

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child call for contributions for a commemorative publication on the 35th anniversary of the adoption of the African Children's Charter

July, 2025

BACKGROUND

1. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC/the Charter), adopted in 1990 and in force since 1999, is Africa's comprehensive framework for protecting and promoting children's rights. It addresses both universal and context-specific issues including child marriage, recruitment of children by armed forces or armed groups, harmful practices, displacement, and socio-economic vulnerability making it uniquely responsive to the lived realities of African children. It also promotes access to education for pregnant girls, non-custodial sentencing for mothers and primary caregivers of young children, and safeguards for children affected by conflict or natural disasters.
2. To ensure implementation, the Charter established the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/the Committee), mandated to monitor compliance, consider State reports and communications, and interpret the Charter. Over the past 35 years, significant progress has been made. To date, 51 out of 55 of the African Union Member States have ratified the Charter. Notable progress has been observed in the form of legal and policy reforms, and improvements in areas such as birth registration, education, and health. Despite these gains, implementation gaps persist. Many children continue to be subjected to harmful social and cultural practices, lack access to basic services, and experience discrimination

and violence. Emerging challenges like digital exploitation, climate shocks, forced displacement, unethical business practices, and shrinking space for participation pose new threats.

3. In commemoration of the 35th anniversary of the Charter, the ACERWC calls for reflection, renewed commitment, and bold, forward-looking action to ensure every child in Africa enjoys their full rights and potential. To this end, the ACERWC is launching a call for contributions to assess progress, examine persistent and emerging challenges, and offer strategic guidance to advance child rights in Africa over the next decades.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PUBLICATION

4. The objectives of the publication are to:
 - i. Reflect on the status of children's rights over the past 35 years in Africa.
 - ii. Document success stories, innovative approaches, and lessons learned that have advanced the rights of the child in Africa.
 - iii. Provide forward-looking strategies and priorities to strengthen efforts to implement and uphold the Charter, in alignment with Agenda 2040 and emerging global and regional priorities; and
 - iv. Generate a continental reference resource that captures diverse perspectives, strengthens knowledge exchange, and supports strategic advocacy and collaboration in child protection efforts.
5. All accepted contributions will be compiled into a commemorative publication titled 'The African Children's Charter @35: Progress, Challenges, and the way forward' which aims to guide future priorities for child rights protection and implementation across the continent.

CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

6. The Committee invites contributions to inform the commemorative publication. Submissions are especially encouraged from UN agencies, national and

international organizations, academic and research institutions, civil society organizations, as well as individuals and experts working on child rights issues in Africa. Submissions should focus on the successes, challenges, and lessons learned in the promotion and protection of children's rights, with a forward-looking lens aligned with the theme Reflect, Renew, Recommit.

7. The Committee especially welcomes contributions from children and young people. These can be shared as short stories, poems, drawings, letters, or other creative forms that express their experiences, ideas, or hopes for the future. Submissions can be made directly by children or through the CSO Forum and child-led organisations, or trusted adults. If support is needed to share a contribution, the Committee encourages adult facilitators to ensure that children's views are expressed in their own words and that their participation is voluntary.
8. Contributions should address one or more of the following themes:
 - i. **Children and Civil Rights:** Contributions may focus on legal identity, nationality and birth registration, including efforts to ensure universal access to documentation; mechanisms to ensure meaningful child participation in family, school, legal, and policy settings; and the protection of children from child labour, sexual abuse, and exploitation.
 - ii. **Children's Rights and Social Protection:** Contributions may focus on child-sensitive social protection systems, such as cash transfers to improve access to nutrition, education, and healthcare; addressing economic and social vulnerabilities; and the inclusion of children with disabilities in social protection and service delivery frameworks. Contributions may also address the rights of children without parental care, including support for family-based alternative care, foster care, and strategies for safe family reintegration and prevention of separation.
 - iii. **Harmful Social Cultural Practices:** Contributions may focus on strategies to end child marriage, female genital mutilation, and other harmful practices through legal, institutional, or community-based approaches; efforts to shift social norms, particularly through engagement with traditional or religious leaders; and legal accountability and protection mechanisms.

iv. **Children, Peace, and Security:** Contributions may focus on the impact of conflict and displacement; the protection of children in humanitarian settings, including access to services, psychosocial support, and reintegration of children; the intersection of emerging threats such as digital risks and climate change in conflict.

v. **Emerging Issues Affecting Children's Rights:** Contributions may focus on the impact of climate change on children's health, education, and security; the risks and opportunities of digital technologies, including online safety and accessibility for children with disabilities; the effects of urbanisation and inequality, including unethical business practices; and the protection of children on the move, including asylum-seeking, refugee, migrant, internally displaced and stateless children.

9. Interested contributors are required to submit two documents:

- i. An abstract (maximum 150 words), which will serve as the basis for selection by **11 July 2025**. The name of the organisation/individual, country, and title of the contribution should be included as well.
- ii. A full article (maximum 1500 words) upon selection by **29 September 2025**.

SUBMISSION DETAILS

10. All submissions should adopt a respectful and constructive tone. While critical reflections are encouraged, contributions must not include accusatory, offensive, or disparaging language. The submissions will be assessed based on their relevance to the objectives of the publication, alignment with the values and mandate of the ACERWC, and overall contribution to advancing the child rights discourse.

11. The deadline for the submission of the abstract is **11 July 2025** and the deadline for the full article is **29 September 2025**. The contributions may be submitted in any of the official languages of the African Union and should be sent via email to acerwc-secretariat@africanunion.org with a copy to sibandao@africanunion.org and manjangh@africanunion.org.