

## Message from AFJN's Executive Director Dr. Steven Nabieu Rogers



Happy Easter! As we welcome the month of May, I am encouraged by the Africa Faith and Justice Network's (AFJN) progress in amplifying African voices and promoting social justice. The first quarter of 2025 has seen our dedicated chapters and volunteers driving meaningful change across Africa. From preventing early and child marriage and domestic servitude in Nigeria, Ghana, and Uganda, to addressing statelessness in Cameroon and land grabbing in Ghana, our work is making a tangible impact. A recent AFJN-led Policy Briefing that I attended in Abakaliki Nigeria showed how stakeholders are collaboratively exploring practical ways to protect young girls in Ebonyi State from forced marriage. It shows that governance only works when all of the people lead - not just some. In Washington DC, AFJN continues to shape the discourse on US-Africa relations through high-level panel discussions and policy engagements. I am therefore heartened by Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (DRC) stated commitment to dialogue to end that brutal conflict. We believe in Africa-led solutions, trusting that our communities can not only survive but thrive when empowered to solve their own problems. This is what our work has been about since 1983. Therefore, as you read through some of our collaborative engagements in 2025 so far, may the peace and love of Easter be with you and your family. Asma, njemu!" (Wishing you peace).



Donations



Membership



### Updated Mission Statement

Inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, the Africa Faith and Justice Network seeks to educate and advocate for just Africa-US relations that empower Africans to be agents of their own destiny, thriving in a just and equitable society.



### 2024 End of Year Report: Activity Highlights and Updates

AFJN's ["2024 End of Year Report: Activity Highlights and Updates"](#) mentions several accomplishments of the past year. While not exhaustive, it provides a broad sampling of the variety of issue areas and projects that the AFJN staff, and partners in the United States (US) and abroad, have achieved. To download a [pdf version click here](#).

## US Advocacy

### Voices of People of Africa and African Descent: Addressing Present Challenges to Equality and Non-discrimination



On April 16, Dr. Rogers was a panelist during the ["Voices of People of Africa and African Descent: Addressing Present Challenges to Equality and Non-Discrimination"](#) hybrid event sponsored by Mekonnen Tegegn Legal, Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference, Mimosa Midwives, the International Civil Society Working Group for the United Nations (UN) Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, Advocacy Network for Africa (AdNA), and Bread for the World that was held at the Church Center for the UN in New York.

### Navigating the Future of US-Africa Policy Event that Featured the South African Ambassador

On March 11, AFJN held the ["Navigating the Future of US-Africa Relations: Opportunities and Challenges in a Shifting Landscape"](#) hybrid event featuring a keynote speech by H.E. Ebrahim Rasool, (now Former) Ambassador of South Africa to the US, with a panel



discussion moderated by Dr. Rogers and featuring panelists Rev. Barwendé Sané, SJ, Former AFJN Senior Fellow and Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith, Strategist for Pan African and Orthodox Faith Engagement, Bread for the World. [Watch the edited event here.](#)

## Continued Advocacy Efforts for Peace in the DRC

AFJN welcomes the recent peace agreement between Rwanda and the DRC, committing to a draft peace deal by May 2, 2025, and respecting DRC's sovereignty. However, AFJN continues its advocacy, emphasizing the need for complete de-escalation of violence and unrest that has killed countless civilians.



Prior to this agreement, AFJN's advocacy efforts, alongside coalition partners, contributed to international condemnation as well as [measures](#) against Rwanda's actions and M23. Key advocacy highlights include: participating in the Search for Common Ground's briefing; meeting with US diplomats and

lawmakers; sending a coalition letter to US officials; and engaging with organizations like the Open Society Foundation, Africa Diaspora Connect, DRC Diaspora Desk, and Friends of the Congo. Meetings included key stakeholders like: US Diplomat Idia F. Irele, the US Embassy in Kinshasa; US Senator Ted Cruz, US Representative Jonathan Jackson, and US Senator Tim Kane's staffers. AFJN also sent a coalition advocacy letter titled "[Urgent Call for U.S. Action Against Rwanda's Violation of DRC's Territorial Integrity](#)" to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US Senators Ted Cruz (TX) and Cory Booker (NJ), and Representatives Jason Smith (MO) and Sara Jacobs (CA) with a Call to Action. AFJN remains committed to pushing for meaningful action to bring peace and stability to the DRC.

## National Black Sisters' Conference Collaboration

In March, Sr. Eucharía Madueke, SNDdeN, AFJN Women Empowerment Project (WEP) Coordinator was invited by the National Black Sisters' Conference to share the impact of the WEP in Africa. The sisters were grateful to learn about the challenges facing young African women and children and how they could join AFJN in the mission of empowering Africans to participate in shaping their society. Sr. Eucharía hopes to attend their annual gathering in July.

## 2025 Jubilee Year with Jubilee USA Network



AFJN is working on the 2025 Jubilee Year campaign, [launched in December 2024](#), as part of the Jubilee USA Network's (JUN) legislative working group to ensure access to aid and debt relief and restructuring will be available for African countries that are heavily burdened with debt. In February, JUN sent a "[Letter from global faith leaders to G20](#) finance ministers on the global debt crisis" that "champion[s] a debt cancellation framework [...] suspend[s] payments [, r]eforms International Financial Institutions [and s]upports the

creation of a UN Debt Convention". [On April 8, a letter](#) from the JUN and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops was sent to President Donald Trump that reiterated how "debt relief and restructuring make effective economic and security policies, strengthening [the US's] global moral leadership" and calling for "strong American leadership on debt relief and financial architecture reform."

## Making Free and Fair Filing Permanent



AFJN, as part of the [Coalition for Free and Fair Filing](#), continues to spread awareness of the benefits of the [IRS Direct File](#) free tax filing program for the low-income African Diaspora. While this program was expanded for the 2024 returns, it is not guaranteed to exist in the future. This is why the coalition is working to secure the permanency of this program; a program that aids those on limited or restricted income navigate the confusing tax filing process.

## Responsible Minerals Trading and Tracing

In March AFJN attended the Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa hearing on "Metals, Minerals, and Mining: How the CCP Fuels Conflict and Exploitation in Africa".

In April AFJN, as a member of the Public-Private Alliance for Responsible Minerals Trade (PPA), sent the PPA Leadership Team a "[Call for Action on Mineral Traceability and Conflict Financing in Eastern DRC](#)" letter urging them to take a clear and principled stance on the ongoing crisis in the DRC



with particular emphasis on the issue of mineral extraction by unauthorized actors, including armed groups. The letter focused on two reasons: first, that the PPA bears responsibility, as an organization committed to mineral traceability in the region, to provide accurate and transparent data on the destinations of minerals extracted from the eastern DRC, including the identification of intermediaries and end-buyers; second, the PPA's membership must not remain silent about the realities of due diligence efforts

within its network as membership may include companies whose products may contain components sourced from conflict-affected areas.

## Ending Gender-Based Violence - Panel Discussion



In January, Sr. Eucharía was a panelist for a discussion on "Gender-Based Violence in Africa" sponsored by the Dominicans for Justice and Peace, Africa. The Zoom panel provided experts and advocates the opportunity to shed light on the pressing issue of gender-based violence, by sharing insights and stories from their experiences, and providing solutions and best practices.

## Just Governance

### Cameroon



### Birth Certificate Crisis in Western Cameroon



In Cameroon, many factors contribute to youth who are often detained, prosecuted, and imprisoned at police checkpoints for lacking proper documentation. Many undocumented individuals are forced to bribe officers for release. They are caught in a cycle of extortion, lacking these legal documents, and as a result many children grow up as second-class-undocumented citizens who are effectively stateless in their own country.



At the request of Fombot's Deputy Mayor, AFJN mobilized youth (15+ years old) to participate in a birth registration mobile court. AFJN successfully negotiated a 40% reduction in court fees and ensured that families would only have the burden of paying one birth registration fee to register all their children. AFJN also continued to raise awareness that individuals cannot complete

school, legally marry, or access essential government services without a birth certificate. Widespread corruption (high bribe demands) and long delays in the civil registration system discourage parents from applying after the deadline.

These projects are made possible by funding from the Raskob Foundation for Catholic Activities and other organizational and individual members.

## Women Empowerment Project (WEP)

Additional [Women Empowerment Project](#) reports will be on our website in the coming month.

### Ghana - WEP





## Sisters Tackling Early Child Marriage and Domestic Servitude in Ghana: Training Youth and Engaging Stakeholders



In February, AFJN with AFJN-Ghana sisters held "[Working Together to End Child & Early Marriage and Domestic Servitude in Ghana](#)". During the sensitization and advocacy workshop, AFJN with the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary SN, Missionaries of Africa Merrivale Formation House, Safe-Child Advocacy, and Talitha Kum-Católica worked together to raise awareness on the impact of these practices on the child's health and also they discussed situations that lead to trafficking.

In March AFJN-Ghana held a "Policy Briefing: Advocacy Against Early Child Marriages and Domestic Servitude" in Tamale which provided an opportunity for the sisters and youth to share their knowledge with key stakeholders and government officials. According to the April 15th "[Africa Faith and Justice Network Ghana hold Stakeholders Policy Briefing in Tamale](#)" article by AFJN-Ghana, the aim of the workshop was "to raise awareness about the devastating effects of [these practices] especially on girls [...] in Northern Ghana."

## Kenya

### Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Safeguarding Training in Kenya



In January, Sr. Eucharia participated in a safeguarding training in Nairobi, organized by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdN)'s global leadership that represented four continents. This crucial training protects poor and vulnerable populations. AFJN hopes to incorporate similar trainings or to connect our partners in Africa with these types of safeguarding resources.

## Nigeria - WEP

*Content mainly provided by Mr. Christian Nkanta, AFJN-Nigeria Communications Officer.*



### Promoting Child Welfare at Ikwo Local Government Area Headquarters

"This meeting marks a pivotal moment [...] to protect vulnerable children in our communities [...] by adopting these systems, we can ensure accountability and foster a

In January, AFJN held an advocacy meeting at the Council Hall in Ikwo Local Government Area (LGA) Headquarters with 43 participants (traditional rulers, local government officials, and community stakeholders) united in their commitment to address issues affecting children. Stakeholders were encouraged to advocate for the LGA Chairman's approval and adoption of the Community Monitoring System and the implementation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (aimed at tracking and monitoring child welfare). Discussions highlighted the vital role of community ownership in combating early child and forced marriage and domestic servitude - a significant step towards enhancing child welfare in the community. Stakeholders also passed a resolution to integrate child protection measures into local council agendas, signaling a proactive approach to safeguarding children's rights, and strengthening partnerships with local authorities and continued collaboration to support these vital initiatives.



### **Sisters Empowering Youth Advocates, Raising Awareness, and Providing Alternatives in Akwa Ibom State**



AFJN, AFJN-Nigeria, and Dominicans for Justice and Peace raised awareness about the detrimental effects of domestic servitude, child marriage, and child labor at Life and Light Comprehensive Secondary School in Ini LGA, Akwa Ibom State in January. In addition to sensitizing the youth about the realities of these harmful practices the group worked with the school to establish a youth club. The club will play a vital role in sustaining the awareness campaign, by empowering students to become advocates for change in their community and to foster an informed and civically-engaged generation.

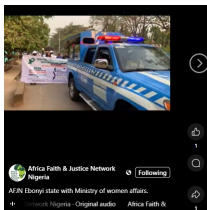


In March the AFJN team visited the [Methodist Comprehensive Secondary School Ete in Ikot Abasi LGA](#) and addressed the devastating impact of domestic servitude, dangers of early child marriage, and exploitation of child laborers. State Coordinator Rev. Sister Stella Usen HHCJ, led interactive sessions that sparked thought-provoking discussions and raised awareness about these issues among the youth.





## Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation in Ebonyi State



On February 6, 2025, AFJN participated in "[Step Up the Pace](#)" with the Ebonyi State Ministry of Women Affairs, the Office of Her Excellency, the First Lady of Ebonyi State, the UN Children's Fund, and other partners in a road walk and public campaign on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) to underscore the urgent need to eliminate FGM and other harmful practices affecting girls. Beginning from the Old Government House, the event brought together government officials, civil society organizations, youth advocates, and community leaders to raise awareness and strengthen advocacy efforts to end FGM, child marriage, and domestic servitude. AFJN Youth Advocate, Peter Ewah delivered a compelling advocacy message that emphasized the need for collaborative efforts in enforcing child protection laws, promoting the education of girls, strengthening community structures and alliances, and joint interventions to eliminate these harmful practices.



## Memorandums Protecting Children from Early Child and Forced Marriage and Domestic Servitude

**Akwa Ibom State:** In February, AFJN engaged a total of 39 community leaders including His Royal Highness Etebom Nsikan Udom, the Clan head, elders, women leaders, and youth leaders and community member on the issues of domestic servitude, child marriage, and child labor in Ukpum Ette Clan, Ikot Abasi LGA, Akwa Ibom. AFJN also presented a MOU, stating the modalities, to the elders that addressed the issues of domestic servitude recruitment, child marriage, and child labor to prevent these practices and to protect children from exploitation. The community elders actively participated in the discussion, sharing their observations and suggestions that included: the creation of infographics and other strategically placed visual aids to

raise awareness within the community; government partnerships; church engagements; support for poverty alleviation; and following up to ensure adoption of the MOU.



In March, eight members of the [AFJN team visited 28 participants](#) from the Ukpum Okon Clan, including the Wife of His Royal Majesty Edidem Dr. U. J. Ntuk OBom XII, village heads, women leaders, and youth leaders in Ikot Abasi LGA. Rev. Sr. Stella spoke on the negative impact of domestic servitude; Rev. Sr. Mary Ekpo, HHCJ, addressed the issue of child labor; and Mrs. Regina Fabian highlighted the dangers of child marriage and human trafficking. At the end of the session Rev. Sr. Stella presented a MOU to the Chief's Representative as a working tool to address these critical issues in their community. The Royal Majesty's Wife expressed her happiness with our efforts and pledged her support for this initiative. Participants suggested that AFJN: partner with the government for greater impact; include child abuse as a sub-topic for future programs; bring the program to churches within the clan; and provide ongoing support and monitoring of the MOU implementation.

The eight-member AFJN team also visited Ikpa Ibekwe Clan in Ikot Abasi LGA where 41 leaders (including the Clan Head, his Wife, elders, youth leaders, and women leaders) welcomed AFJN and dialogued about the harmful impact of domestic servitude, early child marriage, and child labour on their community. The team sought to foster collaboration with community leaders to eliminate these practices and promote social justice. Participants were very receptive including. Elder Sunday Elijah, Council Chairman of Ikot Aba Village, suggested the adoption of the MOU and pledged to enforce it within the clan while commending AFJN for its impactful efforts. Elder Paul proposed partnering with the Local Government Council Chairman to amplify advocacy efforts. Elder Uffot James recommended forming a welfare committee within the community to be more proactive with their interventions. While, the Clan Head expressed full support for AFJN's mission and pledged to collaborate further by extending advocacy efforts to Uta Ewak Village, where similar issues are reportedly prevalent.

**Enugu State:** In March, AFJN led a delegation to Eze's Palace in the Ndeaboh Autonomous Community, Enugu State, to advocate for an end to early child and forced marriage and domestic servitude. The discussions focused on: fostering community ownership and strengthening child protection systems; implementing a MOU to regulate child placement in domestic service; and promoting cultural reformation and sustainable alternatives. Several key achievements arose from the meeting that included the: MOU adoption to monitor domestic servitude cases; declaration of a state of emergency and commitment by traditional rulers to prohibit early child and forced marriage and domestic servitude; appointment of a gender officer to lead child protection activities; and institutionalizing of child protection measures at the traditional leadership level.

**Lagos State:** In March, AFJN held the "[Ending Domestic Servitude and Child Labour](#)" training in collaboration with Dominicans for Justice and Peace Lagos State. This was the first training where participants from parishes, Christian and Muslims, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and religious congregations in the Lagos metropolis came together for a weeklong-advocacy training that included visits to state government offices and meetings with key stakeholder to address these issues.

**Ebonyi State:** In March AFJN, with Trained Youth Advocates, and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, successfully carried out a town hall meeting at Offika, Ndibokotte Ward, Izzi LGA, Ebonyi State on early child and forced marriage and domestic servitude. The town hall meeting sensitized women on the dangers of these practice since they are the key influencers who contribute to these practices, often due to economic hardship, cultural norms, or a lack of awareness of the harm caused on children. The event challenged women to protect children's rights and ensure their well-being and had presentations from AFJN-N trained youth advocates and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, as well as interactive discussions. Educational materials, including information, education, and communication materials, were distributed to help the participants spread the message within the community.

The group also organized a consultative dialogue meeting in Ikwo LGA to introduce a Community-Based Child Monitoring System and to facilitate the implementation of a MOU as a strategic effort to combat early child and forced marriage and domestic servitude. The consultative dialogue provided a platform for key stakeholders, including government representatives, traditional rulers, religious leaders, and community-based organizations, to discuss and develop strategies to ensure that children are protected and to end practices harmful to children in these areas.





## Ebonyi State High-Level Policy Briefing



In April, AFJN held a high-level policy briefing on ending early and child marriage and domestic servitude. A part of this meeting included a dramatization highlighting the plight these children encounter. Watch it at [AFJN Nigeria's FaceBook page](#). This was a culmination of a 3-year-long effort to sensitize local communities and key stakeholders about the negative impact of these unjust practices on children's health and the development of the community. Following the briefing, participants visited a new community where they sensitized them on these issues. The communities and key stakeholders were encouraged to adopt the MOUs and ensure the MOUs are implemented

properly and timely.



### AFJN High-Level Policy Briefing Featured in *Asiwaju Media*

On April 30, 2025, AFJN's High-Level Policy Briefing was featured in "Ebonyi stakeholders unite to end child marriage, domestic servitude" in *Asiwaju Media*. [Read it here.](#)



### AFJN Workshop Featured in *The Guardian*

On April 15, 2025, Cleopatra Eki's article "Groups pledge to tackle child labour, domestic servitude in Lagos" features AFJN's WEP in *The Guardian*. [Read it here.](#)



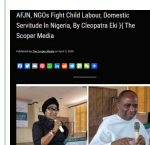
### AFJN Workshop Featured in *Asiwaju Media*

On April 14, 2025, AFJN's WEP workshop was featured in "Ebonyi Partners with Africa Faith Network to End Child Trafficking" in *Asiwaju Media*. [Read it here.](#)



### AFJN Consultant, Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP in *Business Day*

On April 6, 2025, Fr. Aniedi Okure, OP, AFJN WEP Consultant, was quoted in Seyi John Salau's article "When we torture, do harm to other human beings, we violate God's own divine creation – Rev. Fr. Okure" in *Business Day*. [Read it here.](#)



### AFJN Workshop Featured in *The Scoper Media*

On April 3, 2025, AFJN's WEP was featured in Cleopatra Eki's article "AFJN, NGOs Fight Child Labour, Domestic Servitude In Nigeria" in *The Scoper Media*. [Read it here.](#)



### AFJN Workshop Featured in *Radio Nigeria*

On April 1, 2025 AFJN's WEP was featured in Barnabas Hunjo and Innocent Onoh's article "Coalition Established in Lagos to Tackle Child Labour and Domestic Servitude" in *Radio Nigeria*. [Read it here.](#)





### Sisters Protecting Children from Child Labor, Domestic Servitude and Early and Child Marriage through Community-Led Engagements in Karamoja and Kampala

In January, AFJN revisited Karamoja and Kampala to see the accomplishment in child protection since AFJN's 2023 workshops and sensitization outreach. The empowered community continue working to find solutions protecting their children and monitoring the working situations in Kampala and other surrounding areas. Several participants shared their testimonials with AFJN, watch them below:



### Advocating for Alternatives: Learning to Farm for Sustainability



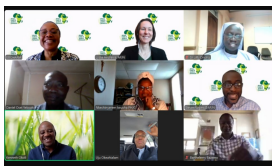
One of the challenges for the communities living in Karamoja is that they are nomads, animal rearers, which require open grazing but the available land is shrinking. Three young men from two communities in Karamoja were chosen to learn how to grow food in the very difficult and harsh climate in the hope that by learning these new niche skills, the community will be able to farm and become food secure (possibly turning a profit). The Comboni Missionaries in Karamoja have shown it is possible to transform the land. By learning these new skills, the community will be able to provide their children with alternatives to working in Kampala as domestic servants.



This project is made possible by grants from the Conrad Hilton Foundation, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Base Communities, and other organizational and individual members.

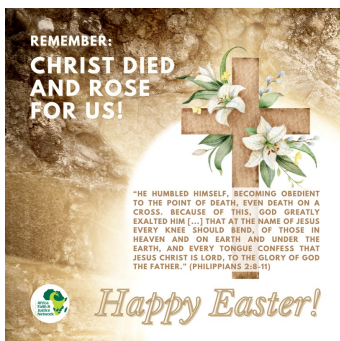
## News and Events

### Institutional Briefing



On April 8, AFJN held the 2025 Spring Institutional Briefing for Organizational members where several stories from the field, including a talk from Sr. Lilly Driciru, MSMCC, were highlighted and members were encouraged to ask questions pertaining to the work of AFJN in the US and Africa.

### Holy Week



[An Easter Reflection for Africa](#)

[Good Friday with Maryknoll's Way of the Cross for Peace & Justice](#)

[Palm Sunday Prayer](#)

### Interns Wanted



AFJN is looking for Summer, Fall, and Spring interns. More information can be found on [AFJN's Internship page](#). Learn more about [AFJN's Internship Program](#) and apply online [here](#).





## AFJN's Kelly Maltagliati Featured in the March Issue of the IVC Capital Corps Connector

On March 4, 2025, Ms. Kelly Maltagliati, AFJN Office Manager and Ignatian Volunteer Corp (IVC) Volunteer, was featured in Chris Kelly's article "IVC Member Profile Kelly Maltagliati: Providing Office Support to Africa Faith & Justice Network" in the March issue of *IVC Capital Corps Connector*. [Read it here.](#)



## Press Release: AFJN Endorses Statement on Women and AI and the Never Ending Cycle of Victimization

On March 8, International Women's Day, AFJN issued a press release "AFJN Endorses the International Women's Day Statement on Women and AI" in conjunction with endorsing the "International Women's Day 2025: Statement Prepared by Soroptimist International and the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO)". [Read it here.](#)



## AFJN with Catholic Task Force on Africa Issued Press Statement Advocating for Women's Dignity

On March 8, AFJN along with other members of the Catholic Task Force on Africa (CTFA) issued the press statement "International Women's Day: Advocating for Women's Dignity and Rights in Africa". [Read it here.](#)



## Press Release: AFJN Calling for Congressional Action Against Rwanda in the DRC

On January 31, AFJN issued the press release "AFJN Calls on Congress for US Action Against Rwanda's Violation of Territorial Integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo." [Read it here.](#)



## Press Statement: AFJN Urges Trump to Keep Commitments Ahead of Inaugural Address

On January 19, AFJN issued the press statement "AFJN Urges President-Elect Donald Trump to Uphold America's International Commitments and Support Africa's Development" ahead of the inaugural address. [Read it here.](#)

## Support AFJN in These Ways

### PRAY



### ADVOCATE



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