



# ANNUAL NARRATIVE REPORT

21/12/2018



**HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTER**

**GEORGE ETAMESOR**

*ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

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## INTRODUCTION

This report both builds on the earlier quarterly report made available in August (Update from HRCRC); and summarizes the year ended with special emphasis from May 29<sup>th</sup> 2018, when George Etamesor took over as Acting Director of Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Center.

The report attempts to highlight some of our initiatives and activities during the year, which are poised to catalyzing the developmental strides embarked on by Dominic Okoliko during his time as Acting Director; whilst also highlighting challenges peculiar to the center and recommendations for growth.

The HRCRC team is grateful to God, whose concept of a peaceful and just world we attempt to actualize in little ways, and we are grateful to St Patrick's Missionary Society for her continued support, and we thank Kevin O'Hara profoundly for his goodwill and support for the center.

## ADMINISTRATION

As occasioned by the draught in funded projects the center is currently experiencing, the team quite laudably and passionately have continued to volunteer their time at the center without remuneration; save for the acting director, the securityman and the NYSC lawyers. This is beginning to take a toll on the availability of the team but for a few very dedicated. However, most still are open to and contributing their time, experience and knowledge for the center whenever they are called upon to. The leanness of the team time however has enabled the center achieve quite a lot of growth with the unnecessary bureaucratic bottleneck baggage.

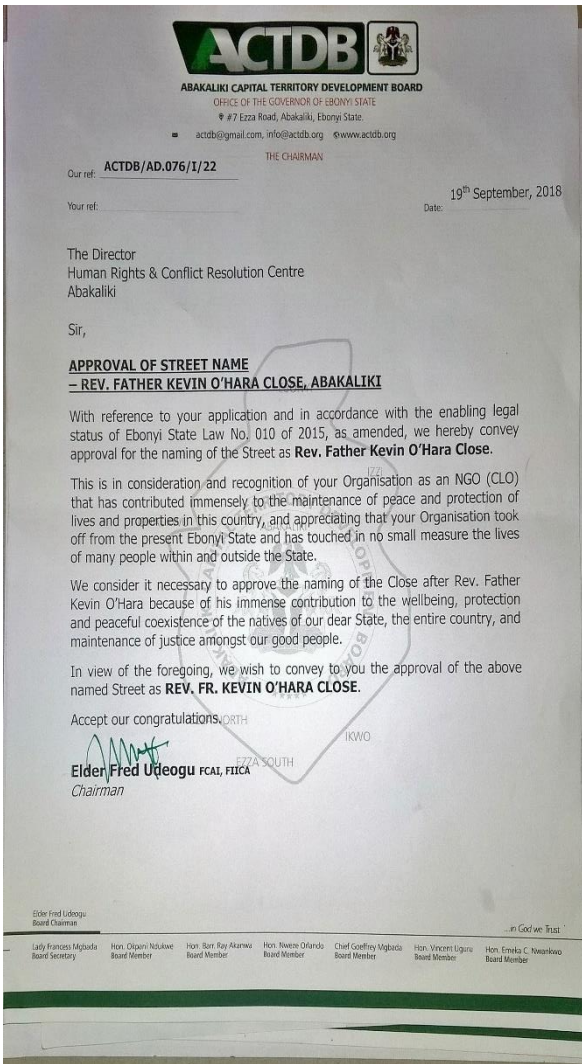
Also, the inclusion of the corps members, Barrs Chioma, Chukwuemika and Chukwudi to the team brought new life and energy to the team. Their youthful energy has practically translated to several success in and of the center especially as with the Police hierarchy, in the courts and Prisons. HRCRC is gradually climbing back up her ladder of recognition of Human Rights and Justice Significance in Ebonyi State and beyond.

## ACTIVITIES AND INITIATIVES

Over the course of the year, despite the limitation occasioned by the paucity of funds, HRCRC was still able to carry out several activities aimed at upholding social integrity, the rule of law and peaceful coexistence. Activities highlighted hereafter would mainly be a follow-up to others already made available in UPDATE FROM HRCRC in August 2018.

### **ACCESS ROAD NAMED**

In recognition of HRCRC's contribution to the social wellbeing of the state, the Ebonyi State Government named a landmark after Kevin O'Hara. The access road to HRCRC complex is now officially known as 'Fr Kevin O'Hara Close'. The formal presentation of the letter to the center and Fr Kevin coincided with the visit of the former Irish Ambassador to Nigeria – Sean Hoy.



George signing the Documents naming the street.



Chairman of Abakaliki Capital Territory Development Board – Elder Fred Udeogu presenting the letter to Fr Kevin.



## MEMBER OF NATIONAL COALITIONS

Also HRCRC is now a member of several national bodies and coalitions of civil society organizations. Notable amongst these are Open Alliance – a National Coalition of NGOs committed to ensuring the actualization of the Open Government Partnership (OGP); a partnership of government and the civil society to hold government to the ideals of Accountability and Transparency.



*HRCRC Acting Director George in a meeting with the Commissioner for Finance, the Permanent Secretary, members of the OGP steering committee and Budgit (a CSO based in Lagos) signing an MoU with the Ebonyi State Government to build a web portal for budgetary display –to aid transparency and accountability.*

Locally, in the constituted but yet to be formally launched OGP of Ebonyi State, HRCRC is a member of the steering committee, and the cochairman of the Access to Information Thematic Area of the State Action Plan.

Also HRCRC has been invited to the Nigeria Civil Society Situation Room – another Coalition of NGOs committed to ensuring credible elections in in Nigeria. HRCRC has participated in the South East meeting of the situation room.

## DOMESTICATED FIRST EVER EBONYI SITUATION ROOM

After participating the South East Situation Room, HRCRC in partnership with DIG foundation and ASCARD –both local NGOs, collaborating with INEC Ebonyi domesticated the Situation Room. In the activity which the Resident Electoral Officer (REC), the Electoral Officers (Eos) of all 13 Local Government Areas, supervisors, local actors and stakeholders were present to evaluate the state of preparedness and strategies employed to ensure credible and

peaceful elections. The meeting which was widely acclaimed as timely and very engaging was held in INEC headquarters, Abakaliki.



*HRCRC's George addressing the gathering*



*Cross section of participants at the dialogue session with INEC*

#### **ELECTION WITHOUT TENSION**

Also in partnership with DIG Foundation and as a precursor to our Peaceful Electioneering Project, HRCRC launched a forum tagged ELECTION WITHOUT TENSION. The forum which brings together stakeholders in the conduct of elections – INEC, Security Agencies, The Media and Civil Society to meet and deliberate on contributions of each stakeholder to ensuring peaceful and credible elections in Ebonyi State.



*Stakeholders after the launch of the Election without Tension forum in INEC office, Abakaliki*

**ADVOCACIES**

Also, in the course of the later part of the year, HRCRC fronted several advocacies to various groups, individuals and leaders. The major message of our advocacies was to sue for peaceful conduct especially in light of the forthcoming general elections. Ebonyi state is a very volatile state with lots of flashpoints and hibernating crisis looming. Thus, we continue to solicit the help of every individual and entity of the state to help preach the message of a nonviolent electioneering period.



*Visiting the Local Government Chairman and the DPO of Onueke, One of the most politically violent towns in Ebonyi State*



*Traditional institutions and rulers are not left out of our advocacies because we recognize their role in the social fabric of our society. They have a unique ability to influence the will and tempers of their constituents.*

## **SOCIAL CHANGE**

As agents for social change, HRCRC engaged the residents around the access road to the office now known as Fr Kevin O’Hara Close, and all other prayer groups that make use of the hill in a few meetings to collectively work on the road whilst we await government’s intervention. This activity was aimed at both encouraging citizens to take ownership of public properties around them; and also with the hope that the gesture would draw the state government’s attention to the road; by getting the local media involved in the activity.







The activity was a huge success recorded a huge turnout of eager participants and was published in two local Dailies. Whilst the government is yet to act on the road, the consciousness of the participants changed drastically positively. A coalition of them approached HRCRC to ask for a repeat and a consistent sustainable community work on the road; while it is noticeable that many residents now individually and independently make minor repairs on the road without prompting or the lethargy of waiting on the government.

#### **FOCUS ON YOUTH**

Currently, HRCRC is engaged in a 'catch them young' movement; in which the platform of the Child Rights Clubs in secondary schools of Ebonyi State is reawakened and revitalized. These clubs which are an outcome of the last executed project of the center in 2015 had gone moribund due to lack of sustainable contact.

We decided to reach out to educate the civil and social consciousness of young ones, whilst teaching them both about their rights, and to check the apathy to governance, transparency, accountability and human rights now exhibited by the average Nigerian adult today. It is also intended to help curtail the rate of child abuses now prevalent in the southeast and in Nigeria generally.

After getting permission from the Ministry of Education, we have started sensitizing secondary schools and youth groups in churches about Human Rights, child rights and integrity in government, and forming these clubs.



*HRCRC's George and Barr Chioma sensitizing youths of Presco Secondary school and Isielu youths.*



*After the sensitization workshop with youths of Christ Apostolic Church, Isielu.*

## BRANCHES

HRCRC branches are one of our greatest strengths because it confers on us a peculiar reach and access to the grassroots. HRCRC now has over 29 branches across Ebonyi state and over 13 are very active still, while we are making efforts to revive the less active ones. We embark on periodic visits to the branches to encourage them and monthly meetings / evaluations at the headquarters continues unabated on the first Saturday of every month.



*HRCRC's Moses extreme right after the inauguration of HRCRC's Onueke Branch*



*inaugurating the Onuayim branch*

We have inaugurated two new branches in the later part of the year – Ezza South and Onuayim, whilst four others are in line for both training and inauguration. It is fascinating to note that requests for HRCRC branches come from

both within and outside the state; which is a paradigm shift from when we go out to begin the process of establishing branches.

### DECONGESTION EFFORTS

Also we are currently actively engaged in decongesting the Remand Home for minors, whilst advocating for a more practical application of the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA); with the hope that it will reduce the congestion in Nigerian Prisons.

### 2018 WORLD HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

With support from St Patrick's Missionary Society (SPS), HRCRC was able to organize a rally for the 2018 World Human Rights Day. This year's rally took a slightly different outlook. Whilst the global theme was stand up for human rights, with the uniqueness of the state and the upcoming elections, we chose a theme that speaks to the immediate situation around us – End Electoral Violence.

Since one of the most widely acclaimed violators of human rights in Nigeria is the Nigerian Police, we undertook to get them involved in our rally; as a public statement and commitment to upholding and standing up for human rights, as well as sister CSOs and other passionate volunteers who are sympathetic to the cause. Three teams with three Hilux vans and the DPO of IKhaba Police Station joined in the rally.



### *DPO Ikhaba Police station and HRCRC's Barr Chioma*

The rally was slated for 7am so as to catch the rush hour traffic and other business owners opening shop for the day. It went through the meat market down to ogoja road and through gunning road and afikpo road to hilltop and terminated at HRCRC's office complex. The principal message was peace and the end of violence and intimidation during the upcoming elections; urging citizens to get involved actively and lawfully in all the election phases; and the underlying but loud message was stand up for human rights.




*George talking to the press after the rally*

Immediately after the rally, HRCRC's George proceeded to Radio Nigeria, Unity FM for a 30 min phone in program on the World Human Rights Day. The day before, HRCRC's George granted interviews to reporters from Unity FM, the People's Guide Newspaper, Citizen's Advocate Newspaper, and a reporter for the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) on the significance of the WHRD. The report of this featured in their respective publications and programs since the 10<sup>th</sup> of December.



Several advocacies were planned to relevant stakeholders such as INEC, security agencies, the senior special assistant to the Governor on internal security, amongst others. However, as at the time of compiling this report, HRCRC had only visited the police due to the political hullabaloo and end of year activities of various organizations.

Pictured here is HRCRC's Barrs Chukwuemika and Chioma, and George presenting our communique to the Police Public Relations officer at the police Headquarters.



Also, HRCRC branches were also carrying out activities, workshops and seminars simultaneously in their respective communities; all talking about Human Rights and Peace during elections.

### **MEDIA OUTREACH**

Our media outreach and partnership has continued to grow. We publish our activities and other sensitizing articles on The People's Guide Newspaper – a biweekly publication in Ebonyi State. Also we have an understanding with Citizens Advocate Newspaper, The Nigerian Tribune, NAN, Unity FM. These help in amplifying our voice when the need arises.

Our social media pages: Facebook: @HRCRC.Abakaliki and Twitter: hrcrcabakaliki are kept updated on all our activities; our website too [www.hrcrc.ng](http://www.hrcrc.ng).

### **RETAIL SERVICES**

Retail Services have continued to blossom.

**Access to Justice** recorded over 40 cases since January and are in various stages of resolution or litigation. It is also more proactive especially in unjust and indiscriminate police arrests, police cell and prisons visitations.

**Peace Building and Conflict Management** recorded over 80 new cases registered since January most of which are land disputes.

**Women and Children** Department has handled over 74 new cases since January. The statistics however indicate that there is a rising crisis of Domestic abuses.

We will focus on sensitizing the public on the evils of Domestic Violence in the coming year 2019.

### **ASSETS**

The office Complex still enjoys the new look, however there is growing concern about the fallen portion of the perimeter fence as to its security and aesthetic implications.

Thanks to support from SPS, the jeep now runs. HRCRC now has two functioning vehicles, A Toyota corolla and a Toyota 4runner. However, due to the age of these vehicles, and the bad roads in the rural areas of the state, they are always at the service of mechanics and this takes a toll on the little resources budgeted for the center. Furthermore, the corolla is in urgent need of body work and refurbishment.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Overall, we can safely assume that it has been a good year for HRCRC with activities and initiatives gradually propelling the center to its original height and beyond. HRCRC promises to continue on its present trajectory with even more vigor and intensity. Some prospects we can look forward to in the coming year include:

- Earlier in the year we wrote a proposal to Ebonyi State University seeking a partnership in establishing an Institute for Peace. We are hopeful that this proposal will yield some fruit in the coming year.
- We welcome three new young lawyers to HRCRC for their mandatory NYSC service and we are hopeful that they will build on the great foundation already laid down by the lawyers who just concluded their NYSC program. HRCRC hopes to retain Barr Chioma and Barr Chukwuemika for another six months – time span of the upcoming project on peaceful electioneering in Ebonyi State.
- We are also hopeful that like the government has promised, the rehabilitation of access road to HRCRC Complex will be included in next year’s budget and consequently executed.
- We are also hoping to build on the goodwill we currently enjoy amongst the people of Ebonyi State.
- We are also very hopeful that HRCRC will get a grant from Irish Aid to carry out some activities to positively influence the upcoming elections in the state.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR

While I am passively working on sliming the workforce, I continue to solicit your support in trying to reduce the team and getting fresh young hands into the system.

Also I advocate for a more proactive involvement and contribution by the Board of Trustees in the workaday affairs of the center.

Furthermore, HRCRC is overdue for a computerized system, thus informing my need for a more vibrant computer-literate workforce. Whilst we have made significant improvement in our data collection and recording process, there is still much to be done and I recommend that some members of the team – the receptionist especially be trained in a data management and analysis tools and these software be bought and installed on all computers of the center.

Importantly, with the renewed vibrancy of the Access to Justice Department, several cases require filings and court procedures, which in turn demands that the lawyers have a legal seal and stamp which our young lawyers are yet to get and the center doesn’t have. I humbly recommend that HRCRC endeavor to get the seal and stamp to accord it the status of a chamber on its own right; instead of appearing in court under the borrowed identity of another gracious law chamber as is the current practice.

Finally, the need for sustainable funding for the center can never be overemphasized. I humbly ask that this be urgently considered and implemented so as to give continuity and sustainability to the immeasurable work of Justice, peace and development going on in the center with or without funding from both donor agencies and international funders. I humbly suggest that an earth friendly venture be setup in trust; and dividends from the venture be used to run the center and remunerate the team.

## CONCLUSION

We express deep gratitude to God for the year ended, to St Patrick's Missionary Society for their support, and profoundly to Rev Fr Kevin O'Hara (SPS) for his maternal care, love, goodwill and support. We look eagerly to the prospects of the New Year.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays.

## HRCRC

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'George Etamesor'.

**George Etamesor**

*Acting Executive Director*

*HRCRC*

21/12/2018