



ACERWC

African Committee of Experts on
the Rights and Welfare of the Child

ACERWC Secretariat

E-mail: acerwc-secretariat@africa-union.org

Tel: +266 52 01 00 18 | **P.O.Box:** 13460,

Address: Nala House, Balfour Road Maseru
Kingdom of Lesotho

DAY OF THE AFRICAN CHILD 2025

**THEME: PLANNING AND BUDGETING FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: PROGRESS
SINCE 2010**

CONCEPT NOTE

1. Introduction

The Day of the African Child (DAC) was launched by the Assembly of Heads of State of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1991 to be commemorated on 16 June each year. The DAC pays tribute to the 1976 student uprising in Soweto, South Africa, which resulted in the killings of students who demonstrated against the poor quality of education they received and demanding to be taught in their own language by the apartheid regime. Over the years, the Day has been an opportunity for all stakeholders and actors involved in the protection and promotion of children's rights in Africa to come together, to consolidate common goals and to tackle the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving an Africa fit for its children.

As guardian of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/Committee) has spearheaded the commemoration of the DAC since 2002. The ACERWC is an Organ of the African Union established in accordance with articles 32 and 33 of the ACRWC mandated to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the child in Africa and monitor its implementation. Each year, the Committee identifies a relevant theme for the Day, which is further adopted by the Executive Council of the AU, organizes and coordinates activities and events to commemorate the Day at continental level.

The purpose of this concept note is to provide guidance to Member States on the main objectives of the theme, and the various measures that should be undertaken by States in the celebration of the theme. The Committee notes that the DAC provides an opportunity for children, Member States, policy makers, organisations and other stakeholders on the continent working on children's issues to review and evaluate efforts, policies and programmes aimed to protect and promote children's rights considering the theme. The DAC is called for serious introspection and commitment to addressing the many challenges facing African children.

2. Background and justification of the theme

In 2010, the theme of the DAC was: "Planning and budgeting for children's rights: a collective responsibility". The commemoration of the DAC on this theme was informed by the various challenges the Committee observed on budgeting for children's rights. The Committee noted that in addition to the lack of resources, the realization of children's rights was faced by several factors that hinder the design and implementation of programs geared towards the protection and promotion of the rights and welfare of the child. Among these are: failure to take proper account of certain aspects of child protection in national programs, non-efficient use of resources, lack of participation of children in planning and budgeting for programs, lack of strategic information and statistical data and reliable target on the situation of children in some areas, poor coordination of programs, the lack of reliable financial records. The 2010 DAC aimed at exchange of ideas and experiences, reflection and advocacy in Africa on planning and budgeting that will promote a better improvement of living conditions of children in the continent.

The Committee decided that the year 2025 DAC will be commemorated under the theme "Planning and budgeting for children's rights: progress since 2010". The theme

is aimed at assessing the level of progress achieved in mainstreaming a children's issues in planning and budgeting by Member States of the AU and further encourage States to assess and reform their mechanisms of budgeting and planning to adopt a child rights-based approach.

The Committee notes from its engagement with Member States that budget for children has shown increase in most countries. However, children continue to face various challenges which call for additional and child sensitive budgeting. Africa still has high rates of child mortality, child malnutrition, stunting, wasting affecting their survival and development. Access to immunization has increased, yet there remain to be underserved areas with millions of children. Poverty remains to be an underlying factor that affects children and results in the violation of their rights such as child labour, separation from parents and caregivers, lack of access to basic services such as education and health. Moreover, the Continent is facing famine, pandemics, armed conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies that disproportionately affect children. Harmful practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation as well as gender-based discrimination are violations of children's right and often perpetuated due to poverty. Furthermore, children in vulnerable situations are more exposed to violence due to lack of sufficient programming for their specific needs such as children with disabilities, children in street situations, children separated from parents, and children from marginalised and remote areas.

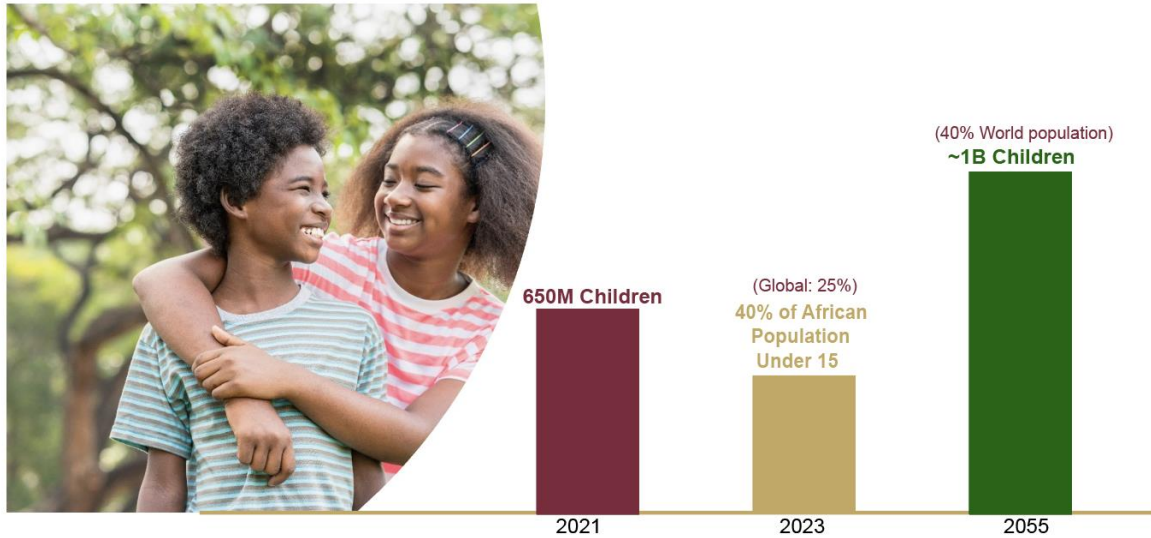
The Committee notes the significant strides achieved by Member States of the African Union through legislative and other measures. To date 51 Member States have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. However, the implementation of the Charter is challenged by several factors including weak institutions and lack of resources. Planning and budgeting for children's rights enables the needs relating to their fundamental rights to be considered in national processes, which is key to ensuring implementation of their rights in the Charter. Child sensitive planning and budgeting is highly impacted by lack of prioritisation of children's issues on budget processes. African Countries tend to spend more on other priorities such as military and peace and security which result in less investment in children. Line ministries dealing with children's issues are not politically placed in higher status as opposed to other ministries which impacts the amount of resource that will be allocated to their mandate. Ineffective management of national resources due to lack of sufficient regulatory frameworks and laws and administrative practices also affects children's budget. Governments are obliged to ensure that there is an effective resource mobilisation and allocation through their fiscal and regulatory policies including tax laws. However, if such laws and policies are not child sensitive, they may have an adverse effect on children, for instance by increasing the price of goods and services consumed by children. Moreover, lack of proper regulation results in a loss of funds and resources through illicit flows or other factors. In addition, corruption which remains to be prevalent in the Continent affects child's share of the national budget. More specifically, lack of accountability in the budget allocated for children coupled with lack of effective execution of the children's budget to the right cause hinders the realisation of child sensitive budgeting and planning. Furthermore, children are not engaged in plans and budgeting processes concerning them which impacts the integration of their needs and views in decisions that impact their lives.

The Committee also notes that the demography of Africa calls for a compelling action to align planning and budgeting with child rights approach.



Africa's Growing Child Population: A Call for Child-Rights-Focused Planning and Budgeting

By 2055, Africa will be home to around 1 billion children, or 40 percent of the world's population



In 2021, Africa had 650 million children and in 2023 it was estimated that Africa has 40% under 15 years population which is higher than the global average of 25%. By 2055, Africa will be home to around 1 billion children, or 40 percent of the world's population. This demographic dynamic of Africa calls for increased investment on children to build a better future for the continent. The Committee also notes that Africa's Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals of 2030 cannot be achieved without sufficient investment on children.

Moreover, Africa's aspirations towards eradication of poverty, development of human capital, and economic growth cannot be realised unless investments are directed towards children. By investing in children today, States build a resilient economy, increase employment and productivity thereby increasing economic gains for countries. Moreover, by fighting unemployment and building a healthy and thriving society, States prevent causes for instability and conflict. Therefore, investing on children today is the key to achieving a prosperous, stable, and secure Africa.

3. Objectives

The objectives for the 2025 DAC on 'planning and budgeting for children's rights: progress since 2010' include:

- Take stock of the progress made by African States in areas of children's rights over the last decade by analyzing the measures undertaken, challenges encountered, and best practices documenting in budgeting and planning for children;
- Identify the challenges of children in Africa that are affected by lack of child sensitive budgeting and planning

- Encourage Member States to undertake a national assessment of the child-friendliness of their planning and budgeting processes;
- Encourage Member States to undertake legislative reforms of their budget laws and policies to incorporate children's rights perspectives;
- Encourage Member States to ensure the participation of children in the development of national plans and budgets;
- Encourage Member States to increase their budget allocations for children to ensure better implementation of the Charter;
- Advocate for child sensitive fiscal policies and accountability frameworks on budgeting and planning;
- Galvanise political efforts to ensure that public policy decisions support and strengthen children's rights programmes;
- Provide opportunities for exchange, reflection, and advocacy in African countries on child sensitive planning and budgeting
- Mobilise partnerships among stakeholders to increase investment in children;
- Provide policy guidance and create platforms to share stakeholder capacity and experience on child-friendly budgeting and planning issues.

4. Planning and budgeting for children

4.1. Normative standards

The realization of children's rights under child rights treaties calls for the integration of children's issues in national budgeting and planning. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the child, under Article 1, stipulates the general obligation of States which is to recognize the rights therein and undertake all the necessary measures to ensure the implementation of the Charter. General Comment No 5 of the Committee on General Measures of Implementation and Systems Strengthening vividly outlines that the nature of State Obligation under Article 1 of the Charter entails legislative, institutional, and budgetary measures, among others. Therefore, the implication of Article 1 of the Charter provides the ground for budgetary measures to be undertaken by States to ensure that sufficient funding is availed for children. In addition, it is a call to ensure that legislative and other measures are undertaken in mainstreaming child rights approach in budgeting and planning. In other words, States should budget and plan for children but also undertake legislative reforms to reflect children's needs in laws and policies dealing with children. Article 4 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is more explicit about the responsibility of States to mobilize and commit adequate resources towards the implementation of children's rights. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child developed General Comment no 19 on Public Budgeting for the Realization of Children's Rights to provide guidance on the measures to be undertaken to realize budgeting for children. The General Comment provides that budgeting for children entails that States 'take all children's rights into consideration throughout all stages of their budget processes and administrative systems at the national and subnational levels including budget planning, enactment, execution and follow-up'. Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040 at continental level as well as the SDGs at Global level also provide aspirations and goals that need to be achieved in relation to budgeting and planning with focus on specific sectors.

Even though there are no declarations or commitments on the amount of budget that should be allocated to children, States have also made commitments on budget

allocations for various sectors benefiting children through various declarations. Through the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Other Infectious Diseases, in 2001 African States committed to invest 15% of their national budget on health. Globally there is a commitment to allocate 4-6% of GDP and at least 15-20% of public expenditure to education with a view to implement the education goal of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In addition, Member States of the Global Partnership for Education have committed to spend at least 20% of their public expenditures on education. The UNESCO 2022 ECCE Tashkent Declaration also committed to a 10% of education budget to early childhood education.

4.2. State Obligations on budgeting and planning

In line with the above normative standards and commitments, States must undertake concrete steps to realize children's rights through budgeting and planning for them. As the Human Rights Council rightly noted in its Resolution on 'Rights of the child: Towards better investment in the rights of the child (2015)', it is only through a proper investment in children towards the effective implementation of their rights that States can establish and sustain a just society, address poverty, and build a strong economy. In their efforts to achieve a sustainable and broad-based investment on children, States must take legislative and other measures in all budgeting and planning processes namely budget preparation and formulation; enactment, execution; and monitoring.

Legislative measures for child rights budgeting requires States to enact, review and harmonize laws on planning and execution to integrate child rights principles therein. The aim of the legislative measure should not be only to incorporate child rights principles in budget laws, but rather to bring a result aimed at improving the status of child rights in their respective jurisdictions. The legislative measures should address the aspect of revenue mobilization, budget formulation and budget enactment. Legislative measures should also be undertaken to regulate the utilization of public budgeting for children, ensure accountability and transparency, and sanctions for failure to adhere to the laws and policies on budgeting. States should also conduct child rights impact assessment on the various laws and policies adopted on budgeting, planning, or any fiscal related policies. Such assessment enables governments to adopt exceptions and mechanisms to avert the negative impact fiscal laws and policies may bring on children. Parliamentary committees dealing with children's issues may play the role of leading child rights assessments of laws and policies being discussed in Parliaments. Adequate planning for children's rights must be integrated by bringing child rights experts in the process and conduct children's consultation.

Governments should take deliberate actions in creating a budget line for the protection of children's rights and increasing allocations every year. Disaggregated data on children is crucial to ensuring that child sensitive budgeting and children. States should collect updated and disaggregated data on children using various indicators and consult these data while adopting laws, policies, budgets and other decisions. Children's need assessment should be undertaken to inform budget planning which should be informed by scientific data on the proportion of children in a specific country as well as their status in terms of accessing education, health, child protection,

nutrition and other facilities. Comprehensive data on budget allocated for children, budget utilisation, and audit report on child rights budgets should be conducted. These findings should be publicly available and used in the next budgeting process.

States ought to establish a clear and accessible accountability framework for how budget is allocated, appropriated, utilized, and tracked. More specifically, States should establish mechanism to track how much budget is allocated for children and what outcomes have been achieved through the allocated budget. Such budget tracking mechanisms play a critical role in evaluating the impact of the budget on children and ensure accountability. The Committee notes that while budgeting for children might be there at face value, there are issues that need further assessment including how much budget is spent on administrative expenses compared to programs benefiting children, budget execution rates, and how the implementation of the budget has improved the lived realities of children. The impact of the budget in ensuring the realization of children's rights in the Charter is the most important aspect despite how much budget is allocated as the obligation of states under the Charter including their budgetary obligation is an obligation of result.

States should take consistent and deliberate action on adopting a child lens to their budgeting and planning processes. Sensitization of all wings of government focusing on those dealing with finance and national budgets on child rights should be undertaken. Child rights considerations should be mainstreamed in all budgeting and financing issues including international assistance and cooperation, and financial agreements whereby child rights assessment on the impact of the same is conducted and evaluated. Moreover, there should be a sustained increase in the budget allocated for children. Considering that children's population and needs continue to grow, so should their budget. States should take progressive and no regressive measures on budgetary allocations for children.

4.3. Principles for child sensitive budgeting and planning

To achieve budgeting and planning for children in a comprehensive manner, the legislative, administrative, and other measures on planning and budgeting should be undertaken in line with the four general principles of the Charter namely, non-discrimination, best interests of the child, the life, survival and development of the child, and child participation.

Non-discrimination

The principle of non-discrimination as enshrined under Article 3 of the Charter should guide the planning and budgeting processes and results. The mobilization, allocation and spending of budgets should be aimed at addressing the existing disparities among children based on gender, location, status, and other factors. Governments should not discriminate against any child in the appropriation of budget, rather, the realization of the principle of non-discrimination should underpin how budget is allocated among children. Governments are responsible to undertake assessment of the diversity among their children, the varying vulnerabilities they may have, with a view to developing responsive programs and budget to bridge the disparity among children giving due regard to vulnerable and marginalized children. The budget of States has to take into account the specific needs of girls and boys, children with disabilities,

unaccompanied minors, children in rural and remote areas, economically disadvantaged children, children on the move, children in humanitarian settings, and children in street situation, among others.

Best interests of the Child

Pursuant to Article 4 of the Charter, any actions undertaken by States should be aligned with the best interests of the Child. The consideration of the best interest of the child becomes even more crucial in Africa considering the limited fiscal resources most countries have. Social budgets are mostly at the risk of being reshuffled and used for other priorities without necessarily undertaking the best interest test of the child. However, States must demonstrate and justify their budgetary priorities are in the best interest of their territories' children. Planning and budgeting for children's rights requires a realistic assessment of the situation of children's rights, and budgetary decisions must be subject to an assessment of the impact on children's rights at the planning stage. The assessment of child rights impact and the best interest of the child should be conducted in line with the Charter's provisions, and no other contradictory national norms and standards. Moreover, the consideration of the child's best interest should be implemented in spending and monitoring public budgets.

Right to life, survival and development

The right to life, survival, and development of children as a cardinal principle of the Charter under Article 5 requires States to identify and take steps to promote child growth by meeting the needs of children in all their developmental stages. Hence, budgets and programs of States have to visibly show how children of each age group are considered in planning and executing budgets. The Committee underlines that investment in children should start from early childhood stage which is a critical stage to ensure that children grow and thrive in the right direction. The budget allocated for children should focus on the need for early childhood care and development (ECCD) investment by Governments. In most countries, ECCD is often left for the private sector, excluding the larger population of children. The principle of life, survival, and development requires States to also focus on age-appropriate investment in all stages of childhood, in addition to ECCD. This relates to the notion of aligning national plans and budgets with the evolving capacity and needs of children.

Child Participation

The principle of child participation provided under Article 7 of the Charter is another cardinal principle essential for planning and budgeting for children. The Charter provides that every child is given a chance to express their view in all matters. Considering the direct impact of public planning and budget on children, it becomes

inevitable to consult children in all the processes including budget preparation, formulation, allocation, spending, monitoring and evaluation, and accountability. While budget is being prepared, States should consult children to identify their needs and priorities for investment. For such consultation to be meaningful, information should be made available to children in a child friendly manner about national planning and budgeting. Governments should have dedicated child participation platforms which are representative that discuss and reflect on programs and budgets. These views should be compiled and submitted to inform decision making. Children's views should be collected to inform the process and approval of planning and budgeting. There should be a clear indication on how children's views informed planning and budgeting. Moreover, information about children's budget execution, monitoring and evaluation should be available in a child friendly manner. Children's views should be considered in assessing the impact of Government planning and budgeting. The Committee is of the view that without ensuring child participation, a child-rights based planning and budgeting cannot be achieved.

4.4. Progress since 2010

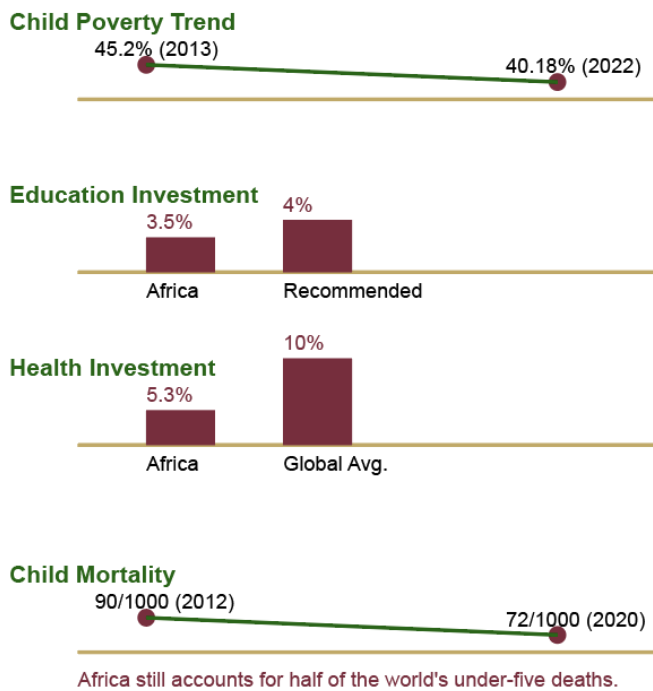
Since 2010, the Committee has observed notable progress on child rights planning and budgeting from its engagement with States through the State Party reporting process and other studies conducted.

The Committee notes that there is increased awareness and reporting on child rights budgeting and planning by State Parties. This enhances increased budgeting for children and accountability. States have reported that they have increased the budget for children by increasing the budget allocation for sectors that benefit children.

More countries have reported the adoption of national plans and in recent years child rights and child development components have been integrated into some of the plans. This is key as the budget will be allocated and prioritized in line with national plans. However, sometimes these plans are developed without integrating child rights as enshrined in the Charter, and without conducting child rights consultations.

Countries have also demonstrated how they have designed economic policies specifically aimed at improving the lives of children. The African Child Policy Forum recently issues a study on 'Good Practices in Child-Sensitive Economic Policies in Africa' which documented successful policies in the form of cash transfers in South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, and Lesotho. Moreover, Botswana and Nigeria have introduced policies aimed at supporting families, providing nutritional support, and assisting pregnant mothers and their children. Homegrown school feeding schemes in countries like Ethiopia and subsidies on critical items like in Egypt on oil and petrol are other examples documented in the Study to highlight good practices. In addition, some States have increased domestic revenue mobilization to avail resources for children.

ACERWC Progress in Resource Mobilization and Sectoral Commitments
African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child



Rwanda, Zambia, Tanzania, Ghana, Algeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe are among the countries that increased. These efforts have been effective in reducing child poverty in the Continent. According to UNICEF's data child poverty has gone down from 45.2% in 2013 to 40.18% in 2022 in Africa.

There is also progress in investments in education, health, and nutrition. Almost all countries have established free primary education despite some related costs. Since 2010 many countries have also established free

secondary education. However, investment in education in Africa is still below the recommended average. In 2020 the median education budget of Africa was 3.5% of the GDP which is below the least recommended 4%. In the area of health, while some countries reported increase in health budget, malnutrition and child mortality remain to be high. Child mortality has dropped from 90 death per 1000 in 2012 to 72 deaths per 1000 birth in 2020, yet Africa accounts for half of the world's under five deaths. Despite some of the strides, Africa still spends only 5.3% of its GDP on health which is lower than the 10% global average.

Progress has been achieved in advocacy and partnerships, international support, and global initiatives on child rights-based budgeting in Africa. This has increased budgeting for children through programmatic support from CSOs. While this is a positive trend, there are some indications of the shrinking of civil spaces in Africa. International cooperation has increased donation aid and financial agreements for children, however, increased debt of African States is affecting their access to more credits and accessing some finances.

5. Activities during DAC 2025

During the Day of the African Child 2025, the ACERWC will carry out the following activities:

- Online seminar or Panel Discussion will be organised with Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), NHRIs and CSOs on child-friendly budgeting to sensitise and build capacity on the issue;
- Training session for children will be held on 15 June 2025 on State obligation and the role of children in planning and budgeting to foster their meaningful participation on such issues. Following the training session, children will develop an outcome statement of their deliberation with a call to all actors;
- Continental celebration on 16 June 2025 will be held in the presence of all stakeholders. During the continental celebration children will present their findings on the training session. An intergenerational dialogue will also be held among children and other child rights actors;
- Outcome statement on child-friendly planning and budgeting following the celebration of DAC will be released summarising the main findings and calls for actions for all stakeholders.

6. Recommendations to Member States

The concept note aims to provide information on the specific activities to be undertaken by Member States in line with the 2025 DAC theme. These recommendations aim to provide information on the content and structure of Member States' reports to the ACERWC in order to demonstrate how the commemoration of the 2023 DAC has played a crucial role in the promotion and protection of children's rights in planning and budgeting for children's rights. The recommendations are as follows:

| Recommendation | Indicators |
|--|---|
| <p>Ensuring that national planning and budgeting processes and outcomes are child-sensitive</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct assessment of current budgeting and planning processes - Identify areas in which child sensitive planning and budgeting can be integrated - Conduct capacity building for Members of Parliament, ministries responsible for the public budget, ministries and bodies responsible for national plans in child-friendly planning and budgeting - Integrate child-sensitive approaches in planning and budgeting processes - Develop guidelines on ensuring child rights based budgeting and planning - Undertake costing of child rights laws and programs |

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|---|--|
| Conduct child rights and impact assessment of laws, policies and budgeting processes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that child rights assessment forms part of the process of developing national plans and budgets - Integrate child rights experts in the development of national plans and budgets - Evaluate national plans and budgets from a child rights perspective and assess the impact on the realisation of children's rights |
| Increase the level of investment on children | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increase the budget allocated for children - Increase budget utilisation and execution by child rights actors through accessible and effective budgeting processes and bureaucracy - Regulate how much should be spent on administrative and programmatic expenses |
| Establish child rights budget tracking mechanisms | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify how much budget is spent on children's rights programs from the national GDP or expenditure - Identify how much spending has been made from the budget allocated for children - Assess the level of investment based on needs, population growth and vulnerabilities - Conduct impact assessment by evaluating how the budget for children is used to achieve the intended goals and outcomes - Identify budget gaps that should be prioritised in the upcoming budget year |
| Adhere to the principles of transparency and accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide public information about government budget and the management of funds on children's rights - Provide such information in a child friendly manner - Disseminate this information to all government and non-government stakeholders - Provide mechanisms to report and investigate corruption and mismanagement of funds - Ensure accountability and sanction of those who abuse and mis-use children's funds |
| Enhance national, regional, and international cooperation to | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperate with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), intergovernmental organisations, |

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|---|---|
| <p>mobilise resources for children's rights</p> | <p>multilateral and bilateral initiatives and partnerships, among others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that children's programs are funded through international financial agreements including debts and donations - Conduct child rights assessments of international financial agreements - Engage the private sector to increase their social responsibilities - Develop tax systems that aim at mobilising resources for children without disproportionately increasing the cost of basic goods and items consumed by children |
| <p>Identify the various vulnerabilities among children to inform budgeting needs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify what kinds of vulnerabilities affect children in various parts of a State. These include gender, disability, displacement and migration, conflict, climate change, pandemics, harmful practices, child labour, sexual exploitation, children in street situations among others - Conduct assessment on how each vulnerability requires a specific plan and budget to mitigate its impact on children - Assess urban-rural disparities in services to identify planning and budgeting priorities |
| <p>Ensure effective data management system on children</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update data on disaggregated data on children on various indicators - Ensure that data on children is accessible to all stakeholders - Consult data on children in the process of budgeting and planning |
| <p>Ensure child participation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish and strengthen child participation platforms at all levels and engage these platforms in budgeting and planning processes from enactment to implementation and monitoring - Ensure that all children without discrimination take part in budgeting and planning consultations to ensure all views are intergraded |

ANNEX

Monitoring framework for reporting on the commemoration of the Day of the African Child 2025: Template: "Planning and budgeting for children's rights: Progress since 2010"

This template is a presentation framework that AU Member States and other stakeholders can use to report to the Committee on the commemoration of the Day of the African Child 2025, under the theme **"Planning and Budgeting for Children's Rights: Progress since 2010"**.

Country:.....

Measures and activities undertaken :

Summary/analysis of the theme as it applies to the national, local or organisational context

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Legal, policy, administrative and other measures in place to inform child-sensitive planning and budgeting

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Measures taken to integrate child rights issues into national planning and budgeting processes

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Measures taken to monitor the budget allocated to children and principles applied to ensure a proportionate share of the budget for children

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Measures taken to ensure the effective use and implementation of the budget allocated to children's rights

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Factors influencing child-friendly planning and budgeting by governments

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Main progress made at national level in increasing budget allocation for children's issues and integrating the children's agenda into national planning.

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Measures undertaken to ensure children's participation in budgeting and planning.

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