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**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE**

**OF THE CHILD**

**APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN AFRICA**

**Appointment Period December 2025 – November 2027**

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| **External Experts (4)** |
| **Key Task:** Serving in the ACERWC’s Working Group (WG) on Children with Disabilities in Africa in the fulfillment of the mandate of the WG.  |
| **Duty station**: Home-based with travels to attend meetings of the Working Group, on-site activities of the Working Group and Ordinary Sessions of the Committee.  |
| **Contract type and duration**: Voluntary Part-time External Experts (4) for two (2) years |
| **Date of appointment**: December 2025 |

1. **Background**

The rights of children with disabilities is protected under various regional and international including the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the General Comment No 9 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the rights of children with disabilities.

Despite the adoption of these instruments and norms, children with disabilities in most African countries are often excluded and marginalized. They persistently face barriers to the enjoyment of their basic rights and inclusion in most spheres of life. The main reason of their exclusion is discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes towards children with disabilities which hinders their access to basic services such as education, health, recreation, and justice, among others. The discrimination is further exacerbated by lack of sufficient legislative safeguards to ensure the protection and inclusion of children with disabilities and lack of enforcement mechanisms. The discriminatory attitudes within families and communities further lead to social exclusion and neglect, exploitation and abuse, harmful practices against children with disabilities, sexual violence, which result in psychosocial challenges on children with disabilities. Their exclusion deprives them of their right to life, survival and development.

Effective response to the challenges of children with disabilities needs reliable data on the number of children with disabilities, the type of disabilities, and their other status. Lack of such data impedes the efficiency of efforts by all stakeholders as protective measures are not crafted in a way they can address their challenges. There are an estimated 29 million children with disabilities in Eastern and Southern Africa; 41.1 million in West and Central Africa; and 21 million in North Africa and the Middle East according to UNICEF data. Despite being a significant demography, lack of effective data, discriminatory legal and budgetary practices; and neglect of children with disabilities in public investment decisions also affect the realisation of their rights.

While these challenges persist, some African countries have taken legislative and policy steps to advance the rights of children with disabilities by reforming legislation and policies to accommodate children with disabilities. In addition to this, some African countries have constitutional and legal frameworks within which the rights of children with disabilities are to be protected and promoted. Countries have made strides towards the recognition of the rights of children with disabilities and the realisation of those rights, especially in the socio-economic spheres. However, most African States have yet to effectively implement the relevant instruments they have ratified by availing institutional mechanisms, sufficient budgetary allocations, prosecution of perpetrators of discrimination, and awareness raising among family and community levels.

In order to advance the promotion and protection of the rights of children with disabilities, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/the Committee) established a Working Group on Children with Disabilities in Africa during its 36th Ordinary Session, held virtually from 23 November to 04 December 2020. The Committee established this Working Group pursuant to Article 38(1) of the ACRWC and Rule 58 of its revised Rules of Procedure, which mandates the Committee to establish special mechanisms, including working groups, and assign specific tasks or mandates to either an individual member or group of members concerning the execution of special programs, studies, and projects. The Working Group on children with disabilities was established, taking into account the challenges that children with disabilities are facing and the need to take a systematic approach by the Committee to address these challenges sustainably. The aim of the Working Group on children with disabilities is to promote the inclusion of children with disabilities in all spheres of life by using a child rights-based approach that ensures the protection of their rights and welfare as enshrined in the African Children’s Charter and other regional and international Human Rights instruments. The Working Group will undertake its activities guided primarily by the African Children’s Charter, the Resolution related to the mandate of the Working Group and the Standard of Operating Procedures for the establishment of the Working Groups as Special Mechanisms within the ACERWC.

Since its establishment, the Working Group on Children with Disabilities in Africa has undertaken several activities to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children with disabilities through developing various normative standards, baseline study on the status of children with disabilities in Africa, conducted various sensitization activities, and issued statements on key milestone days on persons with disabilities. The Working Group intends to continue its efforts in amplifying the voices of children with all types of disabilities. It will be supporting the development of a General Comment on Article 13 on Children with Disabilities, lead on the development of other normative standards on children with disabilities, furnish the ACERWC with updated information on the situation of children with disabilities, and lead on the ACERWC’s advocacy work on the protection of children with disabilities. In its future endeavors, the Working Group would like to strategically focus on the various disabilities’ children live with and the special protection measures that should be tailored considering the types of disabilities to ensure that no child is left behind.

The Working Group on Children with Disabilities of the ACERWC is composed of four Members of the ACERWC and four External Experts as per its establishing Resolution. The External Experts are to be recruited in accordance with these Terms of Reference.

1. **Main duties and responsibilities**

The external experts, together with the other Members of the Working Group, will be tasked with discharging the mandate of the working group as contained in the Resolution related to the extension of the mandate of the Working Group and reiterated as follows:

1. Provide support for the activities of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities;
2. Assist the Working Group in disseminating the findings and recommendations of the comprehensive report on the status of the rights and welfare of children with disabilities in Africa;
3. Assist the Working Group in undertaking activities to disseminate the Guidelines for action on the Rights of Children with Disabilities in Africa to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in various aspects as well as address the abuse and neglect faced by children with disabilities;
4. Assist the Working Group in disseminating the updated ACERWC’s Strategy for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Children with Disabilities in Africa;
5. Support in conducting research on the situation of children with disabilities in various countries, document best practices in terms of legislative and other measures, as well as identify challenges and recommendations;
6. Assist the Working Group in engaging with Governments to establish laws, policies and strategies that protect the rights and welfare of children with disabilities and provide for their inclusion in education, health services, public engagement, play and other activities;
7. Support the Working Group in undertaking various activities aimed at sensitization of community leaders, civil society leaders, and other actors on the rights of children with disabilities with a view to avert the negative stigma that exists against children with disabilities;
8. Contribute to the development of the ACERWC’s documents concerning the rights of children with disabilities;
9. Execute any duties assigned by the ACERWC or the Chairperson of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities; and,
10. Report to the ACERWC on the activities undertaken under the mandate of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities in Africa.
11. **Qualifications**
12. Advanced university degree in law, human rights, children’s rights/welfare, disability rights, social work, or other related disciplines;
13. A minimum of 10 years of working experience in the area of children’s rights in general and the rights of children with disabilities in particular in the African context;
14. Demonstrated knowledge of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the work of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities in Africa and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child;
15. Demonstrated knowledge of trends in the situation and protection of children with disabilities;
16. First-hand knowledge and experience of the cultural, social, economic and political context of Africa and its relationship with the rights and welfare of children with disabilities;
17. Fluency in one of the AU Languages, is required, and knowledge of additional African union working languages is desirable;
18. Work experience in the AU, UN, and other international organizations, especially in treaty body mechanisms, is desirable;
19. Excellent analytical skills using both qualitative and quantitative methods.
20. **Reporting lines**

The External Experts will work under the direct supervision and guidance of the ACERWC and the Chairperson of the Working Group on Children with Disabilities in Africa.

1. **Duration and attendance**

The appointment of successful candidates will commence in December 2025 and end in November 2027. The External Experts will be required to attend all the meetings of the Working Group and selected onsite activities of the Working Group; and, they will also be required to attend relevant Ordinary Sessions of the Committee upon request of the Chairperson of the Working Group or the ACERWC.

1. **Location**

The appointment will be home-based with the above-mentioned travels to attend meetings as well as travels to various African countries to undertake on-site activities of the Working Group, whenever necessary.

1. **Reimbursement**

The External Experts shall not be considered as employees, as such they are not entitled to any form of remuneration. However, the full travel costs of the External Experts will be covered and a daily subsistence allowance will be given for the duration of travels based on the African Union rules and regulations.

1. **Application**

The application documents should consist of the following:

1. A cover letter summarizing the background of the applicant and why the applicant is interested in the position;
2. A Customized Curriculum Vitae not exceeding 3 pages;
3. Evidence of educational background and professional experience;
4. Samples of publications, professional undertakings or related activities which demonstrate the applicants’ expertise in the areas of children’s rights/Disability rights; and,
5. Names and contacts of three references.
6. **Application deadline**

The application should be submitted to the Secretariat of the ACERWC no later than 20 October 2025. Applications should be sent to opportunities-acerwc@africanunion.org copying AdiamZ@africanunion.org