UROMI JDPCI Newsletter

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the September 2026 edition of the Uromi Justice Development Peace and Caritas Initiatives (Uromi JDPCI) Newsletter. Guided by our mission of bringing hope to the oppressed and empowerment to all, this edition highlights our ongoing interventions, community engagements, and grassroots impact across Edo Central Senatorial District and beyond.

· **Human Rights:** Under our Human Rights Education and Paralegal Scheme, we continue to strengthen grassroots justice structures across 36 communities in five LGAs. Through our quarterly review meetings reaching 425 participants and school-based Adolescent Human Rights Clubs reaching 412 students across 27 secondary schools, we have mediated domestic disputes, challenged harmful traditional practices, and equipped young people with practical self-defense and child protection awareness.

· **Migration and Countering Trafficking in Persons:** Through the Act Against Child Trafficking in Nigeria (AACTING) Project, we marked major milestones including our 3rd Annual Meeting with Religious and Community Leaders, the official project close-out meeting, and child-led town hall campaigns reaching 256 participants across two communities and one secondary school. Featuring successful international rescues from Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire, our work highlights how united faith leaders, empowered youth champions, and swift community protection networks are breaking the silence surrounding child exploitation.

· **Custodial Centre Apostolate:** Demonstrating that no life is beyond redemption, our monthly apostolate visits to the Ubiaja Custodial Centre reached 120 inmates with structured psychosocial support, spiritual counseling, catechism classes, legal aid, and essential welfare assistance. Highlighted by the moving reconnection of an inmate with his family after eight years of lost contact, our holistic interventions continue to restore dignity and hope behind prison walls.

· **Micro Credit:** Driving grassroots economic growth and financial inclusion, the Uromi JDPCI Micro Credit Scheme supported 73 small-scale business owners and farmers, 72.6% of whom are women, across 12 self-managed groups in 9 communities. By pairing manageable loan disbursements with hands-on financial literacy and savings mobilization, we are helping local traders expand their enterprises and build sustainable household financial security.

· **Parish JDPC:** Functioning as frontline beacons of justice across 26 parishes in the Catholic Diocese of Uromi, our Parish JDPC groups actively respond to localized human rights and community challenges. From mediating land and inheritance disputes to protect grieving widows to organizing peacebuilding workshops and civic observation drives, these parish structures prove that lasting peace and social justice are built from the ground up.

· **Climate Change and Environmental Sustainability:** Taking decisive action against environmental degradation and flood risks, our Environment Desk conducted routine inspections and disease control for economic trees at the Chancery premises while facilitating community town halls in Ubiaja and Irrua. Reaching 68 local stakeholders, these sessions mobilized households to adopt proactive drainage management, tree planting, and shared responsibility to build climate-resilient communities.

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND PARALEGAL SCHEME

QUARTERLY MEETING WITH PARALEGALS AND HUMAN RIGHTS CLUBS

Community Human Rights Groups Strengthen Grassroots Justice Across Five LGAs

Uromi JDPCI's quarterly review highlights 131 interventions and services, with renewed commitment to protecting vulnerable persons.

Uromi Justice, Development, Peace and Caritas Initiatives (Uromi JDPCI), with support from MISEREOR/KZE Germany, convened its Quarterly Review Meetings with community paralegals and human rights advocates from 26–28 August 2026. The meetings brought together 425 participants, comprising 219 males and 206 females, from 36 communities across Esan Central, Esan West, Esan North East, Esan South East and Igueben Local Government Areas of Edo State. The gathering provided an opportunity to assess programme progress, share experiences, discuss emerging human rights concerns and strengthen community-based mechanisms to promote access to justice. Participants included community leaders, influential women leaders, law enforcement officers, social welfare personnel and legal practitioners serving as paralegal supervisors.



UROMI JDPCI
CORPORATE FACT SHEET

Name	Uromi Justice Development Peace & Caritas Initiatives (Uromi JDPCI).
Owner	Catholic Diocese of Uromi, Nigeria.
Legal Holder	His Lordship, Most Rev. Dr. Donatus A Ogun (OSA)
Authorized Representative & Director	Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Fidelis Oriabure Arhedo
Corporate Registration No:	CAC/IT/No: 50042 & ED/MWASD/NGOR/200/04
Status	Faith-Based Non-Governmental, Non-For-Profit, Humanitarian and Development Organization.
Motto	Hope for the Oppressed and Empowerment for All
Areas of operation	Integral Development, Human Rights, Democracy, and Good Governance, Alternative Dispute Resolution, Correctional Center Apostolate and Legal Aid services, Peace Building, Micro-Credit, and Caritas, TB and HIV/AIDS care and support, HIV Counseling and testing, Livelihood and Food Security, Migration and Countering Trafficking in Persons, and OVC programming
Project steered	Conflict Management, Training of Electorate, Election Observation, Budget Monitoring, Community TB Care, HIV/AIDS Awareness Creation and counselling, Micro-Credit Facilities, Rural Community Development Enlightenment Campaign, Prisoners' Welfare Services, Gender And Child Rights, Widowhood Association, Human Rights, Training Programmes for Police Officers and Youths, Women Development & Promotion through Micro Credit, Emergency Response, Legal Aid, VC Programming, Capacity Strengthening for Good Governance, Campaigns and Sensitizations Against Human Trafficking as well as Creating Alternatives to Human Trafficking through Vocational Skills Acquisition and Empowerment, Human Right Education and Paralegal Scheme, Don't Pay With Your Life, Strengthening Community Participation to Prevent Human Trafficking and Integrated Child Health and Social Service Award, Galvanize Action for Effective Trafficking in Persons Response, Act Against Child Trafficking in Nigeria
Focus Group	The rural populace, the economically deprived, families, children, students, youths, women and widows living among the poorest of the poor in the society. Inmates in Prison and Ex-inmates, persons stigmatized with deadly diseases.
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Auditors	1. Grant Thornton chartered Accountants Emgn, Lagos Branch 2. Edforte, Fortne, Ehiagwina& Associates 141, Benin-Auchi Road, Ekpoma, Edo State
Bankers	· UBA BANK PLC Mission Road, Uromi · ECOBANK PLC Mission Road, Uromi · FIDELITY BANK PLC Mission Road, Uromi · UNITY BANK PLC Mission Road Uromi · UNION BANK PLC Mission Road Uromi · ZENITH PLC Mission Road, Uromi
Staff Strength Registered Volunteers	22 72
Project Executed	30



During the quarter, Community Human Rights Groups recorded 60 case-based interventions, addressed 11 non-case-based issues and provided 60 support services, bringing the total to 131 interventions and services. Domestic violence accounted for the highest number of reported cases, with 16 incidents, followed by neglect and abandonment, with 10 cases. Other concerns included rape, assault, child labour and trafficking, denial of education with 5 cases each, and other violations include widows' right to inheritance 1, violence against women/person 2, torture and cruel, inhuman or Degrading treatment 1, and freedom of expression/assembly 1. A further 4 cases were classified as other cases, comprising violations such as failure to provide a paid-for service, repeated extraction of blood under false pretenses, fraud, incest, and other related concerns. These findings highlight the continuing vulnerability of women and children and the importance of sustained grassroots protection efforts.

Several of these interventions demonstrated the practical impact of community-based human rights advocacy. In Eguare, Ekpoma, a widow who had been prevented from accessing a house inherited from her late husband successfully regained possession following community engagement. In Ewatto, a girl who had been trafficked to Lagos for prostitution received community support and assistance towards securing alternative employment, helping to reduce her vulnerability to further exploitation.



Another notable achievement occurred in Emaudo, where the Community Human Rights Group engaged community elders to address a traditional practice that denied a first son access to his late father's home and family if he had not performed a prescribed burial rite. The engagement resulted in the abolition of the harmful practice, demonstrating how constructive dialogue can promote human dignity while encouraging positive change in cultural practices.



In his remarks, the Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Fidelis Arhedo, commended the paralegals and Human Rights Groups for their dedication to serving vulnerable individuals and families. He emphasised that their work reflects the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly solidarity with people experiencing poverty, disadvantage and injustice. He encouraged them to measure their service by the positive difference they make in people's lives.

The quarterly review reaffirmed the importance of community-based structures in identifying violations, supporting survivors, facilitating referrals and collaborating with relevant authorities. Uromi JDPCI will continue to strengthen these mechanisms through community sensitisation, case follow-up and engagement with traditional, religious and other influential leaders to promote safer, more inclusive and rights-respecting communities across Edo Central Senatorial District.



ADOLESCENT HUMAN RIGHTS CLUBS

Empowering Adolescents to Recognise and Prevent Sexual Violence

Uromi JDPCI reaches 412 students across 27 secondary schools, equipping young people with practical self-protection skills and pathways to seek help.

Uromi Justice Development Peace and Caritas Initiatives (Uromi JDPCI), with support from MISEREOR Germany, conducted quarterly learning sessions for school-based Adolescent Human Rights Clubs from 18 September to 2 October 2026. The sessions formed part of the Human Rights Education and Paralegal Scheme and reached 412 adolescents (124 males and 288 females) in 27 secondary schools across Edo Central Senatorial District. With the theme *"Self-Defense Mechanisms Against Sexual Violence and Rape,"* the sessions aimed



to strengthen adolescents' understanding of personal safety, child protection and appropriate responses to abuse. Building on previous lessons, facilitators introduced internal, verbal and physical self-defence mechanisms, emphasising awareness of unsafe situations, trusting one's intuition, seeking help and prioritising escape where possible. Students were reminded that self-

defence does not mean confronting an attacker; rather, it involves taking the safest available steps to protect oneself and seeking assistance from trusted adults and appropriate reporting channels. The central message was clear: *"I am worth defending and have the right to defend myself."*

The impact of the sessions extended beyond the classroom, with approximately 52 additional people reached indirectly as students shared what they had learned with family members, friends, neighbours and peers. At Obiaza Mixed Secondary School, a student used her knowledge to report concerns about domestic violence affecting her elder sister and was guided to the Community Human Rights Club in Ubiaja for assistance. At Ewossa Secondary School, another student helped a friend experiencing unwanted sexual advances by encouraging her to seek support from her parents.



In another example, a student raised concerns with her mother after learning that her younger siblings were being sent to hawk vegetables in the rain, exposing them to potential dangers, including flooding and road accidents. Her intervention prompted a discussion about child safety, demonstrating how human rights education can influence decisions within families. At Uhiele Secondary School, a student encouraged her younger sister to speak out after she disclosed alleged sexual harassment by a teacher, reinforcing the importance of reporting abuse and seeking protection.



The growing involvement of school authorities also strengthened the initiative. Several participating schools, including Ekekhen, Obiaza Mixed, Agba, Ujoelen, Egoro Amede and Irrua Girls Secondary Schools, engaged principals and teacher coordinators in the sessions. Their participation provides an opportunity to sustain club activities and reinforce child protection messages beyond project visits.



Although poor road conditions and erosion delayed access to Obiyon Secondary School, the project team adjusted its schedule to ensure that students were not excluded from the intervention.

The quarterly sessions demonstrate that adolescent human rights education is moving beyond awareness-raising to practical application. Through the growing connection between school-based Adolescent Human Rights Clubs and Community Human Rights Groups, young people are becoming more confident in identifying protection concerns, encouraging others to seek help and sharing safety messages within their communities.



Uromi JDPCI will continue to strengthen these school- and community-based structures, ensuring that adolescents have the knowledge, confidence and support systems needed to protect themselves and contribute to safer environments in their schools, homes and communities.

MIGRATION AND COUNTERING TRAFFICKING IN PERSON
ACT AGAINST CHILD TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA (AACTING PROJECT)

United Against Trafficking: Faith and Community Leaders Standing Up for Our Children

Across Esan land, a powerful shift is taking place. Faith and community leaders are stepping into the frontlines to break the culture of silence surrounding child trafficking and exploitation.

On July 9, 2026, sixty-five leaders, representing the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), the Catholic Diocese of Uromi, Islamic clerics, African Traditional Religious Practitioners, and local community heads, gathered at Chancery Hall, Egbele, Uromi, for the 3rd Annual Meeting with Religious and Community Leaders, which was organized by Uromi JDPCI as part of its Act Against Child Trafficking in Nigeria (AACTING) project. The gathering reinforced a vital truth: that protecting children requires collective action.

During the meeting, which served as a strong reminder that safeguarding children requires a united front, the Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI called on leaders to leverage their pulpits, altars, and community platforms to promote vigilance. He commended the leaders for their unwavering partnership while emphasizing the urgent need for heightened vigilance. Beyond





traditional trafficking routes, participants were alerted to emerging threats like online recruitment and digital exploitation, emphasizing the need for active parental supervision.

Participants shared technical insights on spotting warning signs, reporting suspicious movements, and acting as community watchdogs. Discussions highlighted how poverty and family pressure drive vulnerability, but also pointed to tangible solutions: supporting vulnerable families, keeping children in school, engaging women's groups, and offering compassionate support to survivors without judgment. Leaders called on government institutions to improve socio-economic conditions while committing their own platforms to action. They pledged to engage women's groups, advocate for children's education, sensitize local business owners against child exploitation, and foster compassionate community support for survivors without judgment.



The impact of these ongoing efforts is already showing, with leaders noting increased awareness and a drop in reported trafficking cases across local communities. Stakeholders noted that widespread community sensitization through the AACTING Project has noticeably deepened local awareness and contributed to a decline in child trafficking cases across Esan land

When religious and traditional custodians unite, silence turns into action. Together, we can ensure every child in our community grows up safe, supported, and free.

A Milestone in Child Protection: Sustaining the Momentum of the AACTING Project

On July 30, 2026, Uromi JDPCI marked a defining moment in the fight against human exploitation by hosting the official close-out meeting of the Act Against Child Trafficking in Nigeria (AACTING) Project.



Coinciding with the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons with the theme "Trapped Behind the Scam". The event brought together 90 key stakeholders (57 males and 33 females), including institutional actors, traditional and religious leaders, civil society groups, and community members.

The gathering was both a celebration of three years of transformative impact and a solemn pledge to sustain the movement. Funded and supported by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and with coordination from ECPAT France and ECPAT Luxembourg, the AACTING Project succeeded in reshaping how communities in Esan land view child protection: shifting it from a purely government duty to a shared collective responsibility.



In his opening address, Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Fidelis Arhedo, Executive Director of Uromi JDPCI, expressed deep gratitude to funding partners and local champions. While this phase of the project has formally concluded, Fr. Arhedo reminded participants that the mission to safeguard children remains active, urging all leaders to continue building safe communities.



Presenting the project scorecard, Director of Programs Dr. Iyoriobhe Michael highlighted progress across prevention, advocacy, and reintegration. Key achievements include the creation of youth-led Child Champion Clubs, the establishment of local Child Protection Groups as trusted first responders, and enhanced coordination with security agencies and social welfare officers.

The event resonated with powerful testimonies. Archbishop Anthony Okosun and High Chief Hilary Ekhoye (representing the Monarch of Igueben) both commended the initiative, pledging to carry the anti-trafficking campaign forward within their congregations and kingdoms. Representatives from the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) and the LGA social welfare departments also affirmed how project training significantly strengthened their capacity to identify and respond to trafficking risks.

The meeting culminated in a symbolic signing of the Stakeholders' Commitment Board. Leaders pressed handprints onto the board alongside written pledges, sealing their dedication to protecting vulnerable children well into the future.

Though this phase of the AACTING Project has reached its final chapter, its legacy endures in empowered communities, vigilant leaders, and safer environments for every child.

Empowered Voices: Children Take the Lead in the Fight Against Trafficking

In a powerful demonstration of youth leadership, children across Edo Central Senatorial District recently stepped up as the primary advocates in protecting their peers from human trafficking. Between September 15 and 22, 2026, Community-Based Child Champions from Efandion and Igueben, alongside the School-Based Child Champions' Club at Idunwele Girls Secondary School, spearheaded town hall campaigns across their communities and school.



Supported by Uromi JDPCI through the Act Against Child Trafficking in Nigeria (AACTING) Project, coordinated by ECPAT France and Luxembourg, these campaigns transformed children from passive learners into active community educators. Rather than relying on adult speakers, the Child Champions developed their own concept notes, crafted key protection messages, and designed creative strategies to engage their peers, parents, and local leaders.

Preparation for the events included strategy sessions, poster production, and drama rehearsals supported by the project team. Through compelling keynote speeches and original drama performances, the young leaders brought urgent issues to life, tackling deceptive online recruitment, sexual exploitation, and the importance of speaking out when in danger. They alerted parents to subtle warning signs, urged vigilance, and shared practical reporting channels.



The town hall meetings reached 256 participants (205 females and 51 males), including community leaders, parents, teachers, youths, and prominent figures such as the Eson (Queen) of Igueben Kingdom and one of the Edionwele in Efandion communities. A central highlight was the stakeholder commitment exercise, where attendees pledged specific actions to safeguard children. Participants stamped color-coded palmprints onto commitment boards to symbolize their promises to speak up, report suspicious activity, and support survivors. These signed boards were officially handed over to traditional custodians and school authorities for permanent display as daily reminders of collective responsibility.



By leading these town halls, the Child Champions built vital confidence, public speaking skills, and leadership capabilities. More importantly, they proved that when children are given a platform, their voices become one of the most persuasive tools in breaking the silence around exploitation.



A Sister's Courage, A Mother's Hope: Breaking Free from the Shadows

When an 18-year-old girl managed to send a desperate, hidden message from Ghana back to her hometown of Uromi, she set off a chain reaction of courage and quick action. Trapped alongside her 20-year-old sister in a web of deception and forced sexual exploitation, the young women had almost lost hope. But that single outreach became their lifeline.

The alert reached the Esan Awareness Initiative, which immediately engaged Uromi JDPCI. Acting swiftly, Uromi JDPCI coordinated a high-stakes intervention alongside the Amedokhian Police Division and the Edo State Migration Agency. Their seamless partnership dismantled the local recruiter's network, resulting in an arrest in Nigeria and the safe, triumphant rescue of both sisters.

Returning home, however, was only the beginning of their journey. Beyond physical rescue, the true heroism lay in rebuilding their broken spirits. Uromi JDPCI stepped in with comprehensive wrap-around care: offering compassionate psychosocial counseling, urgent medical treatment, safe accommodation, food, and basic household essentials.

To ensure long-term freedom and economic independence, both sisters were enrolled in vocational skills training. Recognizing that poverty often fuels vulnerability, Uromi JDPCI also supported their mother with counseling and a ₦100,000 livelihood grant to boost her small business, while continuing ongoing food assistance to ease the household's financial stress. Today, free from fear and supported by a resilient home, the sisters, with support from Uromi JDPCI, are focusing on learning new trades, turning a dark chapter of survival into a promising story of self-reliance.

The Power of Community Vigilance: Bringing Our Daughters Home

When two young girls vanished from their local community, lured across international borders to Côte d'Ivoire under false promises and subjected to sexual exploitation, their family refused to suffer in silence. Equipped with newfound awareness and trust in local safety networks, they turned directly to their neighborhood Community Child Protection Group for help.

What followed was a masterclass in swift, community-led justice. The protection group immediately activated a local referral pipeline, contacting the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Ekpoma Division. Recognizing the critical nature of the situation, community actors and law enforcement moved in unison to track down and arrest the two local facilitators who had arranged the girls' trafficking.

This decisive local action created the vital leverage needed to secure the girls' freedom and bring them safely back home to Nigeria. The suspects were subsequently transferred to the NSCDC State Command and handed over to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) for formal prosecution.

This rescue stands as a poignant reminder that human trafficking thrives in silence, but crumbles when communities stand united. Thanks to a family's trust, a community group's quick action, and prompt law enforcement response, two young lives were saved, proving that a vigilant community is the strongest shield a child can have.

CUSTODIAL CENTER APOSTOLATE

Restoring Hope Behind Bars: Holistic Rehabilitation at Ubiaja Custodial Centre

During the third quarter of 2026, Uromi JDPCI continued its dedicated mission of inmate rehabilitation, restoration, and reintegration through monthly visits to the Ubiaja Custodial Centre. Uromi JDPCI blended psychosocial support, spiritual guidance, legal counseling, and essential welfare aid to bring meaningful transformation to those serving time.

Across the quarter, 120 inmates (113 males and 7 females) participated in structured psychosocial sessions. Designed to guide inmates along a path of personal growth, the sessions tackled critical themes: understanding anger triggers, rebuilding positive identities, and accepting personal responsibility for the future. Inmates actively reflected on self-control, forgiveness, and choices, demonstrating sustained engagement and mindset shifts over time.



Alongside emotional support, the apostolate nurtured spiritual renewal and legal awareness. Spiritual counseling was provided to 15 male inmates, while 13 participated in catechism classes preparing for Baptism, supported by the distribution of catechism books and rosaries. One participant shared how these lessons helped him abandon his former ways and envision a renewed life. Concurrently, 15 male inmates received legal counseling, gaining much-needed clarity and guidance regarding their pending court cases.

The quarterly visits also delivered powerful human impact through social welfare interventions. In a deeply moving outcome, Uromi JDPCI successfully reconnected an inmate, held in custody since 2018, with his family in Benue State after years of lost contact. His family, who had been searching relentlessly for him, expressed immense relief and restored hope.



Additionally, female inmates received essential sanitary hygiene supplies to uphold their health and dignity.

Through these combined efforts, Uromi JDPCI continues to affirm that no one is beyond redemption, proving that dignity, healing, and a second chance are possible even behind prison walls.

MICRO CREDIT DESK

Fueling Enterprise: Empowering Local Traders and Farmers Through Financial Inclusion

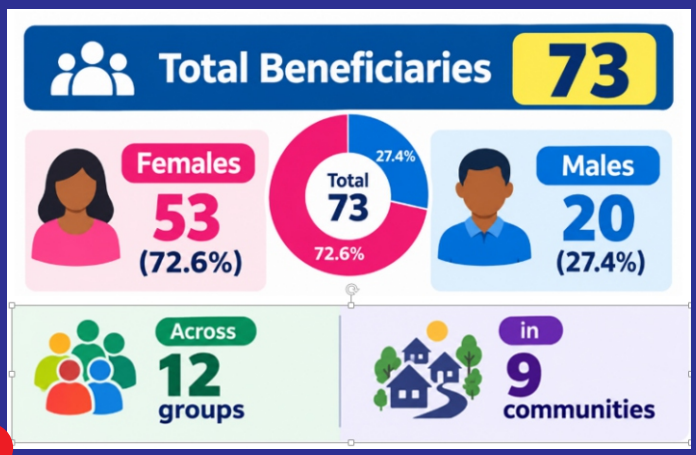
Uromi JDPCI Micro Credit Scheme continued its mission to drive grassroots economic growth, helping small-scale entrepreneurs and farmers break the cycle of financial insecurity across Edo Central Senatorial District. The scheme used targeted access to credit, savings mobilization, and hands-on financial literacy training to provide the capital and tools needed to expand the livelihoods of 73 beneficiaries, made up of 53 women and 20 men across 12 self-managed groups in 9 communities.

For many micro-entrepreneurs and rural farmers, traditional banking remains out of reach. The Uromi JDPCI Micro Credit Scheme bridges this gap by offering manageable loans alongside practical business education. During the quarter, beneficiaries participated in financial literacy sessions covering essential topics like money management, strategic loan utilization, simple record-keeping, and structured savings habits.

The human impact of this approach is evident in the resilience of local markets and farms. Female traders expanded their market inventories, farmers secured critical agricultural inputs for higher yields, and families gained reliable income streams to meet basic household needs.

Beyond loan disbursement, the scheme fosters long-term financial discipline. Beneficiaries demonstrated remarkable accountability through regular savings contributions and consistent loan repayments, supported by ongoing mentoring and field monitoring from Uromi JDPCI team. Sustained interest and new registrations throughout the quarter highlight the growing community trust in the initiative.

Uromi JDPCI Micro Credit Scheme continues to equip local business owners, particularly women, with financial tools and confidence to prove that sustainable community development begins by empowering people to build their own economic independence.



PARISH JDPC

Grassroots Justice in Action: How Parish JDPC Groups Are Transforming Communities

At the heart of Uromi JDPCI's mission are the Parish JDPC groups, which are grassroots beacons of hope that are active across 26 parishes and Mass Centres in the Catholic Diocese of Uromi. The groups, which function as localized networks for justice, peace, human rights, and good governance, help to empower everyday parishioners to identify and respond directly to the social and human rights challenges within their immediate communities.

In this quarter, Uromi JDPCI conducted targeted monitoring and follow-up across 11 parishes, including St. Anthony's Cathedral in Uromi, Annunciation in Irrua, St. Mary's in Ibore, and St. Theresa in Ukoni, among others, to assess progress, address operational bottlenecks, and deepen grassroots engagement. These visits provided vital guidance, helped streamline operations, and deepened local engagement, proving that frontline vigilance is the most effective shield for human dignity.



The true impact of these parish units unfolds in the real stories of lives changed. At St. Theresa Catholic Church in Ukoni, members stepped into a critical frontline intervention after completing a training on human rights advocacy. When a grieving widow faced property dispossession by her late husband's family, the parish JDPC intervened through peaceful dialogue and mediation, successfully resolving the dispute and safeguarding her inheritance rights.

Across other communities, parish groups demonstrated an equal commitment to peacebuilding and civic growth. At St. Anthony's Cathedral in Uromi, members launched an electoral observation drive and organized step-down peacebuilding workshops to equip parishioners with practical conflict-resolution skills. Meanwhile, groups at Christ the King in Opoji and Annunciation Catholic Church in Irrua focused on mediating local disputes, rebuilding internal structures, and providing compassionate pastoral support to members navigating personal grief.

Parish JDPC groups, standing up for widows, mediating local conflicts, training civic observers, and walking alongside the vulnerable, proved that true justice is built from the ground up, one parish, one family, and one community at a time.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Nurturing the Earth: Building Climate-Resilient Communities Across Esan Land

As climate challenges continue to impact everyday livelihoods, Uromi JDPCI's Environment and Climate Change Desk spent the third quarter of 2026 taking decisive action on two critical fronts: practical environmental stewardship and grassroots disaster prevention.

Beyond simply planting trees, long-term environmental protection requires constant care. Within the Chancery premises in Egbele, Uromi, the team conducted routine maintenance and inspections on newly planted fruit trees. When fungal infections were detected on several young saplings, Uromi JDPCI acted quickly, sourcing specialized treatments from the Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) in Benin City while carrying out targeted pruning to protect the investment. The message is clear for every household: planting a tree is only the first step; consistent care, inspection, and nurturing are what keep economic trees alive and productive.



Simultaneously, Uromi JDPCI took its environmental campaign directly to the people. Led by Executive Director Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Fidelis Arhedo, the team conducted community sensitization town halls on erosion control and flood prevention in Ubiaja and Irrua on August 25 and 27, 2026. Bringing together 68 participants, including local farmers, traders, civil servants, and community leaders from Esan South-East and Esan Central LGAs, the sessions tackled the root causes of seasonal destruction. Discussions highlighted how illegal waste disposal in gutters and waterways blocks natural drainage channels, turning heavy rains into destructive flash floods and severe soil erosion. Recognizing that open waste dumping remains a challenge, leaders called for renewed community vigilance, stronger collaboration with traditional custodians, and the revival of communal sanitation cultures.



Preventing erosion and flooding is not just a government duty, it is a shared responsibility owned by every household, trader, and religious community. We can protect our homes and build safer, and more resilient communities across Esan land by keeping drainage channels clear, planting trees to anchor exposed soil, and acting before disaster strikes.

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

Mobilizing for 2027: The Catholic Church Championing Democratic Integrity and Civic Engagement

As Nigeria prepares for the 2027 General Elections, the Catholic Church is taking a decisive step to strengthen electoral integrity, combat voter apathy, and build a culture of active citizenship across the country. On July 22–23, 2026, the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria (CSN) in Abuja hosted the Annual General Meeting of the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), centered on the theme: *"Towards the 2027 General Elections: The Imperatives of JDPC Participation and Civic Engagement."*

Hosted by Very Rev. Fr. Peter Babangida Audu (Executive Secretary of Caritas Nigeria and Director of the Department of Church and Society) and Chief Host Very Rev. Fr. Michael Ayanleke Banjo, the gathering brought together diocesan directors, provincial coordinators, development partners, and civil society actors.

Delivering his address virtually, the Chairman of the Department of Church and Society, Most Rev. Callistus Onaga (Bishop of Enugu Diocese), commended the sacrifices of JDPC observers over the years while setting a strong tone for safety and moral integrity. He urged observers to uphold honesty and professionalism without exposing themselves to unnecessary danger, reminding participants that they carry the moral authority of the Church. Building on this vision, Fr. Audu announced an ambitious national target: deploying trained Church observers to cover at least 60 percent of Nigeria's polling units in 2027.

Addressing the dramatic decline in voter participation, which plummeted from 85 percent in 2003 to just 26 percent in 2023, keynote speaker Rev. Fr. Raymond Aina, MSP, called on the Church to rediscover its prophetic role. He proposed a strategic "600 × 400" parish mobilization model, turning local parishes into centers for civic education, conscience formation, and issue-based advocacy under four core actions: *Register, Mobilize, Vote, and Hold Leaders Accountable.*



A central highlight of the AGM was the introduction and hands-on demonstration of VoteGuard, a cutting-edge digital election observation platform. Designed for real-time reporting, incident tracking, and polling unit result verification, VoteGuard empowers observers to capture official result sheets (Form EC8A) via mobile devices, dramatically improving election observation accuracy and transparency.

For local dioceses like Uromi, the meeting provides a clear operational roadmap. Uromi JDPCI is aligning its local strategy to intensify parish-level voter registration drives, roll out step-down VoteGuard digital trainings, strengthen non-partisan advocacy with local leaders, and expand local resource mobilization.

Though the journey toward democratic consolidation requires patience and resilience, the 2026 AGM reaffirmed that when faith communities stand up for justice and accountability, every vote becomes a powerful tool for social transformation.