

AFJN-GHANA PROJECT REPORT

**Interventions on Ending Early and Forced Child
Marriages and Domestic Servitude in Selected
Communities of the Northern Region**



**Prepared by
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FINAL REPORT

Interventions on Ending Early and Forced Child Marriages and Domestic Servitude in Selected Communities of the Northern Region Study

Submitted to:



Africa Faith & Justice Network Ghana

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction: The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN-GHANA) used a project called “Ending Early and Forced Child Marriages and Domestic Servitude in selected communities in the Northern region” to tackle the ingrained socio-cultural norms that perpetuate the phenomena of child marriages and domestic servitude. The initiative aims to empower youth and women, enhance the local governance systems, and promote behavioural change by sensitizing communities, advocating, and engaging the leadership of the target communities. The purpose of the impact assessment was to record the experiences of the participants in the context of the project, assess the effectiveness and sustainability of the project, and offer recommendations on how future interventions can be improved.

Methodology: A mixed method was applied, incorporating quantitative survey data and qualitative data (focus group discussions [FGDs] and key informant interviews [KIIs]). One hundred households were surveyed in the project communities (Gbulahagu, Chirifoyili, Diare, Kuli, and Bogkurugu). Chiefs, teachers, youth leaders, women, and project staff were also interviewed to obtain qualitative insights. Tablets were used to collect data with Open Data Kit (ODK) and analyze them thematically and statistically to achieve triangulation and validity. Ethical issues, such as informed consent and confidentiality, were strictly followed.

Findings: The evaluation established that the AFJN-GHANA project has successfully created awareness, positive attitude, and behaviour towards fighting early and forced marriage and domestic servitude. The level of awareness was 94 percent, and community leaders and radio sensitization were recognized as the most effective communication channels. More than 86 percent of the respondents said that they had seen a decline in the number of early and forced marriages, and more than 99 percent of the respondents said they could see that there were more school retention and participation in leadership roles by girls than before.

The qualitative results showed that youth and women became fervent supporters of child protection, organizing community watch groups and peer mentoring clubs. By-laws were instituted by chiefs and religious leaders, and education was encouraged as a preventive measure. The participatory, faith-based, and inclusive nature of the project led to ownership, which resulted in long-term community-based initiatives. Nevertheless, certain areas are still inhibited by obstacles such as lack of funding, ingrained cultural practices, and the inability of institutions to provide effective support.

Recommendations: To maintain and expand the project impact, the report proposes the strengthening of community-led mechanisms by formalized bylaws and youth/women advocacy groups. Economic empowerment efforts for women and adolescent girls need to be increased to counter the threats of poverty. To ensure increased coordination and accountability, the AFJN-GHANA should intensify its collaboration with government institutions, especially the Ghana Education Service and the Department of Social Welfare.

Positive behaviours should be reinforced by continuous learning and the creation of awareness through local radio, schools, and faith-based platforms. Lastly, the institutionalization of child protection priorities in District Medium-Term Development Plans (DMTDPs) and the development of effective child protection community-based monitoring systems will guarantee long-term sustainability after the project.

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The consulting team thanks the Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN-GHANA) for granting them the opportunity to undertake this Impact Assessment on Ending Early and Forced Child Marriages and Domestic Servitude in Selected Communities of the Northern Region. We would not have been able to assess the project without the help of the AFJN-GHANA project, logistical support, and cooperation.

We also wish to thank the traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, youth, and community members of Gbulahagu, Chirifoyili, Diare, Kuli, and Bogkurugu who allowed us to cooperate and make significant contributions to the data collection process. A special mention is given to all survey respondents, FGD and KII participants, and field enumerators, whose input and dedication to the assignment made this report a possibility.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronyms	Full meaning
AFJN-GHANA	Africa Faith and Justice Network
AU	African Union
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DMTDP	District Medium-Term Development Plan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GES	Ghana Education Service
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
IEC	Information, Education, and Communication
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoGCSP Protection	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
ODK	Open Data Kit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHS	Senior High School
UN	United Nations
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNW	United Nations Women
USAID Development	United States Agency for International
WB	World Bank

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

1.0 Background

The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN-GHANA) addresses a broad range of social and developmental issues, including hunger, conflict resolution, international debt, trade, child welfare, good governance, women's empowerment, and food security.

AFJN-GHANA's interventions in Africa have particularly focused on combating violence against women and children, human trafficking, child labor, early and forced marriages, and domestic servitude. Other areas of focus include youth development, education and life skills training, and empowering teenage girls.

Through its Women Empowerment Project (WEP), the AFJN-GHANA project has also engaged in addressing issues related to environmental governance, land and water rights, drug abuse, ritual killings, and occult practices.

AFJN-GHANA's primary intervention countries include Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

AFJN-GHANA has been active in Northern Ghana since 2022, implementing interventions in selected communities to address early and forced child marriages, child labour, human trafficking, and domestic servitude.

This impact assessment sought to take stock of the interventions implemented over the period, evaluate their outcomes, and determine whether there is a need for additional funding or strategic realignment to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of AFJN-GHANA's interventions in the region.

1.2 The Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the impact assessment, as outlined by the AFJN-GHANA project, define the scope and purpose of the assignment. The primary objective was to determine the extent and nature of the impact of AFJN-GHANA's interventions and gain insights into the key factors ("active ingredients") that contributed to these outcomes in Northern Ghana, especially in relation to early and forced child marriages and domestic servitude.

The specific objectives were as follows:

- Identify project participants for interviews and document their lived experiences of the interventions;
- Assess the extent to which the interventions have been impactful and sustainable;
- Provide recommendations to the AFJN-GHANA project on strategies to enhance impact and sustainability in future interventions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- Technical and Financial Proposal: A detailed proposal outlining the methodology, work plan, and budget for conducting the impact assessment.
- Final Report: A comprehensive impact assessment report not exceeding 30 pages, including an executive summary written in clear and concise English.

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Design of the Study

The study used a cross-sectional design with a mixed-methods design, which allowed the use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. This design helped to obtain a full picture of the situation under study and enabled triangulation of the results with other data sources.

The quantitative component was employed to produce statistically representative data regarding the level of household income, agricultural activities, accessibility to services, and any other pertinent socio-economic indicators. The qualitative aspect, that is, Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), provided insights into governance frameworks, women's participation, institutional interactions, and market activities.

2.2 Study areas and sampling

The study was carried out in communities of the Northern Region of Ghana, where the AFJN-GHANA implemented diverse activities from March 2022 to September 2025, focusing on interventions early and forced child marriages, as well as domestic servitude. Gbulahagu, Chirifoyili, Kuli, Diare, and Bogkurugu are the key intervention communities. The selection of these locations was due to the level of activities and variation in community dynamics, as recorded in the ToR Appendix 1.

Some of these areas served as venues for various activities, including community advocacy events, the development of youth advocacy groups, policy briefings, and radio engagements. The evaluation was designed to understand both the direct and indirect effects of these interventions on women, girls, and youth, and the community dynamics of change in general.

2.2.1 Sampling

The quantitative element of the assessment adopted a multistage sampling strategy to represent the key stakeholder groups concerned or affected by the interventions. This not only provided sufficient coverage of major subgroups, such as female and youth respondents, but also increased the accuracy of estimations at the regional level.

The sample size was determined using Solvin's formula for finite populations:

$$n_0 = 1 \frac{N}{e^2} + Ne^2 \quad eq. 1$$

Where:

- n_0 = is the sample size
- N = population
- $e = 0.05$ (margin of error)

Adjusting for field realities and to allow even distribution across the communities, a final sample size of 100 participants (i.e., 20 participants per community) was used.

Table 1: Sample Size for Individual Interviews (Quantitative Data)

District	Community	Sample Size			
		Total	# Of youth (30%)	# Of women (30%)	# Of men (40%)
Tolon	Gbulahagu	20	6	6	8
	Chirifoyili	20	6	6	8
Sagnarigu	Bogkurugu	20	6	6	8
Kumbungu	Kuli	20	6	6	8
Savelugu	Diare	20	6	6	8
Total		100	30	30	40

Source: Project Documents

In the qualitative aspect, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) was purposely carried out. The KIIs engaged community leaders (chiefs, elders, religious leaders), project implementers and local coordinators, government agency representatives, and NGO partners engaged in policy briefings, whereas FGDs engaged genderdisaggregated groups of participants, parents, or guardians of intervention communities to be inclusive and contextual.

The strategy of this mixed and representative sampling guarantees the quantitative reliability of the sampling strategy, as well as the qualitative richness, which can serve to inform project planning and future impact assessments.

Table 2: Sample Size for Qualitative Interviews

District	Community	Stakeholder	# Of KIIs	# Of FGDs
Tolon	Gbulahagu	Chief, Headmaster, &n Youth Advocate	3	1
	Chirifoyili	N/A	N/A	1
Sagnarigu	Bogkurugu	Chief & Project Staff	2	N/A

Kumbungu	Kuli	N/A	N/A	N/A
Savelugu	Diare	Teacher & Youth Advocate	2	N/A
Total			7	2

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

2.3 Data types and collection procedures

The evaluation was conducted using both quantitative and qualitative measures to obtain a comprehensive view of the results and the efficiency of the AFJN-GHANA interventions. Structured household surveys were used to gather quantitative data using tablets with Open Data Kit (ODK) to conduct computer-assisted personal interviews (CAPI). This method increases the reliability and efficiency of the data. The survey targeted major indicators, including the prevalence of child marriages at an early age, forced marriages, school attendance and education levels, community attitudes towards domestic servitude, involvement in advocacy, and rights and social service awareness.

To supplement the quantitative element, qualitative information was collected using Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). This was done in the presence of a wide range of stakeholders, including but not limited to community leaders and members of Youth Advocacy Groups, such as the Female Youth Advocacy Group (FEYAG), parents, AFJN-GHANA field staff, and representatives of the relevant government and nongovernmental organisations. These interactions contributed to the exploration of further stories regarding the way in which cultural practices, institutional reactions, and the perceived effect of the interventions worked.

In addition, secondary data sources, including internal documentation of the AFJN-GHANA, activity records, and any other reports, were reviewed. This gave the study contextual richness, facilitated the ability to triangulate results, and improved the validity of the assessment findings.



Picture 1: An enumerator interviewing a project participant at Bogkurugu, Sagnarigu District



Picture 2: An enumerator conducting FGD at Chirifoyili, Tolon District

2.4 Data quality assurance and control measures

A data quality control strategy was introduced to ensure the reliability, validity, and consistency of the collected data. All data collection tools were pre-tested before the fieldwork to determine the level of clarity, flow, and logicity. Changes were made according to the pilot feedback.

The enumerators were provided rigorous training on the tools, ethical practices, rules of data validation, and handling of the devices. Daily spot checks and back-checks in the field were carried out by supervisors to ascertain the accuracy and observability of performance by the enumerators. ODK made it possible to track activities in real time, identify missing or inconsistent responses, and correct errors immediately.

Outliers, duplications, and anomalies were identified through data profiling. The survey tools were constructed using internal data validation rules to reduce the number of input errors. Data were also cleaned and validated before analysis, which is highly associated with high data integrity standards.

2.5 Data analysis and reporting

SPSS, Excel, and/or STATA were used to analyze the quantitative data and apply both descriptive and inferential statistics. Vertical analyses were based on central tendencies (means and medians), distribution, and disaggregation by gender, age, and location. Comparative analysis can be used between FOs and regions to highlight spatial differences in outcomes.

Qualitative data (based on KIIs and FGDs) were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically using NVivo. The new trends and stakeholder stories were triangulated with the quantitative results to reinforce the interpretation of the findings and provide context.

The structure was based on the ToR and included an executive summary, methodology, findings by thematic area, recommendations, and annexes (tools, data tables, transcripts). Another PowerPoint presentation on the main findings of the stakeholders and partners of the project.

2.6 Ethics and Safeguarding Approach

The evaluation maintained high-quality ethical practices in its execution. All participants provided informed consent and received full information on the purpose of the research, the procedure, risks, and benefits of the research. Involvement was fully voluntary, and the respondents had the option of dropping out or pulling out at any time. To preserve confidentiality, all data were anonymized with unique identifiers, and no personal information was presented in any report. The information was safely stored and was only accessible to the research team.

Following the principles of safeguarding minors in the AFJN-GHANA, all team members were taught proper behaviour, especially when dealing with vulnerable groups, including women and children. Gender-sensitive procedures were observed, such as gender-segregated focus group discussions, where necessary, to provide protection and free participation. These steps ensured respectful interaction and safeguarded the rights and dignity of every participant in the study.

KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the key findings of the impact assessment of the project conducted by the AFJN-GHANA to terminate early and forced child marriages and domestic servitude in selected communities in the Northern Region. The results rely on the data of household surveys, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions, and are presented according to the three goals of the study: recording the experience of the participants, evaluating the project impacts and sustainability, and coming up with a solution that will improve the interventions in the future. Collectively, the findings underscore the projects impact on the community’s awareness, behaviour, and action in safeguarding children and gender equality.

3.2 Demographics of Respondents

Table 3 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries’ age, sex, main occupation, and farm size, among others, are presented and discussed.

Table 3: Socio-economic characteristics of beneficiaries

Variables	Figures
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Sex Distribution

The gender distribution of the respondents indicates that males comprised 61 percent with the females making 39 percent. This lack of balance shows the larger tendency of male participation in community activities and decision-making in most of Northern Ghana. Nevertheless, the high number of women implies that more women are included in the discussion on child protection and gender equality. According to recent research (UNICEF, 2024; GSS & UNFPA, 2023), women should be actively involved to maintain the momentum of eliminating child marriage and domestic servitude since the voices of women tend to lead to behavioural change at the household level and advocacy within the household.

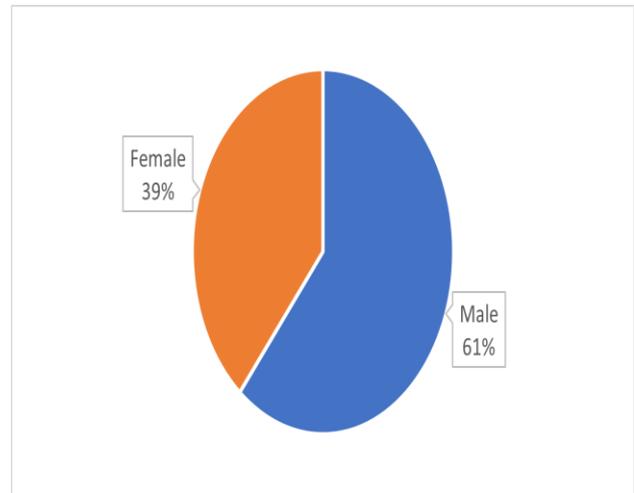


Figure 1: Sex Distribution

Average Age Distribution

The respondents were aged between 11 and 67 years and the mean age of the respondents was 31 years, showing the involvement of both the young and adults. This wide age distribution indicates that the AFJN-GHANA interventions have touched on several generations, making the community aware and talk about child protection. The involvement of younger participants is correlated with the evidence at the global level that highlights the importance of youth participation as the key to changing negative social norms (UNFPA, 2024; Girls Not Brides, 2023). Meanwhile, the intergenerational collaboration is facilitated by the presence of adults, which recent research identifies as critical to maintaining the behavioural change in the long-term in opposition to child marriage and domestic servitude.

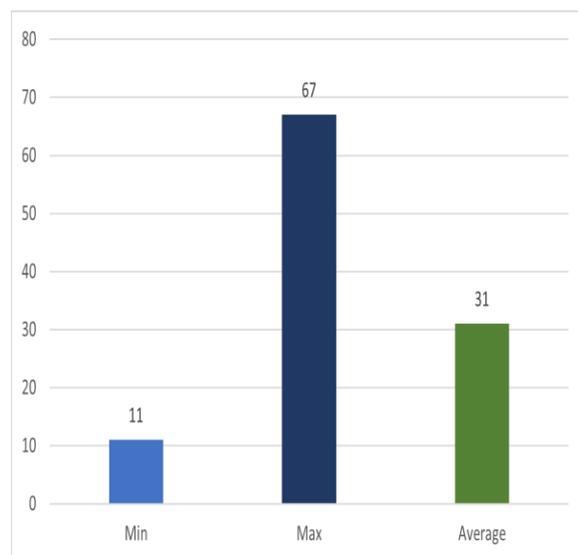


Figure 2: Average Age Distribution

Educational Level

The findings indicate that 41 percent of the respondents were not given any formal education, 25 percent attained senior high school, and just 8 percent got to tertiary level. This trend underscores the inequalities that have existed in education, especially among the rural people, which still affect the risk of child marriage. Recent studies (UNESCO, 2024; UNFPA, 2023) also indicate that low education levels are strongly associated with early marriages and a status of domestic servants in girls. The fact that the respondents with higher education were, however there, indicates gradual access improvement to schooling, which is the positive ripple effects of the community sensitization and gender-focused intervention with the support of AFJN-GHANA.

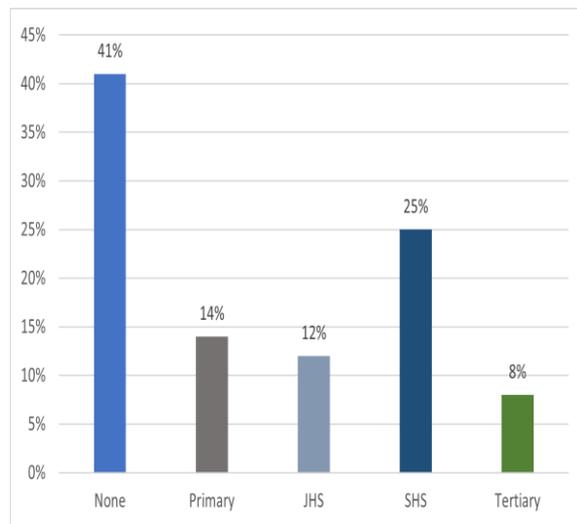


Figure 3: Educational Level

Household Size

The respondents had an average family size of 11 people with a range of 3 and 30 people per household, showing large family set-ups which is characteristic of rural Northern Ghana. These extended families tend to strain families economically, leading to practices such as early marriage and child slavery as a coping strategy. Recent statistics (UNICEF, 2024; Ghana Statistical Service, 2023) verify that the household size are closely related to the vulnerability of childbirth since a family with many children has more problems in accessing education, and protection of all children. This highlights the importance of ensuring family planning and livelihood support are incorporated into the child protection programmes in order to create sustainable results.

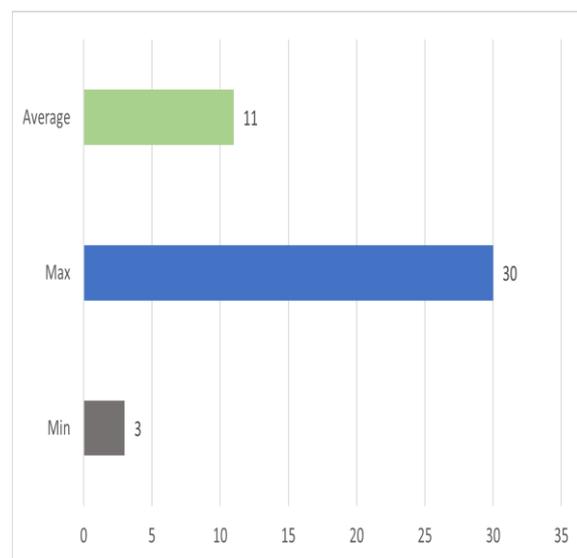


Figure 4: Household Size

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.3 Project Participants and their Lived Experiences

3.3.1 Levels of awareness and participation

The findings demonstrate that the majority of the respondents (94 percent) knew about the AFJN-GHANA project, which means that the project had effectively reached out and engaged the community. Such awareness also demonstrates the effectiveness of AFJN-GHANAs communication strategy by local leaders and the media. More recent research (UNICEF, 2023; Plan International, 2024) also mentions the high level of awareness as a means to engage communities and change the behavioural patterns of child protection programmes in the long run.

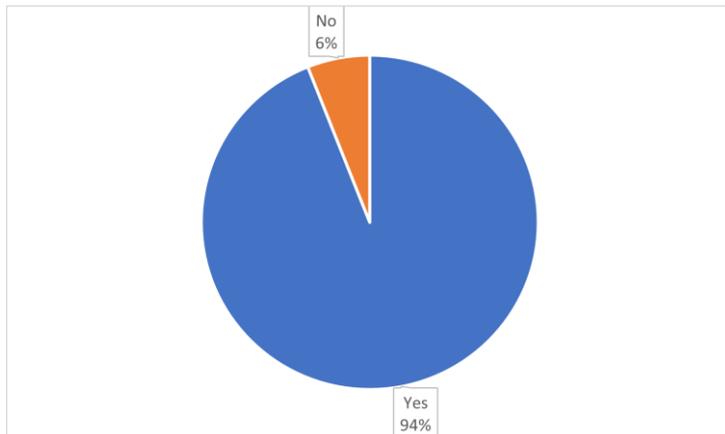


Figure 5: Awareness level

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.3.2 How participants first heard about the project

The majority of respondents (87%) received information about the AFJN-GHANA project in the community through chiefs, opinion leaders, and local meetings rather than through radio and NGOs. This highlights the efficiency of community-based communication in mobilizing participation. Current research (World Bank, 2024; CARE International, 2023) proves that trusted local structures help to increase the visibility of projects and their ownership, especially in rural areas where interpersonal communication is the most credible source of information.

The qualitative data from the FGDs proved that the most effective communication channels were community leaders and local networks. One of the male members of the FGD, Gbulahagu, stated “an announcement of the programme was made at the mosque after evening prayer so we were all eager to benefit from the project”. On the same note, an FGD participant, Chirifoyili, said “I first heard about the intervention on the radio, but our Assembly Member came to explain more about the project to our understanding”.

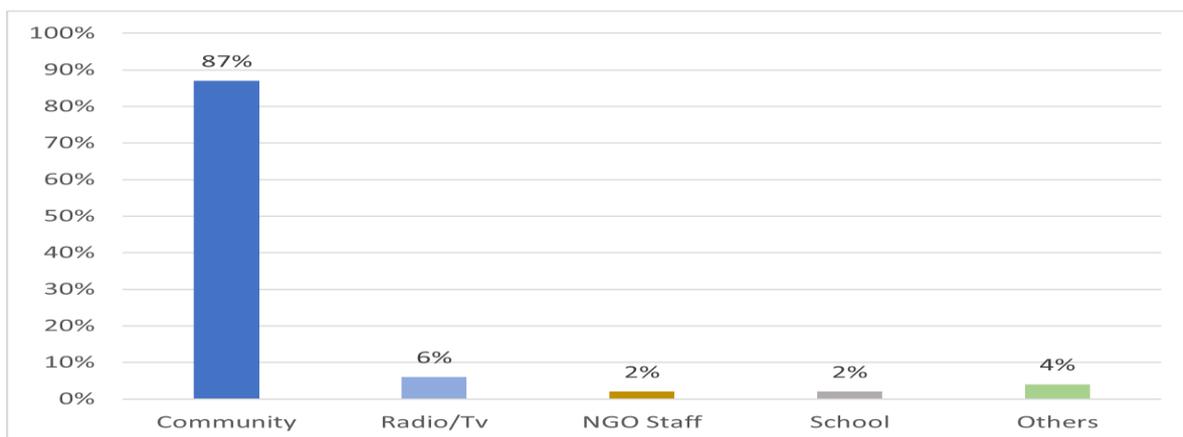


Figure 6: How participants first heard about the project

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.3.3 Types of activities participated in

The most attended project activities according to Table 4 were sensitization meetings (73%) and youth clubs or mentoring sessions (59%). FGDs emphasized that safe learning and interaction spaces were established through these sessions. One of the youths who attended Diare mentoring clubs said, “The mentoring clubs taught us our rights and how to speak out”.

This was also echoed by the KIIs, where a teacher in Gbulahagu pointed out that “the young clubs have curbed absenteeism and motivated students, particularly girls, to remain in school”.

Table 4: Types of activities participated

Variables	Freq.	Percentage
Sensitization meetings	73	73%
Radio discussions	2	2%
Youth clubs/mentoring	59	59%
Livelihood/skills training	4	4%
Leadership training	1	1%

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.3.4 Participant experiences and motivations

Participant experiences

The results indicated that most participants gained knowledge about child rights (52%) and early marriage prevention (45%) with high levels of improvement in awareness and social learning. The positive effects of increased self-efficacy among youth and women enhanced confidence and empowerment (18%) and improved educational outcomes (14%). Even though livelihood gains were small (6%), this indicates the prospects of economic empowerment integration. These findings are in line with the latest studies by the African Child Policy Forum (2024) and OECD (2023), who observed that education, together with empowerment activities, can produce more profound and lasting changes in various negative practices including child marriage.

From the FGD participants, a mother from Chirifoyili had this to say; “*I believed early marriage was normal before, but now I understand it is bad*”. She further added that “*hmmm we can thank AFJN-GHANA project enough, because of the project my daughter was saved from early marriage and now she is in senior high school and father is supporting her*”

Table 5: Participant experiences

Theme	Description	Percentage
Knowledge & awareness of child rights and protection	Learned child rights, child protection, laws, dangers of servitude	52%
Knowledge on early/child marriage	Causes, consequences, disadvantages, prevention, delay of marriage	45%
Confidence, empowerment & leadership	Improved confidence, capacity building, empowerment, public speaking	18%
Improved education outcomes	Increased school attendance, support for SHS/Nov-Dec, bicycles, improved results	14%
Community-level change	Change in attitudes, reduced early marriage, new norms	12%
Livelihood/economic benefits	Skills, business start-up, more girls in tailoring, farming	6%
Total		100%

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

Participant motivations

The results indicate that majority of the participants were driven by the need to acquire knowledge (81%) and guard children (79%) with 42% of the participants being motivated to support community change. This finding is a reflection of enhanced individual and social dedication to child welfare and change.

Table 6: Participant motivations

Theme	Percentage
To gain knowledge	81%
To protect children	79%
To support community change	42%

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.3.5 Challenges faced

Although 46% of the respondents exhibited no difficulties (Table 7), others mentioned time clashes, family issues, and cultural challenges. According to a female FGD member from Gbulahagu, “*some husbands did not permit their wives to attend meetings*”. One of the religious leaders at Chirifoyili added that, “*sometimes, our tradition does not allow us to speak out when it comes to child marriage*”.

These limitations were replicated by other studies conducted by CARE International (2023), which observed that gender norms and household duties tend to prevent the involvement of women in local initiatives.

Table 7: Challenges faced

Theme	Description	Percentage
No challenges faced	Participants reported no barriers	46%
Timing & scheduling conflicts	Clashes with farming, school, market days, long meetings	18%
Household & childcare responsibilities	Domestic chores, caring for children, breastfeeding	10%
Cultural & social resistance	Cultural beliefs, peer pressure, parental resistance, stigma	11%
Distance & transportation challenges	Long distances, difficult transport, timing of classes	6%
Low education/illiteracy barriers	Difficulty understanding due to low literacy	4%
Economic & financial constraints	Financial difficulties, work conflicts, migration	5%
Issues with project design/community change	Project design limitations, slow behavioral change	4%
Total		100%

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.4 The Extent to which the interventions have been impactful and sustainable

3.4.1 Reduction in early and forced child marriages

Figure 7 shows that 86 percent of the respondents reported a significant reduction in early and forced child marriages across their respective communities. This was further affirmed by the FGDs as one of the female participants of Diare explained, *“In the past, before the project, parents married their children out secretly, but they now have the fear of being punished in the community”*.

There was additional evidence of local enforcement from the KIIs. According to one of the KII, Chief Gbulahagu community, *“now our chiefs and imams intervene when a child is being married off*. These results are consistent with those of UNICEF (2024), which emphasizes that community-based implementation of social norms is effective in reducing the prevalence of early marriage.

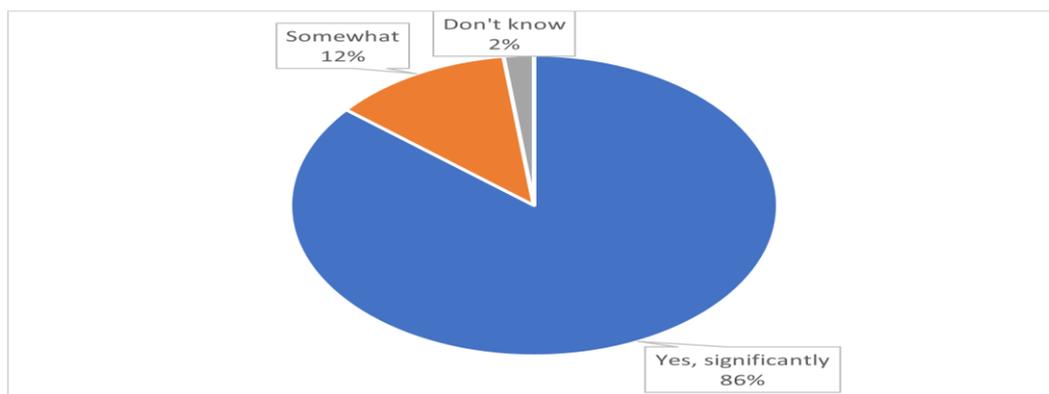


Figure 7: Reduction in early and forced child marriages

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.4.2 Increased school retention and leadership among girls

As depicted in Figure 8, 99 percent of the respondents noted a change in school attendance and participation of girls in leadership. FGDs showed that girl’s confidence and ambition have become significantly higher. A mother in Chirifoyili said, that “my daughter now prefers to be a teacher. She no long wants to travel to south to work as kayaye”.

KIIs emphasized the effects of mentorship programs in the girls’ clubs, a KII, headteacher, Diare noted “the girls club has instilled in the girls’ leadership qualities that are not confined in school”. This is in line with UNESCO (2024) and Plan International (2023) results, which assert that one of the best measures in postponing child marriage is educational retention programs.

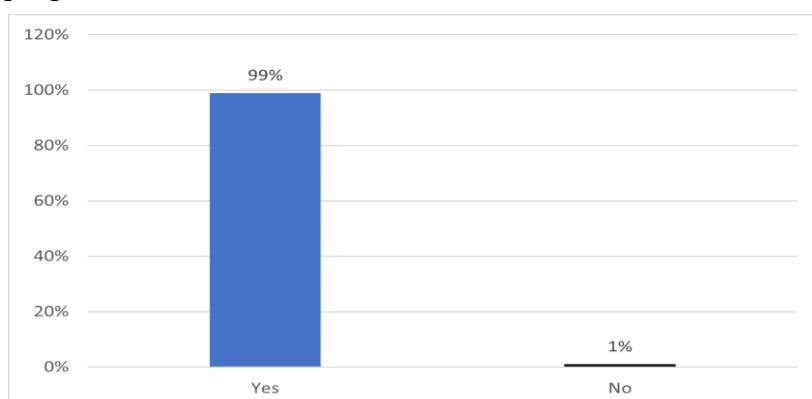


Figure 8: Increased school retention and leadership among girls

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.4.3 Have community leaders become more active in addressing child marriage and servitude

As demonstrated by Figure 9, 98 percent of the respondents noticed increased leadership role in child protection. Social accountability was a major force led by chiefs, religious leaders, and teachers. A young leader, Gbulahagu, said that “no girl under 18 years of age should be married in this village according to the declaration of our chief”.

One of the KII, religious leaders, Chirifoyili, said, “Religious leaders are currently preaching against child servitude and promoting education”. Such results align with the African Union (2023) guidelines that focus on traditional and religious leaders as the agents of sustainable social change of norms.

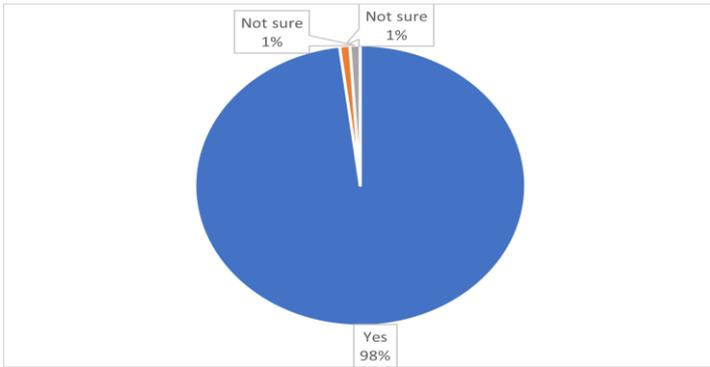


Figure 9: Community leaders become more active in addressing child marriage and servitude
Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.5 Provide recommendations for enhancing impact and sustainability 3.5.1 Are any project activities still continuing in your community (e.g., clubs, dialogues)

According to the data offered in Figure 10, 97 percent of the respondents confirmed that project activities such as clubs and dialogues remained in progress. FGDs observed that youth clubs, peer mentoring and women groups are run on voluntary basis. A youth mentor, Diare, said “we will continued our weekly meetings to discuss child protection because we have seen the benefits”.

Teacher KIIs and chiefs KIIs showed that these local structures have become self-sustaining. According to a teacher, Gbulahagu, “our school has adopted project activities as part of extracurricular activities so the intervention has come to stay”.

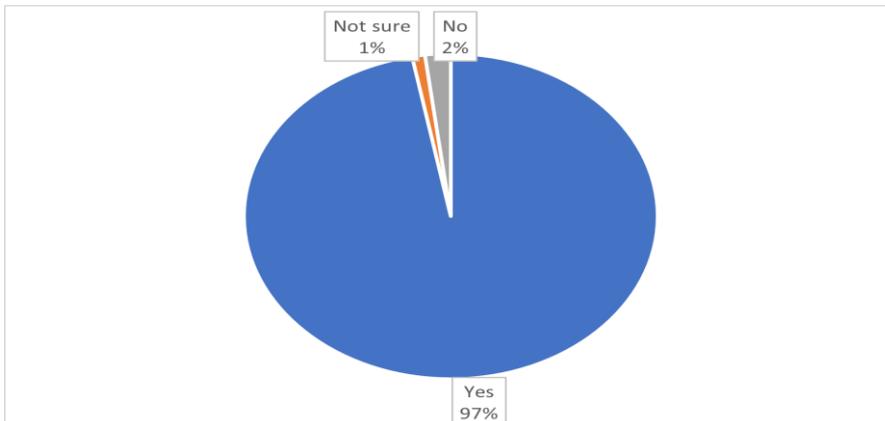


Figure 10: Any project activities still continuing in your community
Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.5.2 What factors have helped sustain the project’s impact so far

Table 8 indicates that the main sustainability facilitators were the creation of youth groups (34%), community leadership (24%) as well as the ongoing AFJN-GHANA support (21%). The most influential factor was mentioned to be the existence of empowered youth leaders. Diare, the chief, KII, said: “The young folks are now our ambassadors; they carry the word on”. These results are consistent with the World Vision (2024) results that youth-led projects can increase the resilience and ownership of the project in the long term.

Table 8: Factors that helped sustain the project’s impact so far

Theme	Description	Percentage
Youth group creation & youth leadership	Youth groups, youth clubs, football teams, youth empowerment	34%

AFJN-GHANA support	Sensitization, water, school revival, materials, continuous encouragement	21%
Community engagement, ownership & leadership	Community buy-in, leader involvement, teacher support, collective action	24%
Capacity building & knowledge retention	Awareness creation, training, peer education, integration into schools	16%
Support for girls' education	Assistance to improve results, encouragement, opportunities	8%
Social norm & community structure changes	Laws, mindset change, radio messaging, willingness to end child marriage	7%
No sustainability reported	Impact not continuing	1%
Total		100%

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

3.5.3 What challenges remain in sustaining progress against early marriage and servitude

They have good performance but maintaining the momentum is hard. As noted in Table 9, role models absence (25%), lack of funds (18%), and cultural resistance (17%) are some of the major impediments. FGDs showed that there were persistent problems with poverty and migration. The hardship is the reason why some families take girls to cities to work, as one of the participants of the FGD, mother, Chirifoyili said.

This was also reflected in KIIs by commenting on poor institutional follow-up. Without the additional support, the gains will be lost, declared one of the KII, Gbulahagu, project staff. The results are consistent with those of UNFPA (2024) and OECD (2023), which indicate that financial and cultural barriers still are persistent when it comes to the sustainable cessation of child marriage.

Table 9: Challenges remain in sustaining progress against early marriage and servitude

Theme	Description	Percentage
Lack of resource personnel & role models	Need for facilitators, educators, role models, advocacy leaders	25%
Funding gaps & inadequate resources	Financial constraints, lack of logistics, no support for girls' education	18%
Cultural norms & family resistance	Deep-rooted traditions, elders' pressure, forced marriage	17%
Poverty & migration	Economic hardship, migration to urban areas for "kayaye", dropout risk	12%
Lack of continued sensitization & follow-up	Irregular awareness creation, weak program continuity	10%
Teenage pregnancy & risky behavior	Peer pressure, early relationships, teenage pregnancies	12%
Weak education infrastructure	Teacher shortages, lack of bungalows, inadequate school facilities	7%

Enforcement & governance gaps	Weak law enforcement, non-compliance, no official support	6%
Meeting/infrastructure barriers	Chairs, youth center, water issues affecting activities	3%
Total		100%

Source: Field data analysis, 2025

SUCCESS STORIES Transforming mindsets and protecting girls’ futures

Early marriage was previously a norm in the community of Diare. Attitudes have started to shift drastically through the continuous sensitization and mentorship programs of some youths, which are offered by AFJN-GHANA. In one FGD, a mother stated with pride that *“my daughter was to get married at the age of sixteen, but after the sessions, she understood that it would ruin her dreams. She is a senior high school student now”*.

On the same note, a chief of Gbulahagu remarked that they used to believe that marrying their daughters off is to their defense, but they are now realizing that it is the reverse. *“We enforce bylaws to stop it.”* The increasing feeling of community responsibility shows that it was not only an individual worldview, but collective norms that were updated in terms of child protection and education.

Such a change can be compared to the results of UNICEF (2024), who note that regular, community-based awareness initiatives are the most effective to help decrease the number of early marriages in rural Ghana.

Empowering youth as agents of change

Empowerment of the youth was a success of the project. In Chirifoyili and Sheegbini, youth clubs were set up to offer leadership, mentorship, and advocacy. One of the youth leaders of Chirifoyili explained that *“we never thought our voices were heard before AFJN-GHANA came. We now hold meetings, go to schools, and discuss child rights.”*

Even after the project has been finished, these groups of youths still operate on a voluntary basis. As a teacher in Gbulahagu stated that, *“our students conduct peer discussions in which they speak about girls remaining at school and saying no to early marriage. We have now made it part of our culture.”*

This method of empowerment is in line with the findings of Plan International (2023) that highlight the importance of youth-led advocacy in maintaining the behavior change and violence based on gender.

Women taking leadership roles

In many project communities, women have emerged as vocal advocates for children’s rights and education. “I used to be shy, but after AFJN-GHANA’s training, I can now speak in public and lead community meetings,” said a female FGD participant from Gbulahagu.

Women’s groups have formed “watch committees” that monitor child protection cases and report potential early marriages to local leaders. A KII, Assemblywoman from Diare, explained, “When a girl is at risk, we step in early and speak to the parents. The chief and elders support us.”

This growing female leadership represents one of the project’s most sustainable impacts, echoing UN Women (2024) evidence that women-led advocacy networks are key to maintaining social accountability in gender equality initiatives.

Education as a shield against early marriage

Education remains a powerful pathway to ending early and forced marriage. The assessment found that 99% of respondents observed an increase in girls’ school retention (Figure 8). *“My daughter now dreams of becoming a nurse,”* shared a mother from Chirifoyili. Teachers also confirmed these changes *“More girls are completing JHS, and their performance has improved,”* said a headteacher in Gbulahagu.

Supportive measures like bicycles, learning materials, and peer mentoring helped sustain this progress. These efforts reflect UNESCO (2024) findings that school engagement combined with community advocacy significantly reduces early marriage risks.

Community ownership and sustainability

AFJN-GHANA’s success was largely driven by community ownership. The project’s participatory design encouraged chiefs, religious leaders, teachers, and youth to take responsibility for sustaining progress. *“Even without AFJN-GHANA left, we will still meet weekly to discuss child protection,”* said a youth mentor from Diare.

In Gbulahagu, chiefs have formalized bylaws to prevent child marriage, while faith leaders in Chirifoyili integrate messages about children’s rights into sermons. A religious leader from Chirifoyili noted, *“The message of protecting our children has become part of our faith practice.”*

These examples demonstrate strong local commitment, consistent with World Vision (2024) research, which underscores those programs grounded in community leadership are more likely to achieve lasting social norm transformation.

Lessons in collaboration and inclusion

One of the project’s most significant successes was its inclusive approach. By engaging multiple stakeholders, youth, parents, teachers, chiefs, and faith leaders, AFJN-GHANA created a network of shared responsibility. As a project staff member in Gbulahagu put it, *“The collaboration made the change possible; everyone played a role.”*

The experience highlights that multi-sector partnerships, including schools, local government, and traditional authorities, are essential for long-term impact. This finding supports Save the Children (2024) conclusions that community-driven partnerships foster resilience and help embed social change within local governance structures.

A lasting legacy of hope

The AFJN-GHANA project has created a lasting footprint across the Northern Region. Awareness of child rights has improved, early marriages have declined, and youth and women have taken on leadership roles in sustaining change. As one young girl in Diare shared proudly, *“We now know our worth, and we are not afraid to say no.”*

Through the voices of empowered youth, women, and leaders, the project’s impact continues to resonate. Communities are not just beneficiaries; they are now active champions for the protection and empowerment of children.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION 5.1 Conclusion

5.1.1 Participants and Documentation of Lived Experiences

The evaluation showed that the AFJN-GHANA project was able to interact with various groups in the target communities such as chiefs, religious leaders, women, youth, and teachers. Awareness was very high (94 percent) by the use of community leaders, schools and radio debates. The project provided platforms of open discussions where community members particularly women and youth spoke openly with regards to early marriage and child servitude.

In the stories of the participants, there was a significant change of knowledge and perception. Numerous people changed their passive and compliant attitude towards child marriage to active support of the right to education and protection of children. The participatory and faith-based approaches provided strength and promoted the idea of inclusion. This has seen community ownership and behaviour change become the success of the project.

5.1.2 Impact and Sustainability

The AFJN-GHANA project had realistic, sustainable outcomes in reducing early and forced child marriages in intervention communities. As in the case of girls, a high proportion (86%) of the respondents affirmed visible developments with regards to decreasing early and forced marriage cases and 99% affirmed the development of better school retention and leadership among the girls. Chiefs and religious leaders became change agents making them come up with bylaws and publicly denouncing bad practices.

The formation of youth clubs, women watch groups and school-based mentorship programs were very sustainable. These structures still remain independent to ensure awareness and reporting cases. Nevertheless, continuous obstacles like cultural opposition, inadequate financing, migration and poor institutional follow up are hindrances to complete sustainability. The results confirm that the leadership should be community-based yet with more powerful institutional and economic mechanisms involved.

5.1.3 Recommendations for Enhanced Impact and Sustainability

It is concluded that the integrated approach of AFJN-GHANA, which includes sensitization, education, and empowerment, has been successful in bringing social change. The societies are more enlightened, driven, and structured to fight early marriage and servitude. Local leaders have taken a position of advocacy and youth have taken up leadership in advocacy and education.

Nonetheless, to maintain these results, one will have to invest in the community structures, livelihood opportunities, and capacity development. The participatory design of the project has been effective although future interventions should be aimed at eliminating economic vulnerabilities and institutional gaps to sustain the progress.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Strengthen Community-Led Child Protection Mechanisms

AFJN-GHANA and partners should also carry on helping traditional and faith leaders institutionalize community bylaws against child marriage and household servitude. Youth and women groups ought to be enabled to spear head peer education, and advocacy programs which will see community-based structures being kept alive and responsible even after the project life span.

5.2.2 Expand Economic Empowerment and Livelihood Initiatives

To address the economic motivations behind early marriages, subsequent intervention programs must incorporate vocational education and progression, savings groups, and the development of small enterprises among women and young girls. The empowerment process in the economy will minimise dependency and maximise the family's ability to focus on education and child welfare.

5.2.3 Enhance Collaboration with Government and Civil Society Partners

AFJN-GHANA needs to further strengthen the partnership with important institutions like the Ghana Education Service, Department of Social Welfare and Community Development, and the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. Reinforcement of the referral systems, coordination structures and policy connections will make the project sustainable and incorporated in the district and national development strategies.

5.2.4 Sustain Education and Awareness Creation

Local radio, schools, mosques, and churches should carry on community sensitization to reiterate behaviour change. The visiting and exchanging activities between communities that have achieved positive results concerning the reduction of early marriage can help to improve peer learning and the replication of best practices. Constant consciousness is imperative in keeping the momentum and avoiding retrogression.

5.2.5 Strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability Systems

AFJN-GHANA would need to assist communities in embracing basic digital data collection and reporting instruments to guarantee sustainable growth. There is a possibility of training youth leaders as well as teachers to keep track of cases of early marriage and child servitude. The development of a follow-up mechanism will aid in following the results and keeping local actors responsible.

5.2.6 Ensure Institutionalizations and Policy Support

District Medium-Term Development Plans (DMTDPs) need to prioritize child protection by including it in the district's budget and allocating funds to it. AFJN-GHANA must also urge more donors and the government to invest in the project to expand the scope of the project.

5.3 Final Remark

The AFJN-GHANA project has triggered a radical change in attitude, behaviour, and local governance in Northern Ghana in respect to child protection. In making the youth and women advocates, involving the religious and traditional leaders and supporting education as a means of empowerment, the project has brought about sustainable social transformation. These gains will need to be sustained with the help of further cooperation, economic empowerment, and institutions.

The strategy of AFJN-GHANA can be used as an exemplary model of faith-based, community-based interventions that can be used to safeguard the rights of children and promote gender equality.

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ANNEXES Survey questionnaire Objective 1: Identify Project Participants for Interviews and Document Their Lived Experiences of the Interventions

No.	Question	Options
A. Background Information		
1	Name of Respondent	
2	Sex of Respondent	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
3	Age	___ years
4	Marital Status	<input type="checkbox"/> Single <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Separated
5	Educational Level	<input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Primary <input type="checkbox"/> JHS <input type="checkbox"/> SHS <input type="checkbox"/> Tertiary <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
6	Occupation	
7	Household Size	
8	Community	
9	District	
B. Participation in Project Activities		
11	Are you aware of AFJN-GHANA's project on ending early and forced child marriages and domestic servitude?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
12	How did you first hear about the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> NGO staff <input type="checkbox"/> Radio/TV <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> Community leader <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
13	Did you or anyone in your household participate in project activities?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
14	If yes, which activities did you participate in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Sensitization meetings <input type="checkbox"/> Radio discussions <input type="checkbox"/> Youth clubs/mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Livelihood/skills training <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership training <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
15	How often did you participate?	<input type="checkbox"/> Once <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly
16	Describe your experience with the project activities.	
17	What motivated you to participate in the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> To gain knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> To protect children <input type="checkbox"/> To support community change <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
18	What challenges did you face during participation?	

Objective 2: Assess the Extent to Which the Interventions Have Been Impactful and Sustainable

No.	Question	Options
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C. Project Impact and Community Change		
19	Has the AFJN-GHANA project contributed to reducing early or forced child marriages in your community?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, significantly <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> No change <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know
20	What specific changes have you observed since the AFJN-GHANA project started?	
21	Are girls now more likely to stay in school compared to before the AFJN-GHANA project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
22	Has awareness about child protection increased among community members?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
23	Have community leaders become more active in addressing child marriage and servitude?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
24	Have any bylaws or local rules been enacted to prevent early marriage or child servitude?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
25	Did the project improve your knowledge of child rights and protection?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
26	Did your attitudes or behavior toward child marriage change due to the project?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
27	If yes, how did your attitude or behavior change?	
28	Do you believe the project improved the lives of girls and young women?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
29	If yes, in what ways?	<input type="checkbox"/> Continued schooling <input type="checkbox"/> Increased confidence <input type="checkbox"/> Delayed marriage <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership roles <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
D. Sustainability of Project Interventions		
30	Are any project activities still continuing in your community (e.g., clubs, dialogues)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure
31	If yes, who is leading or supporting these ongoing efforts?	<input type="checkbox"/> Community leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers <input type="checkbox"/> Youth groups <input type="checkbox"/> NGOs <input type="checkbox"/> Others
32	What factors have helped sustain the project's impact so far?	
33	What challenges remain in sustaining progress against early marriage and servitude?	
34	Has your community developed its own strategies to continue promoting child protection?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
35	If yes, specify these strategies.	

Objective 3: Provide Recommendations to AFJN-GHANA on Strategies to Enhance Impact and Sustainability

No.	Question	Options
E. Lessons and Recommendations		
36	What do you think AFJN-GHANA and its partners did well in the project?	
37	What areas need improvement for future interventions?	
38	What support do communities need to maintain the progress achieved?	[] Funding [] Capacity building [] Policy enforcement [] Awareness creation [] Other
39	What recommendations would you make to improve project impact and sustainability?	
40	Do you have any additional comments about the project's impact on your community?	

Key informant interviews (KII)

(*Target:* Community leaders (chiefs, elders, assembly members), Religious leaders, Teachers and headteachers, social welfare officers, Youth advocacy group leaders and Project staff or implementing partners)

Objective 1: Identify project participants and document their lived experiences

No.	Question	Probe Points / Notes for Interviewer
1	How did your community or institution become involved in the AFJN-GHANA project?	Explore initiation, selection, and awareness process.
2	What specific roles have you or your institution played in implementing the project activities?	Leadership, mobilization, sensitization, referrals, etc.
3	What key activities or interventions were carried out in your area?	Radio advocacy, sensitization meetings, policy briefings, youth clubs, etc.
4	How were community members (men, women, youth) engaged in these activities?	Inclusiveness, participation methods, reach of beneficiaries.
5	What has been your personal experience working with the project?	Positive outcomes, lessons learned, and challenges.

Objective 2: Assess the extent to which interventions have been impactful and sustainable

No.	Question	Probe Points / Notes for Interviewer
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6	In your view, how has the project contributed to reducing early and forced child marriages in your community?	Examples of reported cases, prevention, or behavior change.
7	Have you observed any changes in community attitudes towards child marriage or domestic servitude?	Explore mindset, awareness, and willingness to report cases.
8	Are there any visible outcomes among adolescents, girls, or families as a result of the interventions?	School attendance, empowerment, family relations.
9	How has community leadership (chiefs, religious leaders, etc.) been involved in sustaining project outcomes?	Leadership commitment, bylaws, community action groups.
10	Have there been cases where community action prevented or stopped child marriage or servitude?	Ask for examples, outcomes, and follow-up actions.
11	What challenges still exist in addressing child marriage and domestic servitude?	Cultural norms, poverty, weak enforcement, etc.
12	Are there existing mechanisms to continue awareness and advocacy after the project ends?	Local groups, bylaws, radio programs, partnerships.

Objective 3: Provide recommendations to AFJN-GHANA on enhancing future impact and sustainability

No.	Question	Probe Points / Notes for Interviewer
13	What aspects of the project do you think worked well?	Approach, partnerships, awareness methods, etc.
14	What aspects could be improved or done differently next time?	Program design, coverage, frequency, inclusivity.
15	What support or resources are needed to sustain gains achieved so far?	Funding, training, coordination, government engagement.
16	How can AFJN-GHANA better collaborate with local stakeholders in future interventions?	Suggest partnerships with education, health, or social welfare sectors.
17	What recommendations would you make to strengthen the fight against early marriage and domestic servitude in this region?	Open-ended — encourage strategic and actionable suggestions.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

(Target: community leaders, parents' women and Adolescent girls and boys (ages 10–19))

Objective 1: Identify project participants and document lived experiences

No.	Question	Probe Points / Notes for Moderator
1	How did you first hear about the AFJN-GHANA project in your community?	Source of information — leaders, radio, meetings, NGOs.

2	What types of activities took place in your community under this project?	Community sensitization, radio discussions, youth mentoring, etc.
3	Did you or your family participate in any of these activities?	Frequency, level of engagement, experiences.
4	How did participation in the project affect you or your family?	Knowledge, attitudes, behavior, empowerment.
5	What challenges did you face in attending or benefiting from the activities?	Cultural resistance, distance, time, awareness.

Objective 2: Assess project impact and sustainability

No.	Question	Probe Points / Notes for Moderator
6	Have you noticed any change in the way people think or act about early marriage and domestic servitude since the project began?	Compare “before” and “after” situations.
7	Are girls now more likely to stay in school and delay marriage?	Explore perceptions and examples.
8	Are there fewer cases of child marriage or children being sent away for domestic work?	Ask for examples or trends observed.
9	What are the biggest reasons people still allow early marriage or servitude to happen?	Cultural norms, poverty, education, etc.
10	What community actions or groups are still active to promote awareness?	Youth clubs, advocacy groups, radio discussions, etc.
11	What keeps these efforts going even after the project ends?	Motivation, leadership, community ownership.

Objective 3: Provide recommendations to AFJN-GHANA for enhancing impact and sustainability

No.	Question	Probe Points / Notes for Moderator
12	What aspects of the project were most useful or impactful for your community?	Sensitization, advocacy, capacity building, etc.
13	What challenges or gaps still need to be addressed?	Access, gender norms, resources, involvement.
14	What could AFJN-GHANA or partners do differently to improve outcomes in the future?	New topics, engagement methods, or follow-up strategies.
15	What can the community itself do to sustain progress against child marriage and domestic servitude?	Local bylaws, education campaigns, peer support.
16	What message would you give to other communities still struggling with early marriage and child servitude?	Open-ended — use to capture strong quotes/testimonies.