

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

BY THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC) WORKING GROUP ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

TOPIC: JUST TRANSITION AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN AFRICA

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), in line with its mandate to promote and protect the rights and welfare of children in Africa, is seeking written submissions on the implications of the just transition for children's rights across the continent. This call for submissions is coordinated by the Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change, in accordance with its mandate to seek, receive, examine and act upon information on children's rights and climate change, and to set standards and develop effective strategies to combat and reverse the impact of climate change on the rights and welfare of the child, as provided for in Resolution for the Establishment of a Working Group on Children's Rights and Climate Change. While the Working Group's mandate covers the broader relationship between children's rights and climate change, this call for submissions is specifically focused on the just transition: the process and governance of Africa's shift towards low-carbon and environmentally sustainable economies, and its implications for children's rights. The submissions will inform the development of a Guidance Note to State Parties to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) on Just Transition and Children's Rights in Africa.

A just transition refers to the process of shifting away from carbon-intensive, environmentally unsustainable and extractive economic activities towards low-carbon, environmentally sustainable economies, in a manner that safeguards the rights and livelihoods of workers, communities and other affected populations, and ensures that the social and economic costs and benefits of this shift are shared equitably so that no one is left behind. Anchored in instruments such as the International Labour Organization's Guidelines for a Just Transition towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies for All (2015), the Paris Agreement, and the UNFCCC Just Transition Work Programme, the concept has traditionally centred on workers and industries directly affected by decarbonisation, and on decent work, social dialogue and social protection as the means of managing that shift fairly. Children must equally be recognised as rights holders whose survival, development, health, education and protection are shaped by the pace, design and governance of this transition. Across Africa, the shift towards renewable energy, green industrialisation, Just Energy Transition Partnerships and investment plans, and the extraction of critical minerals required for green technologies presents both significant opportunities and considerable risks for children.

These include, on one hand, improved access to clean and affordable energy, green jobs and skills, and diversified, more sustainable local economies whose benefit trickle down to children, and on the other, risks of displacement, disrupted livelihoods and education, child labour in mineral and green value chains, and the deepening of existing inequalities where children's rights are not deliberately integrated into transition planning and implementation.

The Committee further recognizes that children are disproportionately affected by the social and economic disruptions that can accompany rapid shifts away from carbon-intensive and extractive industries, including changes to household income, employment and access to services, while often having limited opportunity to participate in the decisions that shape these processes. It is therefore essential that the transition towards greener and more sustainable economies be designed and implemented in a manner that respects, protects and fulfils the rights and welfare of children, in line with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

The Committee invites civil society organizations, international organizations, children and youth-led organizations, academics and researchers, governments, National Human Rights Institutions, regional economic communities, the private sector and other interested stakeholders to provide written inputs.

Guiding Questions

Please consider responding to the following questions, **where relevant to your experience, expertise or context.**

Respondents need not address every question and are encouraged to focus on the areas most relevant to them.

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks

- What laws, policies, regulations or strategies support or hinder a child-sensitive just transition?
- Are there safeguards in place to ensure non-discrimination, accessibility, participation and the best interests of the child in just transition-related initiatives?
- Do existing legal and policy frameworks adequately regulate the activities of private actors involved in renewable energy, critical mineral extraction and other just transition-related activities affecting children?
- Are effective remedies available to children and communities whose rights are adversely affected by just transition-related energy, infrastructure or resource extraction projects (e.g., child-friendly complaints mechanisms)?

2. Trends and Status

- What is the current status of just transition initiatives in your country or region (e.g., renewable energy projects, Just Energy Transition Partnerships or Investment Plans, green industrialisation strategies, phase-out or restructuring of carbon-intensive industries, or critical minerals and green value chain development)?
- What measures have been adopted to integrate children's rights into just transition, energy or green industrial policies?
- Are there existing strategies, programmes or institutional frameworks addressing the just transition or renewable energy, and who manages or implements them (e.g., Just Energy Transition Partnerships or Investment Plans, the just transition components of Nationally Determined Contributions, national just transition frameworks, critical minerals strategies or green economy policies)?
- What emerging trends are shaping the just transition and green economy shift in your region/country?
- What data, research or evidence exists on the specific impacts of just transition measures on children?

3. Opportunities and Benefits

- What benefits have just transition initiatives brought, or could potentially bring, for children's rights?
- How can the just transition advance children's rights to survival and development, health, education, social protection, participation, protection and a clean, healthy and sustainable environment?
- How can investments in renewable energy, green jobs and skills, sustainably powered schools and health facilities, and social protection linked to the transition improve children's daily lives?
- Are there examples of just transition or green economy initiatives that have positively impacted children and their communities?

4. Challenges and Risks

- What are the main challenges to ensuring that the just transition is child-sensitive, inclusive and rights-based in your context?
- Are there concerns about the exclusion or marginalisation of specific groups of children in the just transition, including children with disabilities, children in rural or remote communities, children in informal settlements, refugee and migrant children, stateless children, children on the move, children affected by poverty, and children in communities dependent on carbon-intensive or extractive industries undergoing restructuring, including artisanal and small-scale mining communities?

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- Are there concerns regarding displacement, loss of livelihoods, land use changes, disruption of education, increased household poverty, unaffordable energy or services, child labour, unsafe working conditions, pollution or other adverse impacts linked to just transition-related projects?
- Are there concerns regarding the extraction of critical minerals and other resources used in green technologies and their impact on children's rights (e.g., cobalt, lithium, copper, nickel and rare earth minerals used in batteries, solar panels, wind turbines and electric vehicles)?
- What safeguards exist to prevent adverse impacts on children linked to the just transition, and how effective have they been in practice?

5. Children's Participation

- Have children been consulted or involved in just transition, energy or green industrial decision-making processes?
- What mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that children's voices are meaningfully included in just transition policies and programmes?
- How can children participate more effectively in shaping just transition governance and action (e.g., through school-based initiatives, student representative structures, environmental clubs, targeted green-skills education, capacity-building, mentorship, access to decision-makers and safe platforms for child participation)?

6. Accountability, Corporate Responsibility and Good Practices

- What accountability mechanisms exist to ensure that States and private actors respect, protect and fulfil children's rights during the just transition?
- What measures should businesses adopt to ensure that their activities, including child-sensitive human rights due diligence, are consistent with children's rights and the principles of a just transition?
- Can you share examples of successful initiatives, pilot programmes, innovative approaches or good practices in your country or elsewhere in Africa?
- What lessons have been learned from those experiences?

7. Recommendations

- What practical steps should be taken by State Parties to ensure that the just transition advances, rather than undermines, children's rights?
- What standards, safeguards or principles should guide States and private actors when designing and implementing just transition measures affecting children?
- What role should the ACERWC, African Union, regional economic communities and other stakeholders play in supporting a child-rights-based just transition?

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- What issues should be prioritised in the development of the Guidance Note on Just Transition and Children's Rights in Africa?

Submission Details

- Submissions should not exceed 5 pages and may additionally include relevant annexes or links to case studies.
- Contributions may be submitted in the official languages of the African Union
- Deadline for submission: December 10, 2026.

Email submissions to:

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