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# EVALUATION REPORT

## END-OF-TERM EVALUATION OF THE ACERWC'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

An Independent Evaluation carried out by  
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## ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Phrase	Full form/explanation
ACCP	African Children's Charter Project
ACERWC or the Committee	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and People's Rights
ACRWC or the Charter	African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACtHPR	African Court on Human and People's Rights
AU	African Union
AGA	African Governance Architecture
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Day of the African Child
Decision	Used to refer to a decision of the ACERWC on a Communication
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social, and Cultural Council of the AU
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
KII	Key Informant Interview
MDAs	Ministries, Departments, and Agencies
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PSC	Peace and Security Council
REC	Regional Economic Community
STC	Special Technical Committee (of the AU)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report evaluates the performance and progress of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC or the Committee) under its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. Established by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Charter), the Committee aims to play a vital role in promoting and protecting children’s rights across Africa. The Committee’s mandate includes monitoring State Party reports, addressing Communications, conducting investigations, and interpreting the Charter to ensure the fulfilment of children’s rights as outlined in the Charter.

The 2021–2025 Strategic Plan was designed to guide the Committee’s work in alignment with the broader objectives set out in Agenda 2040 and the African Union’s (AU) Agenda 2063. This evaluation assesses the extent to which the Strategic Plan’s objectives have been achieved, identifies key successes and challenges, and provides recommendations for the development of the next Strategic Plan for 2026–2030.

The evaluation found that the role and influence of the Committee have grown over the Strategic period, as demonstrated through enhanced public communications, deepened engagement with strategic partners, and greater influence and uptake of outputs such as General Comments, guidelines, and statements. The Committee is viewed as a critical and attractive forum for engaging on human rights issues as a result of its demonstrated willingness to engage with a wide range of actors and to be alive to the realities of the needs of children on the continent.

The Secretariat, in particular, and the Committee, generally, is seen to be an effective and dynamic organ that has achieved a significant amount given the severe resource constraints, particularly human resources, that it faces. These constraints have, unfortunately, been a key underpinning theme for all the work undertaken, and have had a significant effect on the delivery of outputs and the impact achieved.

The Committee was able to fully achieve 54% of Outputs in the Strategic Plan. It is, therefore, clear that its expanded influence has not been consistently matched by full implementation of planned activities and that it faced challenges in delivering on some outputs. However, this finding must be contextualised by an appreciation of the disruption caused by external factors, such as COVID-19, during the period, and the intangible, often immeasurable broader contributions that were achieved during the period. At the same time, the Committee has faced a concerning trend in certain countries to roll back progress on children’s rights, and political pushback is stymying progress on several fronts, including implementation of decisions on Communications, reporting, conducting country missions, and investigations.

The Committee’s overall approach — described by one stakeholder as “a quiet but steady influencer of regional child rights policy in Africa” — has been somewhat effective in maintaining the crucial balance between securing the collaboration and engagement of States while playing an independent oversight role over progress in implementing the Charter.

Key achievements include the growing visibility and stature of the Committee, strengthened partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs), progress on ratification and the withdrawal of reservations, and successful advocacy on issues such as harmful practices and children in conflict

situations. The Committee has also demonstrated a strong ability to adapt to emerging issues, such as climate change and digital rights.

In particular, its ongoing focus on enabling collaboration with strategic partners including other AU organs (both human rights and otherwise), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), CSOs, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and International Organisations (IOs), has been largely effective and a key contributing factor towards success across all areas of its work. In particular, the openness of the Committee to civil society has enabled it to enhance its programming, develop a richer understanding of the context in which it is working, more efficiently use resources, implement more effectively on the ground, and develop credibility and grassroots support for its agenda. The creation and operationalisation of the Special Mechanisms has also been commended for deepening and extending the thematic work of the Committee.

However, significant challenges remain, notably, low compliance with State reporting obligations, under-resourced operations, and limited engagement with key stakeholders such as RECs. The relocation of the Secretariat to Lesotho, while enhancing operational independence, has also introduced logistical challenges, such as reduced proximity to other AU organs and CSOs, limiting coordination and access. The evaluation recommends that the Committee focus on improving State collaboration, expanding partnerships, increasing creative resource mobilisation, and refining its strategic framework to ensure better alignment with Agenda 2040 and other continental frameworks.

In conclusion, while the ACERWC has made meaningful progress in the past five years, it must address several key challenges to fully realise its mandate and improve implementation systems. The next Strategic Plan (2026–2030) should build on these successes, improve operational efficiency, and prioritise areas of thematic focus that respond to emerging child rights issues in Africa. By implementing the recommended strategies, the ACERWC can continue to drive meaningful change in the lives of children across the continent and contribute to a future where children's rights are fully realised and protected.

## **INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **Objectives and Scope**

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child was established by the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and inaugurated in July 2001, in accordance with Article 32 of the Charter.

The Committee's mandate is to monitor and ensure the implementation of the Charter through consideration of State Party reports, consideration of Communications, undertaking investigations, and interpreting the Charter, among others, as set out in articles 42-45 of the Charter. It is unique on the continent in being the only regional treaty body set up with the dedicated mission to promote and protect children's rights and welfare.

The Committee's work is guided by a strategic plan, which, at present, is the five-year Strategic Plan 2021-2025, adopted by the ACERWC at its 35<sup>th</sup> session in September 2020. The Strategic Plan defines the focus of the Committee's work, establishes key objectives and outlines activities and indicators to measure progress against these objectives.

The Strategic Plan is intended to align with the broader objectives set out in Agenda 2040, which details 10 aspirations for the Continent's children by 2040. Agenda 2040 was adopted by the ACERWC in 2015 and later adopted by the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) (decision no EX.CL/Dec.997(XXXI)). It elaborates on the vision for Africa's children within the framework of the AU's Agenda 2063 for the Africa We Want, adopted by the AU in 2013. The ACERWC's Strategic Plan is intended to serve as a focused and implementation-oriented interpretation of Agenda 2040 into tangible outputs for the 2021-2025 period, while maintaining ultimate alignment on achieving full implementation of the Charter.

As the current Strategic Plan period comes to an end, this report documents the findings of the end-of-term evaluation of the plan, seeking to highlight areas of success and challenges for the Committee over the past five years in order to inform the development of a new Strategic Plan for the coming years. This evaluation has focused on assessing the implementation of the Strategic Plan to date, documenting overall achievements and challenges experienced, highlighting lessons learned, and teasing out recommendations for the refinement of future work to ensure optimal impact and efficiency.

The original goals of the Strategic Plan were to focus the work of the Committee, lay the foundation for a strong, internationally renowned and independent Committee, and maximise its contribution to creating an Africa fit for children.<sup>1</sup> Externally, the Plan aimed to provide a guiding framework for partners with regard to priorities for funding and support, to serve as a common basis for assessing results-based performance of the Committee, and to facilitate collective, coherent, comprehensive and

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<sup>1</sup> Strategic Plan of the ACERWC 2021-2025, p. 7.

complementary engagement between the Committee and key stakeholders.<sup>2</sup> This report evaluates the extent to which these goals have been achieved.

## **Background and context**

Several key elements are highlighted here as relevant to the contextual environment in which the Committee operates. While more countries are embedding children's rights into their constitutions, implementation remains uneven, particularly in regions facing political instability, such as the Sahel and parts of Central Africa. The gap between legal commitments and the daily realities of children remains significant.

Economic hardship further constrains progress. The lingering effects of COVID-19, coupled with widespread poverty and debt burdens,<sup>3</sup> have limited government capacity to invest in child-centred social protection systems. The impending risk of a global recession driven by trade wars, combined with a sense of weakening multilateralism, has further contributed. With 41% of Africa's population under the age of 14,<sup>4</sup> the continent stands at a crossroads: it holds immense demographic potential, yet faces urgent challenges in meeting children's needs.

Rapid urbanisation and expanding digital access are also reshaping childhood experiences. While new technologies open up learning opportunities, they bring fresh risks, especially in the absence of robust mental health services or inclusive education systems. Technology also presents opportunities for the Committee to engage a wider audience, while simultaneously enabling mis- and disinformation that can undermine its work.

Deep-rooted harmful practices persist across the continent despite concerted efforts. Child marriage continues to affect millions of girls<sup>5</sup> and female genital mutilation (FGM) remains widespread, despite some progress.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, conflict and climate-related displacement are increasingly common, underscoring the urgency of linking environmental justice to children's rights. A growing number of States have taken steps to restrict civic space, including by limiting freedoms of expression, association, and assembly. These developments have, in many cases, strained the relationship between CSOs and governments, potentially limiting opportunities for collaborative engagement on the realisation of children's rights.

In the run-up to this evaluation, it is notable that previous assessments of the ACERWC's Strategic Plan (2015–2019) and Agenda 2040 implementation (2016–2020) noted that the ACERWC had achieved strengthened capacity, more structured engagement with stakeholders, and increased visibility within the African Union (AU). They noted particular progress in influencing state policies, laws, and public discourse, especially in areas such as birth registration, harmful practices, children in conflict situations,

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<sup>2</sup> Id.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank Group, 'Global Trends in Child Monetary Poverty According to International Poverty Lines,' (2023) (accessible [here](#)), 5.

<sup>4</sup> World Bank Data, 'Population ages 0-14 (% of total population) - Sub-Saharan Africa,' (2023) (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, '130 million African girls and women today married as children,' (2022) (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF, 'Over 230 million girls and women worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation,' (2024) (accessible [here](#)).

and the visibility of girls.<sup>7</sup> The adoption of Agenda 2040 has also provided a guiding vision for children's rights in Africa, helping the Committee expand its influence. However, these evaluations also emphasised that serious constraints remained at the start of the strategic period under review. Limited funding and staff continued to hamper the Committee's effectiveness. This is particularly pertinent in the present moment, given the broader decline in international aid underway around the world. Structural reforms within the AU, while offering new avenues for collaboration through the African Governance Architecture (AGA),<sup>8</sup> have also introduced bureaucratic hurdles and diluted the visibility of children's rights in broader AU policymaking. The Committee's ability to assert its mandate while navigating these institutional shifts<sup>9</sup> remains a central factor for consideration.

In this shifting landscape, the ACERWC's Strategic Plan plays a vital role in keeping children's rights firmly on the continental agenda. It recognises that child welfare is not only a human rights imperative, but central to Africa's sustainable development, peace, and security.

### **Core values and guiding principles**

In delivering its mandate in terms of the Charter, the ACERWC is mandated to be guided by the universality, interdependence, interrelationship and indivisibility of children's rights, to act in an independent and objective manner, and to strive to be accessible, accountable and open. These values underpin all aspects of the Committee's work. The 2021-2025 Strategic Plan set out four further values required to underlie any assessment of its work: non-discrimination,<sup>10</sup> best interest of the child,<sup>11</sup> life, survival and development,<sup>12</sup> and participation.<sup>13</sup>

Keeping with this overarching values set, this evaluation was designed to embed several key principles within its methodology. First, the evaluation strove to ensure a safe space and cultural sensitivity in all engagements with stakeholders, as this is not only vital to obtaining honest input but also to ensuring the participation of a wide range of stakeholders with varying experiences and perspectives. Likewise, it sought to follow a practical, simple, and outcomes-based approach that emphasised generating useful insights for future strategy development, ensuring authentic ownership by the Committee itself over the results, and enabling effective use of the outcomes and learnings that stem from this evaluation.

Noting that child participation is key to the values and principles of the Committee, the evaluation also endeavoured to implement child-friendly data collection methods while ensuring child safeguarding practices throughout. This began by tapping into the existing child representation networks with which the ACERWC already had relationships and then spread into referrals through children's representatives and organisations.

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<sup>7</sup> ACERWC, 'Agenda 2040: Assessment of the First Phase of Implementation 2016-2020,' (2021) (accessible [here](#)), V.

<sup>8</sup> ACERWC, 'AGA-APSA,' (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>9</sup> Summary of reforms as at 2024 is accessible [here](#).

<sup>10</sup> Article 3 of the ACRWC.

<sup>11</sup> Article 4 of the ACRWC.

<sup>12</sup> Article 5 of the ACRWC.

<sup>13</sup> Articles 7 and 12 of the ACRWC.



## Structure of the ACERWC

At this juncture, it is useful to clarify the structure of the ACERWC to provide a solid base for understanding the evaluation to follow. The Committee is composed of eleven members, which, according to Article 33 of the Charter, must be persons of high moral standing, integrity, impartiality and competence in matters of the rights and welfare of the child, and who are appointed by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government from a list of persons nominated by State Parties. Members elect a Bureau for a period of two years with the possibility of re-election, consisting of a Chairperson, two Vice Chairpersons, a Rapporteur and a Deputy Rapporteur.

The ACERWC also operates three sets of Special Mechanisms. The Committee has appointed all eleven of its members to serve as Thematic Rapporteurs on specific thematic areas<sup>14</sup> as well as Country Rapporteurs for different countries. It has also established Working Groups, many of which include external experts and deal with challenges observed in specific thematic areas.<sup>15</sup>

The ACERWC is supported by a Secretariat, as provided for by Article 40 of the ACERWC, headed by an Executive Secretary, which is in charge of its day-to-day operations and provides support to the Committee Members. The Secretariat was previously hosted by the AU Department of Social Affairs but in 2020 relocated to the Kingdom of Lesotho with the aim of facilitating its greater autonomy and operational effectiveness.

## METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was adopted (incorporating both qualitative research methods and quantitative elements, where relevant) to ensure a comprehensive view of the landscape and the Committee's progress in a contextualised manner. While efforts were made to quantify progress to the greatest extent possible, many of the Committee's activities and achievements are qualitative in nature and difficult to measure using standard metrics. This necessitated a complementary subjective analysis of information relying on the triangulation of evidence and a nuanced interpretation of the contextual factors affecting progress.

Specifically, the methodology involved the following activities.

### Desktop and literature review

This phase involved a comprehensive desktop and literature review, including consideration of AU Assembly Decisions on the ACERWC, work plans and progress reports, Communications, country

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<sup>14</sup> Special Rapporteur on the Right to Name, Birth Registration, and Nationality; Special Rapporteur on Child Justice; Special Rapporteur on Education; Special Rapporteur on Children without Parental Care; Special Rapporteur on Children on the Move; Special Rapporteur on Children in Vulnerable Situations; Special Rapporteur on Child Participation; Special Rapporteur on Child Marriage and Other Harmful Practices; Special Rapporteur on Violence against Children; Special Rapporteur on Children and Armed Conflict; Special Rapporteur on Health, Welfare and Development.

<sup>15</sup> Working Group on the Rights of Children with Disabilities; Working Group on Climate Change and Children's Rights; Working Group on Business and Children's Rights; Working Group on Implementation of Decisions.

mission reports, State Party Reports, General Comments and guidelines, resolutions, open letters, and external research and publications from civil society, NHRIs, and academia.

## **Consultations**

Consultation was conducted in two phases. First, a Strategic Planning Retreat was held on 4 April 2025 in Maseru, Lesotho, ahead of the 45<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ACERWC. This Retreat served as a pivotal moment to initiate a reflective review of the existing Strategic Plan and engage a diverse set of stakeholders in shaping the direction of the forthcoming Strategic Plan (2026–2030). Employing a dynamic and participatory methodology, the Retreat featured break-out groups and plenary dialogues designed to surface lessons from the current plan’s implementation, explore relevant continental and global developments influencing the Committee’s work, and identify emerging challenges and opportunities. Through these interactive exchanges, participants began forging a shared understanding of priority areas, intended results, and long-term impact for the next strategic phase.

The second phase involved virtual consultations with key stakeholders representing several different groups. This included online surveys sent out for virtual completion as well as interviews, both group and individual. In total, 57 survey responses were received<sup>16</sup> and 14 interviews were conducted,<sup>17</sup> including one focus group with four children with experience interacting with the ACERWC. The surveys provided more easily quantifiable and comparable feedback, while the interviews offered an opportunity for deeper and more nuanced feedback to complement that received through the surveys.

## **Evaluation Framework**

This evaluation is grounded in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)’s Evaluation Criteria. The framework is a widely accepted methodology for determining “the merit or worth of an intervention.” This model was used to develop the Evaluation Framework, attached in **ANNEXURE 3: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK** below. The Framework sets out six evaluation criteria (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability) which serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgments are made.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the Framework provides two principles for its use: that the criteria should be applied thoughtfully and understood within the context of the particular evaluation and intervention; and that the use of the criteria depends on the purpose of the evaluation and they should be applied contextually rather than mechanistically.

## **Limitations of the evaluation**

This methodology and the evaluation more broadly aimed at providing a comprehensive view of the performance of the Committee over the past five years against the Strategic Plan as well as the objective standard set by the six evaluation criteria of the Evaluation Framework. While it aimed to provide a

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<sup>16</sup> ACERWC Committee Members – 2 responses; ACERWC Secretariat staff – 14 responses; Strategic partners, including CSOs, international agencies, development partners, and key donors – 6 responses;

AU organs – 2 responses; Children – 33 responses. (although some of these responses may have been duplicates).

<sup>17</sup> Group interview with 4 Secretariat staff; 4 interviews with Committee Members, and 9 with strategic partners.

<sup>18</sup> OECD, ‘Evaluation Criteria,’ (accessible [here](#)).

balanced and comprehensive assessment of the Committee's performance over the Strategic Plan period (2021–2025), a number of methodological and contextual limitations should be noted. These constraints are acknowledged here in the interest of transparency and rigour.

- **Limited timeframe for data collection and analysis:** The evaluation was conducted within a relatively compressed timeframe. While every effort was made to ensure robust consultation and review, the time available limited the extent to which all areas of the Committee's work could be explored in depth.
- **Consultations predominantly with known partners:** Consultations were largely conducted with stakeholders already known to or working closely with the ACERWC. While this ensured a level of depth and contextual understanding in the responses, it may have limited the diversity of perspectives captured, particularly from actors that engage with the Committee less frequently or could have spoken to challenges to better understanding or engaging with the Committee. Efforts were made to mitigate this through asking stakeholders to circulate the surveys to others in their network to reach a broader group.
- **Limited participation of children from diverse backgrounds:** Furthermore, the evaluation may not have fully captured the perspectives of marginalised or harder-to-reach groups such as children in conflict-affected areas or those outside formal protection systems.
- **Potential for response bias:** Given the Committee's close relationships with many of its partners and stakeholders, there is a possibility of response bias in the consultations, with some respondents potentially more inclined to provide positive assessments. The use of anonymous surveys and anonymisation of interview responses was intended to mitigate this risk, and there was no indication that stakeholders felt constrained in providing honest responses.

The findings and recommendations that follow should be understood as a foundation for strategic reflection and future planning rather than a definitive or exhaustive account of all aspects of the Committee's work.

## KEY FINDINGS

This section outlines the principal findings that emerged from the evaluation process. Overall, the ACERWC appears to have grown from strength to strength over the past five years, with many stakeholders reflecting on its growing visibility and effectiveness in influencing the implementation of the provisions of the Charter. While important challenges remain, particularly in relation to resource constraints and institutional positioning, and progress has not always translated into consistent implementation of the Strategic Plan, the findings of the evaluation point to meaningful progress in both the Committee's operational maturity and its strategic influence across the continent.

### Achievement of Strategies and Outputs

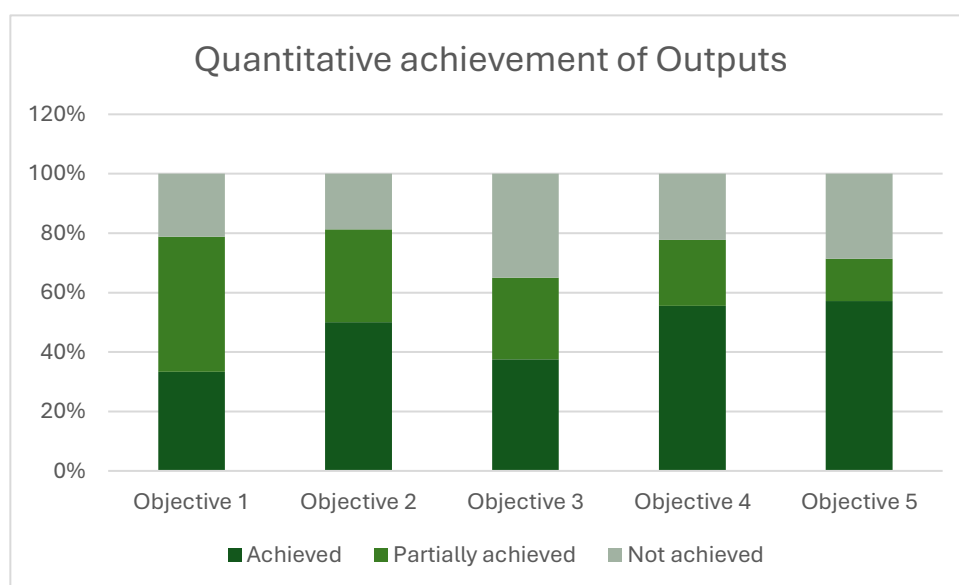
Before delving into a deeper evaluation of progress based on the Evaluation Framework, this section presents a high-level assessment of the extent to which the ACERWC has achieved the core objectives set out in its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. The evaluation considered both the stated goals of the Plan and the broader intention behind its design — namely, to provide a focused and coherent framework to guide the Committee's efforts in promoting and protecting children's rights on the continent. Drawing from

documentary analysis and stakeholder input, the review explores progress made across the objectives, providing a foundation for an assessment of areas of success, partial achievement, and ongoing challenge.

The Strategic Plan comprised five big-picture objectives broken up into 51 Strategies and 119 Outputs, each level becoming increasingly granular and specific. A full logframe detailing the progress made in implementing each Output is attached hereto as **ANNEXURE 2: COMPLETED LOGFRAME**.

**Overall, 64 of the 119 Outputs were successfully achieved (54%) with an additional 36 (or 30%) partially achieved. This leaves 19 Outputs, or 16%, not achieved.**

As can be seen below, Objectives 4 and 5 saw greatest implementation (promoting the ACREWC as a reference point on children’s rights, and operationalisation and capacity-building of the Secretariat and Committee). Objectives 1 (Universal ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Charter) and 3 (Robust normative standards, policies and agendas for child rights practices are developed and implemented) experienced the lowest rates of progress.



*Figure 1: Progress made on implementing Outputs*

This is particularly concerning given that these two areas lie at the heart of the Committee’s mandate — ensuring that the Charter is ratified, domesticated, and meaningfully implemented by States, and developing robust normative standards to guide child rights practices across the continent. The limited progress on universal ratification suggests diminishing returns on advocacy efforts in this area, while implementation and domestication efforts have often been stymied by weak political will, resource constraints, and limited follow-through mechanisms. Likewise, the Committee’s normative agenda under Objective 3 suffered from competing priorities and a lack of dedicated capacity to drive thematic outputs forward. These shortcomings point to a need for sharper prioritisation, improved coordination with State and non-State actors, and a more agile and focused strategy for delivering on the Committee’s core legal and policy functions.

In interpreting this assessment, it must be noted that a key challenge during the period was the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This interrupted the Committee's ability to hold physical meetings, conduct in-country missions, engage in-person with partners and stakeholders, etc during the early parts of the strategic period. In particular, it undermined the ability to achieve some Outputs planned for 2021. Specifically, the 37th, 38th, and 39th Ordinary Sessions had to be quickly adapted to a virtual platform. While this was, in many cases, successfully achieved, it did result in some loss of participation, especially for children and stakeholders in areas with limited digital access.

Uptake of the Plan itself was somewhat inconsistent. While it provided a comprehensive guiding framework for the work of the Committee, it is clear that it was not regularly used throughout the period to assess progress and reflect. For example, despite the development of a very comprehensive and detailed M&E document including a Results Framework, Indicator Matrix, Indicator Tracking Table, and a Monitoring Workplan, the document remained incomplete due to the high burden it placed on staff, resulting in a lacuna of information about performance against the Strategic Plan on an ongoing basis. This is also a prime example of an area where temporary staff played a role in moving forward key work, with the hiring of an M&E officer in 2024, but where progress then stalled once the temporary contract came to an end.

It is notable that there was some misalignment between the Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and the M&E Plan, which may have contributed to causing confusion over the actual Objectives, Strategies, and Outputs in the Plan and what to prioritise.

Staff expressed a clear feeling of lacking M&E expertise and a desire to build skills in this regard, including through the holding of quarterly learning seminars (as was a planned activity under the Strategic Plan). These kinds of activities should be designed for the dual purpose of building staff capacity while also enabling the sharing of information, learning, and reflection on programmatic work to ensure that all staff are aware of progress made against achieving the objectives in the Strategic Plan on an ongoing basis and to enable iterative management to adapt to lessons learned.

It is suggested that the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan may have been overly granular — particularly with regard to the Outputs — intruding into the space that should be reserved for annual workplans. While there are benefits to a highly detailed and granular Strategic Plan, such as providing a clear roadmap for the work of the organisation, there are also some disadvantages. Notably, it restricts the ability to adapt annual workplans to changes in context or priorities and creates the potential for conflicting objectives when the latter are developed. In this case, while there is broad alignment between the Strategic Plan and the 2024 Workplan, for example, several of the activities set out in the Workplan are at the same or similar level of granularity as those in the Strategic Plan and are not explicitly organised according to the Strategic Objectives. This can create challenges for staff and stakeholders to understand the justification and strategic alignment behind certain activities.

“While the goals were achievable in principle, full implementation depended heavily on external partnerships and donor support, making sustainability a challenge.”

It must also be emphasised that the ACERWC’s overall outcome of successfully achieving 54% of Outputs must be considered within a broader and more nuanced context. First, the Committee’s ability to deliver on planned Outputs was significantly shaped by external disruptions, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic, which rendered some activities impractical, less relevant, or of lower strategic priority. In such circumstances, rigid adherence to the original logframe would not have reflected the agility or responsiveness that the Committee was required to demonstrate. Second, many of the Committee’s most meaningful achievements lie in areas that are difficult to quantify, such as shifts in normative frameworks, increased visibility of children’s rights issues, and improved collaboration with AU organs and stakeholders. These kinds of qualitative outcomes are often not fully captured by performance metrics. While measurement is essential to accountability, an overemphasis on numeric indicators risks obscuring the more substantive contributions of the Committee to long-term impact.

This Evaluation Report seeks to provide a balanced view: complementing Output data with a deeper analysis using the OECD DAC evaluation criteria, as below. In doing so, it aims to reflect not only the activities completed but also the strategic value, relevance, and sustainability of the Committee’s work over the 2021–2025 period.

### **Outcomes of the Evaluation Framework<sup>19</sup>**

This section presents an analysis of the ACERWC’s work over the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan period through the lens of the six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. By applying this internationally recognised framework, the evaluation offers a structured and comparative view of the Committee’s performance. The criteria enable a deeper interrogation not only of what the Committee has achieved, but how those achievements align with its mandate, resources, and broader operating environment. In doing so, this section seeks to capture the complexity of the ACERWC’s evolving role within the AU ecosystem and its capacity to deliver on the rights and welfare of children across the continent.

#### *Relevance*

*Is the Committee doing the right things? Does it respond to children’s needs and is it/has it been able to respond to changing circumstances?*

#### Responsiveness to context and emerging issues

Broadly, there is awareness of the Strategic Plan among internal stakeholders (Committee Members and Secretariat Staff), with most respondents agreeing that the Plan provided a meaningful framework to orient the work of the Committee and set relevant goals aligned with its mandate. Secretariat staff are familiar with the five Objectives of the Plan and feel that their work over the period has broadly aligned with the roadmap set by it. Awareness by external stakeholders of the Plan specifically is lower, but there was also relative consensus that the work of the Committee has responded to the context and needs of children during the period.

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<sup>19</sup> OECD, ‘Better Criteria for Better Evaluation: Revised Evaluation Criteria Definitions and Principles for Use,’ (2019) (accessible [here](#)).

At the same time, there was mention of the significantly disruptive effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated flexibility and adjusting strategic priorities according to the new environment and changed funder priorities. The Committee issued several Resolutions on new and emerging issues during the period, such as Resolution N ° 18/2022 on Integrating a Child Rights-Based Approach to Climate Change Responses and Resolution N ° 17/2022 on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights in the Digital Sphere in Africa.

Together with the establishment of Special Mechanisms focused on emerging child rights issues, this indicates an ability to adapt to emerging issues and remain relevant to contextual changes. This also implicates the Committee's ability to respond to requests made by the Executive Council to act on various initiatives. For example, in its 2023 Decisions, the ACERWC was requested to develop a Child Safeguarding Policy for the AU, something which was also successfully achieved.

Building on the theme of relevance, it is important to assess how effectively the Committee integrated key cross-cutting priorities — specifically gender and disability — into its work in ways that are responsive to the actual and evolving needs of children. The inclusion of these issues is not only a reflection of the Committee's mandate under the Charter, but also a measure of how attuned it has remained to the lived realities of children across the continent. Assessing how these cross-cutting themes were operationalised provides further insight into the extent to which the Committee's interventions were relevant, inclusive, and capable of addressing structural inequalities that impact children's rights and welfare.

More progress appears to have been made on integrating disability as a priority than on gender. Although a formal disability strategy has not been developed, engagement on issues related to children with disabilities has been extensive. For example, the Committee has established a working group on children with disabilities, integrated disability issues in several documents produced such as studies, general comments, concluding observations and recommendations, among others, mainstreamed the issue of disability in the theme of the DAC and in the Concept Note for the 35th anniversary of the Charter. It has also published a Study on the Status of Children with Disabilities in Africa in 2023 and organised a Day of General Discussion on the situation of children with albinism in collaboration with the UN Independent Expert on People with Albinism. Finally, Resolution No 19/2022 of the Committee's Working Group on the Rights of Children with Disabilities, adopted during the 39th Ordinary Session of the ACERWC, calls attention to the lack of adequate measures to improve the lives of children with albinism and Resolution 22/2024 on harmful practices against children with disabilities in Africa makes recommendations to states to better protect the rights of children with disabilities.

The discrepancy with programming on gender was attributed to the priorities of funders being more focused in recent years on disability rights. However, activity on gender-related issues appears to be ramping up, particularly with the recent recruitment of a project officer leading the Promotion of human rights and empowerment of women in Africa (AWARE) project, supported by GIZ. This project will include, for example, developing a report on the Committee's mandate and activities in terms of girls' rights, documenting success stories on girls' participation on the continent, conducting a joint tripartite analysis report to explore the challenges in litigating women and girls' rights in the Committee, the ACHPR and the African Court, doing a report on the challenges faced in the implementation of decisions

of the Committee on girls' rights, conducting a training for girl parliamentarians, NHRIs and CSOs on girls' rights issues on the continent, etc. There has also been progress in recruiting two legal researchers on harmful practices and gender mainstreaming and in integrating gender-related elements in the work of the Special Mechanisms of the Committee, although formal achievement of the Outputs in the Strategic Plan has been lacking.

Moving forward, and in particular, the Committee should be encouraged to take an intersectional approach to both gender and disability issues that considers the nuanced vulnerabilities and vectors of marginalisation relating to social, political and cultural structures that contribute to various child rights issues.

Some stakeholders felt that beyond these two cross-cutting themes, the Strategic Plan did not go far enough to explicitly identify other specific or emerging child rights challenges, which would have strengthened the alignment with current realities on the continent. One area was, in particular, flagged for potential misalignment. Given the progress that had been made in the years running up to the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan in achieving ratification of the Charter, it was questioned whether the Plan's focus on universal ratification was necessary or a strategic use of resources:

“By the time the Strategic Plan was adopted in 2020, only a small number of States (five) had yet to ratify the Charter. As such, universal ratification was no longer a widespread challenge at that point. Similarly, while domestication and implementation are essential, the objective as framed reflects a general institutional goal rather than a clearly defined and urgent child rights issue.”

Regardless, there is widespread agreement on the need for focusing on domestication and implementation of the Charter.

#### Visibility and recognition as a reference point

The visibility of the ACERWC has improved over the strategic period, supported by strengthened communications efforts and a more dynamic online presence. The website, in particular, must be commended for providing comprehensive and up-to-date information on the Committee's work. Multiple stakeholders noted a growing awareness of the Committee's work, citing examples where its jurisprudence, General Comments, or other outputs were referenced in unexpected and far-reaching contexts. This suggests that the Committee is increasingly recognised as a credible and influential voice on children's rights across Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Several high-impact normative outputs contributed to this rising profile, including key General Comments and guidelines that addressed emerging or underexplored areas of child rights. These included General Comment No. 7 on Article 27 of the Charter focusing on sexual violence against children; General Comment No. 8, a joint initiative with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), addressing Female Genital Mutilation; the Guidelines on Children's Rights During

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<sup>20</sup> See also CHR, 'The status of the implementation of the African Children's Charter: A Ten-Country Study,' (2022) (accessible [here](#)), p. 27.



Elections; and the Guidelines on Violence Against Children. These documents have bolstered the Committee's stature as a normative leader and reference point on the continent.

The Committee has also made commendable efforts to build partnerships and engage with a range of stakeholders. However, there remains a concern that these engagements sometimes occur within a limited and familiar network, which may inadvertently narrow the Committee's reach and influence. Several stakeholders highlighted the need to expand awareness of the Committee's work beyond expert circles, particularly in regions where the ACERWC remains relatively unknown — such as North Africa — and where ratification and reporting rates are lower.

Despite growing recognition, the ACERWC is still frequently overshadowed by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and many actors across the continent remain unaware of its role and outputs. To address this, stakeholders have urged the Committee to make greater use of its unique tools, such as provisional measures and urgent appeals, especially in grave or time-sensitive situations<sup>21</sup> — both as a means of fulfilling its mandate and increasing its visibility and influence.

The Day of the African Child (DAC) stands out as a particularly impactful initiative that has raised the Committee's profile. It has become a significant annual event, drawing participation from a wide range of stakeholders — including Member States — and generating broader awareness of children's rights issues. The DAC is widely viewed as a meaningful platform that not only brings visibility to the Committee's work but also catalyses collective action in support of children's rights across the continent.

### *Coherence*

*How well does the Committee's work fit with the work being done by other actors? Do its various activities align with each other? Does it support relevant international norms and standards? Does the Committee coordinate with others and avoid duplication of effort?*

The Strategic Plan 2021-2025 stated that—

“The Committee shall work in concert and tandem, where relevant and appropriate, with domestic, sub-regional, regional and international stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, consultation and collaboration to ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights and welfare in Africa. In order to use scarce resources wisely and attain maximum effect, the Committee will avoid duplication, and work collaboratively and collectively with other organisations, agencies and individuals to secure the African Children's Charter.”<sup>22</sup>

Collaboration and coherence with other actors, thus, is not only a strategy to ensure effective use of resources, but is also critical to achieving meaningful and sustainable impact on children's rights across the continent by ensuring take-up and follow-through by other actors.

<sup>21</sup> Frans Viljoen, 'Communications,' in 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Commentary,' (accessible here) (2024) p. 559.

<sup>22</sup> Strategic Plan 2021-2025, p. 13.

Stakeholders broadly agreed that collaboration with partners has remained a core area of focus for the Committee, and the gains achieved in this regard demonstrate the value of prioritising cooperative approaches. At the same time, some challenges were noted in aligning the Strategic Plan with the Agenda 2040 Implementation Plan. Both frameworks contain overlapping objectives, targets, and indicators, and stronger alignment between them would help sharpen the Committee's strategic focus and reduce duplication of effort. For example, current evaluation processes for the Strategic Plan and the phased implementation of Agenda 2040 require separate reporting, which adds to the administrative burden and creates inefficiencies. Better synchronisation of timeframes and monitoring frameworks — particularly between Agenda 2040's ten-year implementation horizon and the three-year budget planning cycle — would improve coherence and streamline resource use. There is a need to more visibly and systematically integrate Agenda 2040 into the Committee's outputs. Doing so would help ensure that the Committee's work continues to be strategically oriented around the long-term goal of realising the rights of every child in Africa, as envisioned in the ten aspirations of Agenda 2040.

#### The Committee's status as a high-level policy body:

There is an existential and somewhat philosophical question mark around the positioning and orientation of the ACERWC. For example, some stakeholders felt that the Strategic Plan did not provide an effective mechanism for engaging grassroots and local actors, and was better tailored to high-level stakeholders. Another felt that the Plan neglected the need to reach children in remote areas. With regards to the Committee itself, some stakeholders felt that the Committee could do more to engage local and grassroots actors in its work.

However, a majority believed that the Committee occupies an important role in high-level policy discussions and risks undermining its position and influence by delving too much into the realm of direct engagement on the ground. Naturally, there are certain areas in which the Committee must act strategically to ensure that the positive impacts of its work trickle down to have a real effect on the lives of children on the ground. Its relationships with CSOs and NHRIs play a critical role in monitoring compliance and promoting children's rights at the national level, and these partnerships not only expand the Committee's reach but also ensure that its work is grounded in the lived experiences of children across the continent. Likewise, when undertaking in-country missions, the Committee has a track record of engaging extensively with affected communities. It also seeks to remain informed of developments on the ground by encouraging complementary reports and inputs on Communications by CSOs operating at the grassroots level.

But the Committee's key mandate and area of expertise is in standards-setting and high-level engagements with States, where it has had notable success. It is important that the Committee not risk this position by extending itself too far into the mandate of other actors, such as CSOs and government ministries, while ensuring that it maintains robust engagement with these entities for the purposes of coherence and coordination.

## Engagement with NHRIs

The amendment and operationalisation of the Guidelines for Granting Affiliate Status to NHRIs has been a major success for the Committee during the Strategic Plan period. NHRIs are a crucial outreach mechanism for the Committee, as many occupy a unique position within States as independent watchdogs on the implementation of treaties, which gives them the ability to provide valuable information to the Committee. NHRIs have access to the internal cogs of government and are seen to be an effective bridge between the Committee and State actors.

Twenty NHRIs have been granted affiliate status between 2021 and 2023.<sup>23</sup> The impact of the relationship with NANHRI must be emphasised in encouraging its members to apply for status, resulting in relatively quick progression in this area.

## Engagement with CSOs

Generally, stakeholders, including CSO representatives themselves, were highly complementary of the ACERWC's efforts to engage CSOs in its work through submission of complementary reports, working with Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups, participating in the development of General Comments, drafting the Child Safeguarding Policy, involvement in follow-up on the implementation of decisions and recommendations, developing joint studies, etc. This engagement is central to the impact of the Committee and is genuinely valued from both sides. It is, however, notable that the Committee relies on several key CSO partners for funding of various parts of its activities and some staff secondments. This is highly valuable and appreciated by the Commission and should be commended as a creative way to deal with the current resource constraints. It does also, though, create a risk for future sustainability and independence, particularly a risk of perceived conflicts of interest that must be carefully managed.<sup>24</sup>

7. How effectively has the ACERWC engaged with your organisation or sector?



Figure 2: Strategic Partners: engagement with partners

Progress has also been made with the recent updating of the Guidelines on Observer Status of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Associations. What was previously seen as an unduly burdensome and difficult process that precluded many CSOs from applying has reportedly improved.

<sup>23</sup> ACERWC, 'NHRIs,' (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>24</sup> To be entirely clear, no stakeholders raised a current perception of conflict, but rather than it remains a risk to be vigilant of and to carefully mitigate against.

However, new CSO applications have remained slow. Eighteen CSOs were granted observer status between 2016 and 2020<sup>25</sup> with an additional 21 in the current period.<sup>26</sup> This increase is positive, but the rate of growth is still relatively low.

This may be because while the intention behind the reforms is admirable, in practice, many small or new CSOs still face challenges in preparing the documentation for the application. As such, the number of CSOs with observer status remains relatively low, compared to both the number of NHRIs with affiliate status and the number of CSOs operating in the area of children's rights on the continent. Positively, CSOs reported that once the documentation requirements had been met, approval was mostly assured.

Further, the body of CSOs with observer status remains relatively imbalanced, with a lack of representation from North Africa and from francophone-speaking regions of the continent. This implies a need to increase initiatives to translate ACERWC documents and social media content and to reach out to CSOs in those regions. The ACERWC should also be commended for its existing efforts to facilitate knowledge-sharing between CSOs with long-standing histories with the Committee and newer or smaller organisations. It must be further noted that many of the key CSO partners of the Committee also provide capacity-building for smaller, more diverse CSOs on engaging with the Committee (and other human rights bodies) and support these CSOs to participate themselves. Arguably, this may be a more efficient way of reaching a greater diversity of CSOs than through direct engagement by the Committee.

The operation of the CSO Forum attracted some limited criticism, noting that its discussions often lacked strategy and direction, and did not feed effectively into the following discussions during the main Sessions. In part, this can be attributed to the disconnect between the often local mandate of CSOs and the continental mandate and focus of the Committee. Although it should be emphasised that it is also the responsibility of the Committee to ensure the Session responds to what is raised in the CSO Forum, it was suggested that the ACERWC should provide a more structured framework for the CSO Forum to ensure that the platform that has been created is used effectively and in a way that advances its work strategically. Another suggestion was that the Committee could do more to encourage and ensure the effectiveness of the work of CSOs by providing capacity-building and more assertively guiding the work of CSOs where it is most needed to implement the standards and guidelines set by it. This capacity gap was evident, for example, in criticism that decisions on Communications and Concluding Observations were not easily accessible, despite these being clearly available on the Committee's website.

#### Collaboration with the ACHPR and African Court

This has been an area of priority for the Committee over the strategic period and appears to continue to ramp up further. For example, the three organs developed a staff exchange programme, which the Committee implemented in 2023 by sending two of its staff to each of the organs. They also collaborate in the publication of the African Human Rights Yearbook, which is published together with the Centre for Human Rights. A joint retreat of legal officers of the three organs was held in 2022 and a joint MOU signed

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<sup>25</sup> ACERWC, 'Assessment of the First Phase of Implementation of Agenda 2040,' (2020) (accessible [here](#)), p. 35-36.

<sup>26</sup> ACERWC, 'CSOs,' (accessible [here](#)).

between the ACHPR, PAP, the Economic, Social and Cultural Council and the ACERWC in July 2023. The Committee adopted two General Comments jointly with the ACHPR on Ending Child Marriage and on FGM and issued a joint letter of urgent appeal and statement on the ongoing debate to decriminalise FGM in the Gambia. The Committee regularly invites both organs to its Sessions and various activities and has sought to actively participate in their activities. The AWARE project is also being implemented jointly with the Court and the Commission, which includes planning a joint tripartite analysis report to explore the challenges of litigating women's and girls' rights in the organs.

While this progress is overall commendable, it should continue to be prioritised and advanced to maximise the complementarities between the work of the organs. It was also suggested that the Committee explore ways to overcome its lack of standing before the African Court to open up a new pathway for accountability for child rights violations across the continent.

#### Integration with the APRM and engagement in the AGA and with other AU organs

Over the past five years, the Committee has made meaningful strides in strengthening its engagement with key AU organs and mechanisms, establishing a more visible and consistent presence within the broader AU architecture. Notable progress has been made in building collaborative relationships with bodies such as the Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Pan-African Parliament (PAP), and the African Governance Architecture (AGA), demonstrating the Committee's commitment to situating children's rights more firmly within continental governance and peace and security agendas. An indicator of the progress made is the fact that statements from several AU organs are now a regular feature at the start of ACERWC Ordinary Sessions.

Engagement with the PSC has been one of the areas of greatest progress for the Committee over the past five years within the realm of partnerships and collaboration. Although this relationship has yet to be formalised, there has been an openness from the PSC to engage on issues of children affected by armed conflict (CAAC) which the Committee has largely capitalised on. For example, two PSC sessions were held on the status of CAAC and the PSC has integrated child sensitive indicators in its early warning systems. A 2023 meeting was also held with the PSC on the integration of child protection into the AGA-APSA on aspects related to CAAC.

The PAP has also been an area of focus for the Committee, although with less demonstrable progress. After ongoing efforts to build the relationship, it is notable that a draft MOU remains to be signed between the two organs as of June 2025. This should continue to be pursued and implemented in the new strategic period.

With regards to the APRM, the Committee has been engaging in the AGA platform actively as a platform Member and has an ongoing initiative through the AGA Secretariat to collaborate with the APRM process through State reporting.<sup>27</sup> However, for the Committee to secure deeper recognition and influence within the AU system, strategic engagement with AU organs must be deepened. Doing so will be critical to increasing institutional buy-in, elevating the Committee's visibility, and ensuring that children's rights are mainstreamed across AU processes and priorities. Because the issue of children's rights is multi-

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<sup>27</sup> ACERWC, 'Assessment of the First Phase of Implementation of Agenda 2040,' (2020) (accessible [here](#)), p. 31.

disciplinary, greater cooperation with other organs of the AU and UN dealing with key issues such as health, nutrition, and education is also needed.

It should be noted that there is some confusion among external stakeholders about how the Committee's work aligns with Agenda 2063. The Committee is recommended to place greater focus on this, including by participating in Agenda 2063 events and activities as a platform to promote its work. More clearly linking the mandate of the Special Mechanisms to the aspirations of Agenda 2063 would also assist to create greater coherence. In particular, the Committee should strategize engagement mechanisms with the AU STCs to build support for children's rights issues within the AU and consider ways to enable greater alignment with the AU themes of the year.

### Engagement with RECs

The Committee has taken steps to build relationships with RECs, recognising their critical role in advancing child rights across the continent. A noteworthy example was the engagement convened during the Committee's 44th Ordinary Session in 2024, where representatives from all five regions participated in a Forum focused on advocating for the establishment and strengthening of child rights structures within RECs. Encouragingly, commitments were made during this dialogue to reinforce such structures, reflecting an openness to collaboration at the regional level.

However, this engagement has yet to evolve into a sustained and structured partnership capable of driving systemic change. While important initial connections have been made, systematic platforms for engagement with RECs remain absent. The planned 2025 symposium on child rights with RECs presents a valuable opportunity to deepen and institutionalise these efforts.

A particular challenge has been the difficulty in broadening engagement beyond the specific domain of children affected by armed conflict, which continues to dominate the child rights agenda in regional peace and security dialogues. This may be partially attributable to the limited presence of child rights specialists within the RECs themselves. There is also a need for increased attention to this from the Secretariat. Indeed, this gap was reflected in the fact that several staff members felt unable to comment meaningfully on REC engagement, indicating that efforts in this area remain nascent and relatively underdeveloped.



Figure 3: Secretariat Staff: coordination between the Secretariat and RECs

## Effectiveness

*Is the Committee achieving its objectives? Were the objectives appropriate and did it prioritise the most important ones?*

Overall, the ACERWC is a highly effective and efficient organ that operates at a high level with a competent team, regular outputs, and meaningful interaction with stakeholders. The Committee, along with its Secretariat, is respected in the ecosystem and seen as an active and reliable partner advancing children's rights. This is despite relatively significant budget and capacity constraints that continue to be felt acutely.

### Implementation of activities

As discussed above, a majority of planned activities were either fully or partially implemented. In many cases, non-achievement stemmed from dependencies on other actors such as MSs, RECs, AU organs, etc. Objectives 4 and 5 saw the highest percentage of completed activities, while Objectives 1 (ratification and implementation) and 2 (accountability mechanisms) had the highest achievement overall including partial achievement. Objective 3 (standard-setting) appeared to experience the greatest challenges to implementation, but also comprised a large number of Outputs.

Some uncompleted activities clearly related to changes in strategic focus or contextual developments, while others remained priorities but faced resource and capacity challenges.

The Committee expanded its use of digital platforms to communicate with stakeholders during the period. It is notable that the website provides comprehensive and mostly up-to-date information about the Committee's work, which is important for enabling broader buy-in. The live-streaming of Ordinary Sessions is also commendable. However, it is clear that budget constraints limited the implementation of activities and required prioritisation to the detriment of certain activities and objectives in the Strategic Plan.

### State Reporting Procedure

A repeated theme of the evaluation has been the challenges faced in securing compliance from MSs on their reporting obligations to the Committee. Assessing this quantitatively, we see that 32 States had submitted initial reports as of 2019 out of 49 states that were due (a rate of 65%), while as of 2025, 42 states have submitted initial reports out of 50 that are due, an improvement to 84%. With regard to periodic reports, as of 2019, 8 states had submitted their first periodic reports, out of 47 that were due (17%) while as of 2025, 23 states have submitted out of those that are due (46%). On second periodic reports, 12% of those due as of 2025 have been submitted

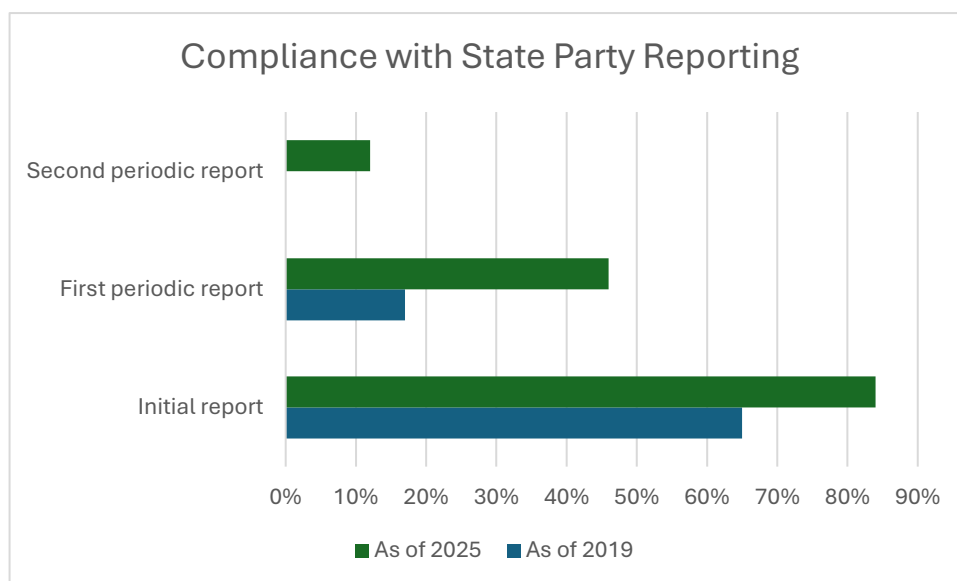


Figure 4: Compliance with reporting obligations over time

It is clear that although there has been improvement in reporting since 2019, there remains a drop-off in compliance with reporting requirements over time, presumably as interest in the process wanes after ratification.

The challenges with compliance stem from several factors: changing political will, prioritisation in the face of humanitarian challenges, limited understanding by MSs of the regularity of reporting and the process for doing so, as well as a general reporting fatigue as a result of the many treaty reporting procedures with which States must comply. By way of demonstration, and in what was frequently cited as a major frustration for the period, there was no State report under consideration at the Committee’s most recent Ordinary Session in April 2025.

The Committee has approached this challenge “in the spirit of cooperation and constructive dialogue,”<sup>28</sup> which has been partially successful. This focuses on providing support to compile reports and interpret the Charter, channelling requests through the AUC Chairperson, encouraging States to comply through the Committee’s annual reports to the AU Assembly, and conducting other advocacy efforts such as in-country missions. These will be discussed in greater detail below; for now, let it suffice to say that such missions are often successful but highly resource-intensive and difficult to scale. Overall, the Committee’s approach has been commendable, but insufficient to overcome the barriers to reporting compliance.

CSOs play a crucial role in improving the reporting periodicity in their respective States as well as in providing accountability for the information provided by States. This involves not only submitting complementary reports, but also proactively initiating the reporting process, lobbying at national level, and, most importantly, playing a key role in following up and enhancing the implementation of the Charter, recommendations, and decisions of the Committee at national level. This includes disseminating recommendations, collecting and verifying information on the status of implementation, and reporting the same to the Committee. There is a need for greater support and guidance to CSOs on

<sup>28</sup>, p. 523.



how to play this role effectively, in particular, to encourage and support the submission of complementary reports by CSOs to act as a verification process for the State Reports.

The process for the development and submission of the Kenyan report in 2024 was highlighted by several stakeholders as an example of best practices that should be shared more widely with other countries. During this process, the responsible department openly collaborated with a well-organised collective of CSOs to compile the report and mobilise support from other government stakeholders to gather information, and the Committee then proactively engaged with both the State and the CSOs to assess the report. This collaborative process was further supported by the submission of a complementary report by the CSO collective. The Committee was applauded for providing regular opportunities for input from all parties throughout the process.

CSOs requested that the Secretariat play a more active role in notifying in-country CSOs when a State's reporting deadline is approaching so that they can advocate and mobilise the State to report comprehensively and on time. A forward-looking schedule of reporting deadlines published on the website and regularly publicised through the Committee's social media accounts would assist in this regard. In addition, it was suggested that the Committee build attention and focus on two particular countries for each Ordinary Session to draw attention to the reporting timeframe and mobilise support well ahead of time.

In addition, the Committee should consider revising the provisions in the Guidelines on Complementary Reports that require the contents of complementary reports to be confidential unless it deems otherwise.<sup>29</sup> This would create greater transparency over the reporting process and the progress made by States in implementation.

Reporting compliance with the ACERWC is often benchmarked against that of the UNCRC, which enjoys significantly higher submission rates. This disparity is partly attributable to the longer history and established presence of the UNCRC reporting system. In addition, UNICEF plays a pivotal role in supporting the UNCRC process, leveraging its country offices across Member States to advocate for timely submissions. While UNICEF also provides valuable support to the ACERWC, there is an opportunity to strengthen this collaboration further. Specifically, the Committee could explore ways to leverage UNICEF's existing initiatives on UNCRC reporting, such as national reporting training and technical support, to bolster compliance with its own reporting procedures. The UNCRC has also adopted a strategic practice of including, within its recommendations, references to International Organisations (IOs) that States might engage to support implementation. While the ACERWC has made similar efforts, there remains scope to deepen engagement with IOs to enhance their understanding of the Committee's mandate and encourage greater responsiveness to its recommendations. These steps would also contribute to broader efforts to elevate the visibility and influence of the ACERWC within the global child rights ecosystem.

From the perspective of the Committee, it must be emphasised that the failure to timeously submit Concluding Observations on State reports not only undermines the seriousness and credibility of the

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<sup>29</sup> ACERWC, 'Guidelines on Complementary Report, the Conduct of and Participation in Pre-session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,' (2015) (accessible [here](#)), para. 5.

process in the eyes of all stakeholders but also stymies the Committee's ability to follow up on outstanding areas needing progress at the national level. This is also contrary to Rule 73 of the Committee's Rules of Procedure, which requires it to adopt Concluding Observations "at the conclusion of the examination of the report." As of June 2025, 4 sets of Concluding Observations remained outstanding, though only one related to reports submitted during the Strategic Plan period under review.<sup>30</sup>

The Committee may also consider new mechanisms for supporting the kind of intensive engagement with MSs that is required, such as identifying key focal persons in each country together with focal persons within the Secretariat who are allocated a certain number of countries with which to engage.

A final note on reporting relates to ongoing discussions within the Committee to simplify the reporting process for States along the lines of that which the UNCRC has implemented with its simplified reporting procedure.<sup>31</sup> Any simplified reporting process naturally has advantages and disadvantages, but it is important to maintain the comprehensiveness and quality of reports in any adjusted process, while minimising the burden on States. The ACERWC must be careful not to be consumed or overshadowed by the UNCRC process. That said, aligning reporting timeframes to the five-year reporting timeframe of the UNCRC would greatly facilitate the reporting process for States and is likely to generate goodwill among them. While reports would still need to be tailored to the specific provisions of the Charter, aligning timelines would ease the reporting burden and offer a more streamlined process for States, ultimately encouraging greater compliance.

It is also recommended that the development of a more targeted reporting procedure that focuses on key outstanding or live issues would be more achievable by MSs while maintaining the efficacy of the process. This is in line with the recommendation made in the 2023 Study on the Implementation of Decisions.<sup>32</sup> Greater integration with the APRM process, as well as the new AUDA-NEPAD Agenda 2063 [Reporting Portal](#), is also recommended, as this will enhance coherence with those processes alongside transparency of the reporting process and its outputs. The Committee must also boost its efficiency in considering state reports:

"The long intervals between the submission and consideration of reports further complicates tracking progress, as key issues may evolve or regress during that time."

The submission of Concluding Observations, though, is only as impactful as their implementation. It is challenging to determine any particular trend in the implementation by States of recommendations from Concluding Observations over time. Mostly, this is because, as time has progressed from the point of ratification, subsequent reports provide more information about the implementation of recommendations from earlier reports. Some States are on their second or third periodic report, while others remain on the initial report, which provides little ability to assess implementation. Second, the

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<sup>30</sup> ACERWC, 'State Reports & Concluding Observations,' (accessible [here](#)). These relate to reports submitted by Burkina Faso in 2011, by Cameroon in 2009, by Niger in 2023, and by Senegal in 2003.

<sup>31</sup> UN OHCHR, 'Reporting guidelines Committee on the Rights of the Child,' (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>32</sup> P. 16-17.

interplay between the rights promoted through the UNCRC process and that of the ACERWC make it difficult to distinguish causality related to change.<sup>33</sup>

That said, some internal and external research has been done in this regard which provides some insight. For example, research has found several instances of causal links between concerns raised in Concluding Observations and policy or legislative change by States.<sup>34</sup>

However, it is clear that the Committee is struggling to encourage implementation of recommendations and that failure to do so risks undermining its credibility as an institution, particularly with regard to its monitoring mandate. Critically, there is a need for greater publicity over the recommendations made to States to enable civil society and the general public to participate in advocacy for reform. This could include, for example, an easy-to-use dashboard visualising recommendations or summary reports of the Concluding Observations. Concluding Observations also need to be made more precise to provide a solid foundation for State implementation and follow-up by civil society and others.

### Communications Procedure

The number of Communications received increased to ten in the period 2021-2025, including a bumper year in 2022 in which five were filed. For context, in the period 2015-2019, eight Communications were received, and an additional 4 in 2020 (a year which fell between strategic periods due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic). While it is hard to tell whether there was a particular driver of the increased number of Communications filed in 2022, it is notable that the Committee held a litigation training with CSOs in the years preceding, which may have facilitated awareness of the procedure.

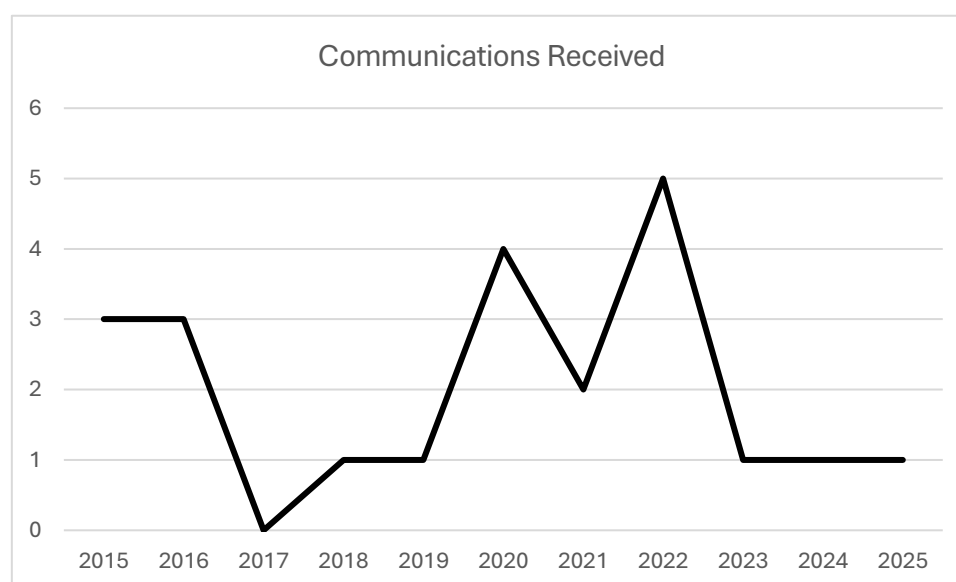


Figure 5: Communications received over time

<sup>33</sup> Rachel Murray, 'Reporting Procedure,' in 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Commentary,' (accessible [here](#)) (2024) p. 526.

<sup>34</sup> Rachel Murray, 'Reporting Procedure,' in 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Commentary,' (accessible [here](#)) (2024) p. 526.

Seven Communications were finalised in the Strategic Plan period, taking on average 2 years. Although a small sample, it is encouraging when compared to the total number of ten Communications that were filed within the period. However, this can be compared to the seven out of eight Communications that were filed and finalised during the previous period. All cases filed during 2015-2019 have since been finalised, taking on average two years. For cases filed between 2021 and 2025, including those that have not yet been finalised, the average length of time to finalisation remains around two years.<sup>35</sup>

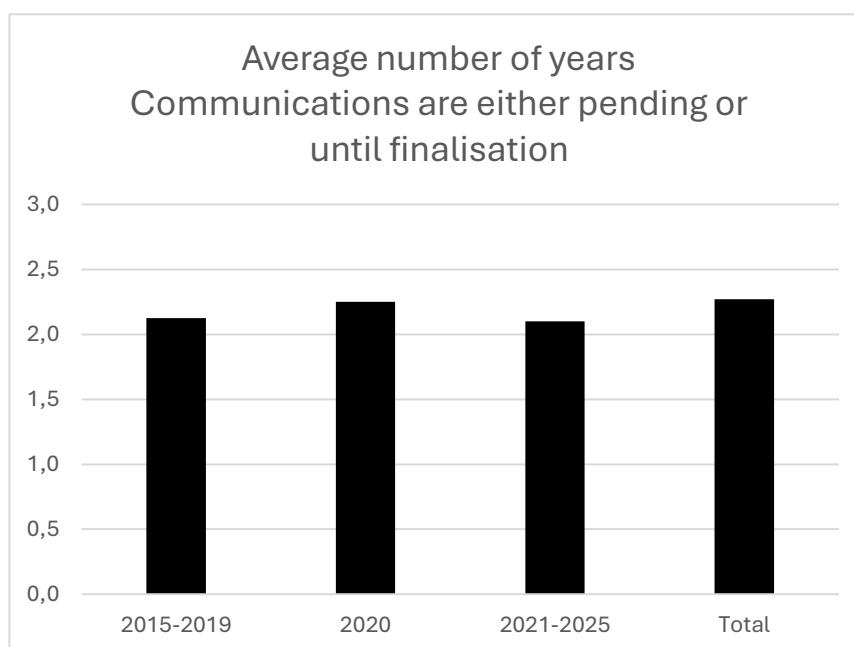


Figure 6: Finalisation of Communications

While this consistency is admirable, there is still a clear need to prioritise speeding up the finalisation of Communications to deliver an effective redress mechanism for victims of rights violations and to bolster the credibility of the Committee. The slow pace of finalisation also discourages the submission of future Communications as it undermines trust in the objectivity and efficacy of the process and risks missing the window of opportunity for victims to receive meaningful redress.

<sup>35</sup> This is likely an underestimate, as these Communications have been received more recently and this includes pending matters.

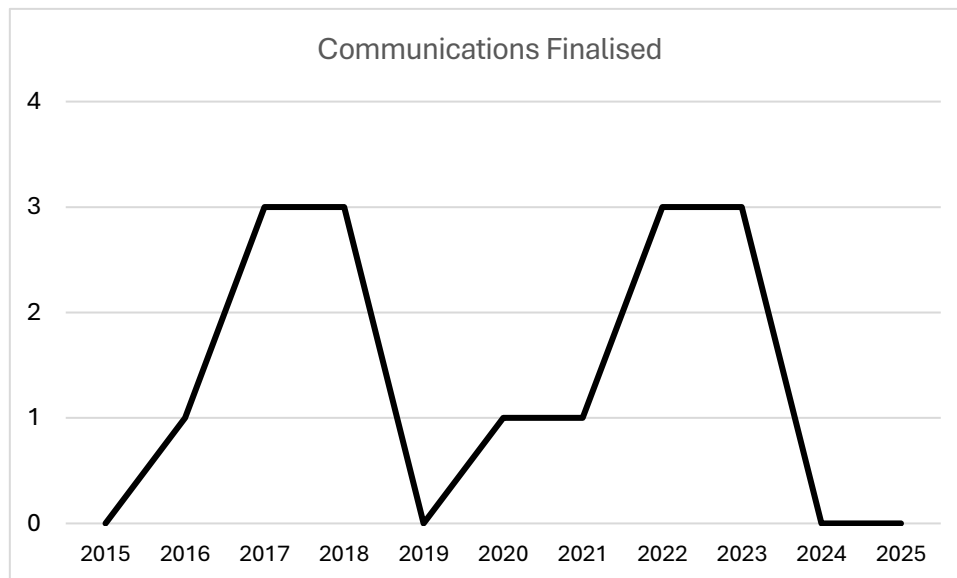


Figure 7: Number of Communications Finalised

Delays in finalising cases often result from late responses by Respondent States. Some suggest the Committee is being too accommodating when receiving these delayed responses. Instead, the Committee should strictly enforce the timeframes outlined in the Communications Guidelines, which would establish a standard that States would hopefully be more likely to follow in future cases.

Positively, fewer Communications concluded in a declaration of inadmissibility than in the past (two compared to three in 2015-2019), suggesting that applicants are becoming more aware of the procedural requirements of filing Communications. The uptake of the amicable settlement procedure has also increased,<sup>36</sup> although some stakeholders felt that implementation of and follow-up to amicable settlements was lower than for decisions finalised in other ways.

Overall, the Communications procedure remains relatively underutilised, with only 26 communications submitted as of May 2025, which is low compared to other similar regional mechanisms with comparable mandates, such as the ACHPR and the African Court.

With regard to the procedure for Communications, the ACERWC has been commended by human rights commentators for, amongst others, its wide provisions on standing, progressive and integrated approach to children's rights, expansive approach to states' obligations, purposive reading of the provision on exhaustion of local remedies, and willingness to make significant findings, which makes it an effective forum for litigating children's rights issues.<sup>37</sup> Enabling access in this way can be an impactful way to increase access to justice for children in Africa.

<sup>36</sup> Frans Viljoen, 'Communications,' in 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Commentary,' (accessible [here](#)) (2024) p. 533.

<sup>37</sup> Boshoff and Damtew, 'The potential of litigating children's rights in the climate crisis before the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,' (2022) (accessible [here](#)).

For example, a 2022 research paper recognised the early and active engagement of the Committee in the issue of the child rights implications of climate change, through, for example, establishing a Working Group on Climate Change and Children's Rights and acknowledging the links between environmental degradation, climate change, and children's rights.<sup>38</sup>

The Guidelines for Communications have also been praised for dealing extensively with implementation, which provides a solid foundation for the enforcement of decisions, and the Committee for the wide range of remedies it has been prepared to adopt.<sup>39</sup> In the human rights ecosystem of Africa, the depth and detail of implementation mechanisms available to the Committee are noteworthy. The Committee has also been praised for its open and willing engagement with other parties, particularly applicants and other CSOs, on implementation, including through invitations to participate in implementation hearings.

However, it is clear that there are major challenges in ensuring the implementation of decisions and that this should be a significant area for attention in future. The ACERWC has invested significant attention and resources into improving the implementation of decisions, such as by establishing the Working Group on Implementation of Decisions, adopting its first resolution on the topic in 2022; and holding its first continental workshop on implementation of decisions and recommendations in 2023.<sup>40</sup> However, severe challenges remain.

The Committee's 2023 Study on the Implementation of Decisions of the ACERWC provided a comprehensive analysis of the challenges hindering the effective implementation of the Committee's decisions (notably, defined to include decisions on recommendations and Concluding Observations on State Party reports) and offered strategic recommendations to address them. Overall, the study indicated a general trend (as of 2023) of inconsistency in the pace of implementation across different countries and decision types. Key challenges identified were:

1. **Limited awareness and dissemination:** Many stakeholders, including government officials and civil society organisations, lack adequate awareness of the ACERWC's decisions, leading to poor dissemination and understanding at the national level.
2. **Insufficient political will:** A lack of commitment from some State Parties hampers the domestication and implementation of the Committee's recommendations, often due to competing national priorities or limited appreciation of children's rights issues.
3. **Resource constraints:** Financial, human, and technical resource limitations within both the ACERWC and State Parties impede the effective follow-up and enforcement of decisions.
4. **Weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms:** There is an absence of robust systems to track the progress of implementation, making it challenging to assess compliance and impact.
5. **Lack of structured Engagement:** Insufficient collaboration between the ACERWC, NHRIs, and CSOs results in missed opportunities for joint advocacy and monitoring efforts.

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<sup>38</sup> Id.

<sup>39</sup> Julia Sloth-Nielsen, 'Remedies for child rights violations in African human rights systems,' (2023) (accessible [here](#)). See also Frans Viljoen, 'Communications,' in 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Commentary,' (accessible [here](#)) (2024) p. 550.

<sup>40</sup> Frans Viljoen, 'Communications,' in 'The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: A Commentary,' (accessible [here](#)) (2024) p. 554.

The key recommendations were thus:

1. **Enhance awareness and capacity building:** Conduct targeted training and awareness campaigns for government officials, NHRIs, and CSOs to improve understanding and ownership of the ACERWC's decisions.
2. **Strengthen political commitment:** Advocate for higher-level political engagement to prioritise children's rights and allocate necessary resources for implementing the Committee's recommendations, including by setting up or designating national implementation and reporting focal institutions.
3. **Improve resource allocation:** Mobilise financial and technical support from international partners and integrate children's rights into national budgeting processes to ensure sustainable implementation efforts.
4. **Develop robust monitoring frameworks:** Establish clear indicators and reporting mechanisms to regularly assess the status of implementation and facilitate accountability.
5. **Foster structured partnerships:** Formalise collaboration frameworks between the ACERWC, NHRIs, and CSOs to coordinate efforts, share information, and jointly monitor progress on implementing decisions.

In addition, there is a lack of publicly available and structured information on the state of implementation,<sup>41</sup> something which the Committee is recommended to address in future by providing regular summary reports. It is clear that the success of implementation depends heavily on the depth and extent of advocacy efforts undertaken together with strategic partners, particularly CSOs and NHRIs, to popularise the decisions, leverage the media, and build local willpower for change. Such information thus provides a crucial foundation. A key recommendation for future improvement is the publication of generic follow-up reports or summaries of decisions on the ACERWC's website to facilitate interested parties, including CSOs and NHRIs, understanding the decision taken and supporting follow-up and implementation.<sup>42</sup>

The implementation of decisions also relates, though, to the efficiency of the ACERWC in processing and finalising Communications. The Committee has previously been criticised for the low number of Communications finalised.<sup>43</sup> Many of the previous recommendations made to enhance this process have been implemented during the current strategic period, including enhancing the visibility of the ACERWC and its Communications procedure, separating the ACERWC from the Social Affairs Department, increasing the number of full-time staff, and appointing Special Rapporteurs in thematic areas.

### Special Mechanisms

The Special Mechanisms have proven a valuable institutional innovation for the ACERWC, helping deepen technical work and visibility on key child rights issues. They have played a central role in

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<sup>41</sup> Id.

<sup>42</sup> Id.

<sup>43</sup> Dube, Sekoankoetla and Wurz, 'Communications to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: Challenges and prospects,' (2017) (accessible [here](#)).

extending the thematic work of the Committee, and the inclusion of well-respected external experts has given the work credibility and a solid grounding in the content of the issues.

Some have been notably more effective than others, while some also took time to become operational after establishment. For example, the Special Rapporteur on Children and Armed Conflict has managed to garner attention from several important stakeholders, including RECs, States, and the PSC. The Special Rapporteur on Harmful Practices was also cited as a particular success with regard to its involvement in the AU Campaign to End Child Marriage. It was highlighted that the recent assignment of dedicated officers from the Secretariat to support the Special Mechanisms is expected to provide much-needed capacity support to enable more activity. The preparation of work plans has also provided needed strategic guidance for the Working Groups. Developing workplans for the Country and Thematic Rapporteurs may also be a useful exercise for this reason.

At the same time, the Special Mechanisms, like the rest of the Committee, remain under-resourced, which constrains their ability to deliver on planned activities. There is a need for Special Rapporteurs and Working Groups to conduct their own fundraising efforts, which requires capacity-building to do so effectively. This could include, for example, forging alliances with other special mechanisms within the AU and UN frameworks.

There is equally a need for Committee Members to better leverage their positions to conduct work beyond the Committee's limited scope and mandate, and to take greater initiative to define and action the strategic priorities within their areas of work. In addition, improved communication and collaboration between the Working Groups is essential to prevent them working in silos and to recognise the significant overlap and intersections between the various thematic areas.

Several stakeholders noted the lack of public availability of the reports of the Thematic Rapporteurs. The system of Country Rapporteurs, in particular, seems to be experiencing challenges stemming from a lack of clarity as to their mandate and activities, as well as barriers to gaining access to States for in-country missions. Clarifying the mandate of the Country Rapporteurs will also assist in demonstrating to States how they can be a supportive structure for their efforts on domestication and implementation.

### Ratification

In a major success for the Committee, the Sahrawi Arab Republic ratified the ACRWC in 2024 (although with several reservations),<sup>44</sup> bringing the total number of ratifications to 51.

“This achievement reflects sustained advocacy, direct engagement with Member States, and consistent follow-up by the Committee to encourage ratification and reaffirm political commitment to child rights.”

It is also commendable that Botswana withdrew its reservation to Article 2 of the Charter following advocacy efforts by the Committee. This ensures that all individuals under the age of 18 are now legally recognised as children under Botswana's national framework in alignment with the Charter.

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<sup>44</sup> ACERWC, ‘Ratifications Table,’ (accessible [here](#)).



However, the fact that four countries retain reservations and a further four have not ratified, despite concerted advocacy efforts, remains concerning. As will be discussed further below, the extent to which the Committee should continue its focus on securing ratification from the remaining four States is an uncertain issue among stakeholders.

In this regard, it is of note that both Somalia and South Sudan have given positive indications toward ratification that provide a foundation for future efforts.

### *Efficiency*

*How well did the Committee use its available resources? Were activities implemented in an economic and timely way? How well was the work of the Committee managed?*

Overall, stakeholders perceive the Secretariat to be dynamic and efficient in its operations. While the primary challenge of insufficient resources pervaded all elements of operations, there was widespread agreement that the Secretariat ‘did the best with what it had.’ The successful implementation of activities, including delivery on-time, was largely attributed to whether sufficient human resources could be allocated towards the particular activity.

### Country Missions

Country missions, of all types, have been highly impactful.<sup>45</sup> There seems to be a clear link between country missions and States submitting their periodic reports, as well as in building visibility and awareness of the Committee in the targeted countries. The Committee conducted at least 13 country missions during the strategic period.

However, the Committee is facing increased resistance from MSs to allow or support in-country missions, which presents a major barrier for several key areas of its work. States tend not to outright refuse outreach to conduct a mission, but rather to simply delay approvals indefinitely, leaving the Committee in a state of limbo for extended periods of time and affecting the finalisation of Communications, submission of State Party reports, investigations and research efforts, etc.

The reticence of State parties to accept and support in-country missions is a clear barrier to progress in several areas of the Committee’s work. This stems from several factors: a feeling of defensiveness, a fear of being found to be non-compliant with the Charter, a general lack of understanding of the work of the Committee, and, on occasion, confusion with the UNCRC and its processes. With regard to the latter, it was noted that UNICEF plays a key role in supporting engagement with states on the UNCRC, a mechanism which is lacking at the continental level in Africa.

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<sup>45</sup> For example, Chad submitted its outstanding report to the Committee following a follow-up mission; Botswana withdrew its reservations to the Charter within roughly 8 to 9 months of a follow-up mission.

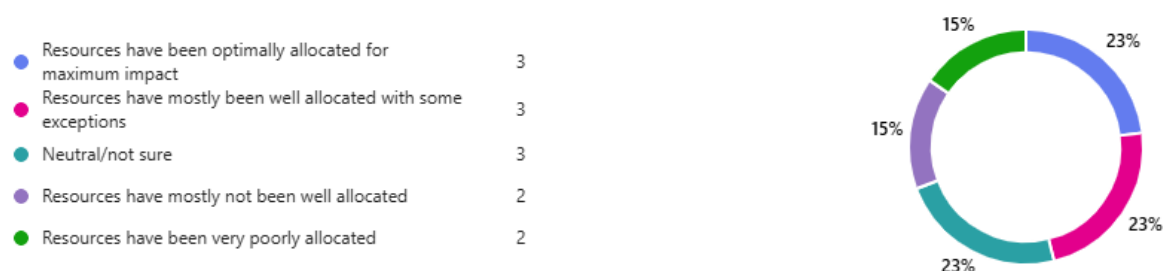
Developing cooperative relationships with States is undoubtedly a critical necessity for the Committee to do its work effectively. However, balancing the monitoring mandate of the Committee against its promotional and other mandates requires a degree of resistance to becoming overly deferential to State Parties.

“The Committee must maintain cordial relationships with States; it is ideal that there are good relationships and cooperation. But, at the end of the day, the mandate of the Committee is monitoring the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, so it should expect some confrontation. That is a sign that it is using its powers appropriately, and if it is not experiencing that, then it is being overly deferential.”

Without understating the importance and effectiveness of in-country missions, the Committee may consider whether there are more cost- and time-effective ways to enable deeper engagement with State Parties to complement such missions, especially where there is reticence on the part of State Parties to host them. This may include, for example, leveraging technology, in-country CSO partners, etc.

### Staffing and Resourcing

25. How well do you think the ACERWC has allocated its financial and human resources during the 2021-2025 period?



*Figure 8: Secretariat Staff: allocation of resources*

There is general agreement among stakeholders that the Secretariat is operating effectively within the existing, severe budgetary and capacity constraints. Despite these limitations, the Secretariat has demonstrated professionalism, a strong work ethic, and an impressive ability to juggle multiple responsibilities. Its growing internal knowledge management and archiving systems have further enhanced institutional memory and operational continuity.

The ACERWC operates in an increasingly constrained funding landscape, marked by a broader shift away from international development and governance funding. This trend has been driven in part by declining support from key donors such as the United States, as well as Nordic countries like Sweden and Denmark, which have pivoted towards humanitarian assistance in response to conflict, migration, and more inward-looking foreign policies.

This shift has had serious implications not only for the ACERWC but also for CSOs operating across international, regional, and local levels. Many of these CSOs provide cascading financial support to

smaller organisations and to the Committee itself. The resulting funding squeeze threatens to undermine long-term programme planning, staffing stability, and the effective implementation of children's rights initiatives on the continent.

The 2019 Decision of the AU Executive Council on the Activity Report of the ACERWC to fund the programme budget of the ACERWC through MS contributions from 2020 was a significant positive development for the Committee.<sup>46</sup> Despite this, its allocations have continued to shrink in the intervening period and it operates with insufficient budget, a concern raised by virtually all stakeholders.

In 2023, the Committee formally requested the AU Commission to authorise it to recruit its own staff.<sup>47</sup> Out of a target structure of 24 staff positions, the ACERWC successfully filled four regular full-time positions and secured an additional four short-term contracts (for nine months in 2024). This represents a 16.67% increase in full-time staffing and a 33.33% increase when including short-term staff. Relative to its strategic target of reaching 61% staffing, this places the Committee at either 46.67% (full-time only) or 66.67% (combined) of its goal.

However, the reliance on temporary or contract-based personnel presents clear risks. While the Committee has managed to mitigate some of the negative effects thus far, these arrangements can hinder continuity in key projects and contribute to an unstable working environment that affects staff morale and long-term productivity. Support from strategic partners has been instrumental in filling critical staffing gaps and enabling the continuation of core activities.

A frequently cited grievance is the disparity in funding between the ACERWC and the ACHPR. While the latter's larger allocation can be justified by factors such as its longer history, broader mandate covering multiple human rights treaties, and stronger institutional visibility, the ACERWC's unique and expanding mandate — focused specifically on children's rights — arguably warrants greater parity. In this regard, the Committee must consider how best to articulate and report on its impact to the AU Assembly, using evidence to both account for past achievements and make the case for future investment.

It must also be noted that criticism was levelled at the Committee's high operational expenditure, reportedly accounting for well over the target of 65% of the overall budget.

To navigate the funding crisis, stakeholders recommended several fundraising strategies. These include:

- Emphasising thematic work that aligns with donor priorities;
- Leveraging key advocacy moments—such as the upcoming African Climate Summit in September 2025—to build momentum for initiatives and attract donor support;
- Exploring deeper engagement with the Permanent Representatives' Committee (PRC), which may present a missed opportunity to advocate for more consistent AU funding.

The resourcing constraints have been compounded by high rates of turnover among Committee Members: in 2021 alone, six new Members — including the Chair — were appointed. While this has

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<sup>46</sup> EX.CL/Dec. 1043(XXXIV) at para. 10.

<sup>47</sup> ACERWC, 'Draft Decisions of the ACERWC,' (2023) unpublished.

injected new energy and ideas, it has also resulted in some discontinuity with prior work and strategic objectives.

It must also be highlighted that the process for appointing Committee Members is highly political and not always well-suited to the appointment of persons with appropriate and relevant expertise. While the nomination and appointment process is established at a high level and may offer limited scope for immediate reform, it is important to encourage civil society engagement in the nomination process at the national level to ensure that appropriately qualified experts are nominated and supported and to ensure that the Secretariat provides ample induction and orientation processes to new Members to help them understand and take ownership over their mandate and responsibilities. In the long-term, it may also be worth reflecting on whether there are lessons to be learned from more formalised nomination and appointment processes within the AU system, such as that of the AUC Chairperson, which involves a thorough and transparent shortlisting process, comprehensive background checks, a requirement for nominees to provide briefings on their plans and intentions for the position, public debates between candidates, etc.

Finally, the Secretariat's relocation to Lesotho has been a significant development in the evolution of its capacity. On the whole, the move is viewed positively, having enhanced the ACERWC's independence, programmatic autonomy, and visibility within the AU system. However, the relocation has also introduced new logistical and strategic challenges. These include:

- Reduced proximity to other AU organs and CSO partners, limiting coordination and access;
- Obstacles in mobilising AU-based fundraising;
- Transitional difficulties, such as administrative delays and insufficient infrastructure;
- Unmet commitments from the host country, which has left the Secretariat under-resourced and operating in suboptimal facilities.

### *Impact*

*What difference has the Committee's work made to the rights and welfare of children in Africa? Were there any significant positive or negative impacts? Were there any unintended effects? Were there any changes in systems, norms, children's well-being, gender equality etc as a result of the Committee's work?*

The impact of the ACERWC must be assessed not only in terms of its outputs and activities but also through the tangible changes it has contributed to advancing the rights and welfare of children across the continent. Despite significant resource constraints and external political challenges, the Committee has made notable progress in influencing policy, legal reform, and institutional practice at both continental and national levels. This section reflects on the broader outcomes associated with the

Committee's work, including both areas of demonstrated success and enduring challenges that have shaped the extent and sustainability of its impact.

"The ACERWC has been a quiet but steady influencer of regional child rights policy in Africa. Through legal interpretations, strategic partnerships, and participation in AU-level agenda-setting, it has embedded children's rights into key regional frameworks. Going forward, enhanced collaboration with RECs, AU departments, and national institutions, along with increased visibility and political support, will be essential to maximising its policy impact."

### Positive impact

The following sub-section outlines illustrative examples of the Committee's impact in recent years, drawing attention to initiatives or decisions that have led to concrete legal, policy, or practice-level changes. These examples highlight the value and reach of the Committee's work, while also offering insight into the conditions that have enabled or constrained such impact.

- Ratification by the Sahrawi Arab Republic in 2024, bringing the total number of ratifications to 51 out of 55 (93%), and the withdrawal of Botswana's reservations.
- There have been examples of in-country advocacy, grounded in Concluding Observations on state party reports, having a tangible effect on State policy or implementation.<sup>48</sup>
- Where implementation of Communications has occurred, this has generally had major impacts in terms of both policy and redress for individual victims of rights violations.<sup>49</sup>
- The publication of the Continental Study on Children Without Parental Care, conducted in close collaboration with CSOs and partners, despite delays due to COVID-19, resulted in the development of a robust and evidence-based General Comment, adopted by the Committee in April 2025. This has, in turn, led to a clear definition among stakeholders, especially MSs, of children without parental care and an understanding of the magnitude of the challenge across the continent (for example, that more than 70% of countries lack explicit child protection policies).<sup>50</sup> CSOs working in this area report that the General Comment provides a valuable guiding document

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<sup>48</sup> For example, Zimbabwe developed and adopted an alternative care policy in 2024 - SOS Children's Villages Zimbabwe, 'Cabinet approves child protection policy,' (2024) (accessible [here](#)) and ACERWC, 'Concluding Observations and Recommendations by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) on the First Periodic Report of the Republic of Zimbabwe On The Status of Implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,' (2024) (accessible [here](#)) at para. 34. In addition, Mozambique developed a policy to enable pregnant schools to remain in school - ACERWC, 'State Reporting: State Reports & Concluding Observations,' (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>49</sup> For example, Malawi amended its Constitution with regard to the legal definition of a child in implementation of the Committee's recommendation in the amicable settlement in Communication No. 004/Com/001/2014, and a comprehensive legal harmonisation process is now ongoing to align legislative provisions with the new definition. Cameroon investigated and prosecuted (the latter remains ongoing) the alleged perpetrator of child sexual exploitation in Communication No. 006/Com/002/2015. Mauritania also implemented the Committee's decision in Communication No. 007/Com/003/2015 by awarding compensation to the victims, issuing birth certificates, and sentencing the perpetrators to imprisonment. In addition, a special court was established, with a dedicated budget for 2022–2023, to handle slavery-related cases. National policy in Tanzania was changed to enable pregnant and married girls to remain in school in Tanzania as a result of the decision in Communication No: 0012/Com/001/2019.

<sup>50</sup> ACERWC, 'Children Without Parental Care in Africa,' (2023) (accessible [here](#)) p. IX.

for country offices to use for advocacy at the national level for policy changes and implementation and to inculcate an understanding among governments of state responsibility for children in such situations.

- Despite the challenges faced in enabling child participation (discussed further below), several Secretariat staff noted that progress in this regard was an area of success. Child participation has been ingrained in the Ordinary Sessions of the Committee through dedicated slots and in several other areas of the Committee's work. One example of impact was in Lesotho, where recommendations from children to review the Children's Protection and Welfare Act were seen to have contributed to an eventual review, and the revised Bill has now been tabled in the upper house of Parliament.<sup>51</sup>
- The adoption of the Child Safeguarding Policy by the AU was also cited as a key success due to the potential influence of such a norm-setting document within the broader AU environment and operations of all the organs.
- Subtle forms of advocacy, such as the sending of direct letters to Heads of State on certain live issues, appears to have been relatively successful. Although it rarely results in a complete change of policy, several examples were cited in which the State did not continue down the original intended path after receipt of a letter.

These examples demonstrate the Committee's ability to influence concrete legal and policy shifts, deliver redress for individual rights violations, and shape normative frameworks across the continent. They also underscore the importance of sustained follow-up, collaboration with partners, and strategic advocacy to translate the Committee's work into meaningful change for children.

### Challenges

Despite these strides, the Committee's ability to generate sustained and wide-reaching impact has been constrained by a range of structural and contextual challenges. This sub-section outlines some of the key challenges that have hindered the Committee's effectiveness and limited the realisation of its full potential.

A central challenge during the reporting period has been the limited responsiveness of Member States, particularly in relation to Communications, periodic reporting obligations, and the facilitation of in-country missions. While missions have yielded some positive outcomes, they are inherently resource-intensive and heavily dependent on the willingness of the host State to cooperate. Success in this area rests on a complex interplay of factors, foremost among them, political will. This, in turn, is often shaped by a State's interest in projecting a progressive image on the international stage, the availability of resources, and whether other national priorities — such as conflict or humanitarian crises — take precedence. Many of these dynamics remain beyond the control of the Committee itself.

That said, there are potential strategic avenues through which the Committee can continue to exert influence despite these constraints. These include more actively harnessing the role of civil society organisations in conducting follow-up advocacy at the national level, engaging the media and broader

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<sup>51</sup> The Reporter, 'Parly passes Children's Protection Bill,' (2025) (accessible [here](#)).

public to build pressure and support for implementation, and investing in technical capacity-building for State officials, including through peer learning and the sharing of good practices between countries.

Other key challenges, as already discussed, include:

- Severe gaps in and declining resourcing;
- Staffing constraints and overreliance on short-term contracts;
- Institutional isolation following relocation to Lesotho and limitations in visibility among MSs, the AU architecture, and the broader public; and
- Engagement with RECs and some other AU organs, notably the APRM.

### Child participation

Child participation has emerged as both a defining feature of the ACERWC’s approach and a critical area for further development. It is evident in the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan that it is a central and high-priority element of the ACERWC’s work. It is also embodied in Aspiration 10 of Agenda 2040: that children’s views matter and should be integrated into decision-making processes. Such participation reinforces the Committee’s credibility, promotes child-centred decision-making, resulting in more impactful and meaningful interventions, and can be a deeply empowering experience for children themselves.

The Committee has taken important steps to institutionalise the participation of children in its work, recognising their agency and the value of their lived experience in shaping decisions that affect their lives. These efforts have included innovative practices and platforms aimed at amplifying children’s voices at the regional and national levels.

33. How effectively has the ACERWC included children in its work?

● Very effectively	5
● Somewhat effectively	6
● Neutral/not sure	1
● Quite ineffectively	2
● Very ineffectively	0

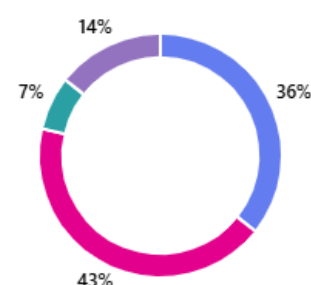


Figure 9: Secretariat Staff: Child participation

17. In your view, how effectively has the ACERWC promoted meaningful child participation in its work?

Very effectively	4
Somewhat effectively	2
Neutral/not sure	0
Somewhat ineffectively	0
Very ineffectively	0

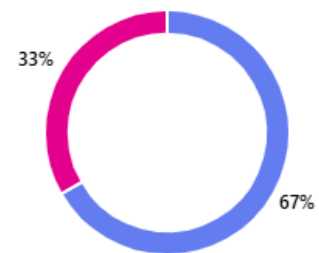


Figure 10: Strategic partners: Child participation

“I felt like I could do anything after giving that speech [at the ACERWC Session.] It inspired me a lot and I am already improving myself a lot in school. I can now use the confidence I got to help people in the future to be able to do the same, especially on children’s rights. I really enjoyed it and am happy I took part and I wish I could keep doing it because it has been so pivotal to my life.”

A Special Rapporteur on Child Participation was appointed in 2017<sup>52</sup> and a member of the Secretariat staff assigned to support them. The Committee has also made provision for child participation in the annual celebrations of the DAC and other events. CSOs have been particularly complimentary of these efforts. The value of child participation was clearly demonstrated during the 43<sup>rd</sup> Ordinary Session in the Panel Discussion on the right to education, during which children and their representatives made insightful contributions to understanding the priorities to advance the right to education for all children in Africa. Participation has been enabled through dedicated budget line items for Ordinary Sessions, Day of the African Child (DAC), and other events and panels. There is also a standing slot in the Opening Session of the Committee reserved for the inputs of children. In another commendable example, in 2021, the ACERWC and the CSO Forum supported the development of a child-led report to assess the implementation of AU Agenda 2040 in parallel to the implementation report on the first phase of Agenda 2040.<sup>53</sup> Children who had participated in these processes reported that they felt heard and respected when doing so.

“I feel like they did take me seriously and didn’t take me for granted – everyone was nodding their heads and listening to me, and this motivated me even more. It really felt like they were enjoying listening to what I was saying.”

Particularly with regard to the handling of Communications related to violations of the Charter, it is highly commendable that children who are victims have been invited to share their experiences, which has

<sup>52</sup> ACERWC ‘Resolution on the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Child Participation’ (2017) (accessible [here](#)).

<sup>53</sup> CHR, Global Campus of Human Rights and Right Livelihood, ‘Child Participation in Development Frameworks in Africa,’ (2022) (accessible [here](#)), p. 68.



informed the Committee's decisions and recommendations to States. The same applies to consultations with children during the Committee's country visits.

At the same time, significant challenges remain in ensuring that child participation is meaningful, inclusive, and sustained beyond symbolic engagement. Child participation is a difficult initiative to achieve and maintain — in terms of securing the budget for child participation, ensuring appropriate logistics and mechanisms for participation, enabling a diversity of children to engage rather than the same groups over and over, etc, all while maintaining the highest possible standards of child safeguarding. Meaningful child participation involves not only participation in a particular event, but preparation activities that provide the background to be able to contribute properly, follow-up activities to engage in implementation activities, translation into child-friendly and diverse languages, and awareness-building activities so that children understand the mechanism they are interacting with. It must go beyond delivering prepared remarks to leading and engaging in discussion and policymaking.

In addition, some stakeholders felt that while there is inherent value for each child who is able to participate in ACERWC activities, there is a significant gap in enabling this to contribute to policy change and practice. For example, it is insufficient for children merely to present in certain fora – they must be meaningfully engaged during the policy development and implementation processes at regional, national, and local levels for this participation to be meaningful on a societal level. In this regard, it was recommended that the ACERWC play a more prominent role in strategizing and implementing meaningful child participation that goes beyond mere attendance at all levels at which change happens.

It was suggested that the Committee develop a framework for reporting on progress made in meeting the inputs and recommendations made by children (for example, this could be included as a permanent section in annual activity reports). Of the children who participated in the focus group for this evaluation, most had not experienced any major follow-up or engagement after their participation in the Sessions. What limited follow-up did occur had major impacts on the children's lives and was deeply felt by them.

There is also a need for more sustained follow-up with children in between sessions. For example, it was noted that outcome statements developed by children during DAC are rarely acted upon. Suggestions from children themselves on how to improve their participation included using existing structures, such as schools and faith-based organisations, to gather children's input.

The Committee can learn from the experiences of other bodies, particularly the UNCRC, in facilitating meaningful child participation, and prioritise the publication of child-friendly documents of the ACERWC to enable greater participation.

“ The Committee should try to connect with other children because we all have our own opinions and don't all face the same problems and others should also be given an opportunity to talk.”

*Will the benefits of the Committee's work last? What systemic requirements are needed to sustain the benefits over time, both in the medium and long-term?*

The sustainability of the positive impact attributable to the Committee is critically dependent on the availability of not only continued but increased resources. In particular, while the Committee, together with its partners, has been admirably creative in leveraging consultants, interns, and short-term contracts to make up for capacity constraints, sustaining and advancing this work in the long-term requires internal resources as well as predictability and continuity in resourcing. This is also important to avoid the ACERWC falling into a pattern of dependency on partners that will undermine its independence and reputation, particularly with regard to the perceptions from MSs.

The sustainability and expansion of impact also depend on the continued growing visibility and respect for the Committee as an institution. Raising its profile should be prioritised through initiatives such as the DAC, engagement with the media, and building partnerships with other diverse partners, such as local-level leaders (mayors or local councillors), First Ladies, parliamentarians, etc. In addition, partnerships with other AU organs and agencies are vital to solidifying the Committee's institutional positioning within the AU architecture and assuring its future ability to have impact.

“The ACERWC has demonstrated a clear commitment to working collaboratively with both AU bodies and UN agencies, and this coordination has enhanced the impact and credibility of its work. However, to ensure lasting complementarity, coordination needs to shift from project-based partnerships to institutionalised collaboration mechanisms, supported by clearer communication, shared planning, and integrated implementation structures.”

Several other factors are likely to affect the sustainability of these impacts:

- The Committee's ability to accept and take advantage of new digital tools and technologies to make its work more effective and reach more children across the continent;
- The global reduction of donor funding;
- The Committee's continued ability to retain skilled staff and reduce reliance on short-term or contract-based roles, which is essential for maintaining institutional memory and programmatic continuity; and
- The degree to which the Committee can respond flexibly to emerging and intersecting crises — such as climate change, conflict, and displacement — that disproportionately affect children and may alter national priorities or resource allocation.

## SWOT ANALYSIS

This section presents a high-level SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the ACERWC's implementation of its 2021–2025 Strategic Plan. The analysis draws on evidence from the desk review and stakeholder consultations and aims to synthesise key internal and external factors

that have shaped the Committee's performance over the strategy period, highlighting areas of institutional strength, persistent challenges, and the contextual dynamics that have either supported or constrained the achievement of strategic objectives. This assessment also serves as a bridge to inform forward-looking recommendations for the ACERWC's next Strategic Plan (2026–2030), ensuring it is grounded in practical insights and reflective of the complex operating environment in which the Committee works.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Committed and dynamic Secretariat leadership and staff</li> <li>• Trust and engagement from CSO partners</li> <li>• Strong willpower to collaborate</li> <li>• Strong legal and normative foundation and mandate in the form of the Charter</li> <li>• Growing visibility and respect for the ACERWC</li> <li>• An authentically African institution and framework</li> <li>• Special mechanisms enable more focused interventions</li> <li>• Agenda 2040 sets a clear long-term vision for children's rights that aligns with continental aspirations</li> <li>• AGA framework has strengthened ACERWC's position within the AU system</li> <li>• Enhanced child participation framework, specifically the AU Guidelines on Child Participation provides a strong foundation for participation in the work of other organs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relatively small and lean Secretariat staff that limits capacity</li> <li>• Limited and unpredictable funding</li> <li>• Lack of responsiveness from States in enabling in-country missions</li> <li>• Physical distance from other AU organs and associated travel challenges</li> <li>• Growing economic and fiscal pressures faced by States</li> <li>• Low State compliance, limited enforcement powers and inconsistent follow-up mechanisms</li> </ul>
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location within Lesotho and associated proximity to the PAP</li> <li>• Continued growing recognition of children's rights among Member States</li> <li>• Growing appreciation on the continent for gender equality and disability rights</li> <li>• Growing importance of digital platforms and social media offers opportunity to connect directly with youth and children across the continent</li> <li>• Growing partnerships and networks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changing funding environment for international organisations, particularly those working on human rights</li> <li>• Ongoing reform within the AU creates potential for disruption</li> <li>• Ongoing threats to civic space which affects CSOs' ability to engage</li> <li>• Increasing environmental and associated displacement risks from climate change</li> <li>• Growing pushback against multilateralism</li> </ul>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Strategic objectives**

Based on the comprehensive evaluation of the current Strategic Plan and extensive stakeholder consultations, the following recommendations emerge as critical priorities for enhancing the ACERWC's effectiveness and impact over the coming strategic period, 2026-2030.

#### **1. *Strengthen State collaboration and compliance***

Enhanced State Party reporting mechanisms represent a cornerstone of this. The Committee should streamline the reporting process by reforming the current cycle to align with the UNCRC's five-year reporting framework. This alignment will reduce the administrative burden on States while maintaining robust oversight. Equally important is the identification and empowerment of focal points within responsible MDAs to champion the reporting process and ensure it becomes a meaningful exercise in accountability rather than a perfunctory compliance measure. Complementing this approach, the Committee should actively facilitate and encourage more complementary reports from CSOs, bringing these partners into advocacy efforts to support State compliance with reporting obligations.

Strategic State engagement and implementation support must also be a core operational priority. The Committee should prioritise developing sustained relationships with State Parties that extend beyond formal reporting cycles to ensure continuous progress on domestication and implementation of the Charter. This requires more strategic engagement with RECs, which serve as influential intermediaries in continental governance structures. The Committee's approach should incorporate targeted objectives specifically focused on State implementation, maintaining structured engagement through coordinated involvement of all key stakeholders including MSs, CSOs, NHRIs, AU organs, and national focal points such as inter-ministerial committees and relevant line ministries.

#### **2. *Expand Strategic Partnerships and Institutional Relationships***

Enhanced communication and media engagement emerges as a fundamental requirement for amplifying the Committee's impact. The development of a comprehensive communication strategy must include systematic engagement with media outlets to build the Committee's profile and create constructive pressure for the implementation of decisions and recommendations. Diversified strategic partnerships must extend across multiple levels and sectors of governance and civil society. Enhanced collaboration with the RECs represents a critical pathway for continental influence, while systematic engagement with Parliamentary structures across Africa can leverage significant policy and legislative development power.

“Strengthening coordination with RECs could significantly enhance the ACERWC’s reach and impact, particularly in aligning child rights efforts with regional development agendas and leveraging the RECs’ influence over Member States. Moving forward, there is a clear need for the ACERWC to build stronger, more structured partnerships with RECs to ensure that child rights are mainstreamed across regional policies and programs.”

The Committee should broaden its engagement beyond child-specific government departments to address the intersectional nature of children's rights, including collaboration with local authorities such as mayoral offices, municipalities, local councillors, and traditional leaders. Strategic engagement with influential figures including First Ladies can also provide additional advocacy channels and political support.

“These leaders are well positioned to drive child rights implementation at the community level and can play a critical role in translating the Committee’s work into concrete change on the ground.”

### **3. *Improve resource mobilisation and operational efficiency***

The evaluation highlighted critical needs for enhanced resource mobilisation strategies and operational optimisation to ensure the Committee's sustainability and expanded impact.

Diversified funding strategies must move beyond traditional donor dependency towards innovative funding mechanisms. Strategic engagement with corporate social investment funds and both international and African financial institutions presents untapped opportunities, potentially through the development of a comprehensive private sector engagement framework that aligns corporate interests with children's rights advancement.

### **4. *Strategic Framework Harmonisation***

Developing a more streamlined strategic architecture emerges as essential for operational clarity and measurable impact for the Committee. The evaluation recommends focusing on a small number of clear outputs for each strategic objective to prevent dilution of efforts and ensure concentrated impact. Implementation of simple, feasible progress tracking tools will enable continuous monitoring, ensuring the Committee remains informed about successful interventions and areas requiring strategic adjustment.

#### **Thematic focus areas**

It is recommended that, rather than changing or overhauling the Committee’s focus, particularly with regard to thematic areas, it focus on deepening and nuancing its work on existing thematic areas. This is not only because much work remains to be done in these areas, but is also strategic, being cognisant of the resource-constrained environment in which the Committee operates. The following thematic focus

areas were most commonly cited by stakeholders and align with the contextual analysis and evaluation findings above:

- Climate change;
- Children in humanitarian situations, particularly child hunger;
- Effective child participation;
- Harmful practices;
- CAAC; and
- The internet and digital rights of children.

## ROADMAP FOR THE NEW STRATEGIC PLAN

Activity	Timeframe	Responsible Party
Validate Evaluation of the 2021-2025 Strategic Plan	July 2025	ACERWC
Disseminate findings of the Evaluation to all stakeholders in accessible formats	August-September 2025	ACERWC Secretariat
Internal and collaborative reflections on the findings of the Evaluation, and development of high-level priorities for the new Strategic Plan	October-November 2025 (during the 46 <sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session)	All stakeholders
Commission consultant to develop new Strategic Plan	November 2025	ACERWC Secretariat
Strategic Framework development, including stakeholder consultation, strategic planning retreat, results framework design, and collect baseline data	December 2025 – March 2026	Consultant
Validate and adopt Strategic Plan	April 2026	ACERWC
Launch and dissemination, including annual workplan development, etc	April – May 2026 and onwards	ACERWC Secretariat

## **CONCLUSION**

This evaluation of the ACERWC's 2021–2025 Strategic Plan underscores the Committee's growing impact despite the persistent challenges it faces. The Committee has demonstrated resilience and adaptability in advancing children's rights across Africa, leveraging partnerships and expanding its influence in key policy areas. However, the lack of adequate funding, staffing constraints, and limited responsiveness from States remain significant obstacles to achieving its full potential.

To build on the successes of the past five years, it is essential for the ACERWC to prioritise strategic State engagement, strengthen its partnerships with both governmental and non-governmental actors, and enhance its resource mobilisation efforts. The next Strategic Plan (2026–2030) must sharpen the focus on key thematic areas, streamline operational processes, and ensure better coordination with broader African and global frameworks, such as Agenda 2040 and Agenda 2063.

The recommendations set forth in this report provide a roadmap for strengthening the Committee's capacity and positioning, ensuring that it remains an effective force in the promotion and protection of children's rights across Africa. By addressing these challenges and building on the momentum of its work, the ACERWC can continue to drive meaningful change, contributing to an Africa that truly supports and safeguards the rights and welfare of its children.

## **ANNEXURE 1: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS**

*(Please see attached).*

1. Survey Instruments
  - 1.1. ACERWC Committee Member Survey
  - 1.2. ACERWC Secretariat Staff Survey
  - 1.3. Children's Survey
  - 1.4. Strategic Partners Survey
  - 1.5. AU Organs Survey
2. Interview Guides
  - 2.1. ACERWC Committee Member Interview Guide
  - 2.2. ACERWC Secretariat Staff Interview Guide
  - 2.3. Strategic Partners Interview Guide

## **ANNEXURE 2: COMPLETED LOGFRAME**

*(Please see attached).*



### ANNEXURE 3: EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

OECD DAC Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Related Strategic Plan Objectives & Indicators	Data Collection Methods	Validation Approach
<b>Relevance</b>	1. To what extent were the Strategic Plan's objectives aligned with i) the most critical needs of children in Africa; and ii) contextual challenges facing children in Africa?	Alignment with Agenda 2040, the Charter and ACERWC ratification progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Document review</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-referencing</li> <li>Stakeholder feedback loops</li> </ul>
	2. To what extent was the Strategic Plan aligned with broader policy and strategic documents, including the Charter, Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040?	Flexibility of strategic approach to addressing dynamic regional contexts.		
	3. How well did the Strategic Plan respond to emerging child rights challenges (e.g., conflict, climate change, digital threats, Covid-19 etc)?	Strategic integration of child protection themes.		
	4. Were the objectives and strategies realistic given ACERWC's capacity and resources?	Implementation feasibility vs. available resources.		
<b>Coherence</b>	5. How effectively did ACERWC coordinate with AU bodies, RECs, CSOs, NHRIs and UN agencies?	Strength of partnerships with AGA, APSA, and NHRIs; level of engagement with other stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership documentation</li> <li>Coordination records and outputs</li> <li>Stakeholder interviews</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder feedback loops</li> <li>Multi-stakeholder discussion during Strategy Retreat</li> </ul>
	6. How well did ACERWC's activities complement other child rights mechanisms at the continental and global levels (including the UN CRC, PSC etc)?	Level of engagement in AU and UN human rights systems.		
	7. Were there overlaps or gaps in ACERWC's role compared to other actors?	Clear division of roles in joint initiatives.		
	8. Did the Strategic Plan integrate cross-cutting child rights themes cohesively?	Responsiveness to cross-cutting issues while maintaining strategic focus.		
<b>Effectiveness</b>	9. To what extent were key Strategic Plan activities implemented and objectives met (e.g., increased state reporting, ratification, child participation)?	Number of state reports submitted, concluding observations followed up, meetings with RECs held, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative performance indicators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External benchmarking</li> <li>Stakeholder feedback loops</li> </ul>

	10. Are there demonstrable examples of tangible policy changes, ratification events, etc triggered by ACERWC interventions?	Efficacy of State party engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome tracking (through stakeholder interviews)</li> <li>• Impact case studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-stakeholder discussion during Strategy Retreat</li> </ul>
	11. Did the special mechanisms and child protection initiatives achieve their intended outcomes?	Functionality of special mechanisms, advocacy impact.		
	12. Was the Secretariat able to operate effectively?	Functionality of the Secretariat.		
	13. What was the quality of advocacy and awareness-raising initiatives (in terms of implementation, audiences reached, effectiveness, etc)?	Efficacy of outreach activities.		
	14. What were the main challenges in achieving objectives, both expected and unexpected, how were they mitigated, and what was the effectiveness of the mitigation strategies adopted?	Identified barriers and mitigation strategies.		
<b>Efficiency</b>	15. Were ACERWC's resources (financial, human, and technical) optimally allocated for maximum impact?	Budget utilisation vs. planned activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity timeline analysis</li> <li>• Proposals and budgets</li> <li>• Workplan analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multi-stakeholder discussion during Strategy Retreat</li> </ul>
	16. Were planned activities delivered on time and within budget?	Comparison of planned vs. actual activity timelines.		
	17. What were the unforeseen delays due to external or other constraints and how were they overcome?	Contextual challenges and factors.		
	18. Were there bureaucratic or procedural delays that affected implementation?	Efficiency of AU processes supporting ACERWC.		
<b>Impact</b>	19. What measurable changes in child rights policies and protection systems can be attributed to ACERWC's work?	Policy reforms, legal changes, or improved child welfare indicators, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>• Independent reports</li> <li>• Workplans and progress reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual data</li> <li>• Stakeholder feedback loops</li> </ul>
	20. Did State parties take concrete actions in response to ACERWC's recommendations? Are there examples where State parties failed to take concrete actions in response?	Rate of implementation of concluding observations, of decisions etc.		
	21. Did ACERWC's advocacy efforts lead to increased child participation, empowerment and awareness of rights?	Child-led engagement initiatives, education campaigns.		

<b>Sustainability</b>	22. How likely are the achieved results to be sustained beyond 2025?	Institutional capacity, government buy-in.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation of indicators</li> <li>• Stakeholder interviews</li> <li>• Independent reports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contextual data</li> <li>• Stakeholder feedback loops</li> </ul>
	23. How well does the current state and capacities of ACERWC align with and integrate into the objectives of the Second 10-Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063?	Broader policy alignment for political support		
	24. What steps were taken to ensure ACERWC's financial sustainability and independence? How did these steps align with current development sin the funding environment?	Securing AU funding, donor diversification, navigating international aid cuts.		
	25. How effectively have institutional capacities been developed to appropriately meet the needs for the future?	Ensuring necessary capacity.		
	26. How well was knowledge transferred to stakeholders to ensure continued progress?	Capacity-building efforts for CSOs, state actors, and NHRIs.		