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**WORKSHOP ON THE POPULARIZATION OF AGENDA 2040 AND CROSS  
BORDER ISSUES AFFECTING CHILDREN BY THE AFRICAN  
COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE  
CHILD IN THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES**

**DRAFT REPORT**

**November, 2018**

**Workshop On The Popularization of Agenda 2040 and Cross Border Issues Affecting Children by The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in the Economic Community of West African States**

## **Introduction**

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) in 2015 developed Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, otherwise known as Agenda 2040. The Agenda was developed during the celebration of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child to set aspirations for African countries which will be implemented and achieved in the next 25 years of the Charter.

Taking into consideration the significant role that Regional Economic Communities (RECs) can play in advancing children's rights in general and the aspirations of Agenda 2040 in particular, the ACERWC in its 30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session decided to engage RECs in the dissemination and implementation of the Agenda. Accordingly the ACERWC undertook popularization workshops in East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The popularization workshops were supplemented by discussions on cross-border issues affecting children in the regions.

The objectives of the popularization of Agenda 2040 in Regional Economic Communities include:

- To enhance awareness and knowledge about Agenda 2040 among the Secretariat of RECs and their respective Partner States;
- To create sense of ownership of Agenda 2040 among RECs;
- To identify priorities, challenges and worrying trends in the respective RECs taking into consideration the specific and peculiar context of each of the RECs;
- To identify cross-border issues affecting children's rights in each of the RECs to better inform areas of collaboration and joint activities in the implementation of Agenda 2040;
- To encourage RECs to engage their Partner States on the Agenda;
- To ensure that RECs join hands with the ACERWC in monitoring the implementation of the Agenda in States by using their legislative and institutional mechanisms; and

- To ensure that RECs' child rights focused activities are aligned with Agenda 2040 for an integrated action in the continent.

This report envelopes the various presentations and discussions in the workshop on the popularization of agenda 2040 and cross border issues affecting children in ECOWAS, which took place on 30-31 October 2018. It highlights, among other things, the particular cross-border issues affecting children in the Members States of ECOWAS.

### **Item 1: Opening remarks**

#### **Honorable Marie Christine Bocoum, Vice Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**

Hon Bocoum commenced by expressing her deepest gratitude to the ECOWAS and its Member States for collaborating with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in making this workshop a reality. She gave a brief background on Agenda2040 and stated that the document is an elaboration of the vision of Agenda 2063 in respect of children, with the main objective of fostering an Africa fit for children. It sets out ten aspirations to be achieved by the year 2040 and provides brief backgrounds with a deep insight on specific issues.

Hon Bocoum highlighted that the Committee acknowledges the progress recorded by State Parties of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC/the Charter) with regard to children's rights at the domestic level. However, she stated that despite the foregoing milestones, serious child rights violations still remain an urgent concern in many African countries. She stated that RECs, such as the ECOWAS, play a great role in addressing cross border issues due to their proximity to the challenges and better understanding of the socio-economic and legal backgrounds informing them. The Committee is committed to work closely with RECs to address cross border issues and other issues affecting children.

Hon Bocoum concluded her remarks by extending appreciation for GiZ, Save the Children International and Plan International for the financial and technical support they provided in the organization of the workshop.

#### **Remarks by Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne, Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender of ECOWAS Commission**

Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne, Commissioner for Social Affairs and Gender of ECOWAS Commission, commenced her remarks by reiterating the

demographic dividend of children in Africa, in which most of the African populations fall under 0-15 age group. She highlighted that among the various issues that impact children, education is the prominent one, which has a holistic impact on their life. She highlighted that ECOWAS is discussing the issue of pre-primary school education and expanding education in mother tongue. Furthermore, she stressed that child participation should start at an early stage within the education system. Adding that gender issues in education and the participation of children are interlinked, she stated that classrooms should be seen through gender lenses to improve participation of girls. Furthermore, the education system, she stated, needs restructuring and decolonization. African values, ethics and languages should be incorporated in the education system and children need to be enabled to critical thinking and question all aspects of their lives.

In conclusion, she highlighted an initiative of ECOWAS called '50million women speak', which is a project that provides a platform for women entrepreneurs to mentor various groups from all over Africa including girls in high schools. The project incorporates all RECs in Africa.

## **Item 2. Presentation on the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**

Ms Samrawit Getaneh, Legal researcher at the Secretariat of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, presented on the Committee and the Charter. She commenced by explaining the background of the charter which was adopted in 1990 and came into force 1999. It is ratified by 48 AU Member States, the remaining countries who have not yet ratified the charter are, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sahrawi Arab Republic, Somalia, São Tomé and Príncipe, South Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco. She stated that the justification for the adoption of the Charter are twofold. The first is political exclusion of African States from the drafting process of the UN Convention on the Rights of the child and the second is the resulting legal omission in the UN Charter with respect to the challenges being faced by the African child.

The Charter has four cardinal principles, which are the principles of non-discrimination, best interest of the child, survival and development and child participation. The Charter establishes the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, to monitor the implementation of the Charter. The Committee is given the mandate to consider state reports and individual complaints/communications, to conduct on-site investigations and to interpret and promote the Charter.

While explaining the work of the Committee in ECOWAS regions, she stated that all ECOWAS Member States have ratified the Charter and among them all but two have submitted their initial report on the implementation of the charter while 3 have submitted initial and periodic report. Burkina Faso has submitted initial report, 1<sup>st</sup> Periodic report and 2<sup>nd</sup> Periodic report on the implementation of the Charter. Furthermore the Committee has considered a Communication from the region. *Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (South Africa) and La Rencontre Africaine pour la Defense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO) (Senegal) Vs Senegal, 2002*. The Communication was related to the talibes children who are sent away by their parents to live in Qur'anic schools known as daaras in the urban centers of the Republic of Senegal to attend religious education. The talibes are forced by their instructors (known as marabouts) to work on the streets as beggars. The Committee found the Government of Senegal in violation of various provisions of the charter, including the right to education and issued recommendations. Accordingly, the Government of Senegal has been implementing the recommendations of the Committee.

After the presentation, representatives of Member States posed questions and comments. It was stated that the Committee should emphasize strengthening coordination of the various actors working on child rights. It was also mentioned that there is a need to have more of a learning session about the Charter and the Committee. It was explained that maternal mortality has shown a reduction in Liberia, while in Sierra Leone has set up a national committee for child protection and a child welfare policy. In Guinea, laws relating to the child are not being implemented properly due to cultural barriers and lack of resources.

### **Item 3: Presentation on Agenda 2040**

Mr. Sekone Wendyam Philippe, Senior child rights officer at the Secretariat of the ACERWC, presented on Agenda2040. He explained the background of the Agenda by recalling that at the celebration of the 25 Years of the adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, in 2015, the ACERWC decided to develop a 25 year Agenda for children's rights in Africa. The Agenda was adopted by the Committee at its 28th Ordinary Session which was held in November 2016 in Banjul, the Gambia. The agenda is adopted to supplement para 53 of Agenda 2063 which states 'African children shall be empowered through the full implementation of the African Charter on the Rights of the Child'. And to establish long-term strategies that will contribute towards sustaining and protecting children's rights in Africa. The Agenda sets the following ten aspirations.

- ▶ **Aspiration 1:** The African Children’s Charter, as supervised by the ACERWC, provides an effective continental framework for advancing children’s rights.
- ▶ **Aspiration 2:** A child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place in all States.
- ▶ **Aspiration 3:** Every child’s birth – and other vital statistics -are registered.
- ▶ **Aspiration 4:** Every child is born alive and grows up healthy.
- ▶ **Aspiration 5:** Every child grows up as well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life.
- ▶ **Aspiration 6:** Every child benefits fully from quality education.
- ▶ **Aspiration 7:** Every child is protected against violence, exploitation and abuse.
- ▶ **Aspiration 8:** Children benefit from a child-sensitive criminal justice system.
- ▶ **Aspiration 9:** Every child is free from the impact of armed conflict.
- ▶ **Aspiration 10:** African children’s views matter.

Regarding the implementation of the Agenda, it was noted that the ACERWC coordinates the implementation, monitoring and evaluation at the continental level. After the end of every five-year period (2020, 2025, 2030, 2035, 2040), the Committee will facilitate a stakeholder platform, including non-state partners, to review the achievements towards the implementation of the Agenda at the national, regional and continental levels, in order to identify the main challenges and formulate priorities for the next five years.

After the presentation participants reflected on the Agenda and certain child rights issues. It was highlighted that the use of the term child marriage is very important, early marriage may be subjective hence suggestion was made to stick with child marriage. The idea of an annual child rights forum was raised and welcomed, it was stressed that there is a need to ensure effective representation of children at the forum. It was also stressed that there is a need to invest on education to ensure the realization of Agenda2040 as education is the pillar for many aspects of development. Moreover, concerns were raised regarding the reporting obligation under Agenda2040. It was stated that as there is a reporting obligation on the Charter, hence there should be a different way to ensure implementation of the Agenda instead of adding a reporting obligation. Mr. Sekone explained that Agenda2040 is aimed at implementing Agenda2063, it is not to elaborate or remind Member States on their obligation on the Charter, a separate report on it is thus important.

**Item 4: Protection and promotion of children’s rights in ECOWAS region: legal and policy documents in light of Agenda 2040**

Dr. Bolanle Adetoun, representative of ECOWAS Commission, presented on the child protection activities of the ECOWAS and the link with Agenda2040. She recalled that ECOWAS has a child policy adopted in 2008/9 and a strategic plan of action that has expired. The policy covers, among other things, survival, development, child participation and protection. It was stated that ECOWAS is currently focusing on child protection and has the ECOWAS strategic framework for strengthening national child protection systems. This was approved in 2017 by the Heads of States and Governments and it is aimed at protecting children from violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse, which is in line with aspiration 7 of Agenda2040. Dr. Bolanle mentioned other related documents including the protocol relating to free movement of persons, residents and establishments; ECOWAS ECASS Convention to combat trafficking in persons 2006; ECOWAS Gender Policy; ECOWAS Labor and employment policy and ECOWAS humanitarian policy.

She further explained the specific link between ECOWAS documents and activities with aspirations of Agenda2040. As such she noted that aspiration 2 (*An effective child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place in all member States*) is in tandem with ECOWAS child policy and framework for child protection system. The framework under commitment 1 requires compliance with international and regional legal frameworks and translation of these documents in local languages. Commitment 2 also talks about strengthening of institutional frameworks. Aspiration 3 (*Every child's birth and other vital statistics are registered*) is linked with the child protection framework, which includes among its five priorities, civil registration and vital statistics. Aspiration 4 (*Every child survives and has a healthy childhood.*) is linked with Commitment 6, which talks about service delivery that ensures the health and survival of children. Service delivery here also incorporates education. Aspiration 5 (*Every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life.*) is also linked with Commitment 6, under adequate basic social services of quality. Aspiration 8 (*Children benefit from a child-sensitive criminal justice system.*) is linked with one section of the child policy entitled children in conflict with the law. Aspiration 9 (*Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations.*) is linked with the section of the child policy which talks about children in conflict situations. The department of peace and security of ECOWAS has a manual on children in conflict situation and they sensitize personnel in the peace-keeping system. With regards to aspiration 10 (*African children's views matter.*) the child policy has a section on child participation, which depends on the evolving capacity of the child.

It was noted that while Agenda2040 is overall in line with all the efforts being taken by ECOWAS to ensure child protection, ECOWAS is currently

prioritizing the issue of child marriage in line with direction taken by the heads of states.

### **Item 5: Presentations on countries and regional practices on cross border issues affecting children's rights: challenges and opportunities**

The representatives of the ten Member States in the workshop made brief presentations on the various cross-border issues affecting children in their jurisdictions and measures put in place to address them.

#### **Nigeria**

It was noted that Nigeria has very long borders with no natural barriers. Neighboring countries fear that some of the problems in Nigeria such as terrorism may spill over to their territories. There is an issue of trafficking, Nigeria is a source, transit and destination of girls. The final destination of these girls is mainly Europe. There are centers to rehabilitate girls who are victims of trafficking. The issue of Boko Haram in North East Nigeria is still persistent. They recruit boys to serve as child soldiers and they recruited girls to become suicide bombers. There is a multi-sectorial committee called the Child Protection sub-set, it is active in the Northeast and intervenes in issues that affect children. The other cross-border issue is a refugee issue, Cameroonians from English speaking regions moving to Nigeria due to the political unrest. The children who come as refugees from Cameroon do not have birth registration certificates. There are issues of protection in refugee camps. With regards to the way forward, it was noted that there are arrangements with some countries such as Benin and Nigeria is working with international partners to address these issues. Reviewing the ECOWAS policy will help Nigeria handle cross border issues. Nigeria has protective legislations, proper implementation of these legislations is necessary. For Quranic students that cross from Nigeria to Niger and vice versa, there are special schools provided for them that integrate Quranic education and western education. There is also a national child rights implementation policy, which looks at all these issues holistically and takes measures to address them.

#### **Ghana**

It was stated that Ghana is surrounded by French speaking countries, however the local language across borders is similar, hence movement along the borders is common. It was noted that most of the challenges are similar to the once mentioned by Nigeria. Recently Ghana is having an increasing challenge with cross border issues. Children are among those who are migrating to Europe through Libya. The reasons for movement are mainly economic. The children do not know and do not mind where they go, they simply want to leave their houses, because of economic social or environmental



issues. There are also a lot of children who come in as refugees, they move in to the country in a regular way but once they are in Ghana they claim to be refugees. There are issues such as sexual exploitation and labor exploitation. Trafficking for sexual exploitation and child labor is a big challenge in Ghana. It was noted that there are legislative frameworks but the implementation is weak. Moving forward it is pertinent to harmonize and strengthen national data collecting on cross border issues to make appropriate interventions.

### **Sierra Leone**

It was mentioned that Sierra Leone shares border with Nigeria and Guinea. Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children Affairs is the national coordinating mechanisms for children's affairs. There is also a child welfare committee to ensure the effective implementation of the child welfare policy and the alternative care policy. Challenges in the country include; impact of civil war (1990-2002), Ebola crisis, child abuse trafficking, harmful practices and others. With regards to cross-border issues, there is a challenge of internal child trafficking, there is a rise of local fostering called "Mehn Pikin" where children are brought to urban centers with a promise for a better life and they end up working on the street or in domestic labor. The 2017 report on situation of human trafficking in Sierra Leone identified most common borders for children on the move. The report also indicated that, over 500 young sierra Leoneans were deported from Middle East, Europe and America.

It was noted that there are laws in place to tackle these issues such as the anti-human trafficking act, sexual offence act, age assessment guidelines and others. Children get in conflict with the law when they cross borders, in such instances they are rehabilitated in centers where they get services. Movement of children from Sierra Leone to Liberia used to be high, now the trend has changed to Guinea. West African Network on child protection has an office in Sierra Leone. When children are moving unaccompanied the Government and the network undertake reunification activities.

### **Liberia**

It was noted that the major child protection concerns in Liberia include children on the move, child marriage, ritualistic killing, children accused of witchcraft, child labor, sexual violence and domestic violence. The issue of refugees is not a big concern in Liberia. Regarding trafficking, there was an instance where 25 children were found at the border with Guinea trafficked for religious rituals; they were later reunified with their caregivers. There is currently a campaign to address the issue of street children. Domestic violence is a serious issue; there is an awareness creation campaign ongoing. Domestic violence against children in general and the girl child in particular is severe. Furthermore, witchcraft accusations directed at children is a challenge. With regards to measures being taken, there are policies and institutional

frameworks to address most of these issues. There are transit homes for children. There are juvenile courts, women and children section of the Liberian national police, child justice section of the ministry of justice and sexual gender based violence crime unit. Border monitoring is a challenge and children come without any documentation. The other main challenge is low policy and laws implementation and enforcement.

### **Cote d'Ivoire**

It was noted that Cote d'Ivoire faces similar issues faced by most ECOWAS Members. There is a massive cross-border movement of people in Cote d'Ivoire, including trafficking. Trafficking is done for the purpose of sexual abuse, labor exploitation and organ harvesting. With regards to the available mechanisms, it was noted that there is an Inter-Ministerial Committee and a Committee of Child Surveillance established to tackle child rights issues. However, it was mentioned that the penal code is silent on trafficking in persons.

### **Burkina Faso**

It was noted that Burkina shares most of the above-mentioned problems. It is situated in the Sahel region and this makes it a heaven for trafficking in persons and similar practices. Cross border practice of FGM is prohibited in Burkina Faso. There are various cross border crimes reported which involved girls from other countries. Traffickers get arrested and a number of them were members of organized trafficking activities. Burkina is signing agreements with its neighbors to tackle some of the issues. There are measures being taken to fortify border-strengthening operations. There is a Ministry in charge of child protection. There is also a national commission for refugees. With regards to the legal framework, Burkina Faso has ratified various international treaties and a resolution against FGM is being developed. The implementation of safe schools initiative is underway. Burkina has 36 transit centers that are manned by social workers, there is provision of accommodation and care in the centers. Over 800 children have been taken in to these centers and benefited from the services, only 3% were neglected. There is a need to strengthen community mobilization and to strengthen efforts for children on the move.

### **Gambia**

It was stated that Gambia is surrounded by Senegal and the Atlantic Ocean. The population is estimated to be less than 2 million. There is a very high immigration ratio. The 2010 emigrant population was 17% of the total population in the Gambia. The country also serves as a transit point for illegal migration. With regards to FGM/C, although the Gambia has a law prohibiting FGM, some tribes go to Senegal, Guinea and Guinea Bissau to conduct the practice. Child marriage and betrothal also has a cross border impact. The *talibe* children travel from Senegal to Gambia and face various protection

issues. Sexual exploitation, child begging, child pornography and trafficking exist in the country. Gambia has ratified the core international instruments for the protection of the child. There is a children's act adopted in 2005 which domesticates both the CRC and the ACRWC. There are also various acts that address trafficking in persons, women's and girl's issues and tourism offences. All children, including refugee children enjoy free education. There is sensitization of laws ongoing, task-forces for coordination of various stakeholders are also in place. However, there is a challenge of lack of proper coordination between agencies, a Ministry dedicated for children's affairs can solve this. There is limited data available and there is a lack of data management system. There is no strict referral systems between various agencies. It was suggested that there is a need for a strong legislation on migration and institutional strengthening.

## **Togo**

It was noted that 48.8% of the population of Togo are children. There are mainly three cross-border issues affecting children; child trafficking, child mobility and child refugees. Furthermore it was noted that there are external and internal factors in play. Togo is a source and transit country for children on the move. As a source country children leave Togo in search of a better life. The distinction between child mobility and child trafficking is something that the Government is grappling with and is undertaking trainings to identify these issues. Togo has signed various international and regional instruments in order to tackle cross border issues. The labor code determines age of employment, while the minimum age of marriage is 18 for both boys and girls. It was noted that there is a strategy called friends of the children whose objective is to improve the educational environment to guarantee quality teaching and learning. Furthermore, there was analysis of child protection in Togo following which a new strategy, aimed at putting communities in the center of child protection, was developed. The child protection system components in Togo were identified to include service for detection, reference centers, pilot project for family support and consultative advisory council for children. It was also noted that there are bilateral cooperation agreement between Togo and Gabon, and Togo and Benin, and a tripartite agreement between Togo Burkina Faso and Benin.

## **Mali**

It was mentioned that Mali shares border with seven countries. The country has ratified UNCRC and ACERWC. Since 2012 Mali has seen a crisis with the rise of violent extremism, especially in the Northern region of the country. This has led to a number of abuses of children such as sexual slavery, child marriage, and recruitment of children for violent activities. There is

inadequate border patrol and environmental and institutional gaps. Cross border trafficking exists but the internal threat is higher. There is prostitution of girls in mines and children are exploited in plantations in neighboring countries. With regards to measures being taken, Mali has signed an agreement to return children caught up in conflict/armed groups to reunify them with their families. This helped in recovering a number of children. In 2012 a law was enacted to address child trafficking in a holistic manner. Art 12 of this act stipulates a punishment for perpetrators of child trafficking, in the form of prison sentence. This has led to the conviction of nationals and foreigners who were engaged in the act. Furthermore, 4 bilateral agreements have been signed with neighboring countries to address cross border issues, including an agreement Mali signed with Gabon against child trafficking. Additionally, there laws on child protection, gender based violence and a national strategy against child marriage,

### **Guinea**

It was noted that Guinea faces similar problems mentioned by the other ECOWAS Member States. Children are exposed to sexual exploitation because of poverty, the country has similar issues as Senegal does with Talibe children. There is a lack of statistics with regards to children working in mines in Guinea, however it was noted that children from Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal are engaged in mine work I Guinea. To address the various challenges Guinea has signed various international child protection instruments. Among the mechanisms put in place, the Procedure Manual of ECOWAS is used to protect and reintegrate vulnerable migrant children. There is a Pilot project for the protection of children on the move, to this effect, an MOU was signed with UNICEF and WHO to reintegrate children who were returned from their route to Europe. As a result of this initiative, 467 children were reintegrated.

### **Item 6: Presentation on cross border issues affecting children in ECOWAS**

Dr. Bolanle, from the ECOWAS Commission stated that Children move either through regular means or irregular means. Some move accompanied and other unaccompanied. However, by and large, children on the move are vulnerable. Conflict plays a big role on children on the move and increases their vulnerability. Among the various factors influencing children on the move domestic workers is the issue that is seldom talked about. Children move internally for domestic work in very early ages. At time they are sent by their parents and at time they move by themselves.

There are various mechanisms aimed at addressing children on the move in the ECOWAS region. Among them, there is an ECOWAS - ECASS Agreement on trafficking. It was also mentioned that there is an institute of Social Services

based in Switzerland which has established a mechanism in West African states to work on reintegration of children in West Africa.

## **Item 7: Experience sharing by partner organizations**

### **EAC child policy addressing cross border issues in the region**

Morris Tayebwa, representative of the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, made a presentation regarding the various cross-border issues and initiatives in the EAC. It was noted that EAC undertook a baseline study to identify issues affecting children, which included cross border issues. The cross-border issues identified are child trafficking, harmful traditional practices, statelessness, use of children in smuggling illegal items in cross border towns, unregulated transfer of children from within the region under the guise of inter-country adoption, radicalization/terrorism/extremism and cybercrimes. Root causes of cross border issues in the EAC region include poverty, unregulated cross border movements of children, weak and unregulated borders, harmful cultural beliefs, Gender inequality and orphaned and displaced children due to civil strife.

The EAC has a child policy with ten priority areas, which is harmonized with the UNCRC and the ACRWC. Priority 4 is aimed at addressing cross border child rights violations. This priority areas puts in place various strategies and activities to ensure the protection of children affected by cross border issues. Among the gaps in the EAC mechanisms is budget analysis, there is a need to assess how countries budget for children's issues. It was noted that proportions of national budgets allocated for children are very minimal, if they are identified at all.

The challenges identified include traditional expectations that child protection falls under the purview of family responsibility rather than the state; fragmented policy approaches and regulatory mechanisms; lack of government capacity (weak child protection systems and lack of resources); definition of the child; lack of documentation; criminalization of irregular migration, even of children. Various opportunities have been identified. These include regional frameworks on migration, refugee management and EAC child policy; collaboration with African Union and RECs, Inter agency collaboration (UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, ILO...) and partnership with CSOs.

### **GiZ Support to the African Union Border program (AUBP)**

Karin Pluberg, representative of GiZ, briefed the participants on the support of GiZ to the African Union Border Program (AUBP). It was stated that

the AUBP implements the African Union Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation (Niamey convention). The GiZ program deploys staff in the EAC and ECOWAS to work on the border program. The border program does not have a specific focus on children, however the growing cooperation with the ACERWC is aimed at, among other things, ensuring the protection of children in the border program. GiZ support program to ECOWAS will have a big program starting next year on migration together with the EU on capacity development on cross border and migration issues. GiZ works with the ECOWAS Commission, however activities will go to the level of Member States.

### **Save the Children international – Best practices from Southern Africa**

Hakima Haithar, representative of Save the Children International, presented on the best practices in addressing cross-border issues in Southern Africa. It was noted that Southern Africa has various good practices that should be replicated in other parts of the Continent. Sustainability is one of the key things that is needed when implementing a program on cross border issues. The program in Southern Africa has been sustainable for the past ten years. The program works at the levels of Governments, civil society and community. Another ongoing mechanism, which can be taken as a good practice, is putting together standard operation procedures between various countries to protect children who move among these countries. The standard has been put in place in few countries and efforts are ongoing to ensure standards are set for all countries in the region.

Another issue is access to services, some children move to access services, where the service in question is more accessible across the border than it is within the country, there are mechanisms put in place to ensure safe movement of children to access such services. Additionally, the need for access to documentation is an issue that has emerged and is being tackled. It was noted that one of the cause of trafficking is misconception about life on the other side of the border. Community awareness has been used in South Africa and Mozambique to reduce trafficking and ensure that communities have the appropriate information in terms of what happens to children when they are trafficked across borders.

It was noted that Save the Children is on the process of publishing a learning document entitled 'ten years of learning' aimed at sharing information and best practices with other regions.

### **Item 8: Collaboration and action plan on the way forward on protection and promotion of children's rights in ECOWAS in line with the Charter, ECOWAS Policies and Agenda 2040**

A consultant in charge of revision of the ACERWC and ECOWAS collaboration plan briefed the committee about the status of revision of the plan. It was noted that Save the children has an initiative to update the collaboration plan between the two organs. It was noted that the presentations from ECOWAS Member States in the workshop indicates that the context and the problems that prevailed during the drafting of the first collaboration plan remain the same.

The objectives in the current collaboration plan are; to promote information and communication exchange, to outline advocacy strategies that MS will put in place to implement the Charter and capacity building of organizations involved in implementing the plan. It was stated that in the updated plan there should be Monitoring and Evaluation and it should show the activities that have been implemented, those that are partially implemented and those that have not been acted upon at all. This should also lead to analysis of the reason why some of the activities did not take place.

The consultant asked 4 key questions to the representatives of Member States regarding suggestions for the revised collaboration plan. The key questions and answers given thereto are as below.

What **priorities** should be captured in the plan?

- Street children
- Children on the move
- Trafficking
- Trafficking – covering street children and domestic workers
- Fight against trafficking, child labor and other exploitations
- Child labor – especially street children
- Trafficking and child labor
- Violence against children – children on the street
- Birth registration and certification
- Education

What activities should be undertaken to facilitate **information and communication** exchange?

- media sensitization against harmful practices
- create experience sharing forum for member states
- Digital platform
- Data collection system
- Data collection
- Establish west Africa media network
- Popularize child rights instruments and translate them to national languages

What would be the **capacity building** activity that is most needed?

- Civil society empowerment
- Strengthen reporting and data management of countries
- Prioritize training for law enforcement officers and judiciary
- Training all actors of child protection including social workers, legislators, judges, CSO, communities and the likes.
- Train social workers and other child protection personnel
- Capacity building for vital statistics registry organs
- Build capacity of communities and empower them

What **advocacy** activity would you suggest?

- Define and sustain budget line with clear indicators
- Popularize laws and translate in to local languages
- Annual conference of ministers on children's rights
- Sensitization
- Develop a policy brief on increasing birth registration coverage for children

### **Item 9: Closing remarks**

Honorable Marie Christine Bocoum, First Vice President of the ACERWC, summarized the highlights of the workshop in her closing remarks. She stated that there is a lot of progress in ECOWAS Member States, however there is a challenge of data collection that is hindering success in the protection of children's rights. There is heavy reliance on figures given to by international organizations. She expressed her wish for all the participants to become ambassadors of Agenda2040 in their countries and to work in collaboration with the Committee on the collection of reliable data and intensifying capacity building. She extend great appreciation to representatives of ECOWAS for their continued support and expressed her hope to cement the collaboration and make it effective and efficient. She concluded by expressing her appreciation to the representatives of Member States and partners of the ACERWC who made the workshop a reality.