



PRESS RELEASE



VIOLENCE IN OUR HOMES: A CALL TO URGENT ACTION

1. The alarming escalation of violence in our homes, including spousal murders, and the inhumane treatment of house helpers has raised serious concerns among well-meaning Nigerians, and calls for urgent action. An examination of the issue paints a picture of war on the integrity and wholeness of the family, and shows a blatant violation with impunity, of the rights and dignity of house helpers especially the girlchild.
2. In response to this growing incidence of violence in our homes, the injustice against house helpers, and the violations of the rights of children, Africa Faith and Justice Network ([AFIN](#)), and Dominicans for Justice and Peace ([DJP](#)) in collaboration with representatives of various religious congregations of sisters, Catholic Men Organization (CMO), Catholic Women Organization (CWO), Catholic Youth Organization of Nigeria (CYON), and several non-profit organizations gathered from December 10–14, 2022, at the Daughters of Divine Love Retreat and Conference Centre (DRACC) Enugu to learn, analyze, and reflect on this troubling issue under the theme: **Violence in Our Homes: Tackling the Rising Incidence of Spousal Murders, and Abuse of Domestic Servants**
3. While domestic dispute is not new, the incidence of violent disputes over trivial things such as the texture of pap¹, leading to spousal murders is increasing at an alarming rate in Nigeria. The April 30, 2022, news by *Sahara Reporters*² citing data compiled by the *Daily Trust* shows that in the fifteen months preceding March 2022, there were officially reported cases of **forty-nine spousal murders**. Of the forty-nine murders, thirty-five were committed by husbands and fourteen by wives. The actual number is much higher, since many, especially those in the rural areas go unreported, and some die from the injuries they sustained after time lapse from the violent attacks. Far higher and in the hundreds, are the number of spouses beaten to near death or receiving long lasting physical and psychological injuries from violent attacks.
4. We listened to presentations by persons well acquainted with this issue, including experts on family life and child development, social scientists, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), legal experts and practitioners on the issue. Their collective presentations paint an alarming graphic picture of the prevalence and gruesome nature of domestic violence and abuse of house helpers in families, and ways these lead to long lasting and often permanent negative physical and psychological injuries, retards the developmental process of victims, and generates more violence in children exposed to such family environments. These children grow up seeing violence and abuse as a way of life.
5. The family, the home which in God's design is supposed to be a safe place for children to grow up and loved unconditionally yet we are witnessing that some of our families, many of our homes, have become centers where our children, especially our young girls and boys serving as house helpers are abused and traumatized in unimaginable ways. Some of these abuses and traumas have led to the death of the victims.
6. We discussed the negative impact these have on our families, our faith communities, and our nation. It generates in the children growing up in such homes, a culture of violence and violations of the rights of others. Children growing up in such homes, see abuse as a normal way of life, as how things are or how things are supposed to be. The ill-treatment of female house helpers influences the perception of, and the rights of women overall. Boys growing up in such homes are indirectly socialized into believing that one can treat a woman anyhow, that she is there at their disposal, and even expendable.
7. While house helpers are generally not forcefully 'recruited,' a close examination of current recruitment process, shows that it is marred by deceitful promises of a better life, which is

¹[Domestic Servitude and Gender Based Violence in Nigeria - Meeting of Minds — Meeting of Minds \(meetingofmindsuk.uk\)](#) retrieved October 3, 2022

²[49 Husbands, Wives Killed By Spouses In 15 Months As Domestic Violence Rises In Nigeria | Sahara Reporters](#) retrieved October 3, 2022

tantamount to human trafficking. This practice affects children from poor homes, children who have lost a parent, or children who are orphans.

8. We heard accounts of how house helpers are metaphorically invisible, tucked away in private homes, and subjected to long hours of labor without break; cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, taking care of children, preparing children for school, and waiting on them for whatever they may need. Many house helpers are subjected to working long hours a day, and a considerable number are not allowed to eat the 'prime' part of the food served to family members. They are deprived of basic education and are often subjected to mistreatment including sexual abuse especially of female house helpers.
9. Reflecting further on the horrific nature of this issue, the moral and spiritual implications, and to help restore our families to their wholeness, and prevent the continuance and spreading of this evil, we call on all well-meaning people to join hands, and as a matter of urgency, to tackle this evil that is gaining grounds in our midst, lest it overtakes us and ruin our families, our communities, our faith institutions, and our country.
10. As part of the measures to contain this evil,
 - a. We call on all faith communities to sensitize their members and charge them to address this evil through structured sessions and collective reflection
 - b. We ask that community leaders put in place a mechanism to monitor the welfare of children that are taken into homes for domestic service. This should include ensuring that these children have regular communications with their parents on the phone.
 - c. Communities need to tackle practices that impinge of the rights and dignity of God's children such as the dispossession of women of their heritage, and confiscation of their properties once their husbands die, denying them and their children of their rights in the community.
 - d. We heard of numerous incidences of sexual abuse of children by adults including their fathers. We ask that mechanisms be put in place to address such issues, bring justice to the victims and appropriate punishment to the perpetrators.
 - e. Recalling an African proverb that *"The ruin of a nation begins in the homes of its people,"* we urge our communities to work tirelessly to strengthen the institution of marriage, and family to curtail the incidence of domestic abuse to save our society, our nation from ruin.
 - f. The community should ensure that the practice of forcing a girl to leave the homes in search of money for the family, or to get married is abolished as this has mostly provided the grounds of domestic violence. Faith and community leaders need to work together to ensure the welfare of the victims.
 - g. Our forebears understood the benefits of collective contribution to raising children as noted in the saying, *"It takes a village to raise a child."* We urge that the protection of children be the collective responsibility of the family and the community.
 - h. Poverty should not be an excuse to force a child into domestic servitude, or marriage.
 - i. Community leaders should serve as role models calling out persons in the community who engage in violence and abuse in the families, especially that of the house helpers who are often children from poor homes, or orphans.
11. We will continue to sensitize our children in our schools about this issue and educate the communities to understand the negative impact of domestic violence.

For and on behalf of Africa Faith and Justice Network, Dominicans for Justice and Peace and Coalition Members

Sr. Eucharía Madueke, SNDdeN
Coordinator of Women Project
Africa Faith & Justice Network
eucharía@afjn.org

Rev. Frederick Ifeanyi Obananya, OP
Promoter for Justice and Peace
Dominican Province of Nigeria & Ghana
fredifeanyi21@gmail.com

This 14th Day of December 2022