

Cabo Verde:

Nine Inhabited Islands.

One Standard of Protection

for Every Child.

A civil society contribution to the dialogue with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), on the implementation of the African Charter in Cabo Verde

Submitted to: African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)

Prepared by:

*West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF-FOSCAO)
in coalition with child rights civil society organisations in Cabo Verde
and independent child protection practitioners*

*with support from The Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) and technical support
from NovaHub Consulting*

Wacsof-Foscao.org

Thanks to our partners



WACSO-FOSCAO.ORG



GONOVAHUB.COM



AFECN.ORG

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	3
1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
2. PRIORITY ISSUES FOR ACERWC CONSIDERATION	5
3. INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS	6
4. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION (ARTICLE 1)	7
4.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS	7
4.2 CIVIL SOCIETY FINDINGS	7
RECOMMENDATIONS	8
5. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD (ARTICLE 2)	9
RECOMMENDATIONS	9
6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES (ARTICLES 3, 4, 5 AND 7)	10
6.1 NON-DISCRIMINATION (ARTICLE 3)	10
6.2 GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY	10
6.3 BEST INTERESTS, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT (ARTICLES 4 AND 5)	11
6.4 CHILD PARTICIPATION (ARTICLE 7)	11
RECOMMENDATIONS	11
7. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (ARTICLES 6, 8, 9, 10 AND 16)	12
7.1 NAME, NATIONALITY AND BIRTH REGISTRATION (ARTICLE 6)	12
7.2 EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION, THOUGHT AND PRIVACY (ARTICLES 7 TO 10)	12
7.3 PROTECTION FROM ABUSE AND TORTURE (ARTICLE 16)	13
RECOMMENDATIONS	13
8. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE (ARTICLES 18 TO 20, 24 AND 25)	14
8.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS	14
8.2 CIVIL SOCIETY FINDINGS	14
RECOMMENDATIONS	14
9. BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE (ARTICLES 5, 13, 14, 20 AND 26)	15
9.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS	15
9.2 POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION	15
9.3 ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY	16
RECOMMENDATIONS	16
10. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (ARTICLES 11 AND 12)	17
10.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS	17
10.2 CIVIL SOCIETY FINDINGS	17
RECOMMENDATIONS	17
11. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES	18
11.1 CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW AND JUVENILE JUSTICE (ARTICLE 17)	18
RECOMMENDATIONS	18
11.2 ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND CHILD LABOUR (ARTICLE 15)	18
RECOMMENDATIONS	19
11.3 SEXUAL ABUSE, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING (ARTICLES 27 AND 29)	19
RECOMMENDATIONS	20
11.4 CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED MOTHERS (ARTICLE 30)	21
RECOMMENDATIONS	21
11.5 CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS	21
RECOMMENDATIONS	21
12. EMERGING AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES	22
12.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND SCHOOL CONTINUITY (ARTICLES 5, 11 AND 14)	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	22
12.2 ONLINE CHILD PROTECTION (ARTICLES 16 AND 27)	22
RECOMMENDATIONS	22
13. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE	23
14. COMPILED RECOMMENDATIONS	24
15. ANNEX A. FIELD CONSULTATION AT A GLANCE	27
16. ANNEX B. INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION OF WACSO-FOSCAO	28
17. REFERENCES AND SOURCES	29
18. THEMATIC REPORT: IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD RIGHTS (0-6 YEARS) IN CABO VERDE	30

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A shared vocabulary for a shared effort.

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADC	Associação de Desenvolvimento Comunitário (community development association)
CAT	UN Committee against Torture
CEDAW	UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CNDHC	National Commission for Human Rights and Citizenship (Cabo Verde)
CRC	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child / Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSU	Cadastro Social Único (Unified Social Registry)
ECA	Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (Child and Adolescent Statute)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ICCA	Instituto Cabo-verdiano da Criança e do Adolescente (Cabo Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents)
ILAB	Bureau of International Labor Affairs, U.S. Department of Labor
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMC	Inquérito Multiobjetivo Contínuo (continuous multi-purpose survey)
MFIDS	Ministry of Family, Inclusion and Social Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RSI	Rendimento Social de Inclusão (Social Inclusion Income)
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WACSO-FOSCAO	West African Civil Society Forum / Forum de la Société Civile de l'Afrique de l'Ouest

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A strong architecture, built to be felt in every village.

- **Purpose.** This Complementary Report is submitted by the West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOFF-FOSCAO), with support from AfECN for the physical CSO Validation meeting and a technical support from NovaHub Consulting, to contribute to the dialogue between the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) and the Republic of Cabo Verde on the Combined Initial and Periodic Report of the State party (2025) (hereafter "the State Report"). It follows the Committee's guidelines for complementary reports from civil society and is offered in a spirit of partnership, in line with the Committee's mandate under Article 42 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).
- **Core message.** Cabo Verde has built one of the most developed child protection frameworks in the ECOWAS region, and the next step is to make that framework reach every child with the same speed and quality, whatever the island, the municipality or the family situation. The State Report documents real progress: a revised Child and Adolescent Statute (Law No. 72/X/2026), new statutes for the Cabo Verdean Institute for Children and Adolescents (ICCA) (Regulatory Decree No. 2/2025), a legal regime for children at risk (Law No. 19/X/2023), free basic and secondary education, electronic civil registration, and school meals reaching 95,325 children in 2022/2023 (State Report, paras. 14 to 15, 40, 74, 147, 159).
- **Five messages for the Committee.** The evidence collected by civil society points to five areas where the Committee's attention and the State's partnership can have the largest effect:
 - **Reach and equity.** Gaps in access to child protection, education and specialised services are not only a matter of island size. Interior and dispersed municipalities, such as Tarrafal in Santiago, face distance, closed schools and thin service coverage (Santo Amaro ADC, field consultation, September 2026).
 - **Trafficking and sexual exploitation.** The 2025 U.S. Trafficking in Persons Report placed Cabo Verde on the Tier 2 Watch List. In 2023/2024, 1,128 sexual crime proceedings were pending nationally, 376 of them for sexual abuse of children (State Report, paras. 230 to 236). Funding, coordination and frontline screening need to catch up with the legal framework.
 - **Child poverty and caregiving.** Effective social protection coverage reached 47.8 percent of children aged 0 to 14 in 2023, which means more than half of them received no cash benefit (State Report, paras. 144 to 145). Mothers who head households carry much of the burden.
 - **Children with disabilities.** Organisations on the ground report no structured early intervention service, limited multidisciplinary teams and inadequate adapted transport outside the main urban centres (ACARINHAR, field consultation, 2026).
 - **Data, participation and financing.** None of the five organisations consulted was involved in preparing the State Report, and four reported that public funding for child-focused civil society is delayed, irregular or inaccessible. Better data and structured consultation would strengthen every other reform.
- **Evidence base.** The report combines a desk review of the State Report with field consultations of five Cabo Verdean organisations (Santo Amaro, Associação de Desenvolvimento Comunitário; Observatório Cidadania Ativa, Cabo Verde; ACARINHAR; Associação Cultural e Desportiva Maracanã de Ponta d'Água; and one organisation that asked to remain anonymous), verified against public sources including the U.S. Department of State, UNHCR, the U.S. Department of Labor, Verité and UN treaty bodies. Section 3 describes the method and its limits.
- **Way forward.** WACSOFF-FOSCAO proposes 45 numbered recommendations, consolidated in Section 14, and ten suggested questions for the constructive dialogue (Section 13). Participating organisations stand ready to support the State party in implementation and follow-up.

2. PRIORITY ISSUES FOR ACERWC CONSIDERATION

Seven issues where early progress would change children's lives fastest.

PRIORITY ISSUE	CHARTER ARTICLES	WHY IT MATTERS	SECTION
Trafficking response and sexual exploitation of children, including tourism-linked risk	15, 16, 27, 29	Tier 2 Watch List (2025). 1,128 sexual crime proceedings pending in 2023/2024. Action Plan needs dedicated resources.	11.3
Equitable access across islands and interior municipalities	1, 3, 4, 11, 14	Dispersed localities, closed rural schools, single ICCA delegation covering a large interior area.	6, 10
Child poverty and caregiving burden on women-headed households	4, 18, 20, 26	About 52 percent of children aged 0 to 14 had no cash benefit in 2023. Girls are covered less (45.6 percent) than boys (49.9 percent).	8, 9
Children with disabilities: early intervention, transport, inclusive schooling	3, 11, 13	No structured early intervention service reported by civil society. Services concentrated in Praia and Mindelo.	6, 10
Statelessness and migrant children	6	Cabo Verde is party to neither statelessness convention. Children of migrant parents face language and documentation barriers.	7
Juvenile justice for 16 and 17 year olds, and data on children deprived of liberty	4, 17	Criminal responsibility starts at 16. No published data on 16 to 17 year olds in the criminal system.	11.1
Financing, consultation and data for child rights	1, 7	Delayed subventions, no consolidated child budget, uneven data series, no consultation of the organisations met.	4

3. INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

How the evidence was gathered, and who stands behind it.

- **Mandate and scope.** WACSO-FOSCAO is the regional platform of civil society organisations across the fifteen West African States (see Annex B). This report covers the Charter clusters addressed by the State Report, following the structure of the ACERWC reporting guidelines, and is also informed by the structure of recent complementary reports by civil society and national human rights institutions to the Committee, including those of the Child Protection Alliance and the National Human Rights Commission of The Gambia and the Alternate Report Coalition of South Africa.
- **Method.** The analysis proceeded in four steps: (1) a clause by clause review of the State Report (in Portuguese; all translations in this document are by WACSO-FOSCAO); (2) a field consultation questionnaire in Portuguese, completed by civil society organisations in September 2026; (3) verification of external statistics and legal status against primary public sources; and (4) formulation of recommendations that are specific, assignable and measurable. (5) questionnaire survey and a meeting was organised with CSO's to complete the validation and (6) a final updated report was produced to reflect the results.
- **Resource limitation.** Because of limited financial resources, the number of CSO covered and surveyed were limited. This situation does not limit the quality and the depth of the analysis in the report.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE AND LIMITS:** Many organisations responded to the questionnaire. Some do not want to have their name listed or appeared in the report. The following organisations accepted to have their names mentioned in the report. Their observations come from many places like Santiago, São Vicente and from a national disability association, and they cannot be taken as representative of every island. Where an observation reflects the respondent's opinion or community knowledge and not documented case data, the text says so. No information identifying individual children or families is reproduced. Among the organisations who contributed the field data, the following organisations agreed to be named as sources.

ORGANISATION	AREA OF WORK AND COVERAGE	RESPONDENT	ATTRIBUTION AND ENDORSEMENT
Santo Amaro, Associação de Desenvolvimento Comunitário (Santo Amaro ADC)	Community development: health, education, poverty, children, adolescents, youth and older persons. Island of Santiago, municipality of Tarrafal.	Chair of the Board	Named source. Willing to co-sign.
Observatório Cidadania Ativa, Cabo Verde	Citizenship and human rights education, with socio-educational actions on children's rights and duties. Island of São Vicente. Does not work directly with children.	Orlando Lima, Chair of the Board	Named source. Willing to co-sign.
ACARINHAR, Associação das Famílias e Amigos das Crianças com Paralisia Cerebral	Founded in 2007. Rehabilitation, inclusive education, social protection, accessibility and community participation for children and youth with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. About 230 child cases per year.	Maria Teresa Mascarenhas dos Santos Pina, Chair of the Board	Named source. Individual cases kept confidential.
Associação Cultural e Desportiva Maracanã de Ponta d'Água (Maracanã)	Sport, education, culture and recreational activities. Island of Santiago, city of Praia. About 300 child cases per year.	Chair of the Board	Named source. Will decide on co-signing after seeing the final draft.
A Cabo Verde child rights organisation (anonymous)	Child rights and early education. National coverage.	Not disclosed	Anonymous source, at its request. Willing to co-sign.

- **Reading guide.** Each thematic section begins with what the State Report documents, then presents civil society findings and field extracts, then ends with numbered recommendations. Extracts are marked by organisation and question number (Q) in the consultation questionnaire.

4. GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION (ARTICLE 1)

Good laws are the first mile. Funded, coordinated services are the last.

4.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS

The State Report presents a mixed protection system involving the courts, the Public Prosecution Service, ICCA, the National Commission for Human Rights and Citizenship (CNDHC), municipal committees for children's rights, NGOs and community associations (para. 30). A revised Child and Adolescent Statute has been adopted as Law No. 72/X/2026, which also introduces the seventh amendment to the Penal Code (Boletim Oficial, 2026). The State Report describes the bill that preceded it as creating a National Council for the Defence of Children's Rights, a Children and Adolescents Observatory and municipal committees in every municipality (paras. 13 to 15). ICCA operates under new statutes (Regulatory Decree No. 2/2025, para. 40). Children aged 0 to 17 number 165,370, or 33.7 percent of the population (Census 2021, para. 20), a share that has fallen from 213,108 in 2000.

4.2 CIVIL SOCIETY FINDINGS

- **Budget visibility.** The State Report explains that the State budget funds the Ministry of Family, Inclusion and Social Development (MFIDS) and the Fundo Mais programme for children (para. 264), but it does not give child-specific allocation and expenditure figures, which the ACERWC guidelines request. Organisations on the ground describe uneven experience. One reports a municipal budget line for child protection that is not accessible to NGOs. Another receives a State subvention in monthly instalments (duodécimos) that arrive late, especially at the start of each year. A third does not know whether a dedicated line exists. A fourth confirms that the State budget has a traceable line for ICCA but none dedicated to NGOs working on child protection, and a fifth knows only of occasional, irregular calls for preschool and study support (Maracanã, Q1).

FROM THE FIELD SANTO AMARO ADC, Q1 - Tarrafal, Santiago

A municipal budget line exists, but it is reserved for the municipality. NGOs have no way of accessing it, and municipalities do not make funds available to NGOs working with children.

FROM THE FIELD ACARINHAR, Q1 - National, cerebral palsy and disability

The Government supports the association through monthly instalments, but with significant delays, mainly at the start of the year. These delays affect regular activities, payment of expenses and continuity of services to children and families.

- **Consultation.** The State Report states that public institutions, NGOs and civil society organisations contributed to its preparation (para. 4) and that an NGO platform representative sits on the steering committee of the National Action Plan on Sexual Violence against Children (para. 263). WACSOFF-FOSCAO welcomes these channels. All five organisations consulted for this report, however, answered that they had not been consulted or were not aware of any consultation on the State Report, the National Children's Policy or the National Child Protection Strategy (Q2). This suggests that the consultation exists but has not yet reached some community based and disability organisations.
- **Coordination.** The State Report notes that ICCA is preparing guidelines that would set out a multisector coordination framework with NGOs (para. 42). In the field, coordination is described as thin in some places: in Tarrafal it is "almost non-existent" beyond police, health and the courts, and prevention work is limited (Santo Amaro ADC, Q3). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa sees a need for more networked work in Sal and Boa Vista, and ACARINHAR points to gaps in several islands and in São Lourenço dos Órgãos (Q3). Views are not uniform. Maracanã, in Praia, considers that the protection of children's rights is weak in all municipalities and that no institution is clearly accountable when a child is out of school or on the street, an assessment it presents as its own and not as documented cases (Q3). An anonymous national organisation, by contrast, considers that the institutions concerned operate in every municipality and has not observed weaker coordination (Q3).

FROM THE FIELD MARACANÃ, Q3 - Praia, Santiago

What happens when a child does not want to go to school? Nothing. When a child wants to stay on the street? Nothing. Who is held accountable? Nobody. Which institution takes in a 13-year-old child at risk? None, there is no effective policy for this, and sometimes children have to turn to crime in order to be arrested, so as not to sleep on the street.

- **Data coherence.** National indicators are, some times, not always stable across the State Report. For example, infant mortality is given as 15 per 1,000 live births for 2022 (para. 156) and as 13.8 per 1,000 for the same year (para. 158), and under five mortality as 16.6 (para. 156) and 15.4 (para. 157). Reconciling definitions and sources would make monitoring easier for the State, the Committee and civil society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R1** Publish an annual child budget statement, showing allocation and execution by ministry, by island and municipality and by Charter cluster, and submit it to audit by the Court of Auditors.
- **R2** Establish a predictable disbursement calendar for State subventions to child focused organisations, with first quarter payments guaranteed, and open municipal child protection funds to civil society through transparent public calls.
- **R3** Institutionalise structured consultation of civil society, including the NGO platform and community and disability organisations from interior municipalities, in the preparation of periodic reports, national child policies and the regulations of the new Child and Adolescent Statute, and publish consultation records.
- **R4** Operationalise the multisector coordination framework between ICCA and NGOs (State Report, para. 42) and activate municipal committees for children's rights in every municipality, beginning with Tarrafal, São Lourenço dos Órgãos, Sal and Boa Vista.
- **R5** Bring the Children and Adolescents Observatory into operation as the single national child data system, with harmonised indicators disaggregated by age (0 to 17), sex, disability and municipality, and reconcile the mortality data series published in the State Report.

5. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD (ARTICLE 2)

Everyone under eighteen is a child under the Charter, whatever the national vocabulary.

- **What the State Report documents.** The Child and Adolescent Statute distinguishes a "child" (under 12) from an "adolescent" (12 to under 18), and the State Report presents this as consistent with the Charter (para. 45). The Civil Code defines a minor as anyone under 18 (para. 46). Criminal responsibility begins at 16 (para. 200), and the minimum age for work is 15 under the Labour Code and the Statute (para. 215). Press reports quote the Minister of Family, Inclusion and Social Development as stating an intention to raise the minimum age for light work to 16 (Forbes Africa Lusófona).
- **Civil society view.** WACSOF-FOSCAO welcomes the shared legal anchor at 18 and encourages the State to make sure the national terms "child" and "adolescent" never reduce Charter protections for those aged 12 to 17. The State Report does not describe the minimum age of marriage. A short confirmation would close the question.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R6** State clearly, in the regulations of the new Child and Adolescent Statute and in the next periodic report, that adolescents aged 12 to 17 are children for all Charter purposes and benefit from every protection in the Charter.
- **R7** Confirm, in law and in the next periodic report, that the minimum age of marriage is 18 for girls and boys without exception, including under customary or religious practice.

6. GENERAL PRINCIPLES (ARTICLES 3, 4, 5 AND 7)

Equal rights become equal chances when services reach the last village.

6.1 NON-DISCRIMINATION (ARTICLE 3)

- **What the State Report documents.** The Constitution and the Statute guarantee equality (paras. 47 to 48), and the Penal Code penalises discrimination (art. 161, para. 49). CNDHC has submitted a draft special anti-discrimination law to the National Assembly (para. 50). For children with special educational needs, the State Report describes a national identification system with multidisciplinary teams in most municipalities (paras. 125, 127, 178), Decree-Law No. 9/2024 on inclusion (para. 180) and a National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2024 to 2030 (para. 126).
- **Civil society findings.** Experience on the ground confirms strong commitments but uneven delivery. ACARINHAR reports no structured early intervention service, no permanent multidisciplinary teams, no efficient public policy specific to children with disabilities, schools and public spaces that are not fully accessible, and inadequate or absent adapted transport (Q4). It also notes that families carry a heavy caregiving burden (Q6). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa reports constant complaints about the limited inclusiveness of services, especially in access to education, and public accounts of discrimination related to disability, nationality and socio-economic status (Q4, Q6). Two further organisations note a great effort to provide inclusive education and good work by associations such as Colmeia, while naming the same gaps in trained staff, equipment and financial resources (Q4). Neither of them has documented cases of discrimination against children (Q6).

FROM THE FIELD ACARINHAR, Q4 AND Q26 - Children with cerebral palsy and other disabilities

Early intervention is decisive for development, autonomy and inclusion. Disability should be built into every child protection policy, and not treated only as a health matter.

6.2 GEOGRAPHIC EQUITY

- **Findings.** The consultation sought confirmation that children on smaller or more remote islands face weaker access to services. Responses refine this picture. In Maio, the Santo Amaro ADC respondent considers that ICCA presence is strong and well organised. In the interior of Santiago, by contrast, a single ICCA delegation in Assomada covers the whole northern region and Tarrafal, about 17,000 inhabitants in 22 dispersed localities, some with very difficult access, and child protection has failed in some cases (Q5). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa answers that the disparity is "a very present reality" (Q5), and ACARINHAR notes that many families must travel to Praia for rehabilitation and specialised services, with transport and accommodation costs (Q5). The State Report itself shows regional differences: the gender parity index in school enrolment is below the national level in 15 of 22 municipalities, and lowest (0.89) in Brava, Ribeira Brava and São Salvador do Mundo (para. 169). An anonymous national organisation considers it possible that services on smaller islands are weaker than in Praia because fewer resources are available there, while Maracanã, which works in Praia, has no basis to give an opinion (Q5).
- **Reading.** Geography matters at three scales: island, interior municipality and dispersed locality. A single access measure by municipality would help the State see where the next investment should go.

6.3 BEST INTERESTS, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT (ARTICLES 4 AND 5)

The Statute guides ICCA and the courts, and training has been offered to prosecutors (State Report, paras. 51 to 52). WACSOF-FOSCAO has not identified a published operational procedure for assessing best interests in custody, placement and juvenile justice cases. On survival, the State Report records an infant mortality rate of 15 per 1,000 live births in 2022 and a neonatal rate that rose from 8.2 to 10 per 1,000 between 2021 and 2022 (paras. 156 to 158), as well as a volatile maternal mortality ratio (37.9 in 2018, 105.1 in 2019 and 36.8 in 2022 per 100,000 live births, para. 155). UNICEF reports chronic malnutrition affecting 10.2 percent of children under five and anaemia affecting 43 percent (UNICEF Cabo Verde, country reporting 2023 to 2025). Santo Amaro ADC adds that cases of malnutrition exist in its area that it has not seen reflected in national statistics (Q13). An anonymous organisation reports that hot meals provided with public support in kindergartens and schools have prevented malnutrition among the children who attend, and warns that children and adolescents who are out of school may not have access to proper food (Q13).

6.4 CHILD PARTICIPATION (ARTICLE 7)

Cabo Verde was a pioneer with the Children and Youth Parliament, created in 1999, and held an extraordinary session on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and climate action in 2023 (State Report, paras. 56 to 57). Peer education programmes in schools support participation in the prevention of sexual violence (para. 57). The State Report does not describe the participation of children in its own preparation. Making Parliament outcomes binding on public follow-up would strengthen what is already a model of good practice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R8** Advance the special anti-discrimination bill submitted by CNDHC (State Report, para. 50), with express protection for children on grounds of disability, nationality, migration status and socio-economic situation.
- **R9** Establish a structured Early Intervention Service for children from birth to five, with permanent multidisciplinary teams, rehabilitation and therapy services and adapted transport in every municipality, beginning outside Praia and Mindelo.
- **R10** Adopt an island and municipality equity index covering child protection, health and education, with service reach targets for interior and dispersed localities such as Tarrafal and São Lourenço dos Órgãos, and publish it annually.
- **R11** Issue operational guidance for assessing and determining the best interests of the child for ICCA, prosecutors and courts under the new Statute, and train all three groups.
- **R12** Give the Children and Youth Parliament a budget line and a formal Government response to its recommendations, and require child consultation in the preparation of the next periodic report and national plans.

7. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (ARTICLES 6, 8, 9, 10 AND 16)

A name, a nationality and a safe childhood are the first rights a child holds.

7.1 NAME, NATIONALITY AND BIRTH REGISTRATION (ARTICLE 6)

- **What the State Report documents.** All civil registry acts are electronic (para. 61), 96 percent of births occur in health facilities and are registered before discharge, and births outside hospitals must be declared within 15 days (paras. 64 to 65, Civil Registry Code, Law No. 75/VIII/2014). The 2023 amendment of the Nationality Law grants Cabo Verdean nationality of origin to a person born in Cabo Verde who has no other nationality, and to a child born in Cabo Verde to stateless parents resident in the country (para. 66). UNICEF records birth registration of 98.5 percent among children aged 0 to 1 in 2024.
- **Remaining gaps.** The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child asked the State in 2019 to pay attention to rural areas and to provide information on stateless children (CRC/C/CPV/CO/2, paras. 31 to 32). The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women welcomed measures on 220 cases of statelessness identified in the 2010 census and recommended ratification of the 1954 and 1961 statelessness conventions (CEDAW/C/CPV/CO/9, 30 July 2019, para. 27). UNHCR noted in its 2023 Universal Periodic Review submission that Cabo Verde was party to neither convention and had not begun accession (UNHCR, UPR 44, 2023). The 2023 nationality safeguard is a welcome step, and accession would add status determination, protection for stateless persons already in the country and international monitoring.
- **Field findings.** Two organisations report children of migrant parents who are not registered. Maracanã also reports many undocumented children in Praia, whom it helps whenever it finds them, though it holds no figures (Q7), and mentions a child whose birth document does not carry the mother's name (Q8). An anonymous national organisation has not encountered undocumented children and notes that parents can register a child at any municipality, city or notary, so that registration services are widespread (Q7, Q8). In Tarrafal, such children are often also not presented to primary health services for vaccination and weight monitoring. The barriers are language (parents speak neither Creole nor Portuguese), lack of awareness of children's rights, cultural distance, and, according to the Observatório Cidadania Ativa, legal documentation of the parents.

FROM THE FIELD SANTO AMARO ADC, Q7 AND Q8 - Tarrafal, Santiago

Children of emigrants who were not registered: mothers are guided and referred to register the birth, but these children are often not brought to primary health care, for vaccination and weight control. Families often speak neither the local nor the official language and do not ask for guidance because they do not know children's rights.

FROM THE FIELD OBSERVATÓRIO CIDADANIA ATIVA, Q7 AND Q8 - São Vicente

Yes, mainly children of migrant parents from the West African coast. The largest obstacle is legal documentation, mainly for migrants who are not legalised in the country.

7.2 EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION, THOUGHT AND PRIVACY (ARTICLES 7 TO 10)

The Statute protects children's right to express their views, to assemble peacefully without prior authorisation (art. 23) and to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 20), with privacy guarantees in protection proceedings (State Report, paras. 67 to 71). WACSOF-FOSCAO has not identified child specific restrictions. For accessibility, the State Report cites a braille edition of the Convention brochure and a sign language professional qualification module (paras. 43, 181), and the sign language and captioning of public information outside the two main cities deserves attention.

7.3 PROTECTION FROM ABUSE AND TORTURE (ARTICLE 16)

The Constitution protects the integrity of the person (art. 28), the Statute requires an upbringing free of violence and corporal punishment (art. 31) and bars physical or humiliating sanctions in schools (arts. 17 and 51) (State Report, paras. 53, 254, 256). The 2021 Penal Code amendment extended the offence of mistreatment of minors to institutional and workplace settings (paras. 252 to 253). ICCA registered 727 complaints of physical and psychological mistreatment in 2021 to 2023, all referred to the Public Prosecution Service (para. 218). CNDHC, as National Preventive Mechanism, visits police stations and children's centres and issues recommendations (para. 257). In 2017 the Committee against Torture asked about juvenile detention conditions and independent monitoring (CAT/C/CPV/CO/1). Publication of visit findings on facilities holding children would help show how those concerns are being met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R13** Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and conduct an updated national assessment of stateless and at-risk children, including children of migrant parents.
- **R14** Launch registration outreach for migrant and remote families, with information in the languages of the main migrant communities, mobile registration points and a link between birth registration and enrolment in primary health care, and publish data on late registration by municipality.
- **R15** Publish CNDHC visit reports on facilities holding or hosting children, and report in the next periodic cycle on follow-up to CAT/C/CPV/CO/1 (2017).

8. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE (ARTICLES 18 TO 20, 24 AND 25)

Family strengthening is the best child protection system a State can buy.

8.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS

Families are central to national policy. The State funds the Social Inclusion Income (RSI, Decree-Law No. 41/2020), a subvention for access to nurseries and pre-school that targets single-parent households headed by women in groups 1 and 2 of the Unified Social Registry (CSU), and six new nurseries (paras. 99 to 100). Decree-Law No. 63/2020 regulates care facilities (para. 101), and the National Care Plan prioritises children up to 12 (para. 124). Family separation by foster care is a last resort (para. 83).

On alternative care, ICCA's institutional structures hosted 129 children and adolescents in 2023: 64 in the Praia Emergency Centre, 47 in Mindelo, 5 in Sal and 13 in the Nhô Dunga Youth Centre (para. 110). A Sal Emergency Centre opened in 2023 and centres have also been set up in Maio and São Nicolau (paras. 112, 222). The State Report is candid that human resources are insufficient, that numbers in emergency centres are high, and that adoption of children with special educational needs remains difficult (paras. 95 to 96). WACSO-FOSCAO welcomes this candour and offers support in implementation.

8.2 CIVIL SOCIETY FINDINGS

- **Women-headed households.** UNICEF reports that 85 percent of extremely poor households are women-headed (UNICEF Cabo Verde, country reporting 2023 to 2025). Field experience shows how this plays out in children's daily lives. Mothers who work to support the family sometimes leave children with neighbours or relatives, or alone, without realising the exposure (Santo Amaro ADC, Q10). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa reports children left alone for many hours, children exposed to abuse including sexual violence, and children asking for money in the streets (Q10). ACARINHAR describes mothers who provide round-the-clock care for children with cerebral palsy, which limits their ability to work and increases dependence on social support (Q10). Maracanã estimates, without precise data, that more than 70 percent of the children in its community in Praia live in households headed by women (Q10). An anonymous organisation adds that such children are more vulnerable and make up the majority of the poor, and that the presence of both parents makes a real difference to children's behaviour and learning (Q10).

FROM THE FIELD SANTO AMARO ADC, Q10 - Tarrafal, Santiago

Many women, trying to sustain the family, end up neglecting their children, even unconsciously. Children are left with neighbours, other relatives or alone at home, without the mothers calculating the danger to which the children are exposed.

- **Quality of alternative care.** The Observatório Cidadania Ativa describes a structural asymmetry between a strongly regulated formal system and an informal system that has historically been invisible to State supervision, and welcomes the new Statute and the National Care System Strategy 2025 to 2030 (Q9). Santo Amaro ADC, without a systematic assessment, perceives that NGO-managed shelters may not be monitored as they should (Q9). ACARINHAR calls for regular monitoring of care quality with specific attention to children with disabilities (Q9). An anonymous organisation working in early childhood care notes that recently established homes and foster families are a viable alternative for caring for children (Q9).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R16** Extend day centres and after-school care to every municipality without one, beginning with interior Santiago, using closed or underused school buildings where suitable, and with local associations as implementing partners.
- **R17** Combine cash with care for women-headed households identified in the CSU: link transfers to child protection case management, parenting support and access to nurseries.
- **R18** Create a light registration and monitoring framework for informal kinship care, proportionate to risk, and strengthen ICCA inspection of NGO-run residential care under the new Statute.
- **R19** Publish annual, island disaggregated data on children in alternative care, length of stay, reunification, and adoption of children with special educational needs.

9. BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE (ARTICLES 5, 13, 14, 20 AND 26)

Surviving is not thriving: the next gains are in nutrition, early intervention and adolescent health.

9.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS

Coverage of the first consultation for infants rose from 86.9 percent in 2018 to 97.3 percent in 2022 (para. 151). Health fee exemptions apply to children aged 0 to 5 and to people with disabilities (para. 122), and HPV vaccination reached 95 percent of ten-year-old girls (para. 27). The National Strategic Plan for Child and Adolescent Health covers 2023 to 2026 (para. 130). For HIV, prevalence is about 0.6 percent, and Law No. 7/X/2022 sets the legal regime (paras. 258 to 260).

9.2 POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The State Report records that child poverty reached 43 percent in 2015, with children making up about 45 percent of people in poverty (para. 26), and that in 2022 49.1 percent of children lived in households with a low or very low comfort level. Effective coverage of children aged 0 to 14 by at least one cash social protection benefit rose from 44.4 percent in 2021 to 47.4 percent in 2022 and 47.8 percent in 2023, or 45.6 percent for girls and 49.9 percent for boys (paras. 144 to 145). UNICEF reports that, in 2022, children aged 0 to 15 made up 37 percent of extremely poor people (UNICEF Cabo Verde, country reporting 2023 to 2025). The monthly family allowance is 700 escudos per child (para. 140).

- **Field findings.** Organisations confirm the importance of CSU and RSI while highlighting practical gaps. The Observatório Cidadania Ativa notes that some families have received these benefits, but they are not enough to meet socio-economic difficulties, which leads families to seek supplementary income, often in precarious jobs (Q11). ACARINHAR notes that families of children with disabilities face additional costs for food, transport, medicines, assistive products and therapies, and calls for stronger links between the CSU, the RSI and specialised services (Q11). Santo Amaro ADC considers that the CSU reaches households but is perceived as having become a political tool, and proposes that accredited NGOs working with disadvantaged families take part in classification (Q11). Maracanã finds that the CSU and RSI reach families but with a large deficit, since even the technicians cannot explain their real importance (Q11), while an anonymous organisation confirms that they do reach informally employed households and that many children in its early childhood centres are beneficiaries through their parents (Q11). WACSOF-FOSCAO reads this as a call for transparent, auditable and participatory targeting rather than as a criticism of the instrument.

FROM THE FIELD SANTO AMARO ADC, Q11 - Tarrafal, Santiago

The registry has been reaching families, but it has come to be seen as a political tool. It should be managed neither by municipalities nor by the Government alone, but with accredited NGOs that truly work with the most disadvantaged, who would classify households better.

9.3 ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND PROFESSIONAL CAPACITY

The Strategic Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health covered 2018 to 2022 (State Report, para. 262), and the State Report does not mention a successor. In 2022, 8,277 pregnant women were seen in reproductive health services, 1,281 of them under 20, including 29 girls aged 10 to 14 and 239 aged 15 to 16 (para. 153). Each pregnancy at these ages is also a child protection signal. On the ground, Santo Amaro ADC reports a shortage of psychologists, social workers and nutritionists, and notes that NGOs cannot afford to hire specialists and can only identify and refer cases (Q12). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa considers that services are available but need more awareness-raising, and cites the contribution of VerdeFam (Q12). ACARINHAR notes that adolescents with disabilities face additional barriers because of inaccessible communication and untrained professionals (Q12). An anonymous organisation adds that smaller islands and municipalities have fewer human resources and therefore fewer services of every kind, while recognising the effort made through online services and new technology (Q12).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R20** Set a target and a timetable to raise effective coverage of children aged 0 to 14 by cash social protection above 47.8 percent, with specific attention to the lower coverage of girls and to children in informal and migrant households, and review the real value of the family allowance.
- **R21** Make CSU targeting transparent and auditable by publishing eligibility criteria and appeals procedures, and by involving accredited community organisations in verification.
- **R22** Scale growth monitoring and micronutrient supplementation to the level of the immunisation programme and publish nutrition data by municipality.
- **R23** Adopt a successor to the Strategic Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health 2018 to 2022, with accessible information and services for adolescents with disabilities, and apply a child protection assessment to every pregnancy of a girl under 16.
- **R24** Fund psychologists, social workers and nutritionists in interior municipalities, for example through service contracts between municipalities and local associations.

10. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (ARTICLES 11 AND 12)

Free schooling is truly free only when the road to school is.

10.1 WHAT THE STATE REPORT DOCUMENTS

Basic and secondary education is free (Decree-Law No. 13/2018, para. 159), compulsory from age 6 (para. 160), and the Education Strategic Plan 2022 to 2026 aims to reduce regional disparities (para. 161). In 2022, 97.3 percent of children aged 5 to 17 attended school, and 11.9 percent of those aged 15 to 17 did not (para. 28). Support programmes include school meals for 95,325 pupils in 2022/2023 (para. 147), school kits for 30,230 pupils (para. 163), school transport for 7,640 pupils in secondary education (para. 164), and six student residences with 300 beneficiaries (para. 165). Pregnant students are protected by Decree-Law No. 47/2017 and Statute art. 47 (paras. 170 to 171). On leisure and culture, the State Report describes the BA-Cultura programme (paras. 183 to 185).

10.2 CIVIL SOCIETY FINDINGS

- **Distance and closed schools.** Santo Amaro ADC reports that many rural zones have lost their schools because of low enrolment, and that children from age four walk long distances, sometimes two hours, usually without an adult (Q4, Q5). It considers that where at least one pupil remains, the right to safe access to education should be protected, because families who can no longer pay transport costs see their children leave the system (Q26). The organisation reports transport costs that reached 30 euros in some communities and adolescents who often go long periods without eating (Q14).

FROM THE FIELD SANTO AMARO ADC, Q26 - Tarrafal, Santiago

Education is free, yet we are depriving some children of access, because parents have to pay for transport and at some point cannot pay. The child ends up outside the system, and then the Ministry wants to trace out-of-school pupils, even though closures contributed to it.

- **Dropout and disability.** The Observatório Cidadania Ativa and Santo Amaro ADC both identify economic pressure as the main driver of dropout, and the Observatório adds early pregnancy, while noting that pregnant students may attend classes in Cabo Verde (Q14). ACARINHAR stresses that disability, poverty, distance, family conditions and school capacity should be analysed together (Q14). Maracanã reports a reasonable number of dropouts every year in Praia (Q14), and an anonymous organisation names economic pressure, disability and early pregnancy together as drivers (Q14).
- **Quality and climate.** UNICEF notes constraints on measuring learning outcomes as opposed to enrolment, and that digital initiatives such as the Learning Passport Cabo Verde are expanding (UNICEF Cabo Verde, 2025). Section 12.1 addresses school disruption caused by Tropical Storm Erin in 2025.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R25** Require a child rights impact assessment and a guaranteed safe, free transport or community learning alternative before any rural school is closed, including after-school and multigrade options.
- **R26** Extend the school transport programme to pre-school and basic education in dispersed localities and ensure no child leaves school for lack of transport money.
- **R27** Establish a national learning assessment system, separate from enrolment tracking, that measures literacy and numeracy by island, sex and disability.
- **R28** Accelerate inclusive education infrastructure and support staff for children with disabilities outside Praia and Mindelo.

11. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

Protection works best where it is fastest and closest to the child.

11.1 CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW AND JUVENILE JUSTICE (ARTICLE 17)

- **What the State Report documents.** The Orlando Pantera Socio-Educational Centre receives children aged 12 to 16 under a judicial socio-educational measure. At the time of the State Report, it hosted 33 boys, 18 from Santiago, 7 from Brava, 4 from Fogo, 2 from São Vicente and 1 each from Sal and São Nicolau, with a maximum measure of five years (paras. 191 to 195). Pupils attend classes in the centre (para. 196) and receive medical and psychological care (para. 198). Adolescents from age 16 are criminally responsible but benefit from special conditions, with separate wings in prisons for those aged 16 to 21 (paras. 200, 204). Free legal aid is available (para. 201), and a 2024 law on electronic monitoring may reduce pre-trial detention (para. 205).
- **Civil society findings.** Santo Amaro ADC, the Observatório Cidadania Ativa, Maracanã and an anonymous organisation do not have access to official data on children deprived of liberty, and ACARINHAR has no systematised data (Q22). The State Report presents data on the Centre but not on 16 and 17 year olds held in the criminal system, nor on pre-trial detention of children, nor on any equivalent arrangement for girls. The Charter treats everyone under 18 as a child for the purposes of Article 17, and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child encourages States to apply child justice rules to all children under 18 (General Comment No. 24, 2019).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R29** Publish annual data on all persons under 18 deprived of liberty, including 16 and 17 year olds held in the prison system and pre-trial detainees, by sex, island, legal status and length of detention.
- **R30** Review the treatment of 16 and 17 year olds against Article 17 of the Charter and General Comment No. 24, and ensure that every child is tried by a specialised child justice process and held apart from adults.
- **R31** Confirm the facilities and measures available to girls in conflict with the law, and expand community based alternatives to detention for children.

11.2 ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION AND CHILD LABOUR (ARTICLE 15)

- **What the State Report documents.** The Statute and the Labour Code set 15 as the minimum age of work (para. 215). A hazardous work list has been in force since 2016 (Law No. 113/VIII/2016), and the National Committee on Child Labour includes 30 institutions (paras. 210 to 212). The 2022 ILO-supported survey found that 4.2 percent of children were in child labour and 2.5 percent of children aged 5 to 17 worked in hazardous conditions. Incidence was higher among boys (5.6 versus 2.7 percent) and in rural areas (9.4 versus 2.4 percent) (paras. 213 and 216).
- **Civil society and external findings.** The U.S. Department of Labor reports no criminal investigations, prosecutions or convictions for worst forms of child labour in its latest reporting period (U.S. Department of Labor, ILAB, Cabo Verde). Verité reports 24 cases of child labour recorded by ICCA in 2020, in domestic service, agriculture, waste collection and drug trafficking (Verité, Cabo Verde). In the field, Santo Amaro ADC documents street vending in Tarrafal markets by children selling food and fruit, and describes labour inspection in its municipality as "zero" (Q16, Q17). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa lists street vending, domestic work, fishing in fishing villages and agriculture, and explains that informal activities operate outside the reach of the General Labour Inspectorate (Q16, Q17). In Praia, Maracanã has observed children working in carpentry, locksmith, panel-beating and mechanics workshops, in selling fish, "fresquinhas", bread and doughnuts, and in construction, and states that there is no inspection (Q16, Q17). An anonymous organisation has not documented child labour and considers existing legislation adequate, provided that it is enforced and monitored (Q16, Q17).

FROM THE FIELD SANTO AMARO ADC, Q16 AND Q17 - Tarrafal, Santiago

Many mothers send children to fairs and markets to sell, and many help their mothers in trade during the day. Awareness campaigns happen in large centres. Local associations know the communities and are closer to them, but have no funding to train people locally.

FROM THE FIELD MARACANÃ, Q16 - Praia, Santiago

Carpentry, locksmith, panel-beating and mechanics workshops, fish selling, "fresquinha", bread and doughnuts, children in construction. Praia.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R32** Approve, fund and publish the Second National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour, with municipal action plans for interior municipalities.
- **R33** Create community-based child labour monitoring through local associations and municipal committees, and train labour inspectors, police and municipal agents in interior municipalities, not only in the capital.
- **R34** Commission a national study on child labour in the informal economy, by island and sector, covering street vending, domestic work, fishing and agriculture, building on the 2022 ILO-supported survey.

11.3 SEXUAL ABUSE, SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND TRAFFICKING (ARTICLES 27 AND 29)

- **What the State Report documents.** The 2021 Penal Code reform strengthened sexual crime offences, including the use of minors aged 10 to 18 in remunerated sexual activity (art. 145-A) and the luring of children under 16 for sexual acts abroad (paras. 225, 238). The National Observatory on trafficking was created by Resolution No. 40/2018, a second National Plan against Trafficking in Persons has a child protection focus, and operating procedures have been adopted (paras. 240 to 245). Hotlines operate through ICCA (8001020) and the National Police (132) (para. 227), child-friendly interview rooms exist in Praia, Mindelo, Sal and Boa Vista (para. 223), and the tourism ministry is part of the Action Plan on sexual violence 2022 to 2024 (para. 228).
- **What the data show.** In 2023/2024 the Public Prosecution Service registered 644 sexual crime proceedings, including 306 for sexual abuse of children (47.5 percent) and 26 for sexual abuse of minors aged 14 to 16 (paras. 230 to 232). It resolved 621 and had 1,128 pending, of which 376 were for sexual abuse of children (paras. 233 to 235). By WACSOF-FOSCAO calculation, the pending stock equals about 1.8 times the number resolved in the year.
- **Trafficking.** The U.S. Department of State downgraded Cabo Verde to the Tier 2 Watch List in its 2025 report. The report credits the investigation of two trafficking cases, anti-trafficking training for frontline officials and the convening of the National Observatory, which was formally inaugurated in November 2024 and met twice in the reporting period. It recommends strengthening the Observatory's capacity and allocating dedicated resources to the National Action Plan. It also records that ICCA operated centres on eight of the nine inhabited islands, three of them with 24-hour emergency care (U.S. Department of State, 2025). WACSOF-FOSCAO has not identified a reported trafficking conviction for the period.
- **Field findings.** The Observatório Cidadania Ativa reports recurrent complaints of abuse and sexual exploitation of minors in Sal and Boa Vista, handled by police and judicial authorities with several people arrested, noting that abuse often occurs within the family and that victims receive psychological support and, in some cases, placement in ICCA emergency centres (Q19). It also describes training for frontline actors as occasional only (Q21). Santo Amaro ADC does not hold documented case data, but reports community knowledge in Tarrafal that some emigrants choose the municipality for this reason, that complaints are filed, but that families sometimes deny or cover up the facts and investigations do not start (Q19). It also raises overseas labour contracts leading to debt cycles that were never investigated (Q18) and believes frontline workers are not trained to screen for trafficking (Q21). ACARINHAR

stresses the need for resources and training for frontline staff (Q18, Q21). Maracanã and an anonymous organisation have documented no case of trafficking or tourism-linked sexual exploitation (Q18, Q19). Maracanã is not aware of the draft law on sexual abuse and reports that frontline staff are not trained to screen for trafficking indicators (Q20, Q21), while the anonymous organisation knows the draft law and judges that more awareness training is needed to help frontline staff spot such cases and handle them better (Q20, Q21). These accounts are presented as opinion and community knowledge, not as verified cases.

FROM THE FIELD OBSERVATÓRIO CIDADANIA ATIVA, Q21 - São Vicente

Training has happened only occasionally for the main actors in this sector, but the subject is very challenging, so social workers, police officers, other authorities and civil society organisations constantly need training for a better response to trafficking cases.

- **Legislation.** The Observatório Cidadania Ativa describes a bill on crimes of aggression and sexual abuse against children and adolescents that would raise penalties to up to 13 years and recognise that minors cannot validly consent (Q20). Law No. 72/X/2026 now amends the Penal Code together with the Statute. The relationship between the two instruments should be clarified for the public and for practitioners. Santo Amaro ADC held a march for children's rights on 1 June 2026 to raise awareness of the Statute, the Second National Plan to eradicate child labour and public service guidelines (Q20).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R35** Allocate a dedicated, ring-fenced budget to the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons, and convene the National Observatory at least quarterly, with published minutes and action tracking.
- **R36** Introduce systematic trafficking indicator screening for every child referred to ICCA, police, shelters and child labour cases, and train frontline staff in all municipalities.
- **R37** Adopt a successor to the National Action Plan on Sexual Violence against Children 2022 to 2024, with a budget, tourism sector codes of conduct and local monitoring in Sal, Boa Vista and other high-risk municipalities, and community prevention led by local associations.
- **R38** Clarify and conclude the legislative status of the penal provisions on sexual crimes against children, including Law No. 72/X/2026 and the related bill, with specific provisions on tourism-linked exploitation, and publish an accessible guide for practitioners.
- **R39** Reduce the backlog of sexual crime proceedings through specialised prosecutors and child-friendly interview rooms on every inhabited island, and report annually on clearance rates.
- **R40** Examine overseas labour recruitment practices that affect adolescents and young workers, with community-based reporting and oversight of work contracts abroad.

11.4 CHILDREN OF IMPRISONED MOTHERS (ARTICLE 30)

The Code of Criminal Procedure bars pre-trial detention of pregnant women and of women responsible for children under three (art. 291, State Report, para. 206), and prison management guarantees monthly visits by children outside school hours (para. 207). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa explains that there are no women-only prisons, that women are held in separate wings of central and mixed prisons, and that the Code of Execution of Penal Sanctions provides for compartments for pregnant women and for women with children, preferably in a separate space (Q23). Santo Amaro ADC, ACARINHAR, Maracanã and an anonymous organisation are not aware of specific arrangements in their areas (Q23). WACSOF-FOSCAO has not identified published data on children living with imprisoned parents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R41** Publish data and standards on pregnant and nursing prisoners and on children living with their mothers in each prison, give priority to non-custodial sentences for primary caregivers, and provide child-friendly visiting arrangements.

11.5 CHILDREN IN STREET SITUATIONS

The State Report describes protection and day centres that serve children in street situations (para. 246), a 2022 vocational training project for 184 adolescents in or on the street, of whom 149 completed it (para. 247), two digital learning rooms for more than 150 children (para. 248), and six new day centres in 2024 with one more in January 2025 and four planned (para. 250). According to official ICCA data reported by the Observatório Cidadania Ativa, 11 children in street situations were registered on São Vicente, of whom five live on the street (Q24). Santo Amaro ADC does not see children living permanently on the street in Tarrafal but many adolescents who spend their days there and return at night to relatives, neighbours or acquaintances. Its day centre cannot guarantee night-time stay, so in adverse situations it refers to SOS Children's Villages, the Sisters of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Mary, ICCA and the health delegation (Q24). ACARINHAR calls for national and municipal surveys (Q24). An anonymous organisation reports that it currently sees no children in street situations and that their number had greatly reduced in the past thanks to NGO interventions (Q24). Maracanã raises the case of children at risk, for example at age 13, for whom it knows of no institution that takes them in (Q3).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R42** Carry out a national and municipal survey of children in street situations and adolescents who spend their days in the street, and adopt a policy and referral pathway, including night-time options, built on the existing day centre network.
- **R43** Establish a clear referral, placement and follow-up pathway for children at risk aged 12 to 17, naming the institution responsible for receiving them and for following up school non-attendance, so that no child has to sleep on the street or is left without a response.

12. EMERGING AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

New risks reach children first, and the answers should reach them first.

12.1 CLIMATE CHANGE AND SCHOOL CONTINUITY (ARTICLES 5, 11 AND 14)

As a small island developing State, Cabo Verde is structurally exposed to climate shocks. In 2025 Tropical Storm Erin affected São Vicente and Santiago North. On São Vicente, the Observatório Cidadania Ativa reports damaged school infrastructure that, although the storm struck during the school holidays, created difficulties at the start of the 2025/2026 school year because some classrooms needed repair (Q15). In Tarrafal, Santo Amaro ADC supported families with school materials, food baskets, uniforms and school transport (Q15). ACARINHAR notes that heavy rain and floods affect children with disabilities particularly severely because of mobility and transport difficulties (Q15). Maracanã did not report climate-related disruptions, and an anonymous organisation mentions only the COVID-19 pandemic as having disrupted its operations (Q15). UNICEF documents a Child Protection and Climate Resilient Action Plan and learning continuity measures (UNICEF Cabo Verde, 2025). The State Report notes no separation of children from families because of natural disasters (para. 78).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R44** Resource the Child Protection and Climate Resilient Action Plan as a standing budgeted programme, with school continuity protocols for all inhabited islands and inclusive evacuation and transport plans for children with disabilities.

12.2 ONLINE CHILD PROTECTION (ARTICLES 16 AND 27)

The State Report lists proceedings for sexting against minors (4 resolved and 6 pending), exploitation of minors for pornographic purposes (4 pending) and child pornography (3 pending) (paras. 233 to 235). The Observatório Cidadania Ativa notes that complaints and public debate on cyberbullying and digital violence in São Vicente are growing, and that ICCA identified the island as the third largest source of complaints nationally after Santiago and Fogo (Q25). Santo Amaro ADC points to the police and ICCA as reporting channels (Q25), and ACARINHAR calls for digital education for children, families and professionals and for accessible, known and functioning reporting channels (Q25). Maracanã and an anonymous organisation report no cases of online exploitation, grooming or cyberbullying in their areas (Q25). WACSOF-FOSCAO has not identified a dedicated national online child protection framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **R45** Develop a national online child protection framework, with a child-friendly and accessible reporting channel, digital literacy for children, families and professionals, and cooperation with online platforms and telecom operators.

13. SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR THE CONSTRUCTIVE DIALOGUE

Ten questions that can turn shared concern into shared action.

- a. What share of the national budget and of MFIDS and ICCA budgets is spent on children, by island, and how are delayed subventions to civil society addressed?
- b. How will civil society organisations, including community and disability organisations, take part in preparing the regulations of the new Child and Adolescent Statute?
- c. What measures ensure that child protection services reach interior and dispersed localities, for example in northern Santiago?
- d. What plans exist for a structured early intervention service for children with disabilities from birth to five?
- e. What steps are planned to accede to the 1954 and 1961 statelessness conventions and to register the children of migrant parents?
- f. What data exist on 16 and 17 year olds deprived of liberty, and how is Article 17 of the Charter met for them?
- g. Is the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons 2023 to 2026 funded, and how often does the National Observatory meet?
- h. What is the status of the successor to the National Plan on Sexual Violence against Children 2022 to 2024, and how will the backlog of 1,128 sexual crime proceedings be reduced?
- i. What conditions must be met before a rural school is closed, and how is safe transport guaranteed for children affected?
- j. What target has the State set to extend cash social protection beyond 47.8 percent of children aged 0 to 14?

14. COMPILED RECOMMENDATIONS

One page to carry into the dialogue.

The following consolidates all 45 numbered recommendations of this report, grouped by thematic section, for ease of reference by the Committee and the State party. Numbering is continuous and matches the text.

GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION (ARTICLE 1)

1. **R1** Publish an annual child budget statement, showing allocation and execution by ministry, by island and municipality and by Charter cluster, and submit it to audit by the Court of Auditors.
2. **R2** Establish a predictable disbursement calendar for State subventions to child focused organisations, with first quarter payments guaranteed, and open municipal child protection funds to civil society through transparent public calls.
3. **R3** Institutionalise structured consultation of civil society, including the NGO platform and community and disability organisations from interior municipalities, in the preparation of periodic reports, national child policies and the regulations of the new Child and Adolescent Statute, and publish consultation records.
4. **R4** Operationalise the multisector coordination framework between ICCA and NGOs (State Report, para. 42) and activate municipal committees for children's rights in every municipality, beginning with Tarrafal, São Lourenço dos Órgãos, Sal and Boa Vista.
5. **R5** Bring the Children and Adolescents Observatory into operation as the single national child data system, with harmonised indicators disaggregated by age (0 to 17), sex, disability and municipality, and reconcile the mortality data series published in the State Report.

DEFINITION OF THE CHILD (ARTICLE 2)

6. **R6** State clearly, in the regulations of the new Child and Adolescent Statute and in the next periodic report, that adolescents aged 12 to 17 are children for all Charter purposes and benefit from every protection in the Charter.
7. **R7** Confirm, in law and in the next periodic report, that the minimum age of marriage is 18 for girls and boys without exception, including under customary or religious practice.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES (ARTICLES 3, 4, 5 AND 7)

8. **R8** Advance the special anti-discrimination bill submitted by CNDHC (State Report, para. 50), with express protection for children on grounds of disability, nationality, migration status and socio-economic situation.
9. **R9** Establish a structured Early Intervention Service for children from birth to five, with permanent multidisciplinary teams, rehabilitation and therapy services and adapted transport in every municipality, beginning outside Praia and Mindelo.
10. **R10** Adopt an island and municipality equity index covering child protection, health and education, with service reach targets for interior and dispersed localities such as Tarrafal and São Lourenço dos Órgãos, and publish it annually.
11. **R11** Issue operational guidance for assessing and determining the best interests of the child for ICCA, prosecutors and courts under the new Statute, and train all three groups.
12. **R12** Give the Children and Youth Parliament a budget line and a formal Government response to its recommendations, and require child consultation in the preparation of the next periodic report and national plans.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS (ARTICLES 6, 8, 9, 10 AND 16)

13. **R13** Accede to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and conduct an updated national assessment of stateless and at-risk children, including children of migrant parents.

14. **R14** Launch registration outreach for migrant and remote families, with information in the languages of the main migrant communities, mobile registration points and a link between birth registration and enrolment in primary health care, and publish data on late registration by municipality.
15. **R15** Publish CNDHC visit reports on facilities holding or hosting children, and report in the next periodic cycle on follow-up to CAT/C/CPV/CO/1 (2017).

FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE (ARTICLES 18 TO 20, 24 AND 25)

16. **R16** Extend day centres and after-school care to every municipality without one, beginning with interior Santiago, using closed or underused school buildings where suitable, and with local associations as implementing partners.
17. **R17** Combine cash with care for women-headed households identified in the CSU: link transfers to child protection case management, parenting support and access to nurseries.
18. **R18** Create a light registration and monitoring framework for informal kinship care, proportionate to risk, and strengthen ICCA inspection of NGO-run residential care under the new Statute.
19. **R19** Publish annual, island disaggregated data on children in alternative care, length of stay, reunification, and adoption of children with special educational needs.

BASIC HEALTH AND WELFARE (ARTICLES 5, 13, 14, 20 AND 26)

20. **R20** Set a target and a timetable to raise effective coverage of children aged 0 to 14 by cash social protection above 47.8 percent, with specific attention to the lower coverage of girls and to children in informal and migrant households, and review the real value of the family allowance.
21. **R21** Make CSU targeting transparent and auditable by publishing eligibility criteria and appeals procedures, and by involving accredited community organisations in verification.
22. **R22** Scale growth monitoring and micronutrient supplementation to the level of the immunisation programme and publish nutrition data by municipality.
23. **R23** Adopt a successor to the Strategic Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health 2018 to 2022, with accessible information and services for adolescents with disabilities, and apply a child protection assessment to every pregnancy of a girl under 16.
24. **R24** Fund psychologists, social workers and nutritionists in interior municipalities, for example through service contracts between municipalities and local associations.

EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES (ARTICLES 11 AND 12)

25. **R25** Require a child rights impact assessment and a guaranteed safe, free transport or community learning alternative before any rural school is closed, including after-school and multigrade options.
26. **R26** Extend the school transport programme to pre-school and basic education in dispersed localities and ensure no child leaves school for lack of transport money.
27. **R27** Establish a national learning assessment system, separate from enrolment tracking, that measures literacy and numeracy by island, sex and disability.
28. **R28** Accelerate inclusive education infrastructure and support staff for children with disabilities outside Praia and Mindelo.

SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

29. **R29** Publish annual data on all persons under 18 deprived of liberty, including 16 and 17 year olds held in the prison system and pre-trial detainees, by sex, island, legal status and length of detention.
30. **R30** Review the treatment of 16 and 17 year olds against Article 17 of the Charter and General Comment No. 24, and ensure that every child is tried by a specialised child justice process and held apart from adults.
31. **R31** Confirm the facilities and measures available to girls in conflict with the law, and expand community based alternatives to detention for children.
32. **R32** Approve, fund and publish the Second National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour, with municipal action plans for interior municipalities.

33. **R33** Create community-based child labour monitoring through local associations and municipal committees, and train labour inspectors, police and municipal agents in interior municipalities, not only in the capital.
34. **R34** Commission a national study on child labour in the informal economy, by island and sector, covering street vending, domestic work, fishing and agriculture, building on the 2022 ILO-supported survey.
35. **R35** Allocate a dedicated, ring-fenced budget to the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons, and convene the National Observatory at least quarterly, with published minutes and action tracking.
36. **R36** Introduce systematic trafficking indicator screening for every child referred to ICCA, police, shelters and child labour cases, and train frontline staff in all municipalities.
37. **R37** Adopt a successor to the National Action Plan on Sexual Violence against Children 2022 to 2024, with a budget, tourism sector codes of conduct and local monitoring in Sal, Boa Vista and other high-risk municipalities, and community prevention led by local associations.
38. **R38** Clarify and conclude the legislative status of the penal provisions on sexual crimes against children, including Law No. 72/X/2026 and the related bill, with specific provisions on tourism-linked exploitation, and publish an accessible guide for practitioners.
39. **R39** Reduce the backlog of sexual crime proceedings through specialised prosecutors and child-friendly interview rooms on every inhabited island, and report annually on clearance rates.
40. **R40** Examine overseas labour recruitment practices that affect adolescents and young workers, with community-based reporting and oversight of work contracts abroad.
41. **R41** Publish data and standards on pregnant and nursing prisoners and on children living with their mothers in each prison, give priority to non-custodial sentences for primary caregivers, and provide child-friendly visiting arrangements.
42. **R42** Carry out a national and municipal survey of children in street situations and adolescents who spend their days in the street, and adopt a policy and referral pathway, including night-time options, built on the existing day centre network.
43. **R43** Establish a clear referral, placement and follow-up pathway for children at risk aged 12 to 17, naming the institution responsible for receiving them and for following up school non-attendance, so that no child has to sleep on the street or is left without a response.

EMERGING AND CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

44. **R44** Resource the Child Protection and Climate Resilient Action Plan as a standing budgeted programme, with school continuity protocols for all inhabited islands and inclusive evacuation and transport plans for children with disabilities.
45. **R45** Develop a national online child protection framework, with a child-friendly and accessible reporting channel, digital literacy for children, families and professionals, and cooperation with online platforms and telecom operators.

15. ANNEX A. FIELD CONSULTATION AT A GLANCE

IMPORTANT NOTE: Many organisations responded to the questionnaire. Some do not want to have their name listed or appeared in the report. The following organisations accepted to have their names mentioned in the report.

Five organisations, five vantage points, one shared concern for children.

The tables summarise the main observations of the participating organisations. "No data" means that the organisation did not have information of its own to offer. Opinions and community knowledge are reported as such.

THEME (QUESTION)	SANTO AMARO ADC (TARRAFAL, SANTIAGO)	OBSERVATÓRIO CIDADANIA ATIVA (SÃO VICENTE)	ACARINHAR (DISABILITY, NATIONAL)
Consulted on the State Report (Q2)	No	No	No
Budget and funding (Q1)	Municipal child budget line not accessible to NGOs	Not aware of a dedicated line	State subvention paid in monthly instalments, with delays at start of year
Coordination (Q3)	Almost limited to police, health and courts in Tarrafal	More networking needed in Sal and Boa Vista	Islands and São Lourenço dos Órgãos
Disability and inclusion (Q4 to Q6)	Few children reached, rural children largely excluded	Needs substantial improvement	No structured early intervention, few teams, transport and accessibility gaps
Geography of access (Q5)	Interior of Santiago: one ICCA delegation for the north and Tarrafal. Maio well served	A very present reality	Families travel to Praia for services
Birth registration and migrant children (Q7, Q8)	Unregistered children of emigrants in Tarrafal. Language and awareness barriers	Children of West African migrants. Documentation is the main barrier	Not a main issue in its caseload
Family and women-headed households (Q10)	Children left with neighbours or alone	Children alone for hours, abuse, begging	Round-the-clock caregiving by mothers
Social protection (Q11)	Reaches families, perceived as politicised	Helpful but insufficient	Extra disability costs not covered
Dropout and school closures (Q14, Q26)	Economic pressure. Rural schools closed. Transport costs	Economic pressure and early pregnancy	Disability, poverty and distance combined
Child labour (Q16, Q17)	Street vending. Inspection described as "zero"	Street vending, domestic work, fishing, agriculture	No systematic survey
Trafficking and sexual exploitation (Q18 to Q21)	Community knowledge, no documented data. Training lacking	Recurrent complaints in Sal and Boa Vista. Arrests reported. Training occasional	No data of its own. Calls for resources and training
Street situations (Q24)	Adolescents in the street by day. Day centre. Referrals	11 registered in São Vicente (ICCA), 5 living on the street	Calls for national and municipal survey
Online risks (Q25)	Police and ICCA channels	Cyberbullying complaints rising	Digital education and accessible reporting
Climate (Q15)	2025 storm: school materials, food, uniforms, transport	Erin damaged classrooms, delaying 2025/2026 start	Floods affect children with disabilities most

THEME (QUESTION)	MARACANÁ (PRAIA, SANTIAGO)	A CABO VERDE CHILD RIGHTS ORGANISATION (ANONYMOUS)
Consulted on the State Report (Q2)	Never	Not aware of any consultation
Budget and funding (Q1)	Nothing concrete. Has heard of preschool funding and occasional study-support calls, none regular	Traceable funding for ICCA in the State budget. No line dedicated to NGOs working on child protection
Coordination (Q3)	Weak protection in all municipalities. No clear accountability. No institution for a child at risk aged 13	Institutions work in every municipality. No weaker coordination observed
Disability and inclusion (Q4 to Q6)	Associations such as Colmeia do excellent work. Gap: trained staff. No discrimination documented	Great effort. Gaps in human resources, equipment and finance. No discrimination documented
Geography of access (Q5)	No opinion	Services possibly weaker on smaller islands because of fewer resources
Birth registration and migrant children (Q7, Q8)	Many undocumented children in Praia, resolved case by case. No figures	No undocumented children encountered. Registration services widespread
Family and women-headed households (Q10)	More than 70 percent of children in its community live in households headed by women (estimate)	Such children are more vulnerable and the majority of the poor. No statistics
Social protection (Q11)	Reaches families, with a large deficit. Technicians cannot explain its importance	Reaches informal households. Many children in its centres are beneficiaries
Dropout and school closures (Q14, Q26)	Reasonable number of dropouts each year	Economic pressure, disability and early pregnancy
Child labour (Q16, Q17)	Workshops, selling fish and snacks, construction, in Praia. No inspection	None documented. Legislation adequate, needs enforcement
Trafficking and sexual exploitation (Q18 to Q21)	No cases documented. Not aware of the draft law. Frontline staff not trained	No cases documented. Knows the draft law. More awareness training needed
Street situations (Q24)	No data. Children at risk with no institution to receive them	None at present. Greatly reduced thanks to NGO interventions
Online risks (Q25)	No cases	No cases
Climate (Q15)	None reported	Only COVID-19 disrupted operations

16. ANNEX B. INSTITUTIONAL PRESENTATION OF WACSOF-FOSCAO

The voice of West African civil society, in dialogue with its institutions.

- **Who we are.** The West African Civil Society Forum (WACSOF), known in French as the Forum de la Société Civile de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (FOSCAO), is an umbrella network of civil society organisations from the fifteen countries of West Africa. It is the official interface between West African civil society and the ECOWAS Commission.
- **Why it exists.** The Forum was created from the need for an institutionalised dialogue between sub-regional civil society organisations and ECOWAS, after consultations that led to an ad hoc committee of ECOWAS and civil society members. Its objective is to strengthen and institutionalise the relationship between West Africa's civil society constituency and the ECOWAS system institutions.
- **Mission.** WACSOF serves as a receptacle for civil society organisations that feed into ECOWAS processes, and empowers them to use the public space at national and regional levels so that they can contribute to an integrated, stable and developed West Africa.
- **How it is organised.** The Forum brings together its members at the General Assembly (Peoples' Forum) (Example of WACSOF 6th, 7th, 8th General Assembly respectively in 2016, 2022, 2024), and works through national platforms, which are its structures in each West African State and which identify areas of collaboration among civil society, the private sector, national authorities and regional organisations such as ECOWAS and UEMOA. WACSOF regularly present the region state on different issues like child rights at the ECOWAS Parliament.
- **Role in this report.** WACSOF-FOSCAO coordinated the preparation of this complementary report under the leadership of the Regional Executive Director, with technical support from NovaHub Consulting. In Cabo Verde, the report draws on the contribution of the organisations named in Section 3 and of one anonymous organisation. WACSOF-FOSCAO is available to support the state, and to support the follow-up monitoring with national civil society and with the Committee.
- **Contact.** www.wacsof-foscao.org / Media@Wacsof-Foscao.Org

17. REFERENCES AND SOURCES

Every claim traced to its source.

- a. Republic of Cabo Verde (2025). I Relatório Nacional Combinado, Carta Africana dos Direitos e Bem-Estar da Criança (cited as "State Report", by paragraph).
- b. Assembleia Nacional de Cabo Verde (2026). Lei n.º 72/X/2026, que aprova o Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente (ECA) e procede à sétima alteração ao Código Penal. Boletim Oficial.
- c. Government of Cabo Verde (2025). Decreto-Regulamentar n.º 2/2025, de 20 de março, que aprova os Estatutos do Instituto Cabo-verdiano da Criança e do Adolescente. Boletim Oficial, I Série, n.º 21.
- d. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019). Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Cabo Verde, CRC/C/CPV/CO/2, 27 June 2019.
- e. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019). General Comment No. 24 on children's rights in the child justice system, CRC/C/GC/24.
- f. UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2019). Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of Cabo Verde, CEDAW/C/CPV/CO/9, 30 July 2019.
- g. UN Committee against Torture (2017). Concluding observations on Cabo Verde, CAT/C/CPV/CO/1.
- h. UNHCR (2023). Submission for the Universal Periodic Review of Cabo Verde, 44th session (UPR 44).
- i. U.S. Department of State (2025). 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cabo Verde. Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons.
- j. U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs. Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Cabo Verde.
- k. Verité. Trafficking Risk in Sub-Saharan African Supply Chains: Cabo Verde country profile.
- l. UNICEF Cabo Verde (2023 to 2025). Annual and country office reports (cited as "UNICEF Cabo Verde, country reporting").
- m. Forbes África Lusófona. Cabo Verde aponta para aumento da idade para exercer pequenas actividades (statement of the Minister of Family, Inclusion and Social Development, reported by Lusa).
- n. WACSOFF-FOSCAO (2026). Field consultation questionnaires completed by Santo Amaro, Associação de Desenvolvimento Comunitário; Observatório Cidadania Ativa, Cabo Verde; ACARINHAR; Associação Cultural e Desportiva Maracanã de Ponta d'Água; and one organisation that asked to remain anonymous, September 2026 (cited by organisation and question number).
- o. WATHI. Presentation of the West African Civil Society Forum. Commonwealth Foundation. Strengthening West African civil society engagement. ECOWAS Parliament (2022). WACSOFF advocates for ECOWAS clubs in schools in Member States. WACSOFF (2016). 6th Peoples' Forum concept note.
- p. African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Guidelines for the Submission of Complementary Reports by Civil Society Organisations.
- q. Child Protection Alliance (2026). Complementary Report on The Gambia's Combined Initial and Periodic Reports. National Human Rights Commission of The Gambia. Complementary Report. Alternate Report Coalition, Child Rights South Africa. Complementary Report to the ACERWC (structure and good practice references).

Thanks to our partners



WACSOFF-FOSCAO.ORG



GONOVAHUB.COM



AFECN.ORG

18. THEMATIC REPORT: IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD RIGHTS (0-6 YEARS) IN CABO VERDE

Submission to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) in response to the Initial Combined Report of the Republic of Cabo Verde 2025

THEMATIC REPORT: IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD RIGHTS (0-6 YEARS) IN CABO VERDE

September 2026

Submitted by: Members of Cape Verdean Network for the Protection and Promotion of Children

Technical Coordination & Support: SOS Children's Villages Cape Verde; Africa Early Childhood Network; and the Oxford Human Rights Hub



INTRODUCTION

This thematic report responds to the Initial Combined Report of the Republic of Cabo Verde 2025 submitted by the State on the implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), focusing specifically on early childhood. In Cabo Verde, early childhood (*pequena infância*) is understood as the period from birth to 8 years.¹ However, this report will focus on 0-6 years age group to reflect Cabo Verde's organisation of early childhood services, encompassing childcare and day care for children aged 0-3, preschool for children aged 4-5, and the transition to primary education at around age 6. This age range also enables an integrated assessment of children's rights to health, nutrition, responsive care, protection and early learning during the foundational early years period.

While this report acknowledges the measures reflected in the State party report, it seeks to draw the Committee's attention on four (4) priority areas where further action is needed to ensure that every young child can survive, develop and thrive in a safe, inclusive and nurturing environment.

Cabo Verde has made significant progress in the legislative and institutional framework for child protection, including the revision of the Statute of Children and Adolescents, the implementation of the National Care Plan, the expansion of social protection and the gradual strengthening of inclusive education. However, available evidence and data reveal that structural challenges persist, in realising comprehensive early childhood development (ECD).

In view of the State's obligation to respect, protect and fulfil early childhood rights, this thematic report jointly prepared by early childhood civil society organisations aims:

1. To share further information and evidence on the key challenges faced by young children in accessing quality, inclusive, holistic early childhood development (ECD) services in Cabo Verde, including the impact of climate change; and
2. To suggest concrete recommendations towards ensuring the right of all children to quality, inclusive, holistic early childhood development services.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD RIGHTS IN CABO VERDE

Priority Issue 1: Child Poverty and Social Protection in Early Childhood

In paragraphs 100, 103, 104 and 139-146 of the State party report, the Government refers to the Social Inclusion Income (RSI), support for access to day care and preschool, and other social protection measures for children and families experiencing poverty or vulnerability, including family allowance and related benefits.

These measures demonstrate the State's commitment to poverty reduction and social inclusion. However, there are concerns that the State report provides limited information on their adequacy, coverage and effectiveness in reducing poverty among young children. It also does not set out a specific and comprehensive social protection strategy for children in early childhood. This is of particular concern because early childhood is a critical period for children's development and inclusive social protection, care and other services are essential to support children and families from birth and throughout the life course (UNICEF, 2023; World Bank, 2024).²

Child poverty remains high: In 2023, the poverty rate among children aged 0-14 years was 25.0%, compared with 16.8% among persons aged 15-64 years (World Bank, 2024).³ Yet only 47.8% of children aged 0-14

¹Varela, B. (2019). Um olhar sobre a educação de infância em Cabo Verde. *Educação*, 44, 1-26. Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. This includes the 0-3, 3-6 and 6-8 age groups.

²UNICEF, *Too Little, Too Late* (2023), pp. 8-10, 37-40, available at: <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/2851/file/UNICEF-TooLittle-TooLate-Report-2023.pdf>; UNICEF, *Early Childhood Development: UNICEF Vision for Every Child* (2023), available at: https://www.unicef.org/media/145336/file/Early_Childhood_Development_-_UNICEF_Vision_for_Every_Child.pdf; World Bank, *Cabo Verde Poverty Assessment* (March 2024), pg. 9-13, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099101524172526567/pdf/P179196-c5262880-3bde-4642-8137-8551c0940a00.pdf>

³World Bank, *Cabo Verde Poverty & Equity Brief* (2024), reporting a poverty rate of 25.0% among children aged 0-14 years. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099706201032590905/pdf/IDU-a1cd6a9e-08c7-479b-9ef2-2fdd98b11657.pdf>

years approximately 67,609 children received at least one social protection benefit in 2023, indicating substantial gaps in coverage (INPS, 2024).⁴

According to the World Bank, Cabo Verde Assessment 2024,⁵ national monetary poverty was estimated at 28.1% in 2022 using the SWIFT methodology. The assessment also found that children under 18 years, were nearly twice as likely as adults to experience multidimensional poverty 23% of children compared with 13% of adults. Although children constitute about 37% of Cabo Verde's total population, they represent 50.1% of all people experiencing multidimensional poverty.

Despite the existing social protection measures, important challenges remain in ensuring that all young children and their families receive adequate support. Social protection remains inadequate for young children and their families.⁶ Despite social protection efforts, gaps remain in the coherence, coverage, monitoring and responsiveness of support for vulnerable households with young children, particularly in rural areas and for women.⁷ Many children face multidimensional poverty across nutrition, health, early learning, housing, water, sanitation and protection.⁸ Single parent households, particularly those headed by women, face heightened economic and social vulnerability, further undermining children's wellbeing and development.⁹

Under Articles 4, 5, 11, 14, 18 and 20 of the African Children's Charter, the State Party must protect the best interests, survival and development of every child and support parents and caregivers in fulfilling their responsibilities. These obligations require adequate, accessible and child sensitive social protection measures.

The Committee may therefore, consider raising the following question to the State:

A. What measures has the State taken to expand adequate, child sensitive social protection for children aged 0-6 living in poor and vulnerable households, particularly children with disabilities and those in female headed single parent families?

We therefore recommend that the Committee urges the State to:-

1. Strengthen child sensitive social protection in early childhood by establishing a dedicated cash benefit, or adapting existing benefits for children aged 0-6 living in poor and vulnerable households. The measure should be integrated into the Single Social Registry (RSI) and prioritise children experiencing multidimensional poverty, children with disabilities and children living in single parent households, particularly those headed by women.
2. Expand adequate child social protection coverage to reach at least all children in poor and vulnerable households by 2030, and monitor the impact of existing benefits on child poverty through disaggregated data. To ensure adequate and sustainable financing, monitor the impact of the RSI, family allowance and early childhood subsidies on child poverty and publish disaggregated data on access, coverage, adequacy and outcomes for children, particularly those aged 0-6.

Priority Issue 2: Childcare services, preschool education, and family support.

In paragraphs 100 and 102 of the State party report, the Government refers to the creation of six (6) new day care centres, financial assistance for children's access to day care and preschool, funding for childcare and social care facilities, caregiver capacity building, and Decree Law No. 63/2020, which establishes rules

⁴Instituto Nacional de Previdência Social (INPS), Boletim Estatístico sobre a Proteção Social em Cabo Verde, 2021-2023 (2024), reporting that 47.8% of children aged 0-14 received at least one social-protection benefit in 2023. https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/BoletimEstat%C3%ADstico_CV_2021-23.pdf

⁵World Bank, Cabo Verde Poverty Assessment (March 2024), pp. 6-13 and 52-67, available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099101524172526567/pdf/P179196-c5262880-3bde-4642-8137-8551c0940a00.pdf>

⁶United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Common Country Programme Document for Cabo Verde, March 2023-December 2027, DP/FPA-ICEF/CCPD/2023/CPV/1 (New York: United Nations, 2023). https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/media/13951/file/2023-CPV-1-Cabo_Verde_CCPD-ENODS.pdf

⁷United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Joint Independent Common Country Programme Evaluation: Cabo Verde (New York: United Nations, 2022), Recommendation 4.2.

⁸World Bank, Cabo Verde Poverty Assessment (Washington, DC: World Bank, March 2024). <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099101524172526567/pdf/P1791961c52628021813718551c0940a00.pdf>; https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/projects-and-operations/cabo_verde_-_country_strategy_paper_2019-2024_midterm_review_csp-mtr_and_2023_country_portfolio_performance_review_cpvr_0.pdf

⁹Ibid.

governing the provision of care services. Paragraphs 124 and 132-135 provide further information on the National Care Plan, Care System and Day Centres.

Childcare Services

While important progress has been made, the state does not provide sufficient information on the national availability, affordability, quality or equitable distribution of childcare services, particularly for children aged 0-3 years. The report does not indicate the number of available daycare centers, the proportion of children covered or the measures taken to ensure access for the most vulnerable children.

Although new day care centres have been established and programmes supporting preschool attendance have been strengthened, territorial inequalities in the provision of childcare services persist, including between islands, municipalities, rural areas and urban centres (UNICEF Cabo Verde, 2024; Ministry of Education, 2023).¹⁰ Childcare for children aged 0-3 reaches only around 20% of children, compared with preschool enrolment of 86.4% among children aged 4-5.¹¹ Demand exceeds supply on Sal and Boa Vista, while rural and peri-urban areas of Santiago and São Vicente have fewer childcare options; municipal disparities also persist in access, infrastructure, class size and the availability of qualified staff.¹²

The National Care Plan identifies young children as a priority group for public care policies (Government of Cabo Verde, 2024). Nevertheless, a coherent integrated national ECD policy and implementation framework is still needed to coordinate services across health, nutrition, education, social protection, care and child protection.

Preschool Education

Preschool education plays a central role in children's cognitive, emotional, social and psychomotor development (UNESCO, 2023; UNICEF, 2024). In Cabo Verde, preschool education is generally directed at children from age 4 until entry into basic education, ordinarily at age 6.

The expansion of coverage for children aged 4 and 5 is welcome. However, important barriers remain. Territorial inequalities limit access to kindergarten in rural and more vulnerable communities, where provision may be insufficient or located far from families. Concerns also persist about service quality and workforce qualifications. Approximately 30% of preschool professionals have the technical profile considered adequate for the work, highlighting the need to strengthen initial and continuing training for early childhood educators (UNICEF Cabo Verde, 2024).¹³

The inclusion of children with disabilities or special educational needs in preschool also requires further attention. Many institutions face limitations related to physical accessibility, specialised equipment and staff capacity to respond to diverse needs (GPE, 2025; Broken Chalk, 2023).¹⁴

Under Articles 3, 4, 5, 11, 18 and 20 of the African Children's Charter, States are required to ensure non-discriminatory access to education and care, protect children's best interests, survival and development and support parents and caregivers in childrearing. ACERWC General Comment No. 9 further recognises early childhood development and education as integral to the right to education and requires services to be accessible, affordable, quality and inclusive, particularly for children in vulnerable situations.

In light of the above, the Committee may seek further information from the State Party on the following:

A. What measures has the State taken to ensure equitable access to affordable, quality childcare and preschool education services for all children aged 0-6, particularly those in underserved islands and municipalities and vulnerable families?

We therefore recommend that the Committee urges the State to:-

¹⁰United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Annual Report 2024: Cabo Verde, February 2025; Ministério da Educação de Cabo Verde, Caderno de Orientações Gerais do Ano Letivo 2023/2024.

¹¹World Bank, Cabo Verde Human Capital Project: Additional Financing, Project Paper (Washington, DC: World Bank, 31 March 2025), pg. 5, para 10. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099040325101025882/txt/BOSIB-ff46bae5-53de-41f0-beb7-9306d92f9e16.txt>

¹²Ibid, pg. 4-5, paras. 7 and 10-12.

¹³UNICEF Cabo Verde (2025), Annual Report 2024: Cabo Verde (n5).

¹⁴Broken Chalk, The Situation of the Right to Education in Cabo Verde: Joint Submission to the 44th Session of the Universal Periodic Review (2023); Global Partnership for Education, "Cabo Verde Leads the Way for Children with Disabilities," 6 December 2024.

1. Adopt or strengthen an integrated national early childhood development policy and implementation framework, with clear targets, budget allocations and coordination across childcare, preschool education, health, nutrition, social protection and child protection. The framework should include a national mechanism for coordination, monitoring and resource mobilisation, including collaboration with civil society organisations.
2. Expand equitable access to affordable, quality childcare and family support services for children aged 0-3 years, particularly in underserved islands and municipalities, through increased public investment in community daycare centres. Ensure free or fully subsidised childcare and strengthen home visiting, parenting support and early intervention services for children and families in vulnerable situations.
3. Establish a legal framework guaranteeing free, inclusive and quality pre-primary education for all children, and allocate adequate resources to ensure its effective implementation.
4. Put in place measures to universalise access to quality, inclusive preschool education for all children aged 4 and 5. In doing so, the State should reduce disparities between islands, municipalities, and rural and urban areas; improve the accessibility of preschool facilities and support for children with disabilities; and strengthen supervision, monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms for preschool services.
5. Strengthen the preschool workforce, including teachers and other educators, through appropriate pre-service and continuous professional training and support. This should equip the workforce to provide inclusive, child centred and high quality early learning, including appropriate support for children with disabilities and other children with additional learning needs.

Priority Issue 3: Inclusion of Children with Disabilities and Early Intervention

In paragraphs 125 and 127 of the State party report, the Government refers to a system for identifying children with special educational needs, including early identification and intervention from preschool and the expansion of multidisciplinary teams supporting inclusive education. In paragraph 131, it further refers to the approval and implementation of education regulations governing inclusion and to free registration and attendance at public education institutions.

We commend the Government for these regulatory and institutional measures. However, there are concerns that children with disabilities, particularly in early childhood, continue to face barriers to early identification, assessment, specialised support and family assistance. The State itself recognises the need to expand multidisciplinary teams and specialised resources, while the national system for identifying children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) remains under implementation.

National surveys have reportedly identified hundreds of children with special educational needs who are outside the education system or who do not receive adequate support. Available information further indicates that only 38% of identified children under the age of 18 years with SEN, benefit from specialised support. However, the available data is not disaggregated for young children, making it difficult to assess their access to early identification, inclusive early childhood education and specialised support. (Ministry of Education, 2024; UNICEF Cabo Verde, 2024).¹⁵

Access to therapists, specialised services and multidisciplinary support remains limited, particularly outside major urban centres and families caring for children with disabilities receive insufficient support. These gaps may delay timely intervention and undermine children's inclusion, development and access to education.

Articles 3, 4, 5, 11, 13 and 14 of the African Children's Charter require the State Party to ensure the non-discrimination, best interests, development, health, education and protection of children with disabilities. Article 13 specifically requires appropriate assistance for children with disabilities and their caregivers. ACERWC's Continental Study on the Status of Children with Disabilities in Africa, further calls for multisectoral systems for disability identification, assessment and support.

In light of the above, the Committee may seek further information from the State Party on the following:

¹⁵UNICEF Cabo Verde (2025), Annual Report 2024: Cabo Verde (n5); Ministério da Educação de Cabo Verde, Lei n.º 9/2024, de 29 de fevereiro, arts.

A. What measures has the State taken to ensure early identification, assessment and timely access to specialised early intervention and family support services for all children with disabilities, particularly those living outside major urban centres?

We therefore recommend that the Committee urge the State Party to:

1. Strengthen early identification and intervention for children with disabilities, including through routine and systemic developmental screening, referral and assessment services from birth through entry into primary education. These measures should support timely identification of children's needs and prompt referral to appropriate services.
2. Expand accessible specialised early childhood support in all municipalities, by strengthening multidisciplinary teams and access to speech therapy, physiotherapy, psychosocial support and family support services, with particular attention to children living outside major urban centres.

Priority Issue 4: Climate Change and Early Childhood

Cabo Verde is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change, including recurrent droughts, water scarcity and extreme weather events (UNICEF, Cabo Verde 2024).¹⁶ These conditions affect household food security, access to safe water and sanitation and families' capacity to meet the nutritional, health and care needs of young children.

While Cabo Verde has adopted climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and shock responsive social protection measures,¹⁷ the State party report provides insufficient information on their impact on children's rights. It does not include child disaggregated climate risk data, evidence of child sensitive implementation, or outcomes showing that children's specific vulnerabilities, needs and views have informed climate and disaster risk policy and programming.

The IMC 2024 Environment and Climate Change Survey¹⁸ found that 43.9% of households in Cabo Verde had, at some point during the preceding 12 months, insufficient water to meet their needs (INE, 2025). The survey also recorded household exposure to drought, heatwaves and flooding. These climate related pressures are particularly significant in a context of structural water scarcity¹⁹ and can disproportionately affect families already living in poverty.

Young children 0-6 years are particularly vulnerable because their survival, health, nutrition, hygiene, care and development crucially depend on reliable access to safe water, nutritious food and essential services. Climate related shocks may also deepen the vulnerability of households already affected by poverty and undermine their ability to provide adequate care for young children.

These concerns are consistent with the Committee's recognition that climate change threatens children's rights to survival, development, health, nutrition, social protection and care (ACERWC, 2024).²⁰ The Committee has called on State Parties to adopt child rights-based climate adaptation measures that incorporate nutrition, health, water and sanitation, social protection, early warning systems and support for climate affected households (ACERWC, 2024; ACERWC, 2026).²¹

The Committee may therefore, consider raising the following question to the State:

A. What measures has the State taken to integrate the rights and needs of children aged 0-6 into climate adaptation and disaster risk plans, including ensuring reliable access to safe water, nutrition, health care and shock responsive support for climate affected families?

¹⁶UNICEF Cabo Verde (2025), Annual Report 2024: Cabo Verde (n5).

¹⁷Government of Cabo Verde, 2020 Update to the First Nationally Determined Contribution of Cabo Verde (2021), pg. 34-39; Government of Cabo Verde, National Adaptation Plan of Cabo Verde, 2021-2026 (2021); and World Bank, Cabo Verde: Second Resilient and Equitable Recovery Development Policy Financing with a Catastrophe Deferred Drawdown Option (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022).

¹⁸Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE), Inquérito Multiobjetivo Contínuo 2024: Ambiente e Mudanças Climáticas (Praia: INE, 2025).

¹⁹International Monetary Fund (IMF), Cabo Verde: Technical Assistance Report, Climate Policy Diagnostic, IMF Technical Assistance Report No. 24/40 (Washington, DC: IMF, 2024). <https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/tar/2024/english/tarea2024040.pdf>

²⁰African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Climate Change and Children's Rights in Africa: A Continental Study (2024). ACERWC, 2024

²¹ACERWC Working Group on Climate Change and Children's Rights, Statement on Earth Day 2026 (2026). ACERWC, 2026

We therefore recommend that the Committee urge the State Party to:

1. Integrate the needs and rights of early years children into climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction and water security plans, ensuring resilient access to safe water, sanitation, nutrition, health care and continuity of early childhood services.
2. Establish child sensitive, shock responsive support for climate affected households, including early warning systems, nutrition assistance and adaptive social protection, to ensure the continuity of essential services and to protect young children from effects of drought, water scarcity and extreme weather.