

December 27, 2023



2023 END OF YEAR REPORT

CONCISE NARRATIVE REPORT



HUMAN RIGHTS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION CENTRE

HRCRC

Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Nigeria



ST PATRICK'S MISSIONARY SOCIETY

Dear Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ihwo SPS,

St. Patrick's Missionary Society,

Partners and Collaborators,

Season's Greetings from HRCRC Abakaliki.

This concise report attempts to highlight and summarize some of the activities and initiatives of the year ending 2023.

INTRODUCTION

The transitioning process initiated in 2022 was consolidated this year with several practical steps aimed at culminating in a more stable organisation for the coming years. Some of these will be highlighted in this report. We thank the Regional Leader for West Africa of St. Patrick's Missionary Society **Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ihwo SPS**, and indeed all members in the region, SPS, her benefactors, our partners and collaborators in the State, State Actors, and all people of good will who have contributed in making our year worthwhile and impactful.



ADMINISTRATION AND DEPARTMENTS

The year ending, HRCRC maintained her administrative structure with the Executive Director as leader, assisted by heads of the departments Access to Justice, Women and Children, Peace building and Conflict Resolution and Registry. These remained:

Executive Director: George Etamesor

Peace Building and Conflict Resolution: Jude Mgbechikwere

Women and Children: Eva Okafor

Access to Justice: Chioma Ikegbunam Udeh Esq

Counselling: Fr. Emmanuel Edet

Registry: Uche Odah

However, due to the existential realities from repositioning the Centre for more effective service, this will be slightly altered in the coming year. Peace building and Women and Children Departments will be merged into one – Alternative Dispute Resolution ADR Department. This merger which is informed by downsizing will not affect the thematic areas of intervention of the original departments.

RETAIL CASES AND INTERVENTIONS

Note: These data is comprised only of newly registered cases for 2023. Cases not concluded and carried over and continued in 2023 from 2022 are not included.

In the year ending, HRCRC **Access to Justice Department** provided Legal Aid services in a total of **28** Cases:

Granted Bail from Prisons	16
Released from Police Custody	5

Also, in Gaol Deliveries in Correctional Custodial Centers during the year, HRCRC assisted in the:

Discharge	1
Bail	6
Total	28

© *Source: HRCRC Registry (2023)*

HRCRC **Peace Building and Conflicts Resolution Department** intervened directly in **72** cases:

Land disputes	26
Interpersonal Conflict	7
Debts	22
Landlord & Tenant	11
Property	6
Total	72

© *Source: HRCRC Registry (2023)*

HRCRC **Women and Children Department** intervened directly in **147** cases:

Family Dispute	20
Child Abuse	3
Neglect	14
Intimate Partner Violence IPV	69
Child Custody	18
Rape	1
Intimidation	6
Pregnancy	11
Forced Marriage	1

Child Trafficking	1
Paternity	3
Total	147

© Source: HRCRC Registry (2023)

Parties from interventions from other departments are usually referred to HRCRC **Counselling Department** as a follow-up to providing more holistic interventions. However, the department intervened directly in 3 cases:

Rape	1
Depression	1
Family Dispute	1
Total	3

© Source: HRCRC Registry (2023)

HRCRC Branches also intervened in a total of **43** cases throughout the year.

As such, HRCRC intervened in a total of **293** cases for the year 2023 directly. As stated above, this data does not include cases not concluded and carried over from 2022 and continued in 2023, and spontaneous interventions necessitated by emergency and exigent issues.

RECRUITMENT

Continuing efforts at positioning the Centre better for more effective and efficient interventions and service delivery, we've also embarked on recruitment to fill up the positions of a qualified Accountant and a Legal Officer. The recruitment exercise which was done following best practice and our policy saw the emergence of Peter Udeh, a staff of CAPIO – Carmelites Prisoners Organization as accountant and Esther Ani as Legal Officer. Both are still in the induction process which will be concluded next year with the onboarding and all other processes concluded.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES



The Pioneer Board of Trustees met on Wednesday the 22nd of November, 2023 at the Theresa Ozor Conference Room and voted unanimously to dissolve themselves as a Board and handover the organisation to the incoming board as will be setup under the auspices of St.

Patrick's Missionary Society. All active and live members of the board except Barr. George Ukpai and Rev. Fr. Kevin O'Hara were present. In appreciation and honour of the outgoing board, letters of gratitude, commendation from Regional Leadership, as well as from Fr. Kevin O'Hara were presented to each member present, while a Plaque in their honour was unveiled in the Conference Room.

With the dissolution of the board, HRCRC is in the almost completed process of Registering a new 3 man Board. The HRCRC constitution as amended makes the new board tenured with a 4 year term that is renewable only once. The Constitution also explicitly recommends that unless exigent circumstances dictate otherwise, the West African Regional Leader of St. Patrick's Missionary Society remains Chairman of the Board. The HRCRC Constitution also recommends a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 members of the board. As such, the proposed members of the new HRCRC Board of Trustees are:



1. Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ihwo SPS (Chairman)
2. Princess Mrs. Chetachi Usulur (Secretary)
3. Honourable Justice Vincent Nwancho (Member)

SPS REGIONAL VISIT

We are most grateful to Rev. Fr. Emmanuel Ihwo SPS for his keen interest and genuine support of our activities; as demonstrated in his learning visit in August and Board visit in November to HRCRC. During his first visit, he met with staff, saw some of our activities first-hand and met with some of our branch members in the grassroots.

On his second visit, he participated in the Board Meeting that saw to the dissolution of the old pioneer Board of Trustees, and also met with the proposed members of the New Board of Trustees named above. The objectives of both meetings were achieved in very insightful ways.

BRANCHES

Due to the political and economic realities confronting HRCRC and her branches, and the lack of constant visitations, the pool of volunteers continued to wane. Active branches in communities reduced to 13, while 14 others slipped into dormancy. The attendance to monthly meetings was also negatively impacted.

As such, HRCRC in year plans an efforts at dormant branches and reinvigorating active branches



the coming aggressive reactivating 6 and retraining 13 existing and spread

throughout the state. Also, against the backdrop of the economic reality, Monthly Meetings will now hold quarterly, which would also serve as the General Meeting of all HRCRC Staff and Volunteers. We continue to be very grateful for their generosity and service; and their dedication in carrying out Monthly Mini Projects/Activities in their communities.

SAFEGUARDING



HRCRC is immensely grateful to SPS and to the Safeguarding office for the annual oversight visit of Raphael Okusaga, capacity building, and annual safeguarding meeting/training. During the oversight visit of 2023, the safeguarding officer was able to facilitate a training for all GBV actors in the state through the instrumentality of HRCRC. Also, a retraining was done for all staff and volunteers of HRCRC and Commitment forms were signed. The Commitment forms for HRCRC are now renewed annually after a refresher training for all staff and volunteers; whilst we continue to facilitate and step

down this information and knowledge to our spheres of influence within Ebonyi State.

2023 HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

HRCRC Chose a different approach to marking this year's Human Rights Day. Unlike previous years where it is marked by a roadwork or another activity of semblance, HRCRC this year decided to mark it in and with the Abakaliki Custodial Center of the Nigeria Correctional Service (Prisons). As at 10th of December 2023, the following stats were true of the Abakaliki Prisons:

Capacity of Prisons:	370
Inmates in Prison:	1430
Inmates Convicted:	63
Inmates that went to court on that day:	3



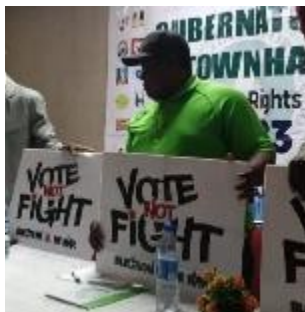
This implies that over **1000** inmates currently detained are **INNOCENT** or at least **PRESUMED INNOCENT**. Their reasons and mode of arriving in the prisons are very different but mostly not adhering to Human Rights Standards.

Since with Congestion such as this comes challenge with health, HRCRC asked for a list of needed Medical Supplies and Procured about 80% of the list provided. This was donated to the Prisons for exclusive use for the inmates. Whilst interacting with the inmates and the wardens, HRCRC promised to

- continue her intervention in helping to decongest the facility through her Access to Justice Probono services,
- Whilst also advocating to the Officer in Charge of the Prisons to using his lawful powers granted him by the NCoS Act 2019 **REJECT NEW INMATES** his facility is full to capacity as it is now. This will serve as a deterrent to the Police and other security agencies who charge and detain innocent Nigerians for frivolous and selfishly malicious reasons.

SOME INITIATIVES

2023 ELECTIONS



HRCRC Participated in the pre-elections sensitization and other activities aimed at ensuring credible, free, fair and violence free Elections in Ebonyi State; such as anchoring a debate by all the leading contenders for Governor, hosted by the National Human Rights Commission, launching the Vote Not Fight Campaign in all the communities we have branches within the state, amongst others.

HRCRC however did not participate actively and directly in Elections Observations but passively got reports from our branch members about the conduct in their communities. HRCRC also hosted the delegation of International Observers to Ebonyi State prior to the Elections.



SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE CONSULTORS

HRCRC has continued to grow to becoming a hub and consultor in the SGBV space in Ebonyi State. This has such as being the Steering Committee, for Magistrates and State Judiciary on Prohibition VAPP Law of the highest response cases in the National Database / Dashboard, amongst others.



manifested in several ways member of the GBV Taskforce facilitating a 3 days training other officials of the Ebonyi Violence Against Persons and GBV Matters, being one centres in reportage of GBV

EBONYI STATE NETWORK OF CSOs AND OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP OGP



HRCRC's dream of having a unified umbrella of credible civil societies within Ebonyi State has developed into having a viable leadership structure. The Network too has started issuing statements, applying for sponsorships and partnering with international organisations. Also, the OGP initiative was formally kick-started

in the state with the commissioning of the Technical Working Groups by the Principal Secretary to Ebonyi State Governor. HRCRC remains the Co-chair of the Peace building and Conflict Mitigation Working Group in the State. HRCRC will mainstream her activities on Peace building in the coming year into actualizing the OGP objectives in the state.

ADVOCACIES

In the course of the year, HRCRC advocated to several stakeholders and partners in the fight for Justice and Peace in Ebonyi State. Some of these stakeholders include the Chief Judge of Ebonyi State, the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioners of the Ministries of Border Peace and Conflict Resolution, Internal Security, amongst others. Some that could not be visited due to their unavailability and schedule are the Commissioner for Justice and Attorney General and the State Director of the SSS, etc.



The outcome of these advocacies have informed and influenced our proposed activities and focus in the coming year 2024. One example of this is lobbying to amend the Ebonyi State High Court Rules to allow for the Courts and Government Institutions to refer and allow Private and Non-governmental Organisations like ours provide services such as Mental Health, Therapy and Counselling Services, as these are not readily available professionally.

INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT



We thank SPS, and the West Africa Regional for their support in helping to repair some structural damage in and around the office building and compound. We are especially grateful for your support in helping



to erect a Security Post/House and Facilities for water – Overhead tank and the stand, and plumbing repairs inside the office complex. All of these are currently at 90% completed stage and will be completed before resumption of activities the coming year.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR'S

In order to enhance the effectiveness, efficiency and professionalism of our work, I recommend as follows:

1. The office building structural integrity is severely compromised and is manifest in the consistent dangerous looking cracks in the office building even after renovations and reinforcements. Thus I recommend a professional evaluation of the building to guide a more adequate repairs to the office building.
 - a. The Septic Tank Soakaway of the office is collapsed due to the ground movement of the terrain. As such, we are in urgent need of sinking a new one.
 - b. With the erection of an overhead tank and plumbing system repaired, the need for sinking a Borehole for water supply is immediately imperative.
 - c. Furthermore, there is currently installed in the office a 2KVA inverter system for power. This is grossly inadequate to power the needs of the office, hence the need for a bigger Inverter System.
2. HRCRC is in dire need of a Utility Vehicle to facilitate movement in the course of our work as the vehicles currently in use are old and in terrible conditions and can barely function.
3. As Justice is a fundamental part of SPS formation, I recommend that students in formation to be posted to HRCRC at some point in their formation journey to get a practical feel of the works of Justice and Peace.
 - a. As HRCRC has a vast land in the office space, and as part of the original plan for the compound, I recommend that a residential building be erected in the compound for principal staff of HRCRC; and also facilitate the safe, secure and simple residence of students in formation posted to the Centre, and other SPS Members who visit the state in the course of their work.
4. I also recommend that volunteers be helped with bikes under the supervision of HRCRC to help facilitate their work in the communities.
5. Finally, I recommend that all SPS affiliated organisations in this region, and around the world share a closer link through exchange programs and ideas sharing, etc.

CONCLUSION

We are continuously grateful to St. Patrick's Missionary Society and her benefactors; through whose support the work of justice and peace is continued in Ebonyi State through the auspices of HRCRC. We thank the leadership of the Society both at the Central and especially at the West Africa Regional level. We are grateful to Fr. Emmanuel Ihwo SPS and all members of Society for the enormous support they have shown to HRCRC since assuming office.

We pray and look forward to a more engaging and productive year 2024

Merry Christmas and a Prosperous New Year.

Warmly,



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27/12/2023

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