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

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2025 YEAR OF REPARATIONS: Justice for Africans & People of African Descent through Reparations

#YearOfReparations

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REPARATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN CHILD: ADDRESSING HISTORICAL INJUSTICES

The African Union's 2025 theme, **Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations**, highlights deep-rooted injustices that continue to shape Africa and, most of all, the lives of African children. The legacies of colonization, slavery, and economic exploitation persist through poverty, inequality, and systemic barriers that limit children's access to education, healthcare, and opportunities. The lingering effects of neo-colonial economic structures further disadvantage children, as multinational corporations control key industries while profits rarely benefit local populations. Furthermore, debt dependency, imposed by international financial institutions, diverts national budgets from child-focused

services to loan repayments. The privatization of education and healthcare, often encouraged by global economic policies, makes these essential services inaccessible to many children.

One example of the continued legacy of colonialism can be found in the education sector. The colonial education system which, was designed for administrative purposes rather than empowerment, prioritizing administrative training over broad-based learning, continues to be an impediment to fulfilling the aims of education as recognized in the African Children's Charter. Many

Reparations must go beyond financial compensation...

countries still operate dual education systems, where private schools offer quality education while public schools remain underfunded. Additionally, language policies from colonial rule impede comprehension and learning outcomes, as children are forced to study in foreign languages rather than their native tongues. For many African children, the consequences of historical injustices begin at birth. High infant mortality rates, malnutrition, and inadequate healthcare are not accidents of geography but direct results of centuries of systemic marginalization. Schools remain overcrowded and under-resourced because colonial systems prioritized resource extraction over human development, leaving a lasting legacy of inequality.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child calls for the eradication of systemic disadvantages that harm children.



Hon. Wilson Almeida Adão
ACERWC Chairperson

Reparations must go beyond financial compensation; they should focus on breaking cycles of poverty and ensuring children's access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.

Justice must take an intergenerational approach, and it must begin with children who are most affected by systematic marginalization, ensuring African children inherit a future of equity and dignity, rather than one defined by historical oppression. ■



**Dr. Ayalew Getachew,
Ag. Executive Secretary**

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA: THE ACERWC'S JOURNEY

Dear Children and Stakeholders ...

Greetings from the beautiful Maseru, the Kingdom of Lesotho, where the Secretariat of the ACERWC is located! As we continue to coordinate the work of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), we sincerely appreciate your interest and support for our efforts to protect children's rights across Africa.

We have made significant progress, evolving from a small team into a larger and more dynamic office. While the African Union (AU) and its policy organs play a major role, many others have contributed to our success, including the host country, partner organizations, and civil society groups who have been instrumental in our achievements.

As you may know, the ACERWC is responsible for ensuring that the rights outlined in the African Children's Charter are protected. The Committee examines reports from different countries, considers communications, and uses various methods to investigate issues within its mandate. The ACERWC can also interpret the provisions of the African Children's Charter and develop guidelines to better protect children's rights. Over the past few years, the ACERWC has made significant progress in fulfilling its mission. Out of the 51 AU Member

States that ratified the African Children's Charter, 42 have submitted at least their initial report. Additionally, 23 countries submitted their first periodic report, and six countries submitted three reports, with Rwanda leading by submitting four. The Committee has granted Observer Status to [44 Civil Society Organizations \(CSOs\)](#) and affiliate status to [21 National Human Rights Institutions \(NHRIs\)](#). Although the individual complaint procedure is still not widely used, the Committee has received [26 Communications](#), most of which have resulted in important jurisprudence (legal decisions). To help interpret the Charter's provisions, the Committee has adopted eight General Comments—two developed together with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. To make its operations more efficient, the Committee has established Special Mechanisms like Country Rapporteurs, Special Rapporteurs, and Working Groups on various thematic areas. Through these mechanisms, the Committee has commissioned and adopted various studies, resolutions, and guidelines.

In terms of standard-setting, the Committee has created and adopted various guidelines, including those focused on Child Participation. We recognize that children's participation is both a fundamental principle and a right. It's important for children's development because it empowers them and boosts

their self-belief. The guidelines provide details on how Member States can effectively implement child participation, ensuring that children are involved in activities at both the national level and within the Committee itself. This process will help ensure that children's voices are heard in decision-making.

Building on our achievements thus far, 2025 presents more opportunities for children and stakeholders to engage with the ACERWC. We will celebrate the 35th Anniversary of the African Children's Charter; commemorate the Day of the African Child with the theme: "Planning and Budgeting for Children's Rights: Progress Since 2010." There will also be various missions that the Committee will undertake throughout the year, providing great opportunities for collaboration. The Committee convenes various stakeholders during its ordinary Sessions where it considers State Party, children and CSO Reports, organizes various panels and conducts hearing on Communications.

I cannot overemphasize the crucial role that children play in ensuring accountability against governments within the framework of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. As primary rights-holders, children possess unique insights into the challenges they face and must be empowered to actively participate in holding duty-bearers accountable for the realization of their rights. Their voices, experiences, and perspectives are essential in monitoring the implementation of laws, policies, and programs affecting their rights and well-being. Through child-led advocacy, participation in reporting mechanisms, and utilizing the Communications/individual complaint procedure within the ACERWC, children contribute to a culture of compliance to the commitments made under the African Children's Charter.

I invite and encourage you all to continue working closely with the ACERWC and its mechanisms to create a better Africa for children. On behalf of the Secretariat of the ACERWC, I want to confirm that our door is always open to enhance partnerships and collaboration ■

THE CHARTER @ 35: REFLECT - RENEW - RECOMMIT

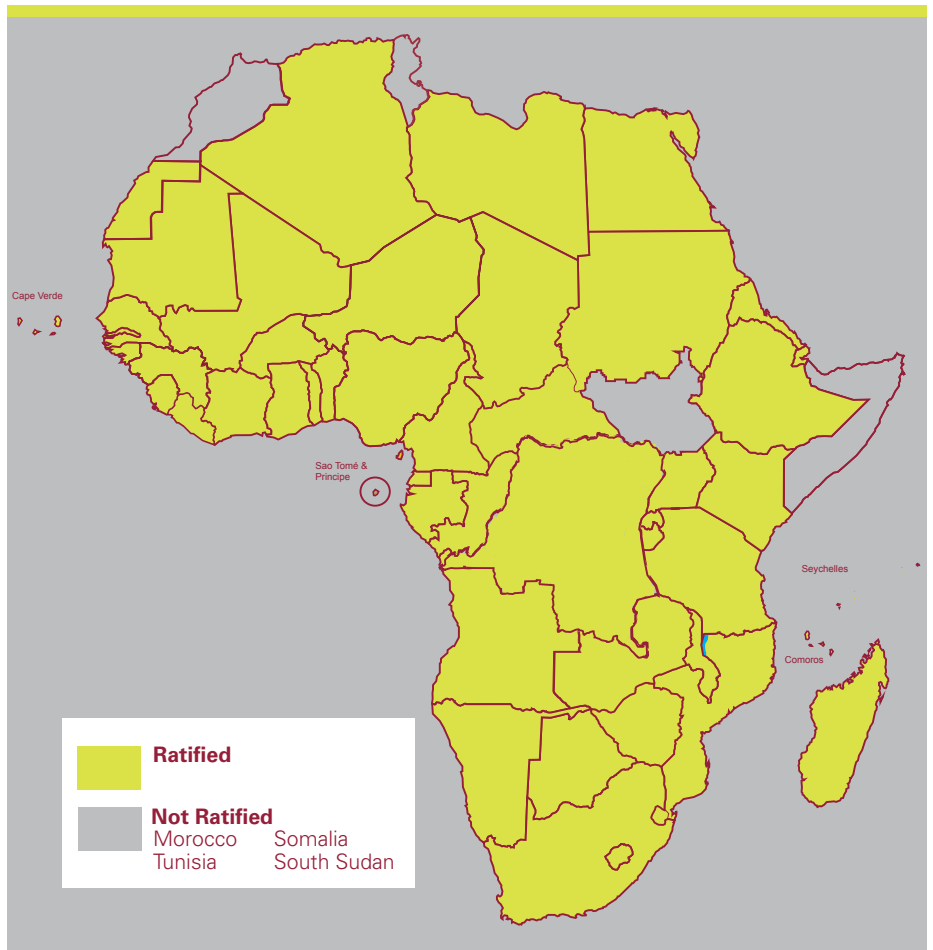
Opal Sibanda

This year marks 35 years since the adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), a milestone in the fight for children's rights across the continent. Over the past three decades, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) has noted progress among Member States, including the alignment of domestic laws with the ACRWC, increased access to education, reduced child mortality rates, improved healthcare, increased birth registration rates, and efforts to address violence against children. Additionally, several governments have taken steps to develop national child protection frameworks and increase public awareness of children's rights.

However, significant challenges remain, and emerging threats demand urgent action. While Member States have enacted progressive laws, weak enforcement, resource constraints, and legal inconsistencies hinder full implementation. Harmful practices such as child marriage and FGM persist, while conflicts and child labor continue to endanger children's lives. The ACRWC has not yet been universally ratified, and reservations by some Member States limit its full implementation. Additionally, a decline in state reporting and low compliance with the ACERWC's decisions further weakens accountability.

Beyond these gaps, new challenges are emerging. Climate change is worsening child vulnerability, increasing displacement and food insecurity. The digital age has exposed children to online exploitation and abuse, while urbanization has widened inequalities, leaving children in informal settlements without access to basic services.

The Committee, therefore, calls for stronger commitments from stakeholders to take concrete steps in ensuring the full protection and promotion of children's rights. As the ACRWC marks 35 years, the focus must be on action, not just reflection. Member States must assess progress, align national laws with the ACRWC, and invest in education,



Countries that have submitted both their Initial & at least One (1) Periodic Reports:

Benin, **Burkina Faso**, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, **Kenya**, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, **Niger**, **Rwanda**, **South Africa**, **Senegal**, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

***State Parties in bold submitted 2 Periodic Reports**

- **Rwanda is the only country to have submitted three (3) Periodic Reports**

healthcare, and child protection services. CSOs and NHRIs must strengthen advocacy, hold governments accountable, and amplify children's voices in policy debates. Children must be at the center of these efforts, and their voices must shape policies that impact their rights.

This 35th anniversary must be a turning point. Now is the time to recommit to creating an Africa fit for children!



Ratification & Reporting Status:

Fifty-one (51) out of the Fifty-five (55) AU Member States have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

- **Four (4) countries have reservations on articles of the Charter.**
- **Out of the 51, 42 have submitted their reports on the measures taken at the national level to domesticate the Charter.**

SPOTLIGHTING THE WORKING GROUPS



ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN AFRICA

Hon. Aboubekrine El Jera and Adiam Zemenfes Tsighe

Since its establishment in December 2020, the Working Group on Children with Disabilities of the ACERWC remains committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children with disabilities, focusing on initiatives aimed at addressing the unique challenges faced in Africa. The Working Group embarked on developing norms and standards for the protection of the rights of children with disabilities and documenting the progress achieved and challenges that persist. It drafted two substantive resolutions: Resolution on the Situation of Children with Albinism in Africa, which highlights the urgent need to address the discrimination and violence faced by children with albinism and Resolution on Harmful Practices against Children with Disabilities, which underscores the importance of eliminating practices that undermine the dignity and rights of children with disabilities. The Working Group developed the Guidelines for Action on the Rights of Children with Disabilities in Africa which provides a

comprehensive framework for stakeholders to systematically evaluate and strengthen the protection of children with disabilities. The Working Group also conducted a Continental Study on the Status of Children with Disabilities in Africa. The study highlights a comprehensive overview of legislative and administrative measures in place, identifies gaps, and underlines the challenges faced by children with disabilities. It serves as a critical resource in informing the interventions.

Moreover, the Working Group conducted a fact-finding mission to the Republic of Malawi to assess the situation of children with albinism in 2022, which shed light on the urgent need for targeted interventions to protect children with albinism from violence and discrimination. The Working Group joins the global community in celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 03 December by amplifying the child rights aspect of the theme. It organized a Day of General Discussion on Solutions to the Challenges of Children with Albinism during the Session of the ACERWC calling for tailored and targeted legislative, institutional, and administrative solutions to address the specific challenges faced by children with albinism.

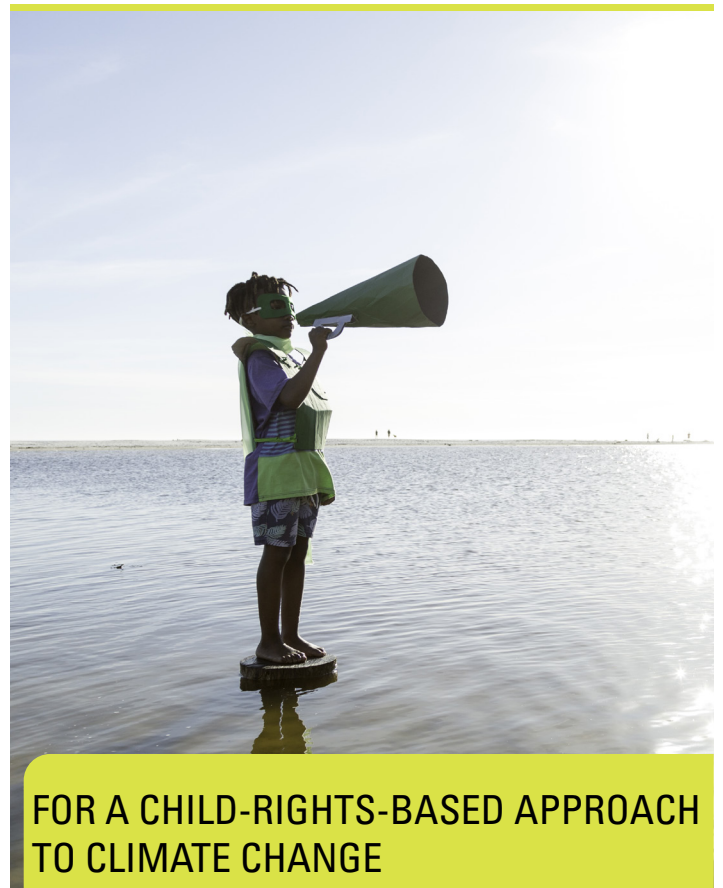
The Working Group's efforts lay a foundation and roadmap for States and other stakeholders to follow to advance the rights of children with disabilities in Africa. However, more work remains to be done to bring change to the lived realities of children with disabilities. By working together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable world where every child, regardless of disability, thrives ■

1.1 Too High!

Hon. Aver Gavar and Samrawit Getaneh Damtew

In 2024, the ACERWC Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change launched a campaign entitled '**1.1 Too High! A child-rights-based approach to climate action in Africa.**' The name of the campaign serves to highlight that the 1.1°C rise in global temperatures since pre-industrial levels is already causing severe harm to children across Africa. Despite the global focus on limiting warming to 1.5°C, the current level is devastating African children, requiring urgent action now. Africa is the "ground zero" of the climate crisis, experiencing disproportionate warming, extreme weather, and health crises. Children are the most vulnerable, facing drought, heatwaves, floods, displacement, food insecurity, and disease. Climate financing and policies grossly fail to prioritize children.

The goal of the campaign is to create awareness about the plight of African children in the climate crisis and advocate for child-rights-based climate policies. Given the context of Africa, the campaign calls for the prioritization of adaptation and the urgent need to remedy climate related harms suffered by millions of children on the continent. It focuses on Child-Rights-Based Adaptation, strengthening climate resilience policies for children; and Access to Remedies, ensuring rights-based response to children affected by climate disasters. The campaign further aims to amplify the voices of children who are actively advocating for urgent climate action ■



FOR A CHILD-RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH TO CLIMATE CHANGE

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTATION OF ACERWC DECISIONS: WHAT NEED TO BE DONE?

Hon. Robert Nanima Doya and Aouatef Mahjoub

The Working Group on the Implementation of Decisions was established as a special mechanism to review progress made in implementing decisions and recommendations of the ACERWC and to undertake activities ensuring their implementation by concerned State Parties. To ensure the effective operationalization of its mandate, in 2022, the Committee expanded the scope of the mandate of the Working Group to follow up on decisions of other organs of the African Union including, the AU policy organs' decisions pertaining to children's rights. In 2024, the Committee further strengthened the Working Group by including four external experts, enhancing its capacity for implementation and follow-up efforts.

Over the years, significant strides have been made in improving the assessment and implementation processes. A key milestone was the adoption of a Study on the Implementation of Decisions, identifying challenges and providing perspectives for improved implementation.

To address the challenges that contribute to non-implementation through collaborative efforts with concerned actors, the Working Group issued a resolution with targeted recommendations for



Member States, NHRIs, and CSOs. Furthermore, a workshop was organized with NHRIs and CSOs from countries where decisions had been issued to strengthen their engagement in implementation efforts.

Under its undertakings to enhance the implementation through exploring all possible avenues that may contribute to this objective, the Working Group organized an Experience Sharing Panel on NMRIFs, leading to a Resolution emphasizing their role in strengthening implementation and follow-up processes. To ensure measurable progress, the Working Group commissioned the development of Guidelines on Reparations.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN THE BUSINESS SECTOR



Hon. Hermine Kembo and Opal Sibanda

Recognizing the significant impact that businesses have on children's rights, the Working Group on Children's Rights and Business aims to promote the integration of a child rights-based approach to business practices with a view to addressing business-related child rights challenges in Africa.

A landmark study on children's rights and business in Africa developed by the Working Group in 2023 has been instrumental in identifying key business-related child rights concerns and informing policy recommendations. The Working Group has also been at the forefront of advocating for child rights protection by stakeholders through various resolutions (protection of children's rights in the digital sphere; integration of a child rights-based approach in the implementation and monitoring of the AfCFTA; & regulation of the informal business sector to ensure enhanced child protection.)

In its advocacy efforts, the Working Group has issued statements on international commemorations, including the [World Day Against Child Labor](#) and the World Safer Internet Day. Additionally, a panel discussion during the Child Rights Forum in 2024 addressed safeguarding children's rights in the informal business sector.

The Working Group has engaged in platforms such as the Africa Business and Human Rights Forum and is part of the Consortium on Children on the Move and Child Labor (consisting of the Labour, Employment and Migration Division of HHS-AUC, ACERWC, ILO, IOM, UNICEF), reinforcing its commitment to child-friendly business environments in Africa.

DAC 2025: BUDGETING FOR CHILDREN’S RIGHTS, A CALL FOR MORE ACTION



Aouatef Mahjoub

Since its establishment in 2001, the ACERWC commemorates the Day of the African Child (DAC) on 16 June each year under a theme selected by the ACERWC and endorsed by the Executive Council of the AU. The ACERWC organizes and coordinates events to commemorate the DAC at the continental level while emphasizing child participation.

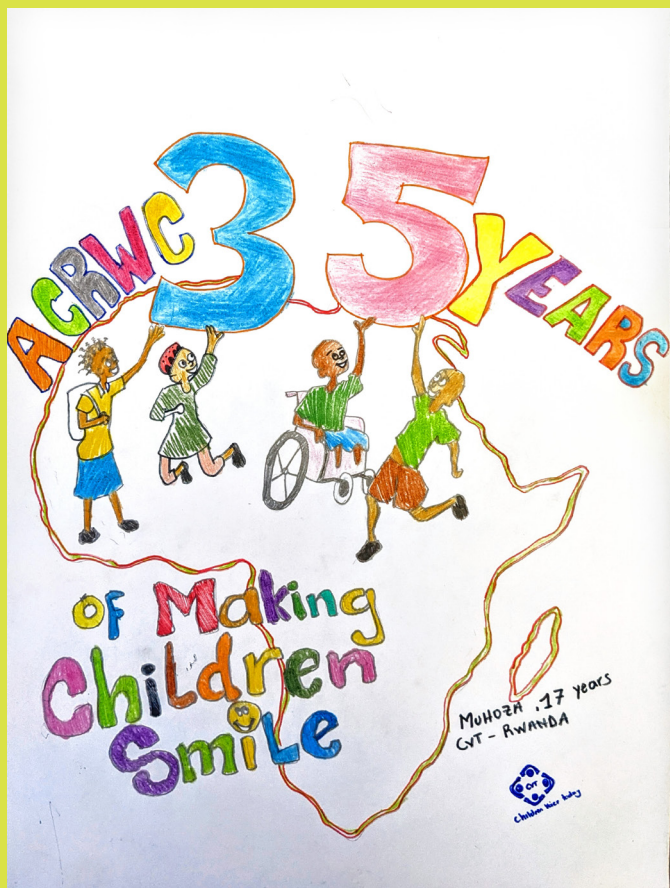
Over the years, the DAC has provided an opportunity for children, Member States, all stakeholders and actors involved in the protection and promotion of children’s rights in Africa to come together, to consolidate common goals around the selected theme and tackle the obstacles that stand in the way of achieving an Africa fit for its children.

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 in budgeting for children’s rights.

Recognizing the crucial role of planning and budgeting for children in the full realization of their rights and welfare, and the need to continue building on the findings and momentum of the 2010 commemoration, 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 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.

Learn more about the Day of the African Child (DAC) 2025 here: <https://www.acerwc.africa/en/dac/day-african-child-dac-2025>

CHILDREN’S CORNER...



IF YOU HAVE MISSED #ACERWC44, HERE IS WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW...

Hussienatou Manjang

From 02 to 12 October 2024, the Committee convened its [44th Ordinary Session](#) in Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho. The Opening Ceremony, officially opened by Her Majesty Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso of the Kingdom of Lesotho, featured high-level delegates from AU organs, UN agencies, [NANHRI](#), and [CSO Forum](#). Children took centre stage, with Kali Posholi (Lesotho) highlighting barriers faced by children with disabilities and Agot Alier Garang (South Sudan) calling for greater accountability in education and stricter oversight to tackle corruption. The Committee also paid tribute to *Hon. Theophane Nikyema*, a member of the Committee and a lifelong advocate for child rights, whose legacy continues to inspire.

A key highlight was the Child Rights Forum, where Member States, children, and key stakeholders discussed thematic issues, including school retention, violence against children, children with disabilities, climate action, child rights in the informal sector, and national reporting mechanisms. The Session also featured a RECs Forum on VAC focused on regional collaboration and implementing [ACERWC’s Guidelines on Ending VAC](#). As part of its core mandate, the Committee considered State Party Reports from Namibia and Zambia, held a Hearing on Communication No. 0017/Com/001/2021 and an Implementation Hearing on Communication No. 0012/Com/01/2019, and adopted key decisions, including: Granted Observer Status to three organizations; Revise the [State Party Reporting Guidelines](#); and Develop Guidelines on Intersession Activity Reports by ACERWC Members.

For more details, read the [44th Session Report](#). Stay engaged and mark your calendar for the [45th Ordinary Session](#) from 07 to 11 April 2025 in Maseru!



Hon. Wilson Almeida Adão

Special Rapporteur on Children in vulnerable Situations

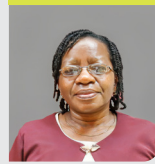
Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Aver Gavar

Special Rapporteur on Violence against Children

Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Anne Musiwa

Special Rapporteur on Children Without Parental Care

Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Hermine KemboTakam G.

Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage & other Harmful practices

Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Robert Doya Nanima

Special Rapporteur on Children and Armed Conflicts

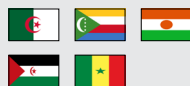
Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Aboubekrine El Jera

Special Rapporteur on Health, Welfare and Development

Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Ghislain Roch Etsan

Special Rapporteur on Child Participation

Country Rapporteur for:



Hon. Sabrina Gahar

Special Rapporteur on Children on the Move

Country Rapporteur for:



INTRODUCING Hon. Joseph Sunday Sinnah

Elected during the 46th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council, Hon. Joseph Sunday Sinnah is from Sierra Leone. Prior to his election, he was the Chief Director of Social Services in the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. He brings a vast experience in child welfare and a strong commitment to child advocacy. Hon. Joseph Sunday Sinnah will be officially sworn-in as a Committee Member during the 45th Ordinary Session.



Hon. Poloko Nuggert Ntshwarang

Special Rapporteur on Education

Country Rapporteur for:



IN LOVING MEMORY OF

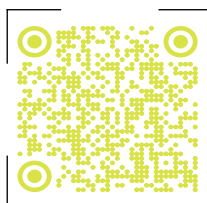


Hon. Theophane Marie Xavier Nikyema
March 2021-July 2024

"To Hon. Theo"

We continue to mourn the loss of Hon. Theophane Nikyema who was called to glory on 29 July 2024. His legacy continues to inspire and guide us!

SCAN to learn more about Committee members:



Hon. Karoonawtee Choramun

Special Rapporteur on the Right to Name, Birth Registration and Nationality

Country Rapporteur for:



UPDATES ON PROJECT

Yvonne Tagwiyeri (ACCP Coordinator)

The African Children's Charter Project (ACCP) is a consortium of six organisations working together to address emerging challenges facing children in Africa.

For over a decade, ACCP has been instrumental in advancing child rights across Africa. It has bolstered the ACERWC, strengthening its ability to discharge its promotion and protection mandate. By providing technical and financial support, the project has enabled ACERWC to conduct country visits, engage with states through State reporting processes, and expand its work on pressing issues like climate change, child rights and business, children's rights and disability. These efforts have reinforced accountability mechanisms, driving tangible actions to improve child welfare.

Designed to strengthen the

implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the project has influenced policy, enhanced advocacy, and driven legal as well as institutional reforms in Africa. A key achievement of ACCP is its role in strengthening legal frameworks to protect children. By engaging governments and regional institutions, the project has facilitated the ratification and domestication of the ACRWC, leading to revised child related laws in multiple African nations. This has resulted in more comprehensive legal safeguards for children's rights.

ACCP amplifies public awareness and advocacy, empowering civil society organisations, government agencies, and activists through campaigns, workshops, and capacity-building initiatives. It has helped elevate critical issues—such as

child labour, business and human rights, climate change, and education onto national and regional agendas, ensuring these concerns receive the attention they deserve.

The project continues to champion children's participation in governance and decision-making processes. By creating platforms for children's voices to be heard, ACCP has fostered child-led advocacy, ensuring children's voices and perspectives shape policies and actions affecting them.

ACCP has left a lasting mark on the African child rights landscape. Its efforts have driven legislative reforms, strengthened institutions, and empowered children and civil society to demand a safer, more just future for children. ACCP has built a strong foundation for continued progress in child rights protection across the continent and remains relevant in addressing contemporary child rights issues ■

FROM THE FIELD...

Wendyam Philippe SEKONE

In its ongoing commitment to ensure the protection and promotion of children's rights across Africa, the Committee recently concluded a field visit to Burundi to follow up on the implementation of the Committee's Concluding Observations and Recommendations, following the consideration of the State Party's initial report.

The four (4) day field visit involved in-depth discussions with high-level government officials, including H.E Prosper Bazombanza, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi., civil society organizations, UN Agencies and children. The field visit was an essential part of ACERWC's efforts to monitor and assess the progress made by state parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Charter and to understand the good practices from the State Party we can share with other

AU Member States.

The delegation of the ACERWC noted the progress made, particularly the legislative, policy and institutional measures taken to address various issues highlighted in the Committee's Concluding

Observations and Recommendations and the draft country periodic report to be submitted soon to the ACERWC.

Despite this progress, the Committee notes that there are still several challenges affecting the day-to-day reality of children in Burundi, among them limited budget allocations for the child rights sector, lack of disaggregated data on children, malnutrition, infant mortality, challenges related to children in street situations, child labor, child trafficking, sexual exploitation,

persistent challenges for girls, including early pregnancy, dropping out of school and child marriage.

The field visit to Burundi serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of regular engagement between the ACERWC and state parties to drive meaningful change. Through these continued efforts, ACERWC strives to create an Africa where children's rights are protected, promoted, and respected in every country ■



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