

Communique Issued at the End of the One-Day High-Level Meeting On Exploitative Child Domestic Work in Southeast Nigeria Held on July 11, 2024, at Carlton Swiss Hotel, Nza Street, Enugu State.

Introduction: The one-day high-level meeting convened to address the pervasive issue of exploitative child domestic work in Southeast Nigeria, recognizing its deep cultural roots and the urgent need for effective interventions. The meeting was hosted by Enugu State Ministry of Child, Gender Affairs, and Social Development with support from South Saharan Social Development Organisation (SSDO).

Background: Child domestic work (CDW) in southeastern Nigeria has historical roots as a means to provide education for underprivileged children in exchange for labor. However, it often leads to physical and sexual abuse, with promised educational opportunities frequently denied, largely due to power dynamics and fear of reprisal.

Key Discussions: The meeting drew insights from three key publications:

- **Nigerian Child Labor Survey 2022** by the International Labour Organization,
- **Behind Closed Doors: Measuring the Scale and Nature of Exploitative Child Domestic Work in Nigeria** by Freedom Fund,
- **Child Domestic Work in Southeast Nigeria: Legal Frameworks and Policy Recommendations** by South Saharan Social Development Organisation.

Action Plan:

Stakeholders resolved to support the following interventions to eradicate exploitative child domestic work:

- **Sensitization and Advocacy:** Launch campaigns to educate women and mothers in rural communities about the risks of child domestic work. Inform them about available justice mechanisms to address exploitation and abuse.
- **Women's Economic Empowerment:** Promote economic empowerment initiatives among women to reduce poverty, thereby decreasing the necessity for children to engage in domestic work.
- **Legal Framework Strengthening:** Advocate for amendments to the VAPP law or introduce new legislation targeting exploitative child domestic work. Propose stricter penalties to deter offenders effectively.
- **Inter-State Collaboration:** Enhance collaboration among southeastern states through regular multi-stakeholder meetings focused on sharing data, research and best practices, policy harmonization, joint awareness campaigns, coordination, and referral strengthening.
- **Inter-Agency Collaboration:** Enhance coordination and collaboration between the Police, NAPTIP, and other similarly positioned organizations while establishing functional referral networks and protocols between agencies.
- **Helplines and Confidential Reporting:** Establish helplines for reporting child trafficking and exploitation, ensuring whistleblower confidentiality and swift response mechanisms.

- **Police Support:** Allocate adequate funding to enhance the capacity of Nigerian Police family support units for swift investigation of reported cases. Provide comprehensive training on child exploitation laws and best investigative practices.
- **Support to the Ministry of Justice:** Allocate adequate human and capital resources to the ministries of justice to swiftly prosecute offenders and bring closure to victims.
- **Judicial Capacity Building:** Conduct specialized training programs for state judges and magistrates on laws related to child exploitation and trafficking.
- **Specialized Courts:** Establish dedicated courts such as Child Domestic Courts and GBV courts to expedite the prosecution of child exploitation cases and improve justice system efficiency.
- **Regulatory Body:** Create a regulatory body to oversee and regulate the movement of children for domestic work within and across states.
- **Partnerships:** Foster collaborations with Civil Society Organizations and International Organizations to build capacity and operationalize resolutions effectively.

Conclusion: In conclusion, stakeholders reaffirm their commitment to eradicating exploitative child domestic work in Southeast Nigeria. By implementing these comprehensive interventions, we aim to create a safer and more equitable environment for vulnerable children, ensuring their rights are protected and upheld.

The Police need to collaborate more effectively with other relevant agencies and have a functional referral pathway/system to ensure cases, and disputes are properly handled and resolved

Signed

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Dr. Kingsley Ude, Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Enugu State.

Mr. Kanayo Uzuegbu, Commissioner of Police, Enugu State.

Prof. Chika Ifemeje Sylvia, Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Anambra State.

Mrs. Ifeyinwa Obinabo, Commissioner of Women and Children Affairs, Anambra State.

Mr. Nnaghe Obono Itam, Commissioner of Police, Anambra State.

Dr. Ben Udo Urochi, Attorney General and Commissioner of Justice, Ebonyi State.

Barr. Felicia Nwankpuma, Commissioner for Women and Children Affairs, Ebonyi State.

Mrs. Augustina Ogbodo, Commissioner of Police, Ebonyi State.

Mrs. Jane Eneh, House Committee Chairman on Women and Gender, Enugu State.

Mrs. Nkechi Ogbuefi, House Committee Chairman on Women and Gender, Anambra State.

Mrs. Chinyere Nwogbaga, House Committee Chairman on Women and Gender, Ebonyi State.

