



AFJN Organizational Member Report November 2016-September 2017

Women Empowerment Project

Nigeria

- In November 2016 we held a capacity-building training session in Abuja with 86 sisters from about 25 Catholic women religious congregations. The theme for the gathering was *Service, Advocacy and Change: Reverend Sister and Nation Building*.
- Following their training, the sisters went to the National Assembly to bring their message to the law makers. However, due to the large number of sisters in their respective habits, security and gatekeepers found excuses to deny entry to the offices of the Senate President and Leader of the House of Assembly. Instead they stood by the side of the gate, sang, prayed, read speeches and held signs of protest. The sisters also visited the National Police Headquarters where they were well received. Through open discussion, the sisters and the police officers promised to work together to find solutions to the issues they are concerned about. The meeting concluded with all praying together.
- The November events led to the creation of Africa Faith & Justice Network Nigeria (AFJN-N) which was incorporated in February 2017.
- In April 2017, after hearing reports about the mushrooming numbers of illegal brothels where young and underage girls are trafficked for commercial sex in rural communities in Edo state Nigeria, we were determined to stop these crimes. Having made an advocacy training workshop, we decided to begin a public awareness campaign in two rural communities. While visiting the communities and discussing the issue of human trafficking, we also confronted one of the brothel owners. We documented our activities, and in subsequent meetings with the governor and police chief we reported our findings, demanding the immediate closing of the brothel, the arrest of the owner, the rescue of the young women, and the rehabilitation of the victims.
- In November 2017, we plan to hold other public campaigns, including more outreach programs in the state capital and in rural communities.

Ghana

- In May 2017 we held a workshop with 30 major superiors of Ghana who convened at the Franciscan Valley of Prayer, Saltpond, Cape Coast, Central Region of Ghana. The conference was titled *Waking Up to Our Call of Acting for Justice*.
- Following their gathering, the sisters set up a steering committee of nine sisters representing different communities to plan a meeting with the president of Ghana. The purpose of the meeting would be to explain to the president the nature of the work done by Catholic sisters and to request that missionary sisters not be charged the same immigration fees as foreign companies and

workers in Ghana. The sisters also encouraged each other to pay more attention to the issues of trafficking and abuse of women and children in their different areas.

- The next workshop will be held in October 2017, and it will include other sisters, not just major superiors. They intend to focus on other social ills befalling Ghana besides the immigration fees.

Tanzania

- In June 2017, more than 70 major superiors from Tanzania's women religious communities gathered at the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference Center in Dar es Salaam for a two day workshop titled *Religious Vocation, Leadership & Justice Ministry*.
- The Tanzanian sisters requested input on Pope Francis' environmental encyclical *Laudato Si*. A good portion of the gathering was spent discussing this document in light of environmental degradation in Tanzania and Africa as a whole.
- At the end of the gathering, participants agreed to visit the president of the country to request more responsible investment in the land as well as in production of radio campaigns to denounce violence against women and children. To keep themselves abreast of these commitments, the sisters inaugurated a steering committee of one dozen sisters from various religious communities to continue this work.

Land Grabbing

Ghana

- For nearly two weeks in February 2017, AFJN Policy Analyst Bahati traveled to Ghana's Volta region and the Greater Accra region to spread awareness on the issue of land grabbing.
- With the help of volunteers on the ground, we were able to hold nine gatherings, three live radio shows, 11 radio interviews, and three shows on the national television station.
- Chief Nii Tettey Akpe II coordinated the partnership of the Ngleshie Alata Traditional Council and AFJN in organizing a February 21st Symposium on Land Grabbing and Environmental Preservation. A total of 185 people attended, most of who were traditional chiefs.

Tanzania Conference of Bishops

- Aniedi gave a briefing to the Tanzanian Episcopal Conference in Dar es Salaam June 20, 2017 called the *Dislocation of Tanzanians from Their Land by Corporations: Impact on Family Life and Values*. This follows his briefing to the Ghanaian Episcopal Conference in October 2016.

DRC Delegation Visit

- In January 2017, the DRC's Minister of Information, H.E. Lambert Mende Omalanga, briefed the Catholic Task Force for Africa (CTFA), focusing on the current state of affairs in the DRC and the role of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in brokering peace in the transition process.
- In March 2017, we invited back H.E. Lambert Mende Omalanga as well as Mr. Mulegwa Zihindula, Center for Political and Strategic Studies/DRC, and Senator Mokonda Bonza, President of the political party *Convention des Democratres Chretienes* to bring awareness of the circumstances surrounding the postponed DRC presidential elections to those in Washington, DC. Other leaders were invited to round out the voices contributing to this discussion, but they were unable to make it due to visa issues.

- AFJN held two briefings with many attending in person and many more participating via our new online conference call system and Facebook Live. These talks were titled, “Road to a Peaceful Democratic Power Transfer in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: Challenges & Opportunities.”
- During the visit, we corresponded with 15 congressional offices, visited the Department of State and National Endowment for Democracy, and facilitated the Minister and Senator’s presences on Voice of America’s Washington Forum.

Visit by African Bishops

- Bishop Andrew Karnley of Liberia visited the AFJN offices in July as well as sat in on our monthly Catholic Task Force for Africa meeting.
- Bishop Anthony Fallah Borwa of Liberia visited the AFJN offices in August.
- Bishop Nicholas Djomo from the Kasai region in the DRC visited the AFJN offices and met with members of the Catholic Task Force for Africa in September.

Advocacy in the United States

- Advocated against the repeal of Dodd-Frank (Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act) through phone calls and letters to members of Congress. We also encouraged our supporters to speak out and contact their members of Congress.
- Aniedi was invited by Congresswoman Karen Bass (D-CA) to speak on a policy panel at the Capitol titled “Continuing the Conversation: End Famine Now.” He also worked with Congresswoman Bass on a bill to go before the House addressing the famine crisis in Africa.
- Attended National Endowment for Democracy event at the Capitol in June honoring recipients of the 2017 Democracy Award. One of those recipients was Angolan journalist Rafael Marques de Morais who was soon after arrested for speaking out against his home government.
- Signed onto statement on the House Resolution 128 that calls for more inclusive governance, accountability for human rights violations, and an independent investigation into the unrest and brutal crackdown in Ethiopia.
- Summer interns organized a social media enlightenment campaign for World Refugee Day.
- Letter to be sent to over 50 universities (most Catholic-affiliated) bringing to light the issue of land grabbing and urging schools to do their due diligence when investing their money.
- College campus toolkit revised and sent to nearly 50 universities with African Studies programs.
- Aniedi spoke twice at Catholic University this past school year, once on the subject of child migration, and also on the just governance movement in Africa as part of IPR’s Brown Bag Lunch series.
- Participate in local coalitions such as Catholic Task Force on Africa and Advocacy Network for Africa. Also serve on the leadership team for the Ecumenical Advocacy Days conference and organize the Africa workshops.
- Continuous presence at events around the DC area, including those at the United States Institute for Peace, the Wilson Center, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

AFJN in the Media

- Voice of America's Straight Talk Africa
 - African Land Reform
 - World Bank & IMF Spring Meetings
 - Medical Tourism
- National Catholic Reporter
 - Corporations in Africa
 - Sisters Fighting Human Trafficking (Global Sisters Report)
- Channels TV
 - Trump's First 100 Days
- Local Radio & TV stations
 - Land grab in Ghana
 - Violence against women and children in Tanzania
- POLITICO
 - Dodd-Frank law

Grant Support

- Past
 - Raskob Foundation
 - National Endowment for Democracy
 - Hilton Fund for Sisters
- Present:
 - Adorers of the Blood of Christ
 - Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
 - Sisters of Notre Dame Base Communities
 - Society of the Missionaries of Africa
- Potential:
 - Raskob Foundation
 - GHR Foundation
 - Presbyterian Hunger Program

Memberships

- 2016 end-of-year: 25 organizational members and 40 supporting (individual) members
- 2017 to-date: 19 organizational members and 16 supporting (individual) members