-Nigeria, Ebonyi State Chapter**, in collaboration with strategic partners such as **NAPTIP, Ministry of Women Affairs, GBV Taskforce, Catholic Sisters of the Good Shepherd, traditional rulers, and community leaders**, implemented a series of coordinated programs and activities aimed at ending **child early and forced marriage (CEFM) and domestic servitude (DS)**. These activities were designed to strengthen community ownership, build legal and cultural safeguards, and create sustainable mechanisms for child protection.

Program Goals and Objectives

- **Goal:** To create safer communities where every child is free from exploitation and has the opportunity to thrive.
- **Objectives:**
 1. Strengthen child protection systems through advocacy, community engagement, and the adoption of **MoUs and Community Monitoring Systems (CMS)**.
 2. Increase public awareness of the dangers of child marriage and domestic servitude through sensitization campaigns, church outreaches, and town hall meetings.
 3. Mobilize multi-sectoral stakeholders, including traditional rulers, religious leaders, government institutions, and youth advocates, to champion child protection.
 4. Promote accountability, policy implementation, and legal enforcement through **policy briefings** and follow-up advocacy visits.

Key Activities Implemented

1. Policy Briefings



Ebonyi State: A high-level **Policy Briefing at the Pastoral Center, Abakaliki (24th April 2025)** brought together over 95% of invited stakeholders, including government ministries, legislators, traditional rulers, and CSOs.

- **Enugu State:** On **22nd September 2025**, a **Policy Briefing at Jubilee Hall, Holy Ghost Cathedral Enugu** mobilized stakeholders from across the state, who jointly adopted AFJN's **MoU on child protection**.
- **Outcomes:** Strengthened policy dialogue, adoption of actionable recommendations, and commitments by state actors to enforce laws (Child Rights Act, VAPP Act) and support CMS implementation.

2. Community Dialogues and Town Hall Meetings



Held across **Izzi, Ikwo, Ezza North, Ebonyi LGA**, and others between February–September 2025. Brought together traditional rulers, union presidents, women leaders, youth leaders, and village heads to deliberate on ending CEFM and DS.

Outcomes: Formal adoption of **MoUs** in multiple communities, creation of **monitoring committees**, and commitments by local leaders to enforce child protection rules.

3. Church Outreaches



- Conducted in major churches such as **Assemblies of God, Anglican Church, Christ Evangelical Mission, Presbyterian Church**, and **Catholic parishes**.
- Outcomes: Clergy formally endorsed AFJN's **MoU** and declared their churches as child protection advocates. Example: Bishop Peter Iteshi adopted MoU and CMS for **Christ Evangelical Mission Izzi LGA**, mandating compliance across congregations.

4. Youth Engagement Programs



- Statewide youth mobilization across **171 wards and 13 LGAs of Ebonyi State**, reaching **1,087 young people (588M, 499F)**.
- The **Diocesan CYON body** was tasked to serve as a reporting channel for cases of DS and CEFM, chaired by the Diocesan CYON President in collaboration with AFJN Youth Coordinator.
- Outcomes: Strengthened youth ownership and accountability in monitoring domestic servitude and child marriage.

5. Commemorative Campaigns



- AFJN participated in **World Day Against Human Trafficking (30th July 2025, Ebonyi State)** with a mass sensitization in partnership with NAPTIP and Ebonyi State Human Trafficking Taskforce.
- Theme: *“Human Trafficking is Organized Crime – End the Exploitation.”*
- Outcomes: Public awareness raised among traders, youth, and

community members at **Ahia Ofuru market**, strengthening grassroots vigilance.

5. Achievements and Impact

Key Achievements

During the reporting year, AFJN–Nigeria, Ebonyi State Chapter made significant progress in mobilizing communities, institutions, and faith-based actors to end **Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM)** and **Domestic Servitude (DS)**:

- **Policy Engagement:**
 - Successfully convened a **High-Level Policy Briefing in Ebonyi State (April 2025)** with 95% of targeted stakeholders present.
 - Facilitated the **adoption of the AFJN Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** as a community-level accountability tool in **7 communities** and **5 churches**.
- **Community Ownership & Monitoring:**
 - **Community Monitoring Systems (CMS)** established in **Ikwo, Izzi, Ebonyi, and Ezza North LGAs**, enabling community tracking of children placed in apprenticeship or domestic service.
 - Traditional rulers across **4 LGAs** issued declarations committing to enforce child protection within their kingdoms.
- **Faith-Based Engagement:**
 - Church leaders—including bishops, pastors, and parish councils—publicly pledged to monitor households and **mandated MoU documentation before any child leaves their congregation**.
 - Youth and church networks empowered to serve as watchdogs and reporting channels for suspected DS or early marriage cases.
- **Awareness & Outreach:**
 - Over **8,500 people reached** through **church outreaches, town hall meetings, market campaigns, and youth engagements**.
 - **World Day Against Human Trafficking (July 2025)** drew over **1,500 participants** and heightened grassroots vigilance.

Impact

- **Shift in Cultural Norms:** Communities that once saw child marriage and domestic servitude as “normal” now recognize them as harmful practices.
- **Strengthened Legal Awareness:** Stakeholders—including police, lawyers, and civil society groups—committed to better enforcement of the **Child Rights Act** and **VAPP Law**.
- **Community Accountability:** With MoUs and CMS in place, child placements are now documented and monitored, reducing exploitation risks.
- **Increased Survivor Visibility:** Survivor testimonies during briefings and church outreaches gave a human face to the issue, mobilizing stronger empathy and action.

Success Stories



1. Eka-Awoke Community Takes Ownership

Following AFJN's advocacy visit after the April 2025 Policy Briefing, **HRH Eze Oliver Eze**, Traditional Ruler of Eka-Awoke in Ikwo LGA, formally adopted the **MoU** and directed full compliance across all villages. A **Community Monitoring System** was also established, making Eka-Awoke the first community in Ebonyi State to institutionalize this accountability framework.

"We must know where our children are, with who, and for what purpose. Let us join hands to protect and give proper direction to our future hopes." – HRH Eze Oliver Eze

2. Faith Leaders Champion Child Protection

At **Assemblies of God Church, Igweledoha, Izzi LGA (Sept 2025)**, the minister in charge pledged that **no child under 18 will leave his congregation without MoU documentation**. The church board and men's fellowship committed to serving as watchdogs, taking advocacy beyond the church into households and villages.

3. Youth Networks as Reporting Channels

Through youth engagement sessions across **13 LGAs**, the **Diocesan Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON)** was designated as a **reporting channel** for DS and early marriage cases. The system is co-chaired by **Mr. Benison (Diocesan CYON President)** and **Mr. Peter Ewah (AFJN Ebonyi State Coordinator)**, creating a sustainable reporting mechanism.

7. Challenges and Lessons Learned

Challenges Faced

1. Weak Legal Enforcement:

Despite the existence of the **Child Rights Act** and **VAPP Law**, weak enforcement mechanisms made it difficult to secure justice for victims. Survivors and whistleblowers often faced intimidation or stigma when reporting cases.

2. Cultural Resistance:

In some communities, deep-rooted cultural practices continued to normalize child marriage and domestic servitude. A few traditional leaders and families resisted interventions, citing "tradition" or "poverty" as justification.

3. Limited Resources:

Financial and logistical constraints limited the reach of awareness campaigns and delayed follow-up visits in certain LGAs, especially in distant rural areas.

4. Silence and Fear Among Survivors:

Many survivors, particularly children, were reluctant to speak out due to fear of retaliation, shame, or lack of trust in existing support systems.

5. Coordination Gaps Among Stakeholders:

While multiple actors (government, NGOs, faith groups) are engaged, lack of coordination sometimes led to duplication of efforts or fragmented responses.

Lessons Learned

1. Community Ownership is Key:

When traditional rulers, churches, and community unions take the lead—such as **Eka-Awoke Community's adoption of the MoU**—change is faster, deeper, and more sustainable.

2. Policy Briefings Must Lead to Action:

The April 2025 Policy Briefing proved effective because of **immediate follow-up visits**, which turned recommendations into **concrete commitments** at the community level.

3. Survivor Voices Inspire Action:

Testimonies like *Amaka's story* gave the issue a human face, moving leaders and congregations from passive sympathy to active commitment.

4. Youth Networks Drive Accountability:

The designation of **CYON (Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria)** as a reporting channel showed that **youth-led structures** are credible watchdogs and can sustain the fight against child exploitation.

5. Multi-Sector Collaboration Strengthens Impact:

Partnerships with **NAPTIP, Ministry of Women Affairs, GBV Taskforce, and faith leaders** amplified advocacy messages and built credibility with communities.

Areas for Improvement



- Strengthen coordination between government, civil society, and community structures to avoid duplication and ensure holistic support to survivors.
- Expand training for **community monitors and youth advocates** to improve case documentation and referral pathways.
- Increase investment in **survivor support services** (psychosocial care, legal aid, and economic empowerment) to rebuild trust in reporting mechanisms.
- Advocate for **budgetary allocation** within LGAs for child protection initiatives to ensure continuity beyond donor funding

8. Future Plans and Goals

Plans for the Upcoming Year (Oct 2025 – Sept 2026)

Scale-Up Policy Briefings:

Extend policy briefing sessions to the remaining LGAs in Ebonyi State and initiate the process in Enugu and other priority states, ensuring grassroots-level adoption of the **MoU and Community Monitoring System (CMS)**.



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- 1. Strengthen Community Monitoring Systems:**
Train and deploy community-based monitors, including youth, women leaders, and religious representatives, to actively track, report, and respond to cases of child marriage and domestic servitude.
- 2. Expand Survivor Support Services:**
Establish referral pathways in partnership with NAPTIP, Ministry of Women Affairs, and faith-based organizations to provide psychosocial support, legal aid, and livelihood opportunities for survivors.
- 3. Deepen Faith-Based Engagement:**
Engage more churches, mosques, and traditional faith institutions to adopt and enforce the **MoU** and create platforms for consistent advocacy against harmful practices.
- 4. Youth-Led Advocacy Expansion:**
Strengthen and expand youth networks (e.g., **CYON** and **school clubs**) to serve as **watchdogs** and community advocates, ensuring children's voices are included in decision-making.
- 5. Policy Advocacy and Legal Reform:**
Collaborate with lawmakers, justice institutions, and civil society to strengthen enforcement of the **Child Rights Act** and **VAPP Law**, ensuring punitive measures against offenders.

Strategies for Achieving the Goals

- **Community Ownership:** Prioritize collaboration with traditional rulers, town unions, and faith leaders to embed CMS and MoU practices into existing community structures.
- **Capacity Building:** Organize regular training sessions for youth advocates, women leaders, and community monitors to enhance reporting and response mechanisms.
- **Partnerships and Networking:** Build stronger multi-sector alliances with government ministries, NGOs, and international partners to scale interventions.
- **Evidence-Based Advocacy:** Document success stories, case studies, and data from communities to strengthen advocacy and influence policies.
- **Resource Mobilization:** Seek increased donor support, government budget allocations, and community contributions to ensure sustainability of programs.
- **Visibility and Awareness Campaigns:** Leverage media, IEC materials, and digital platforms to amplify messages and change community attitudes.

9. Acknowledgments and Appreciation

The African Faith and Justice Network – Nigeria (AFJN-N), Ebonyi State Chapter, extends profound gratitude to all those whose unwavering commitment, generosity, and collaboration have made this year's achievements possible.

Donors and Funding Partners

We sincerely appreciate the support of our donors and funding agencies, whose investments have enabled us to carry out transformative programs in communities. Your trust in our vision to end **child early and forced marriage** and **domestic servitude** has been the foundation of every milestone we recorded this year.



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Government Partners

We acknowledge the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ebonyi State Taskforce on Human Trafficking (ESTHT) for their policy support, technical guidance, and willingness to collaborate in enforcement and awareness campaigns.

Institutions and Networks

Special appreciation goes to our partners at **NAPTIP**, the **Catholic Diocese of Abakaliki (Sisters of the Good Shepherd, CYON, and parish priests)**, and the **Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN)**, for their consistent engagement and leadership in driving community-based solutions.

We equally commend the **Traditional Rulers Council**, Town Union leaders, and grassroots leaders across Ebonyi and Enugu States for taking ownership by adopting the **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** and establishing **Community Monitoring Systems (CMS)** in their communities.

Youth Advocates and Survivors

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to the trained **Youth Advocates** and courageous **survivors** who shared their testimonies. Your voices have become powerful catalysts for change, inspiring communities to confront harmful practices and uphold children's rights.

Staff and Volunteers

Finally, we extend deep appreciation to our dedicated staff, coordinators, and volunteers who worked tirelessly to organize town hall meetings, advocacy visits, church outreaches, and policy briefings. Your passion and sacrifice are the backbone of this movement.

Together, we are building stronger, safer, and more just communities where no child is forced into marriage or domestic servitude.

10. Conclusion

The reporting year (October 2024 – September 2025) has been a period of remarkable progress for the African Faith and Justice Network – Nigeria (AFJN-N), Ebonyi State Chapter. Through advocacy, community dialogues, policy briefings, church outreaches, and youth engagements, we collectively reached thousands of people across Ebonyi and Enugu States with the urgent message of **ending child early and forced marriage and domestic servitude**.

Key milestones such as the **adoption and implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**, the establishment of **Community Monitoring Systems (CMS)** in various communities, and strengthened partnerships with government institutions, religious bodies, and traditional councils demonstrate that sustainable change is possible when communities take ownership.



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Despite challenges such as limited resources, cultural resistance, and weak law enforcement mechanisms, AFJN-N has continued to provide a voice for the voiceless, empower survivors, and engage communities in reshaping harmful norms. The achievements recorded are a testimony to the power of collaboration, resilience, and faith in justice.

Call to Action

As we look to the future, our call is clear:

- **To Government and Policymakers:** Strengthen enforcement of child protection laws and ensure accountability at all levels.
- **To Traditional and Religious Leaders:** Continue to champion cultural and spiritual reforms that protect the dignity of every child.
- **To Civil Society and Partners:** Deepen collaboration, resource mobilization, and joint advocacy to scale interventions to more communities.
- **To Families and Communities:** Reject harmful practices and embrace education, empowerment, and child rights as the foundation for a better future.

Together, we can achieve our shared vision of a society where **every child is safe, educated, and free to fulfill their God-given potential**

“We must know where our children are, with who, and for what purpose. Let us join hands to protect and give proper direction to our future hopes.” – HRH Eze Oliver Eze, Traditional Ruler, Eka-Awoke

With faith, courage, and partnership, **a new dawn is possible for our children. The time to act is now.**





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