



STRATEGIC PLAN

— 2025 – 2030 —

Promoting and Protecting the Rights
of Every Child in Africa



PROTECT

Upholding the rights
and dignity of
every child



EMPOWER

Strengthening
capacities and
creating opportunities



COLLABORATE

Building partnerships
for collective
impact



SUSTAIN

Building a resilient
and just future for
children in Africa

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

Acronym	Full Meaning
7-S	McKinsey's 7-S Framework
ACEWRC	The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AHRM	African Union Human Resource Management
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
BM	Business Model
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSFs	Critical Success Factors
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAC	Day of the African Child
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HHS	Health, Humanitarian, and Social Development
HR	Human Resources
ILO	International Labour Organisation

KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MOUs	Memorandum of Understanding
NHRIs	National Human Rights Institutions
OSPD	Office of Strategic Planning and Delivery
PESTLE	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and Environmental
PMRM	Partnerships Management and Resource Mobilisation
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RMs	Regional Mechanisms
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SP	Strategic Plan
STYIP	Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TOC	Theory of Change
TWGs	Thematic Working Groups
UN	United Nations
UNCHR	United Nations Committee for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), established under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), serves as the African Union's principal body mandated to promote, protect, and monitor the realisation of children's rights across the continent. Since becoming operational in 2001, the Committee has played a central role in developing child rights jurisprudence, strengthening legal and policy frameworks, and advancing accountability for the implementation of children's rights across Member States.

The ACERWC Strategic Plan 2026–2028 was developed at a critical moment. Despite important progress in areas such as legal reform, awareness-raising, and sectoral interventions, significant gaps remain in translating commitments into tangible improvements in children. Across the continent, children continue to face persistent challenges, including poverty, violence, harmful practices, exclusion, and inequality, alongside emerging risks linked to climate change, digital transformation, conflict, displacement, and mental health. The Plan responds to these realities by strengthening the shift from normative progress to implementation impact.

Grounded in lessons from the evaluation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan and aligned with key continental frameworks such as Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040, it is grounded in the realities of a new operating environment. The Plan adopts a results-based, systems-oriented, and evidence-driven approach. It reinforces coherence between legal, institutional, and accountability systems and strengthens the integration of child rights within African Union priorities and Member State development agendas, with a focus on measurable results and strengthened accountability.

Strategic Direction and Objectives

The Strategic Plan is anchored on the overarching goal of accelerating the full realisation of children’s rights in Africa through strengthened legal frameworks, robust accountability systems, inclusive participation, effective protection mechanisms, and a sustainable institutional and financial foundation. It reflects a deliberate shift towards implementation effectiveness, systems thinking, and measurable impact. To achieve this goal, the Plan is structured around six interlinked strategic objectives:

- **SO1: Strengthen Legal, Normative, and Policy Frameworks for Child Rights in Africa.** This objective focuses on strengthening harmonisation, domestication, and interpretation of child rights standards across Africa. It supports legal reform, development of General Comments and guidelines, and evidence-based comparative research to ensure coherent and responsive legal frameworks.

- **SO2: Strengthen Monitoring, Accountability, Enforcement, and Implementation of Child Rights Obligations.** This objective enhances compliance systems, reporting mechanisms, and follow-up processes to ensure that State obligations translate into measurable implementation outcomes. It reinforces enforcement through structured reviews, field oversight, and integration into AU accountability systems.
- **SO3: Enhance Accessibility, Public Engagement, Child Participation, and Inclusive Governance.** This objective strengthens child participation and inclusive governance by improving access to information, expanding awareness of ACERWC processes, and institutionalising meaningful participation of children and stakeholders in decision-making and accountability systems.
- **SO4: Strengthen Communications, Case Management, Protection Systems, and Strategic Partnerships.** This objective improves the efficiency and responsiveness of ACERWC mechanisms, strengthens protection of children and complainants, and enhances strategic partnerships with AU organs, UN agencies, civil society, RECs, and academic institutions.
- **SO5: Strengthen Institutional Governance, Risk Management, Financial Integrity, and Operational Effectiveness.** This objective reinforces institutional capacity through improved governance, financial management, risk management, human resources systems, and results-based planning to ensure a resilient and high-performing institution.
- **SO6: Strengthen Resource Mobilisation, Financial Sustainability, and Budget Efficiency.** This objective addresses structural financing

constraints by promoting predictable Member State contributions, diversified funding sources, and alignment with AU resource mobilisation frameworks to ensure sustainable implementation of the mandate.

Taken together, the above objectives show that improving the lives of children isn't about one single action or sector; it requires everything to work together. Strong laws and policies matter, but they need capable institutions to implement them, reliable funding to sustain them, and supportive communities that understand and value children's rights. By bringing these pieces together, the approach recognises that real, lasting change happens when systems are aligned, and people at all levels of government, partners, and communities are working toward the same goal of helping every child thrive.

Process of Developing the Strategic Plan

The development of the ACERWC Strategic Plan 2026–2028 was a consultative, inclusive, and evidence-based process designed to ensure ownership, relevance, and practicality. It was built on the Committee's mandate under the African Children's Charter and drew on lessons from previous strategic cycles to strengthen continuity and learning.

The process began with a comprehensive review of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan through an independent evaluation that identified key achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. These insights informed a more focused and realistic strategic direction.

Alignment with continental and global frameworks, particularly Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040, as well as the aspirations in the Second-Ten Year Implementation Plan (STYIP); together with the African Union Commission Strategic Plan (2024-2028), ensured coherence with broader African Union development and governance priorities. Global frameworks were also considered in the design of the Plan. Extensive stakeholder consultations were conducted with Member States, AU organs, civil society, academic institutions, and development partners through workshops, virtual engagements, and written inputs, strengthening ownership and grounding the Plan in practical realities.

The Secretariat, with the help of a consultant, further strengthened the evidence base through analysis of existing reports, operational data, and implementation trends. A draft Strategic Plan was then formulated and subjected to some internal review. The draft Strategic Plan then underwent independent expert review and was validated during a two-day workshop involving all Committee Members and the Secretariat. This process ensured technical rigor, consensus-building, and alignment with AU policy decisions, AMERT performance data, and available resource frameworks.

Following validation, the expert consolidated inputs and finalised the Strategic Plan and its supporting Monitoring and Evaluation framework. The result is a coherent, results-oriented, and implementation-ready strategy supported by clear performance and accountability systems.

Structure of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is organized into nine connected chapters that are designed to flow logically from context to action, and from implementation to learning and accountability. Together, they provide a practical roadmap for turning commitments into results for children across Africa.

1. **Foundational Pillars:** This opening chapter sets the tone and direction of the Plan. It explains the context in which the Committee is working, why this Plan is needed, the mandate guiding it, how it aligns with wider continental and global priorities, and the principles that will guide all actions, including a child rights-based and gender-responsive approach.
2. **Context and Review of the 2021–2025 Plan:** This chapter looks back to move forward. It reflects on what was achieved under the previous Plan, where challenges were encountered, and what lessons can be carried forward to improve effectiveness and impact.
3. **Situational Analysis:** This chapter takes stock of the current reality. It explores the wider environment affecting children's rights in Africa, including emerging social, political, economic, and technological trends that shape both risks and opportunities.
4. **Strategic Direction and Framework:** This chapter sets out the “big picture” of where the Committee is going. It presents the vision, mission, strategic objectives, and the theory of change that explains how planned actions will lead to meaningful improvements in children's lives.

5. **Implementation Arrangements:** This chapter focuses on how the Plan will be delivered in practice. It outlines the structures, coordination mechanisms, and roles needed to ensure that responsibilities are clear and actions are well aligned across stakeholders.
6. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** This chapter explains how progress will be tracked. It defines the indicators, targets, and reporting systems that will be used to measure results, strengthen accountability, and support learning and continuous improvement.
7. **Risk Management:** This chapter looks at what could go wrong and how to respond. It identifies key risks and sets out practical ways to manage them so that implementation remains steady even in changing circumstances.
8. **Resource Mobilisation and Financing:** This chapter addresses how the Plan will be funded. It outlines strategies for mobilising resources, broadening the funding base, and ensuring alignment with African Union financial systems to support sustainability.
9. **Critical Success Factors:** This final chapter highlights what must be in place for the Plan to succeed. It focuses on the enabling conditions such as leadership, partnerships, institutional capacity, reliable systems, and sustained political and financial commitment.

Critical Success Factors

Successful implementation of the Strategic Plan will depend on several key enabling factors:

- I. Sustained political commitment and ownership by Member States and AU institutions
- II. Strong coordination and partnerships across AU organs, RECs, civil society, and development partners
- III. Adequate, predictable, and diversified financing aligned with AU priorities
- IV. Robust data systems and evidence generation to support decision-making
- V. Strengthened institutional capacity within ACERWC and Member States
- VI. Adaptability and innovation in responding to emerging child rights challenges
- VII. Strong accountability, transparency, and performance management systems

Conclusion

The ACERWC Strategic Plan 2026–2028 represents a decisive shift towards a more integrated, systems-based, and impact-oriented approach to advancing children's rights in Africa. It places children at the centre of Africa's development and governance agenda, with strong emphasis on equity, inclusion, and gender responsiveness. The Plan promotes a holistic understanding that meaningful progress depends on the effective interaction of legal, institutional, financial, and social systems. Ultimately, its success will be measured by its ability to translate commitments into tangible, sustained improvements in the lives of children, ensuring that every child in Africa is protected, empowered, and able to thrive in a safe, inclusive, and just society.

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRPERSON

It is my great honor to present the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) Strategic Plan for the period 2026–2028. This Plan marks an important milestone in our collective journey to advance the rights, dignity, and well-being of every child across the African continent.

Over the past two decades, the Committee has made significant strides in promoting and protecting children's rights under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Together with Member States, African Union institutions, civil society, and our partners, we have contributed to strengthening legal and policy frameworks, raising awareness, and enhancing accountability for the realization of children's rights. These efforts have laid a strong foundation for progress.

However, we are also acutely aware that many children across Africa continue to face profound challenges. Persistent poverty, inequality, violence, harmful practices, and limited access to essential services continue to undermine children's well-being. At the same time, new and evolving risks, including climate change, digital vulnerabilities, conflict, displacement, and mental health challenges, are reshaping the landscape in which children grow and develop. These realities call for renewed commitment, innovation, and urgency in our work.

This Strategic Plan reflects our renewed resolve. It is built on the lessons learned from the implementation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan and informed by extensive consultations with stakeholders across the continent. It responds to the changing environment in which we operate

and sets out a clear, focused, and results-oriented roadmap for the next three years.

At its core, this Plan emphasizes the need to move beyond commitments toward measurable impact. It prioritizes stronger monitoring and accountability, enhanced advocacy, deeper partnerships, and increased investment in institutional capacity. It also underscores the importance of placing children at the center of all decisions that affect their lives, ensuring that their voices are heard and their perspectives are respected.

The Strategic Plan 2026–2028 is firmly aligned with continental and global frameworks, including Agenda 2063 and STYIP, reinforcing the shared vision of an Africa where every child is protected, empowered, and able to thrive. It recognizes that the realization of children's rights is not only a moral obligation but also a strategic imperative for the continent's sustainable development, peace, and prosperity.

As Chairperson, I call upon all stakeholders, Member States, African Union organs, Regional Economic Communities, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations, development partners, and communities to renew their commitment and work collaboratively to implement this Plan. The responsibility to safeguard children's rights belongs to all of us, and our success will depend on our collective action, shared accountability, and sustained investment.

Above all, we must remain guided by the voices, needs, and aspirations of Africa's children. They are not only beneficiaries of this Plan but active agents of change and the foundation of the continent's future.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all those who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan and reaffirm the Committee's unwavering commitment to advancing the rights and welfare of every child in Africa.

Together, let us translate this vision into action and ensure that no child is left behind.

.....

Chairperson

Hon.

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

REMARKS BY THE SECRETARY

It is my privilege to present the Strategic Plan 2026–2028 of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). This Plan marks both continuity and renewal in the Committee's mandate under the African Children's Charter, with a sharpened focus on strengthening effectiveness, responsiveness, and measurable impact in advancing children's rights across the continent.

The development of this Strategic Plan was rigorous, inclusive, and evidence-based. It draws on the independent evaluation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, extensive consultations with key stakeholders, and a comprehensive assessment of the evolving continental and global landscape. This process enabled the Committee to take stock of progress, understand persistent implementation gaps, and identify priority areas that require more focused and accelerated action.

At its core, the Strategic Plan reflects a deliberate shift from commitments to delivery, and from activities to results. It is anchored on six strategic objectives that define the Committee's programmatic and institutional priorities over the next three years¹:

- 1. SO1: Strengthen Legal, Normative, and Policy Frameworks for Child Rights in Africa.** To advance ratification, domestication, harmonisation, and interpretation of the African Children's Charter through stronger legal guidance, comparative research, and

¹ The three years are meant to align the ACEWRC strategic Plan with the AUC 2024-2028 Strategic Plan

responsive normative development that addresses emerging child rights challenges.

2. **SO2: Strengthen Monitoring, Accountability, Enforcement, and Implementation of Child Rights Obligations.**To enhance State Party reporting, compliance tracking, follow-up mechanisms, and enforcement systems so that commitments under the Charter are translated into measurable and gender-responsive outcomes for children.
3. **SO3: Enhance Accessibility, Public Engagement, Child Participation, and Inclusive Governance.**To expand awareness, communication, and outreach while institutionalising meaningful, safe, and gender-responsive child participation across all ACERWC processes and decision-making spaces.
4. **SO4: Strengthen Communications, Case Management, Protection Systems, and Strategic Partnerships.**To improve the efficiency, accessibility, and responsiveness of ACERWC communications procedures and case management systems, while reinforcing protection mechanisms and deepening strategic partnerships for coordinated action.
5. **SO5: Strengthen Institutional Governance, Risk Management, and Operational Effectiveness.** To enhance institutional capacity, governance systems, data integrity, risk management, and performance frameworks, ensuring a transparent, accountable, and high-performing Secretariat.
6. **SO6: Strengthen Resource Mobilisation and Financial Sustainability.**To secure predictable, diversified, and sustainable financing through strengthened Member State contributions,

improved budgeting practices, and expanded resource mobilisation aligned with African Union frameworks.

A key cross-cutting enabler of the Strategic Plan is the strengthening of systems for knowledge, learning, innovation, and digital transformation. This will enhance digital infrastructure, data management, and knowledge production to support evidence-based decision-making, strengthen monitoring and reporting, and enable more adaptive and responsive implementation across all areas of the Committee's work.

A central pillar of the Plan is the enhancement of monitoring, accountability, and compliance systems. This includes strengthening State Party reporting, improving follow-up mechanisms, and ensuring that obligations translate into tangible improvements in children's lives. Complementing this is the provision of a clearer and more authoritative interpretation of the African Children's Charter to support harmonised application across Member States.

Recognising that progress cannot be achieved in isolation, the Plan places strong emphasis on deepening collaboration with African Union organs, Member States, Regional Economic Communities, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society, and development partners. These partnerships are essential for strengthening coordination, reducing fragmentation, and scaling collective impact.

Internally, the Committee will focus on strengthening governance, systems, and institutional effectiveness. This includes improving operational processes, performance management, digital systems, and internal accountability structures. At the same time, the Plan prioritises

resource mobilisation and financial sustainability to ensure that the Committee is adequately and predictably resourced to deliver its mandate.

The Plan also recognises the importance of adaptability in an increasingly complex environment shaped by climate change, digital disruption, inequality, and humanitarian crises. Strengthening risk management and institutional resilience will therefore be critical to sustaining progress and ensuring continuity of delivery.

Ultimately, this Strategic Plan provides a clear, coherent, and action-oriented roadmap for advancing children's rights over the next three years. It translates strategic intent into focused priorities and reinforces the Committee's commitment to delivering meaningful, measurable, and lasting improvements in the lives of children across Africa.

As Secretary to the Committee, I remain fully committed to ensuring effective implementation of this Plan and to supporting the Committee in its role as a credible, responsive, and impactful institution.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all stakeholders and partners who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan and look forward to continued collaboration in advancing the rights and welfare of every African child.

.....

Ag. Secretary to the Committee

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

1.1. Introduction

Children's well-being is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic foundation for the continent's capacity to achieve its long-term social, economic, and political transformation. Grounded in a child rights-based approach, this perspective recognizes children as rights-holders entitled to survival, development, protection, and meaningful participation, while positioning States and institutions as duty-bearers accountable for delivering these rights equitably and inclusively. Ensuring the realization of children's rights, in a way that systematically addresses gender inequalities and discrimination, is therefore central to building resilient, just, and prosperous societies.

The mandate of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is integral to the realization of Agenda 2063, the African Union's strategic framework for inclusive and sustainable development. Children's rights and welfare are inherently cross-cutting and foundational to all seven aspirations of the Agenda. These include: a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development; a politically united and integrated continent; an Africa grounded in good governance, democracy, human rights, justice, and the rule of law; a peaceful and secure Africa; a continent with a strong cultural identity, values, and ethics; a people-driven Africa that harnesses the full potential of women and youth; and Africa as a strong, influential, and globally engaged actor. Advancing these aspirations requires deliberate attention to **gender equality, non-discrimination, and**

inclusion, ensuring that all children, especially girls and those in vulnerable or marginalized situations, benefit equally from development gains.

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) is the African Union's specialized body mandated to promote, protect, and monitor the realization of the rights and well-being of every child across the continent. Established under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), the Committee serves as a central accountability mechanism to ensure that children's rights are upheld in law, policy, and practice. Its work is guided by the principles of the best interests of the child, the right to participation, non-discrimination, and the right to survival and development, while integrating **gender-responsive approaches** to address the distinct and intersecting challenges faced by girls and boys.

Since becoming operational in 2001, the ACERWC has evolved into a key pillar of Africa's human rights architecture. Through sustained engagement with Member States, regional institutions, civil society, and communities, the Committee has contributed to strengthening legal and policy frameworks, advancing accountability, and addressing violations affecting children. Its work has elevated critical child rights issues across diverse contexts within families, schools, communities, and humanitarian settings while promoting approaches that are both **inclusive and sensitive to gender and other forms of vulnerability**.

As the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan concludes, this new Strategic Plan (2026–2028) emerges at a pivotal moment. Across the continent, important

progress has been achieved, including increased school enrolment, strengthened legal frameworks, and growing awareness of children's rights. However, these gains remain uneven and insufficient for many children, particularly girls and children in marginalized situations, who continue to face barriers rooted in poverty, harmful social norms, gender inequality, and structural exclusion. Many children still experience violence, neglect, and limited access to essential services, while emerging challenges such as climate change, digital risks, mental health pressures, and substance abuse are intensifying vulnerabilities in ways that often disproportionately affect girls and other at-risk groups.

This context calls for a more deliberate, rights-based, and results-driven approach, one that goes beyond commitments to deliver **measurable, equitable, and sustainable outcomes** for all children. It requires strengthening accountability systems, addressing systemic inequalities, and ensuring that interventions are responsive to the different needs, experiences, and risks faced by girls and boys.

Building on the achievements and lessons of the previous strategic cycle, and informed by evolving continental realities, the Strategic Plan (2026–2028) reflects a renewed commitment to accelerate progress in the realization of children's rights. It aligns with the vision of Agenda 2040 and the implementation priorities of Agenda 2063, reinforcing a shared responsibility to act with greater urgency, coherence, and impact.

Over the next three years, the ACERWC will intensify its focus on supporting Member States to translate commitments into concrete action. This includes strengthening implementation of the Charter,

enhancing monitoring and reporting systems, and ensuring that decisions and recommendations lead to tangible improvements in children's lives. Central to this effort is the promotion of **meaningful and safe child participation**, ensuring that children, girls, and boys alike are heard, empowered, and able to influence decisions that affect them.

Building on the above understanding, the rest of the chapter sets out the strategic direction by defining the vision, guiding principles, and priority areas, while the subsequent chapters follow a logical progression from context analysis and strategic objectives to implementation arrangements, financing and sustainability, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and evaluation. The plan then concludes with chapters on risk management, and governance, ensuring that the strategy is not only well-designed but also practical, well-resourced, and accountable. Taken together, the structure provides a coherent roadmap that moves from analysis and intent to action, learning, and sustained impact for children.

1.2. Legal Context and Mandate

The adoption of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Charter) in 1990 marked a landmark moment in Africa's commitment to children's rights. While global frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions on child labor, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) provide important international standards, the Charter was uniquely designed to reflect Africa's social, cultural, economic, and

political realities. It addresses challenges that have historically affected children disproportionately on the continent, including harmful traditional practices, child marriage, child labor, and the impact of armed conflict, ensuring that the protection and promotion of children's rights are grounded in the African context.

The Charter hinges on the need to take all appropriate measures to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the African child². The ACERWC, set up in July 2001, is mandated to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the child in Africa, guided by the various articles in the ACWRC.

The mandate of the Committee is principally derived from Article 42 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which entrusts it with the responsibility of promoting and protecting children's rights across Africa. In fulfilling this mandate, the Committee monitors the implementation of the Charter by examining State reports and assessing compliance with its provisions (Article 42(a)(i)); considers communications alleging violations of children's rights (Article 42(a)(iii)); and conducts investigations into serious or systematic breaches (Article 42(a)(ii)). It is further empowered to interpret the Charter at the request of States Parties or relevant African Union organs to ensure clarity and effective application of its provisions (Article 42(a)(iv)). Additionally, the Committee may perform such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, the Chairperson of

² Article 33 of ACERWC

the African Union, or other organs of the Organization, in accordance with Article 42(b).

The Committee fulfils this mandate by informing and influencing the development of child-friendly laws, policies, and practices; empowering children, their families, and communities to understand and claim their rights; holding States accountable for their obligations under the Charter; and advancing the effective implementation of child rights standards across the continent. The establishment of the ACERWC under Articles 32–46 of the Charter provided an institutional mechanism to ensure that the commitments made by States translate into tangible improvements in the lives of children. Over the past two decades, the Committee has developed a body of jurisprudence through its communications procedure and has issued interpretative guidance that has influenced national legislation and policies.

Despite these advances, the gap between legal commitments and actual implementation remains significant. Many Member States have ratified the Charter but continue to face challenges in domestication, enforcement, and resource allocation. This underscores the continued relevance and importance of the ACERWC's mandate.

1.3 Institutional Structure and Operational Framework

The ACERWC is composed of eleven independent experts elected by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government. Members serve in their personal capacity and are selected based on their expertise, integrity, and demonstrated commitment to the promotion and protection of children's rights. This independence is fundamental to safeguarding the

credibility, impartiality, and integrity of the Committee's work, enabling it to act consistently in the best interests of all children. At the time of developing this Strategic Plan, the Committee was further strengthened by the addition of three new members whose knowledge, energy, and diverse experience bring renewed momentum to its mandate and will be instrumental in driving its work forward.

The Committee delivers on its mandate through a combination of plenary sessions, thematic mandates assigned to Special Rapporteurs, Country Groups, and the strategic leadership of the Bureau. Its work is anchored by a Secretariat that serves as the operational backbone of the institution, managing day-to-day functions such as the processing of State Party reports, communications, and the coordination of sessions and country missions. As the scope and complexity of the Committee's responsibilities have expanded, so too have the demands on its institutional capacity. In response, important decisions have been taken to strengthen and expand the structure of the Secretariat, alongside efforts to improve the remuneration of Committee members in line with other African Union organs. These measures represent critical institutional investments that position the Committee to operate more effectively, attract and retain expertise, and deliver on its mandate with greater consistency and impact.

At the core of these institutional developments is a firm commitment to a child rights-based approach that places the best interests, dignity, survival, development, and participation of every child at the centre of the Committee's work. This approach reinforces the accountability of duty bearers while ensuring that children are recognised as rights holders

with a voice in decisions that affect them. At the same time, the Committee adopts a gender-responsive lens, acknowledging that girls and boys experience risks, discrimination, and barriers differently. Strengthening institutional capacity will therefore go hand in hand with embedding gender equality, inclusion, and equity across all processes and interventions. Taken together, these reforms—new expertise within the Committee, strengthened institutional structures, and improved conditions of service—create a timely opportunity to enhance effectiveness, deepen impact, and ensure more responsive and inclusive delivery for all children across the continent.

1.4 Rationale, Strategic Context, and Alignment

Across the continent, important gains have been made in advancing the rights and well-being of children. More children are accessing education, legal and policy frameworks have strengthened, and awareness of children's rights continues to grow. Yet, for many children, daily realities remain marked by violence, exclusion, poverty, and vulnerability. New and evolving risks—including climate shocks, digital harms, mental health pressures, and substance abuse—are adding further complexity to an already challenging landscape.

The intersecting challenges outlined above underscore a clear imperative: progress must move beyond commitments toward more consistent, measurable, and lasting results in the lives of children. This Strategic Plan is therefore grounded in a deliberate shift toward sharper focus, stronger implementation, and greater accountability, anchored in a child rights-based approach that places the best interests, dignity,

and participation of every child at its centre. It further integrates a gender-responsive perspective, recognising the different and often compounded risks faced by girls and boys, and prioritising equitable outcomes by addressing structural inequalities and discrimination in all its forms.

The rationale for this Strategic Plan reflects a set of interconnected priorities that respond both to lessons from past implementation and to the evolving realities facing children across the continent. Together, these drivers provide a clear foundation for a more focused, coherent, and results-oriented approach to advancing children's rights.

- 1. Building on Implementation Experience.** The 2021–2025 Strategic Plan generated valuable lessons on what works, where gaps persist, and how impact can be strengthened. This Plan builds on that experience, with a stronger emphasis on results, accountability, and consistent delivery across diverse national contexts.
- 2. Consolidating Normative Frameworks.** While important progress has been made in developing several children's rights standards, fragmentation across regional and national frameworks remains a challenge. This Plan prioritises greater coherence and harmonisation to support consistent interpretation, application, and enforcement of children's rights norms.
- 3. Strengthening Institutional Capacity and Delivery Mechanisms.** Effective implementation depends on capable and well-coordinated institutional systems and structures. This Plan focuses on reinforcing committees, coordination platforms, and delivery

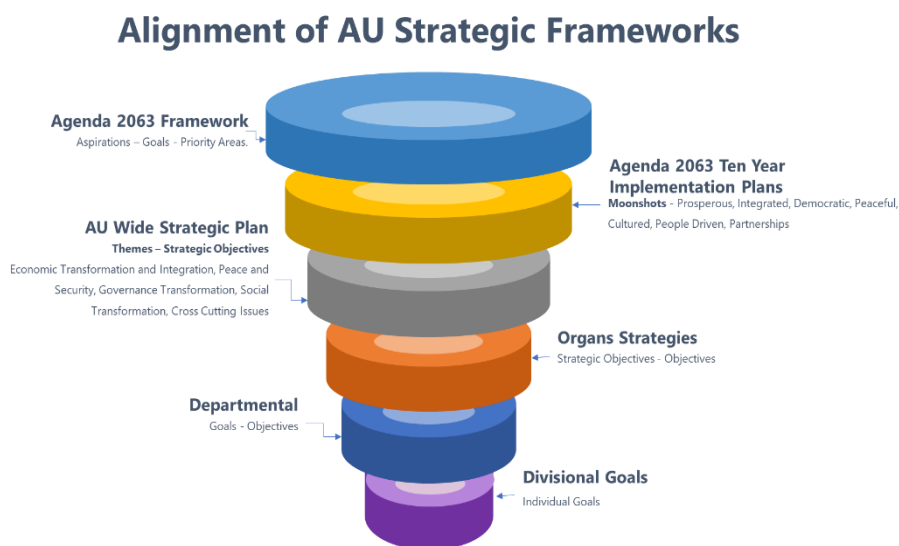
systems to improve oversight, clarify roles, and accelerate action across stakeholders.

4. Enhancing Resource Alignment and Efficiency. Despite increased commitments, resource constraints and inefficiencies continue to limit impact. The Plan places strong emphasis on better aligning financial, technical, and human resources with strategic priorities, reducing duplication, and improving the predictability and effectiveness of investments in children.

5. Responding to a Changing Environment and Strengthening Alignment. Africa's social, economic, technological, and environmental landscape is rapidly evolving and is likely to continue evolving in the next three years. This Plan adopts a forward-looking approach that considers resilience and adaptability in the face of any emerging risks. At the same time, it is closely aligned with continental and global frameworks, including Agenda 2063, the Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan (2024–2033), the African Union Commission Strategic Plan, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, ensuring coherence between regional priorities and international standards.

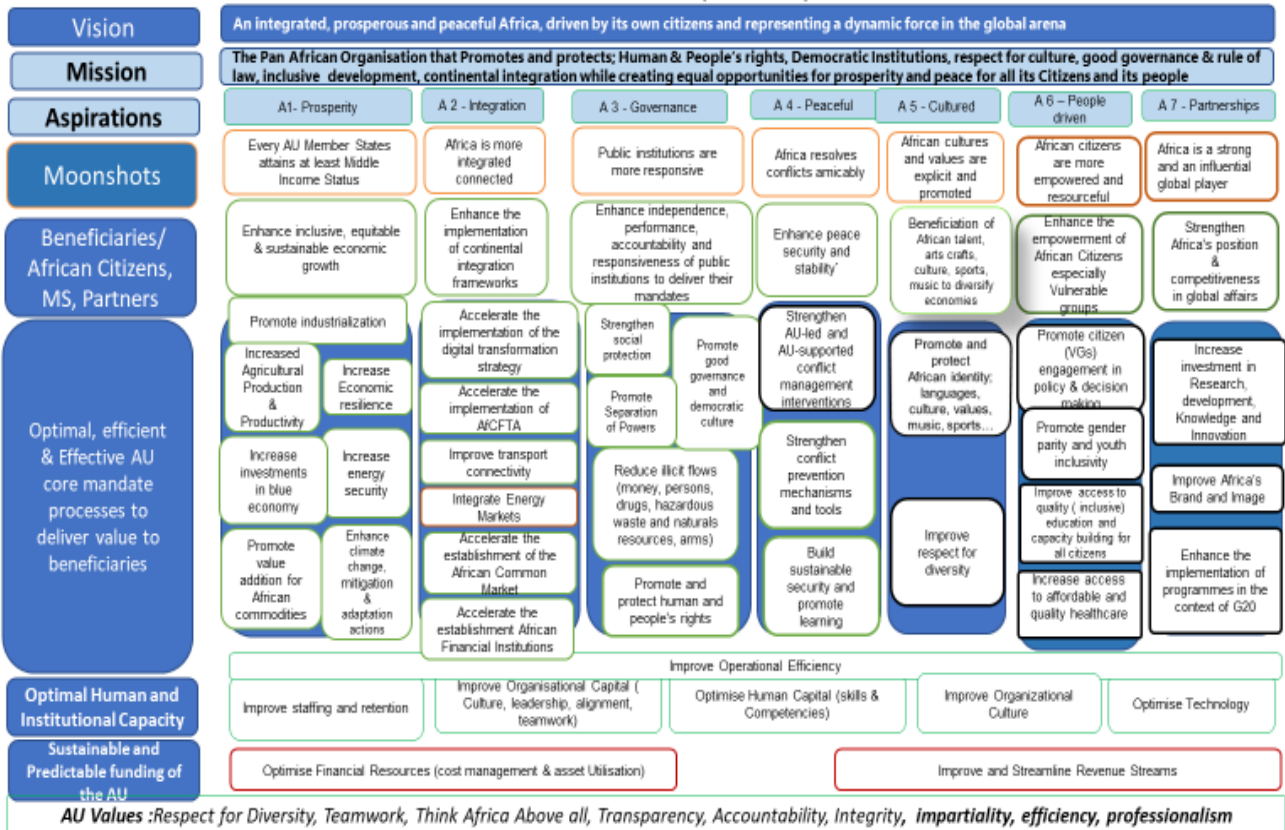
The African Union's Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan marked a renewed focus on accelerated, results-driven action across the continent's development agenda. It emphasises measurable impact, inclusive participation, and targeted interventions to address systemic challenges in governance, human development, and socio-economic transformation. Within this broader framework, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is uniquely positioned to

advance child rights as a foundational pillar of Africa's development. Children's well-being is intrinsically linked to the achievement of key continental priorities from inclusive economic growth and strengthened governance to peace, security, and human capital development.



Within the AU Strategy Map (illustrated further below), the ACERWC Strategic Plan 2026-2028 is heavily focused on Moonshot 3 and its Strategic Objectives of: Promote Good Governance and Democratic Culture, Promote and Protect Human and People's Rights, and Enhance independence, Performance, Accountability and Responsiveness of Public Institutions to Deliver their mandates. However, the ACERWC Strategic Plan will be incomplete without addressing cross-cutting issues related to: Internal Processes like optimal, efficient & effective processes, Optimization of Human and Institutional Capacity, as well as Sustainable and Predictable Funding.

AU STRATEGY MAP (2024–2028)



The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), as a specialized institution of the African Union, contributes significantly to multiple dimensions of the AU's 2024–2028 strategic vision beyond its core governance mandate. While Moonshot 3 on governance aligns closely with the Committee's work in monitoring State compliance, promoting accountability, and strengthening rule of law mechanisms for children, ACERWC also plays an essential role in advancing integration, prosperity, peace, culture, citizen empowerment, and partnerships. By advocating for the protection of children's rights across borders and supporting harmonization of national policies with continental frameworks, the Committee strengthens African integration and ensures that common standards for child welfare are upheld. Its work in safeguarding children in conflict-affected regions, promoting access to justice, and supporting post-conflict recovery

contributes to a more peaceful and secure continent. Beyond this, ACERWC fosters African identity and culture by promoting children's participation in education, cultural life, and civic engagement, while empowering the next generation through children's parliaments, youth-focused initiatives, and participatory platforms that give children a meaningful voice in shaping the societies they live in.

Partnerships are central to the Committee's work, as it collaborates with AU organs, Regional Economic Communities, UN agencies, civil society, and academia to leverage expertise, resources, and innovative approaches. Finally, by strengthening its own institutional capacity, enhancing human capital, and mobilizing sustainable resources, ACERWC reinforces the AU's broader goals of operational efficiency and financial sustainability. In essence, the Committee's strategic interventions are not just about enforcing legal obligations; they are about creating a future where African children are empowered, protected, and able to thrive, contributing to a more integrated, peaceful, and prosperous continent.

1.5. Guiding Principles

For the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan is anchored in a set of guiding principles that provide a clear framework for decision-making, implementation, and monitoring. These principles ensure that the Committee's work remains consistent with its mandate, reflects the values of the African Union, and advances Africa's broader aspirations for children:

- 1. Child-Rights Approach:** All interventions are grounded in children as rights-holders, with duties placed on states and other actors to respect, protect, and fulfil their rights. Children's voices are systematically included in decisions affecting them, in line with their evolving capacities.
- 2. Evidence-Based Decision-Making:** Policies and programs are grounded in robust data, research, and evaluation to ensure relevance, effectiveness, and measurable impact.
- 3. Inclusivity and Participation:** All stakeholders, including governments, civil society, children, youth, and marginalized groups, are engaged equitably throughout planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- 4. Accountability and Transparency:** Decision-making processes are open and accountable, with clear reporting, measurable outcomes, and mechanisms to safeguard responsible use of resources.
- 5. Collaboration and Partnerships:** Strong partnerships with AU organs, regional bodies, international agencies, and civil society are fostered to maximize impact, share knowledge, and avoid duplication of efforts.
- 6. Innovation and Adaptability:** Creative approaches and flexible strategies are encouraged to address emerging challenges affecting children's rights and well-being.
- 7. Equity and Non-Discrimination:** Every child, regardless of gender, disability, socio-economic status, ethnicity, or location, is given equal opportunity to thrive.

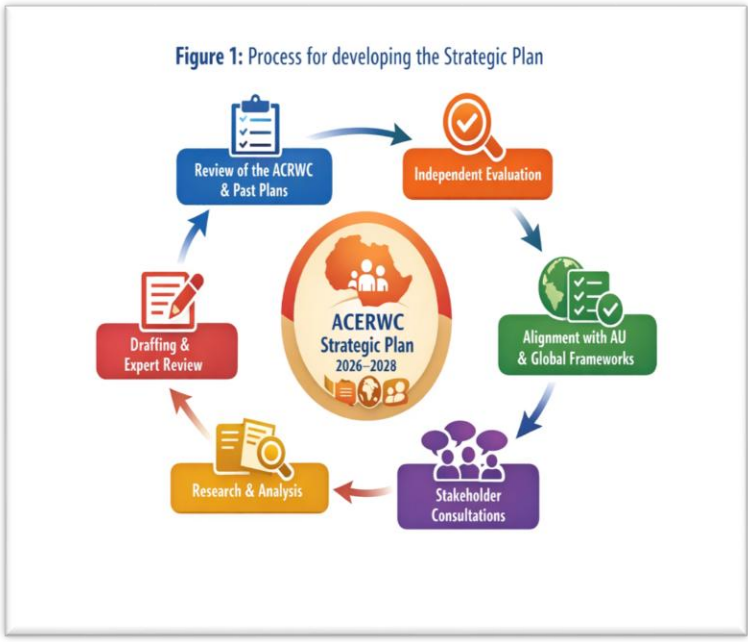
8. Sustainability: Programs and interventions are designed to deliver long-term benefits, ensuring financial, social, and institutional sustainability.

9. Integrity and Ethical Conduct: The highest standards of ethics, human rights, and professionalism guide all Committee activities.

1.6 Process of Developing the Strategic Plan

The development of the ACERWC Strategic Plan 2026–2028 was guided by a deliberate effort to ensure it is practical, inclusive, and firmly grounded in evidence. From the outset, the process was designed to build on the Committee's mandate under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, while also drawing on lessons from previous strategic planning cycles.

At the heart of the process was a reflection on past performance. An independent evaluation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan provided valuable insights into what worked well, where progress was slower, and why. It also highlighted opportunities to strengthen the Committee's impact, partnerships, and responsiveness to emerging child rights issues. These lessons helped shape a forward-looking plan that is rooted in experience rather than starting from scratch.



At the same time, care was taken to ensure alignment with broader African Union and global priorities. Key frameworks, including Agenda 2040 and Agenda 2063, were reviewed to position the Strategic Plan within wider continental efforts to promote

governance, human rights, and the well-being of children.

Engagement with stakeholders was a central part of the process. Committee Members, Member States, AU institutions, civil society organizations, academic institutions, and development partners were consulted through a mix of in-person meetings, virtual discussions, and written inputs. These conversations helped refine priorities, strengthen collaboration, and ensure that the Plan reflects shared ambitions and practical realities.

The Secretariat also drew on a wide range of existing reports, studies, and operational experiences to better understand ongoing challenges, such as uneven implementation across countries and resource constraints, and to identify areas where greater impact can be achieved.

To ensure both technical rigour and broad institutional ownership, the draft Strategic Plan was subjected to an independent review by a newly appointed expert, who also facilitated a two-day final validation

workshop bringing together all Committee members and the Secretariat. This process created space for open reflection, refinement, and consensus-building, while ensuring that the Plan was firmly grounded in a child rights-based approach and informed by a gender-responsive perspective. Importantly, the validation drew on key decisions and recommendations from relevant African Union organs, aligned with priority interventions under the AU Strategic Plan, and incorporated AMERT data requirements, performance targets for the ACERWC, and existing resource commitments. This ensured that the Plan is not only strategically coherent but also realistic, measurable, and aligned with broader continental systems.

Following the validation workshop, the expert undertook a dedicated retreat to consolidate inputs and finalise the Strategic Plan, along with its supporting policy frameworks, including the Monitoring and Evaluation framework. This phase focused on translating the agreed priorities into a clear, results-oriented structure, with defined indicators, reporting mechanisms, and accountability pathways. The result is a comprehensive and implementable Strategic Plan, supported by robust tools to track progress, strengthen performance management, and ensure that commitments are translated into tangible outcomes for children across the continent.

1.7. Structure of the SP.

The Strategic Plan is organized into nine chapters, each providing a critical component of the Committee's roadmap for 2026–2028:

- 1. Foundational Pillars.** This chapter sets the stage, outlining the rationale, context, historical context, and mandate, strategic alignment, principles, and process of developing and structure of the the Strategic Plan.
- 2. Context and Review of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan.** This chapter reflects on the Committee’s past performance, highlighting achievements, challenges, and lessons learned to inform future strategies.
- 3. Situational Analysis.**An updated assessment of the evolving operating environment, including emerging trends, risks, and opportunities affecting children’s rights and welfare.
- 4. Strategic Direction and Framework.**Defines the Committee's vision, mission, strategic objectives, and priority actions for the next three years. It also presents the theory of change and introduces the Committee's new business model.
- 5. Implementation Arrangements.**Details the mechanisms, structures, and processes required to effectively execute the Strategic Plan.
- 6. Monitoring and Evaluation.**Outlines the framework for tracking progress, including a matrix of key indicators aligned with each strategic objective to ensure measurable impact.
- 7. Risk Management.**Identifies potential risks and provides strategies to mitigate them, ensuring the Plan remains resilient in the face of challenges.
- 8. Resource Mobilization and Financing.**Presents strategies for funding the Strategic Plan, aligned with the African Union Commission’s resource mobilization priorities.

9. Critical Success Factors. Highlights the essential conditions and enablers required for the successful delivery of the Strategic Plan's objectives.

2.1. Understanding The Context

2.1.1. Global Context

The global environment in which the ACERWC operates is marked by a complex mix of progress, persistent inequalities, and emerging risks that continue to shape outcomes for children. While notable gains have been made under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), these advances remain uneven and fragile. Poverty continues to affect a significant proportion of the global population, with nearly one in ten people still living in extreme poverty and projections suggesting that 8.9% will remain in such conditions by 2030. At the same time, malnutrition continues to undermine children's growth and development, with only modest reductions in stunting rates. Although maternal and child mortality have declined over the past two decades, the pace of improvement has slowed, raising concerns about the sustainability of these gains.

Progress in education and child protection has been more encouraging, with increased school enrolment and improved completion rates, particularly at the primary level. Gains in girls' education are especially notable. However, these achievements mask persistent disparities affecting the most vulnerable, including children with disabilities, those in conflict settings, and displaced populations. Harmful practices such as child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, and female genital mutilation (FGM) remain widespread, reflecting deeply rooted social and gender

inequalities. Despite declines in adolescent birth rates, nearly one in five young women is still married before the age of 18, and millions of girls continue to face violations of their bodily autonomy and rights. Discrimination also remains pervasive, particularly for children with disabilities, who experience significantly higher levels of exclusion.

At the same time, a range of interconnected global shocks is intensifying risks for children. Climate change is accelerating environmental stress, with rising temperatures and increasingly frequent extreme weather events contributing to food insecurity, displacement, and loss of livelihoods. Conflict and violence continue to drive large-scale displacement, with millions of women and children affected and children increasingly exposed to exploitation, including trafficking. Human trafficking remains a growing concern globally, with children representing a significant proportion of victims and experiencing different forms of exploitation along gender lines. While there has been some progress in strengthening human rights institutions, gaps in protection and accountability persist across many contexts.

Beyond these structural challenges, shifts in the global governance landscape are introducing new uncertainties. Growing scepticism toward multilateral institutions like the UN and weakening adherence to international human rights norms are reducing the effectiveness of global accountability systems. At the same time, declining funding for human rights and social sectors is constraining operational capacity, limiting monitoring, and reducing the reach of essential services. Cuts in foreign aid are placing additional strain on already fragile social protection

systems, increasing the risk of negative coping mechanisms such as child labour and early marriage.

Economic pressures, including rising energy costs, are further compounding vulnerabilities by increasing the cost of service delivery and deepening household poverty. In parallel, rapid technological change presents both opportunities and risks. While digital platforms can expand access to information, education, and participation, increasing restrictions on social media in some contexts risk undermining children's rights to expression, access to information, and engagement. These developments require a careful balance between safeguarding children online and protecting their digital rights.

Taken together, these global trends highlight the urgent need for integrated, resilient, and child-centred responses. Advancing children's rights in this context requires strengthening data systems, improving accountability mechanisms, and leveraging innovation, while ensuring that interventions are grounded in a child rights-based approach and are responsive to gender, disability, and other forms of inequality. For the ACERWC, this evolving landscape reinforces the importance of its role as a regional accountability mechanism one that can promote coherence, strengthen implementation, and ensure that children's rights remain central within broader development and governance agendas.

2.1.2. African Context

Africa has made notable strides in advancing child rights and welfare, largely driven by the advocacy, monitoring, and normative guidance of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

(ACERWC), alongside the ratification of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) by 51 African Union (AU) Member States. There is increasing recognition of the importance of protecting and promoting children's rights, particularly for the girl child, and child-focused initiatives are gaining visibility across the continent. Continental frameworks, including the Second Phase of Agenda 2040 Implementation Plan, have reinforced efforts to align national development priorities with regional and global commitments, supporting the domestication and operationalization of the Charter.

Institutional partnerships have expanded significantly. Engagement between the Committee, Member States, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), civil society organizations (CSOs), AU organs, UN agencies, and development partners has strengthened, while mechanisms such as Thematic Working Groups, Special Mechanisms, Country and Special Rapporteurs, and virtual platforms have enhanced operational efficiency, outreach, monitoring, and reporting capacities.

Despite these gains, implementation of the Charter remains uneven across Member States. Challenges include limited prioritization of child rights in national planning and budgeting, weak institutional frameworks, insufficient resources, and the absence of harmonized child-friendly legal and policy frameworks. Compliance with State Party reporting obligations remains low despite data-driven guidelines, highlighting the need for stronger institutional capacity, coordination, and robust monitoring, evaluation, and accountability systems, including digital tools and real-time analytics.

Persistent socio-economic challenges continue to undermine children's rights. Teenage pregnancy affects approximately 25% of countries, while child labor, malnutrition, stunting, and harmful traditional practices remain widespread. Poverty, inequality, and limited access to essential services constrain the realization of child rights, disproportionately affecting marginalized groups, including children with disabilities. Gaps in legislation, resource allocation, disaggregated data, and policy inclusion exacerbate these inequities, particularly in crisis or humanitarian contexts.

The Charter's guiding principles, non-discrimination, best interests of the child, survival and development, and participation, remain central to addressing these challenges. Children's civil rights and freedoms, including the right to a name, nationality, birth registration, freedom of expression, and protection from abuse and exploitation, require continued attention. Family- and community-based care systems need strengthening to prevent unnecessary separation of children from caregivers, while children in vulnerable or humanitarian contexts require targeted protection. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has introduced new risks, including online exploitation, cyberbullying, and exposure to harmful content, necessitating robust digital child protection mechanisms.

Health, welfare, and development remain critical priorities for children, particularly in underserved areas where mortality, malnutrition, stunting, preventable diseases, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and gender-based violence persist. Emerging challenges such as climate-related disasters, pandemics, mental health crises, and substance abuse

further threaten well-being, highlighting the need for resilient, integrated health, nutrition, and social protection systems. Education and development outcomes show progress but remain uneven, constrained by gender disparities, high dropout rates, and limited access for children with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Inclusive, quality education that incorporates children's rights, life skills, climate literacy, and protection awareness is essential to reduce inequities and empower young people. Conflict, insecurity, and environmental shocks exacerbate these vulnerabilities, driving displacement, exploitation, malnutrition, and trafficking, with boys disproportionately affected by forced labor and girls by sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. At the same time, the Charter underscores children's responsibilities, emphasizing participation and civic engagement as key to empowering them as active contributors to their communities.

In response to this evolving landscape, ACEWRC's 2026–2028 Strategic Plan emphasizes strengthened coordination, collaboration, and alignment across AU policy organs, the Committee, the Bureau, the Secretariat, Member States, RECs, NHRIs, CSOs, and development partners. Building on the achievements of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, the new plan aims to consolidate gains, address persistent gaps, and respond to emerging challenges through measurable outcomes, enhanced accountability, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Sustaining progress requires Member States to prioritize children's rights in planning and budgeting, ensure equitable access to essential services, adopt resilient and innovative approaches, and foster child participation to fully realize the rights and welfare of Africa's children.

2.1.3. ACEWRC context

Since its establishment, ACERWC has made steady progress in strengthening its institutional capacity, operational systems, and engagement with key stakeholders. Implementation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan contributed to enhanced collaboration with Member States, AU policy organs, civil society, National Human Rights Institutions, Regional Economic Communities, and international partners. Institutional innovations including the establishment of Thematic Working Groups, Special Mechanisms, Country and Special Rapporteurs, as well as the expanded use of virtual platforms have improved monitoring, advocacy, and real-time engagement. The introduction of key performance indicators and annual targets has further reinforced a results-based management culture, strengthening performance tracking and accountability.

At the same time, the Committee is operating in a context of persistent institutional constraints. Understaffing within the Secretariat has continued to affect delivery capacity, particularly in the face of an expanding mandate and increasing demand for technical support, monitoring, and follow-up. The recent approval of a new organizational staffing structure by relevant AU organs presents an important opportunity to address these gaps, strengthen functional alignment, and enhance the Committee's ability to deliver on its priorities. However, effective operationalisation of this structure, alongside the implementation of the AU-wide resolution on the harmonization of staff benefits and conditions of service, will be critical to improving staff motivation, retention, and overall institutional performance.

In addition, resource constraints, uneven compliance by State Parties, and persistent data limitations continue to affect the Committee's ability to monitor implementation and enforce accountability effectively. Technical capacity gaps both within the Secretariat and across Member States impact the quality of reporting, policy implementation, and follow-up on recommendations. The complexity of coordinating a wide range of stakeholders across multiple governance levels further underscores the need for more structured, harmonized, and technology-enabled coordination mechanisms to support coherence, alignment, and evidence-based decision-making.

The evolving operating environment, however, also presents significant opportunities for transformation. The growing availability of digital technologies creates space for the Committee to modernize its systems, including adopting technology-supported processes for reporting, case management, data collection, and stakeholder engagement. These innovations can improve efficiency, transparency, and real-time monitoring, while also expanding access to ACERWC mechanisms. At the same time, the induction of new Committee Members with diverse expertise strengthens the institution's intellectual and technical capacity, positioning it to respond more effectively to complex and emerging child rights issues.

Emerging challenges including climate change, public health emergencies, humanitarian crises, and digital risks require more agile, integrated, and forward-looking responses. There is also increasing recognition of the need to address the rights of children in vulnerable situations, including children with disabilities and other marginalized

groups, through more targeted interventions, improved data disaggregation, and strengthened partnerships with specialised actors.

The Committee remains firmly guided by the principles and provisions of the African Children's Charter, including non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, survival and development, and child participation. However, persistent structural challenges such as poverty, inequality, limited access to essential services, and weak social protection systems continue to constrain the realization of children's rights. At the same time, emerging risks, including teenage pregnancy, child labour, digital exploitation, and climate-related vulnerabilities, demand more coordinated, evidence-based, and system-wide responses.

In this context, ACERWC's strategic focus is increasingly directed toward strengthening institutional capacity, operational efficiency, and system integration, while deepening cross-sectoral coordination and multi-stakeholder collaboration. This includes leveraging the new staffing structure, embedding technology-enabled systems, and harnessing the expertise of Committee Members to enhance delivery. It also involves strengthening partnerships with AU organs, RECs, NHRIs, civil society, and development partners to support the domestication and implementation of continental frameworks. At the same time, the Committee will continue to advance child participation, improve access to child justice systems, and ensure that children's rights are systematically integrated into broader governance and development processes.

2.2. Performance Evaluation of the 2021-2025 SP

The implementation of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan reflects the journey of an institution that has grown stronger, more visible, and more confident in its role, even as it continues to wrestle with some fundamental structural challenges. The Plan itself was ambitious, designed not only to guide the internal work of the Committee, but also to position it externally as a credible, influential, and results-driven continental body advancing children's rights. In many respects, that ambition has been realized. The Committee today stands as a more recognized and respected actor within the African human rights system. However, the path to this progress has not been smooth or evenly distributed across all areas of its mandate.

2.2.1. Financial Performance Assessment

Over the 2021–2025 period, the Committee's financial performance reflects a generally stable but fluctuating resource environment, characterised by periods of both deficit and modest surplus. Total revenue varied across the years, peaking in 2023 and 2024 due to a significant increase in donor funding, before declining sharply in 2025 following the absence of external contributions. The African Union budget allocation remained the most consistent and predictable source of funding throughout the period.

Table 1: Revenue Trends (USD, 2021–2025)

Revenue Source	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
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AU Budget Allocation	1,557,000	1,282,000	1,673,000	1,571,000	1,581,000
Donor Funding	114,000	196,000	1,055,000	923,000	0
Grants & Projects	–	–	–	–	–
Partnerships / Contributions	–	–	–	–	–
Other Income	–	–	–	–	–
Total Revenue	1,671,000	1,478,000	2,728,000	2,494,000	1,581,000

The revenue profile for ACEWRC over 2021–2025 indicates that while the ACERWC had a relatively stable core funding base from the AU budget, the overall resource envelope available for implementation of Strategic Plan activities was both constrained and unpredictable. The significant surge in total revenue in 2023 and 2024 was driven almost entirely by donor funding, which temporarily expanded the Committee’s ability to deliver on programme activities, but this proved unsustainable, as evidenced by the complete drop in donor contributions in 2025. This sharp fluctuation suggests that implementation capacity was closely tied to external financing cycles rather than a stable, internally secured resource base. At the same time, the absence of revenue from grants, partnerships, and other income streams highlights a critical gap in diversified resource mobilisation, pointing to underdeveloped financing strategies and limited institutional capacity to attract and manage alternative funding sources. This lack of diversification not only increased

vulnerability to funding shocks but also constrained the Committee's ability to scale interventions, invest in innovation, and respond flexibly to emerging child rights challenges.

Expenditure levels increased steadily over time, closely tracking available resources and indicating improved budget execution. Budget utilisation rates also strengthened, rising from 86% in 2021 to 98% in both 2024 and 2025, reflecting greater efficiency in resource use and implementation capacity. Overall, as seen from the table below, the Committee recorded mixed financial results, with a deficit in 2022 but surpluses in all other years, albeit at declining levels toward the end of the period. The strong performance in 2023 and 2024 was largely driven by donor inflows, while the 2025 outlook highlights increasing reliance on core AU funding and the need for more diversified and sustainable financing. These trends underscore the importance of strengthening resource mobilisation, improving financial sustainability, and ensuring closer alignment between funding and strategic priorities.

Table 2: Budget Performance Analysis

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Approved Budget	1,671,000	1,478,000	2,728,000	2,494,000	1,581,000
Actual Spending	1,192,000	1,424,000	1,955,000	2,187,000	1,477,000
Variance (±)	479,000	54,000	773,000	307,000	104,000
% Variance	29%	4%	29%	13%	7%

Across the 2021–2025 period, budget performance shows a clear overall improvement in efficiency and financial absorption. While 2021 and 2023 recorded relatively high variances of 29%, reflecting initial implementation constraints and periods where approved budgets outpaced spending capacity, subsequent years demonstrate stronger alignment between planning and execution. The variance dropped sharply to 4% in 2022, indicating strong absorption, before rising moderately to 13% in 2024 and then declining again to 7% in 2025. Throughout the period, actual expenditure increased steadily, reflecting strengthened operational delivery and growing institutional capacity to implement approved plans.

2.2.2. Governance and institutional performance.

Across the 2021–2025 period, the Committee's governance framework analysis demonstrates strong institutional stability alongside gradual operational strengthening. Core decision-making structures remained consistent, with two Ordinary Sessions and two Bureau Meetings held annually throughout the period, as well as a steady cadence of Special Mechanisms Meetings, reflecting continuity in mandate execution and oversight. Engagement with AU governance structures also remained stable, with one Executive Council reporting session each year, ensuring consistent accountability and alignment with broader AU processes. In contrast, Secretariat Management Meetings increased significantly from four in 2021 to eight in 2022 and 2023, and further to twelve in 2024 and 2025 signalling a deliberate strengthening of internal coordination and administrative capacity to match the Committee's expanding workload. Overall, the pattern reflects a governance system that is stable at the

strategic level but increasingly reinforced at the operational level to improve efficiency, responsiveness, and delivery.

Over the five years, the Committee strengthened its stature within the African human rights system, with stakeholders increasingly recognizing its credibility, relevance, and effectiveness as a continental authority on children's rights. However, this progress has not been even across all areas of its mandate. While there are clear signs of institutional maturity and growing influence, a persistent gap remains between ambition and implementation, particularly in core mandate areas, highlighting the ongoing challenge of translating strategic intent into consistent and measurable results.

In terms of coherence, the Committee has demonstrated a strong commitment to **collaboration and partnership-building**, which has become one of its defining strengths. Engagement with National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organisations, and African Union bodies has expanded significantly, contributing to broader reach and influence. However, these partnerships also present challenges. There are concerns about duplication and misalignment between strategic frameworks, particularly with Agenda 2040, as well as risks associated with reliance on external funding from key partners. Additionally, engagement with Regional Economic Communities remains underdeveloped and lacks a systematic structure.

The ACERWC also made significant strides in enhancing its **visibility and normative influence**. Its outputs, such as General Comments, guidelines, and thematic studies, have increasingly been referenced across the

continent, reinforcing its position as a thought leader in children's rights. Improved communication strategies, including a more dynamic online presence and the continued success of the Day of the African Child, have further amplified its profile. However, awareness remains uneven, particularly in regions such as North Africa, and the Committee continues to be overshadowed in some contexts by global mechanisms.

2.2.3. Summary Program Activity Performance

The performance of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan reflects a Committee that is operationally active and increasingly influential, but still constrained in translating effort into sustained, measurable impact. Overall implementation reached a moderate but meaningful 68%, with clear progress over time from 55% in 2021 to a peak of 79% in 2023 before declining again in 2025, highlighting challenges in sustaining performance and consistency. The Committee demonstrated strong delivery in its core, process-driven functions such as advocacy, state engagement, and accountability processes where implementation rates were consistently high, reinforcing its credibility as a continental child rights body. However, this strength was not matched in output-driven areas, with critical functions such as knowledge production, reporting, communication, and system development significantly underperforming or inconsistently implemented.

A substantial proportion of activities remained partial or unimplemented, while notable data gaps further limited the ability to fully assess performance and draw lessons. This imbalance points to an institution that is more effective at “doing” than at consolidating, documenting,

and leveraging its work for long-term influence, learning, and visibility. Structural constraints, including limited and unpredictable resources, understaffing, and weak monitoring systems, combined with external factors such as uneven political will among Member States, also affected progress, particularly in advancing ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Charter. While digital visibility improved, it remains underutilized strategically, and key mechanisms such as the Communications procedure and follow-up on recommendations continue to face delays and limited uptake. Ultimately, the evaluation underscores the need for a strategic shift toward results consolidation, stronger knowledge and communication systems, improved data and monitoring frameworks, and a clearer focus on leveraging partnerships to translate normative influence into tangible outcomes for children.

A central tension emerging from the evaluation relates to the Committee's institutional positioning. While some stakeholders advocate for greater grassroots engagement, the majority view supports maintaining its role as a **high-level normative and policy body**. The evidence suggests that the Committee is most effective when operating at this level, using partnerships with CSOs and NHRIs to ensure that its work translates into impact at national and local levels.

The effectiveness of the Committee's core mechanisms presents a mixed picture. The **State reporting procedure** has seen improvements in compliance over time, but challenges persist, particularly with sustained engagement and timely submissions. Reporting fatigue, limited capacity, and competing national priorities continue to hinder full compliance. The **Communications procedure**, while progressive in

2.2.4. Strategic plan design and Implementation

The design of the Strategic Plan itself contributed to some of these challenges. It was widely perceived as **overly detailed and granular**, particularly at the output level, which reduced flexibility and blurred the distinction between long-term strategy and short-term operational planning. This rigidity made it difficult for the Committee to adapt to changing contexts, including the significant disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, Monitoring and Evaluation systems were not effectively operationalised. Despite the existence of a comprehensive framework, it remained incomplete and underutilised due to capacity constraints, resulting in weak performance tracking and limited use of the Plan as a management tool.

The Secretariat, in particular, has been recognized as effective and dynamic, achieving substantial results despite severe human and financial resource constraints. These constraints, however, consistently influenced the Committee's ability to fully deliver on its outputs, highlighting the persistent challenge of aligning ambitions with available resources. External factors, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the Secretariat's relocation from Addis Ababa to Maseru, disrupted planned activities and affected the pace of implementation. Political pushback and inconsistent progress toward the realization of children's rights further hindered the Committee's ability to execute its full mandate.

The 2021–2025 period represents a phase of strong operational growth but incomplete strategic consolidation. The Committee became more capable, visible, and relevant, successfully implementing the majority of

its planned activities and strengthening internal capacity, particularly after 2021. Yet performance was uneven: 36% of activities consistently succeeded, 40% were implemented inconsistently, and 24% underperformed, with data gaps affecting up to 20% of activities. Weak output generation, limited visibility systems, and gaps in system development and performance tracking constrained overall impact. Moving forward, the next phase will require a shift from being primarily activity-driven to being more output- and impact-driven, ensuring that ongoing work is better captured, communicated, and translated into tangible improvements for children across Africa.

2.3. Lessons, Best Practices, And Challenges

2.3.1. Key Lessons

The evaluation highlights that while the Committee has strengthened its visibility, partnerships, and normative influence, this has not consistently translated into tangible impact at the national level. Visibility and activity alone have proven insufficient without stronger follow-up, enforcement, and accountability mechanisms.

- 1. Visibility Without Corresponding Implementation Impact.** Increased institutional visibility and normative output have not consistently led to improved domestication, reporting compliance, or implementation of decisions, underscoring the need to strengthen follow-up and enforcement.
- 2. From Continental Influence to National-Level Action Gaps.** A persistent gap remains between continental engagement and

national-level implementation, pointing to the need for stronger mechanisms to support and monitor State action.

- 3. Activity Does Not Automatically Translate Into Results.** High levels of engagement have not always resulted in tangible outputs or documented outcomes, highlighting the need to better convert activities into measurable results.
- 4. Overly Complex Planning and Limited Strategic Focus.** The Strategic Plan's complexity diluted focus and ownership, indicating the need for clearer, more prioritized, and adaptable planning.
- 5. Fragility of Institutional Capacity.** Gains in capacity were not consistently sustained, demonstrating the need for continuous investment in staffing and systems.
- 6. Limitations of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems.** Existing M&E systems were too complex for consistent use, limiting their effectiveness in informing decisions and tracking performance.
- 7. Dependence on External Actors and Political Will.** Progress remains heavily dependent on Member States, where varying levels of commitment and capacity affect implementation.
- 8. Strengths and Risks in Partnerships.** Partnerships have expanded reach but reliance on a narrow base poses sustainability risks, requiring diversification.
- 9. Capturing Intangible and Normative Impact.** Key contributions in norm-setting and advocacy are not easily measured, highlighting the need for a more balanced approach to performance assessment.

2.3.2. Best Practices

The evaluation identifies several key practices that have strengthened the ACERWC's effectiveness and influence over the strategic period. These reflect an institution that is increasingly adaptive, normatively authoritative, and operationally consistent. Beyond delivering its core mandate, the Committee has shown an ability to respond to emerging challenges, build strategic partnerships, and use both traditional and innovative approaches to advance children's rights. Together, these strengths highlight what enables meaningful institutional impact in a complex environment.

- 1. Adaptive Responsiveness to Emerging Issues.** The Committee has demonstrated strong agility in responding to emerging priorities such as climate change, digital rights, and child safeguarding, ensuring continued relevance in a changing policy landscape.
- 2. Normative Leadership and Standard Setting.** Through General Comments, guidelines, and studies, the Committee has strengthened its position as a key reference point on children's rights, influencing legal and policy development across Member States.
- 3. Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration.** Collaboration with CSOs, NHRIs, and AU bodies has enhanced reach and effectiveness, particularly in reporting, monitoring, and follow-up processes.
- 4. Digital Innovation and Communication.** Improvements in digital platforms and online engagement have increased transparency, accessibility, and demand for the Committee's work, reinforcing communication as a strategic tool.

- 5. Access to Justice Through Communications Mechanisms.** The Communications procedure provides a strong, child-sensitive accountability tool, with potential for greater impact if more widely utilized.
- 6. Mainstreaming Children’s Rights Across AU Systems.** Engagement with AU structures has helped integrate children’s rights into broader governance and policy frameworks.
- 7. Operational Consistency and Delivery Strength.** Strong performance in core functions, particularly advocacy and State engagement, reflects a reliable and increasingly stable institutional foundation.
- 8. Flagship Initiatives and Agenda-Setting Influence.** Initiatives such as the Day of the African Child continue to play an important role in sustaining visibility, mobilizing stakeholders, and advancing the child rights agenda.

2.3.3. Emerging Challenges and Constraints.

While the ACERWC has strengthened its institutional presence and delivered on a significant share of planned activities, results remain uneven across its core mandate areas. Persistent gaps in ratification, domestication, implementation of the Charter, and normative development point to a continued disconnect between strategic intent and measurable impact, shaped by structural, operational, and contextual constraints.

- 1. Persistent Implementation Gaps.** Progress in core mandate areas particularly ratification, domestication, and implementation

remains limited, reflecting a gap between continental influence and national-level results.

- 2. Structural and Political Constraints.** Weak political will, limited capacity among Member States, and insufficient accountability mechanisms continue to slow implementation.
- 3. Strategic Planning Limitations.** The previous Strategic Plan was overly detailed and rigid, reducing flexibility and limiting effective prioritisation and adaptation.
- 4. Weak Monitoring and Evaluation Systems.** Although frameworks existed, complex systems and capacity gaps limited effective tracking, learning, and decision-making.
- 5. Capacity Constraints.** Staffing and resource limitations affected performance consistency, particularly in advancing the normative agenda.
- 6. Uneven Awareness and Visibility.** Despite overall progress, awareness of the Committee's work remains inconsistent across regions, limiting its reach and influence.
- 7. Partnership and Coordination Challenges.** While partnerships are strong, coordination gaps, misalignment, and reliance on external funding pose risks to sustainability and effectiveness.
- 8. Weak National-Level Follow-Up.** Limited follow-through on recommendations, underutilization of key mechanisms, and reporting fatigue continue to constrain impact.
- 9. Thematic Gaps.** Gender mainstreaming and other cross-cutting issues remain unevenly integrated, pointing to the need for more systematic approaches.

10. Communication System Limitations. Despite improvements, communication remains underdeveloped due to limited capacity, absence of a coherent strategy, and weak use of digital tools, constraining visibility and knowledge dissemination.

CHAPTER 3: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS AND OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the operating environment for the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). It examines both the continental and global contexts, highlighting the evolving landscape, emerging risks, opportunities, and expectations from the African Union (AU) and other stakeholders. The analysis situates the ACERWC's work within the broader AU policy frameworks, including Agenda 2063, Agenda 2040, and other continental development priorities, while assessing Member States' progress in implementing the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC).

The chapter also identifies structural, institutional, and socio-economic factors that influence the Committee's operations, highlighting challenges, achievements, and areas for strategic focus. It provides a basis for aligning ACERWC's strategic objectives with the evolving expectations of the AU, ensuring coherence with continental reforms, and strengthening the protection, promotion, and realization of children's rights across Africa.

3.2 Global Context and Emerging Trends

The ACERWC operates within a dynamic global context, shaped by trends that have direct and indirect implications for child rights in Africa. According to the 2025 SDGs/Agenda 2030 Report, 8.9% of the global population is projected to live in extreme poverty by 2030, with one in ten

people still experiencing deprivation. Globally, child growth, development, and long-term health continue to be undermined by malnutrition, despite reductions in stunting rates from 26.4% to 23.2%.

Globally, maternal and child mortality rates have declined between 2000 and 2019, although health progress has slowed. Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy have decreased, with birth rates for girls aged 15–19 declining from 49.9 per 1,000 in 2015 to 38.3 per 1,000 in 2024. Educational attainment has improved, with approximately 272 million children and youth enrolled in schools in 2024, though disparities persist. The prevalence of harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and discrimination against persons with disabilities, remains a concern.

The global environment is further characterized by increasing climate-related challenges, extreme weather events, displacement, and conflict. In 2024, the highest recorded temperatures of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels contributed to unprecedented food insecurity, economic losses, and population displacement. Violence, conflict, and human trafficking disproportionately impact women and children, with child victims increasing by 31% since 2019, highlighting the urgent need for protective interventions.

Emerging trends such as digitalization, urbanization, climate change, pandemics, and socio-economic inequalities present both risks and opportunities for child rights protection. The Committee must increasingly integrate these considerations into its strategic and operational

planning, while guiding Member States to align with global standards and AU priorities.

3.3 Continental Context and Operating Environment

The African context presents a complex environment shaped by socio-economic, political, cultural, and environmental factors that influence child rights and welfare. The ACERWC's work is informed by the nine thematic areas of the Charter, with cross-cutting considerations of gender, disability, migration, conflict, and climate-related vulnerabilities.

There has been measurable progress in child rights promotion and protection, partly due to the Committee's advocacy campaigns. Most Member States recognize and celebrate the Day of the African Child, and 51 States have ratified the ACRWC. The Committee has strengthened institutional partnerships with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), civil society organizations (CSOs), AU organs, and international partners such as UNICEF.

The Committee has also innovated in its working methods, establishing Thematic Working Groups, Special Mechanisms, Country and Special Rapporteurs, and leveraging digital and virtual platforms. These innovations improve outreach, monitoring, and responsiveness to emerging child rights issues.

Despite progress, implementation of the Charter remains uneven. Challenges include insufficient prioritization of child rights in national planning and budgeting, weak institutional capacity, inadequate resources, and a lack of harmonized child-friendly legal frameworks.

State Party reporting continues to be low, underscoring the need for stronger monitoring, evaluation, and accountability systems.

3.4 Emerging Child Rights Challenges

African children face both traditional and emerging risks that require proactive and coordinated interventions across multiple sectors:

- **Child Protection:** Persistent challenges include child marriage, teenage pregnancy, female genital mutilation, child labour, trafficking, and exploitation. These vulnerabilities are further intensified in conflict-affected and humanitarian settings. The situation is compounded by weak integration between child protection systems and broader peace, security, and youth governance frameworks, resulting in fragmented and often uncoordinated responses in contexts of instability.
- **Health and Welfare:** High rates of child mortality, malnutrition, stunting, and limited access to quality health services remain major concerns across the continent. In addition, emerging risks such as climate-related health impacts, rising mental health challenges, and exposure to harmful substances are increasingly affecting children's well-being.
- **Education:** Despite progress in access, significant disparities persist, particularly in relation to gender, disability inclusion, and the participation of marginalised groups. High dropout rates and uneven quality of education continue to undermine learning outcomes. Furthermore, digital literacy gaps and exposure to online

exploitation are emerging as critical concerns in an increasingly digital learning environment.

- **Participation:** Children's meaningful participation in decision-making processes remains limited in many Member States. This is due to insufficient capacity-building, weak implementation of participation guidelines, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms. These challenges are further reinforced by limited political will and weak institutionalisation of child and youth participation structures within governance systems.
- **Climate Change and Displacement:** Climate variability, environmental degradation, and extreme weather events are significantly increasing children's vulnerability. Forced displacement, particularly in urban, rural, and conflict-affected areas, further exposes children to protection risks, disrupts access to essential services, and undermines long-term development outcomes.
- **Systemic Child Rights Governance Challenges:** Across all sectors, child rights programming is constrained by deep structural weaknesses. These include inadequate integration of child protection within broader peace and security frameworks, weak compliance with existing child rights obligations by Member States, and insufficient political commitment to translate policy commitments into sustained action. Collectively, these systemic gaps undermine coordination, accountability, and the effective

implementation of child rights frameworks at both regional and national levels.

3.5 Institutional and Operational Environment

The ACERWC operates within a multi-layered institutional ecosystem. Its effectiveness is influenced by coordination with AU organs, regional economic communities, Member States, NHRIs, CSOs, and development partners. The Committee is increasingly expected to:

- Align its mandate and operations with AU continental frameworks such as Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040.
- Strengthen the monitoring and reporting mechanisms for State Parties, ensuring compliance with the ACRWC.
- Promote harmonization and capacity-building across national institutions to institutionalize child rights in planning, budgeting, and policy-making.
- Foster multi-stakeholder partnerships to enhance technical capacity, resource mobilization, and normative guidance.
- Integrate emerging issues such as digital rights, climate change, health emergencies, and socio-economic inequalities into strategic planning.

Challenges in this environment include institutional fragmentation, resource limitations, limited technical capacity in some Member States, and uneven political commitment to child rights. Strengthening ACERWC's operational systems, digital infrastructure, and engagement frameworks is essential for achieving its mandate in this evolving landscape.

3.6 Opportunities and Strategic Imperatives

The evolving AU and continental landscape presents several opportunities for ACERWC to enhance its impact:

- Leveraging AU frameworks (Agenda 2063, Agenda 2040) to align Member States' national plans with continental priorities for children.
- Expanding partnerships with RECs, NHRIs, CSOs, and international partners to amplify impact and share best practices.
- Utilizing digital technologies for monitoring, reporting, advocacy, and child participation.
- Addressing emerging child rights risks proactively, including climate change, pandemics, forced migration, and digital exploitation.
- Strengthening State Party reporting and compliance through technical support, capacity-building, and standardized frameworks.

Strategically, the Committee must enhance coordination, monitoring, and advocacy while embedding child rights into all AU institutional operations and development agendas. This requires a proactive, evidence-driven, and collaborative approach, ensuring that children's rights remain central to Africa's continental development and governance priorities.

3.7. SWOT Analysis

Strengths

Weaknesses

<p>1. Legal mandate under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) providing normative authority.</p>	<p>1. Uneven implementation of the Charter across Member States.</p>
<p>2. Established institutional frameworks, including Thematic Working Groups, Special Mechanisms, Country and Special Rapporteurs.</p>	<p>2. Limited financial and human resources to scale operations continent-wide.</p>
<p>3. Strong partnerships with NHRIs, CSOs, AU organs, and international partners.</p>	<p>3. Low compliance and reporting rates from State Parties.</p>
<p>4. Recognition and visibility across Africa, including ratification of ACRWC by 51 Member States and celebration of the Day of the African Child.</p>	<p>4. Weak institutional capacity in some Member States for implementing child-focused policies and frameworks.</p>
<p>5. Expertise in advocacy, technical guidance, and capacity-building for child rights promotion.</p>	<p>5. Limited disaggregated data on marginalized children (e.g., children with disabilities, displaced children).</p>
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p>

1. Alignment with AU continental frameworks (Agenda 2063, Agenda 2040) for integrated policy influence.	1. Political instability, conflicts, and humanitarian crises affecting children.
2. Expanding use of digital platforms for monitoring, reporting, and child participation.	2. Climate change and extreme weather events are increasing vulnerabilities.
3. Growing global and continental awareness of child rights and social justice issues.	3. Emerging risks such as online exploitation, cyber abuse, and digital inequalities.
4. Strengthening multi-stakeholder engagement, including with RECs, CSOs, and international partners.	4. Persistent poverty, gender disparities, and harmful cultural practices limit child development.
5. Potential for innovative financing mechanisms and resource mobilization strategies.	5. Weak institutional alignment among AU organs and Member States is hindering coordinated action.

3.8. PESTLE Analysis

Factor	Implications for ACERWC
Political	AU Member States' commitment to child rights influences compliance; political instability, governance gaps, and conflicts affect the

	implementation of programs and child protection. Alignment with AU organs is critical for legitimacy and advocacy.
Economic	Limited national budgets for child-focused programs, poverty, and economic inequalities constrain resources for implementation. Opportunities exist for resource mobilization, innovative financing, and public-private partnerships.
Social	Socio-cultural norms, gender inequality, harmful traditional practices (e.g., FGM, child marriage), and marginalization of children with disabilities affect rights realization. Increased awareness campaigns can shift social attitudes and promote inclusion.
Technological	Digital platforms enable remote monitoring, reporting, child participation, and advocacy. Risks include digital exploitation, cyberbullying, and unequal access to technology among children.
Legal/Regulatory	The ACRWC provides a strong normative framework; however, gaps in domestic legislation and enforcement limit implementation. Harmonization of laws across Member States is critical.

Environmental	Climate change, extreme weather events, and natural disasters disproportionately affect children, increasing vulnerability, displacement, food insecurity, and health risks. ACERWC needs to integrate climate resilience into child protection strategies.
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3.9. ACERWC SWOT Mapped to the 7-S Framework

7-S Element	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Strategy (long-term plans and objectives)	Strong normative mandate via the ACRWC; advocacy campaigns aligned with AU priorities.	Implementation gaps across Member States; low State Party compliance with reporting.	Align strategic objectives with AU continental frameworks (Agenda 2063, Agenda 2040) and emerging priorities (climate change, digital safety).	Political instability in Member States hinders strategy execution; lack of prioritization of child rights in national agendas.

Structure (organizational setup, governance)	Well-established institutional frameworks : Thematic Working Groups, Special Mechanisms, Rapporteurs.	Limited capacity in some Member States; fragmented coordination with NHRIs, CSOs, and AU organs.	Expand partnerships with RECs, NHRIs, CSOs, and AU departments for better integration and coordination.	Weak institutional alignment across AU organs and Member States may limit cohesive action.
Systems (processes and procedures)	Established reporting guidelines and digital platforms for engagement and monitoring.	Low compliance in State Party reporting; insufficient data collection and disaggregation.	Leverage technology for real-time monitoring, reporting dashboards, and evidence-based decision-making.	Digital divide, cybersecurity risks, and inconsistent data quality may affect systems efficiency.
Shared Values (core)	Strong commitment	Limited awareness or	Promote continental	Persisting harmful

<p>principles, mission, culture)</p>	<p>nt to children's rights, welfare, and equity; recognition of marginalize d groups.</p>	<p>prioritization of child rights in some Member States' policies.</p>	<p>awareness campaigns to strengthen cultural and institutional buy-in for child rights.</p>	<p>cultural practices (child marriage, FGM) and gender inequality threaten the adoption of shared values.</p>
<p>Skills (capabilities , expertise)</p>	<p>Expertise in advocacy, technical guidance, capacity-building, monitoring, and reporting.</p>	<p>Human resource limitations and talent gaps in Secretariat and Member States.</p>	<p>Capacity-building initiatives and professional development for staff and partners.</p>	<p>Brain drain, limited local expertise, and uneven technical skills across regions may impede effectiveness.</p>
<p>Style (leadership approach)</p>	<p>Leadership is committed to participato</p>	<p>Leadership is influenced by resource and institutional constraints.</p>	<p>Strengthen strategic leadership in coordinatio</p>	<p>Bureaucratic inertia and political interference can reduce</p>

	ry, evidence-based, and child-focused approaches.		n with AU organs and high-level advocacy.	leadership effectiveness.
Staff (human resources)	Dedicated Secretariat staff and specialized personnel in child rights and welfare.	Insufficient staffing to manage continent-wide initiatives; high workload.	Recruit and retain skilled professionals; leverage volunteers and partner networks for technical support.	Staff shortages, resource constraints, and uneven capacity may slow implementation.

3.10. Implications for the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan

The situational and contextual analysis shows that the ACERWC operates in a dynamic and increasingly complex environment shaped by political, economic, social, technological, legal, and environmental factors affecting children across Africa. These realities require a focused and

adaptive Strategic Plan that strengthens protection, promotes rights, and delivers measurable impact.

- 1. Alignment with Continental Frameworks.** The Plan must align with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040 to ensure child rights are embedded in broader continental development priorities and responses to emerging challenges such as climate change and digital risks.
- 2. Institutional Strengthening.** Strengthening and adequately resourcing internal structures and coordination with AU organs, RECs, CSOs, and NHRIs is essential to reduce fragmentation and improve delivery.
- 3. Data and Evidence Systems.** Prioritising digitised, disaggregated, and standardised data systems will enable evidence-based decision-making, improved compliance tracking, and stronger accountability.
- 4. Shared Values and Social Norms.** Sustained advocacy is needed to address harmful practices and embed child rights values across institutions and communities.
- 5. Capacity Development.** Targeted investments in skills development for staff, Member States, and partners are critical to improving implementation and responsiveness to emerging issues.
- 6. Leadership and Governance.** Strong, coordinated, and evidence-driven leadership is required to enhance influence, strengthen partnerships, and keep child rights high on continental agendas.

- 7. Human Resources and Talent Management.** Improved recruitment, retention, and use of technical expertise and partnerships are needed to address capacity gaps and strengthen delivery.
- 8. Risk and Resilience.** Embedding risk management and contingency planning is essential to ensure operational continuity and sustained protection of children in volatile contexts.

CHAPTER 4: STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND FRAMEWORK

4.1 Strategic Intent

The plan recognizes that achieving sustainable impact requires rethinking the ACERWC business model. Challenges such as low compliance with State reporting obligations, under-resourced operations, limited engagement with key stakeholders, and uneven regional representation of CSOs must be addressed through a combination of capacity strengthening, strategic partnerships, resource mobilization, and innovative operational mechanisms.

4.2. Vision

An Africa where all children are protected, empowered, and able to thrive."

4.3. Mission Statement

To promote, protect, and uphold the rights and welfare of African children by guiding, monitoring, and strengthening the implementation of the African Children's Charter.

4.4. Core Values

For the **ACERWC 2026–2028 Strategic Plan**, the core values reflect the Committee's mandate, operational ethos, and alignment with African Union principles and Agenda 2063 aspirations. The core values that guide the strategic direction are as follows:

1. **Child-Centeredness:** Prioritizing the rights, welfare, and voices of children in all decisions, policies, and interventions.
2. **Integrity:** Upholding honesty, transparency, and accountability in all operations and engagements.
3. **Excellence:** Commitment to high standards, evidence-based approaches, and impactful interventions across all programs.
4. **Collaboration and Partnership:** Fostering meaningful cooperation with governments, AU organs, civil society, and international partners to advance children's rights.
5. **Inclusiveness:** Ensuring participation and representation of all stakeholders, including marginalized and vulnerable children, in policy-making and implementation.
6. **Innovation:** Encouraging creative and adaptive solutions to emerging challenges affecting children's rights and welfare.
7. **Equity and Justice:** Promoting fairness, non-discrimination, and respect for human rights in all activities and decisions.
8. **Accountability:** Responsibility to stakeholders, including African governments, civil society, and the children themselves, with measurable results and transparent reporting.

4.5. Strategic Themes, Objectives, And Actions

4.5.1. Strategic Themes

The ACERWC Strategy for 2026–2028 is anchored on four interrelated strategic themes that reflect the Committee's mandate, mandate-

driven priorities, and stakeholder expectations. Each theme shall be accompanied by corresponding strategic objectives and indicative interventions.

i. Strategic Theme 1: Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights.

This theme reflects ACERWC's core mandate to promote and protect children's rights under the African Children's Charter. It focuses on awareness, prevention of violations, and safeguarding mechanisms to ensure children's rights are respected in practice across Member States.

ii. Strategic Theme 2: Monitoring and Accountability for Rights Implementation.

This theme supports ACERWC's oversight role by strengthening State reporting, follow-up, and compliance systems. It aims to close implementation gaps and ensure States are held accountable for their obligations under the Charter.

iii. Strategic Theme 3: Legal and Policy Interpretation and Guidance.

This theme covers ACERWC's normative function of interpreting the Charter through General Comments, guidelines, and studies. It promotes legal clarity and harmonised application of child rights standards across Africa.

iv. Strategic Theme 4: Strategic Partnerships and Continental Engagement.

This theme strengthens collaboration with AU organs, RECs, Member States, CSOs, and partners. It enhances coordination, resource mobilisation, and the integration of child rights into broader continental agendas.

4.6. Strategic Objectives And Actions

This section presents the strategic objectives and actions. Each objective is organised in a logical sequence that begins with a rationale explaining the context and key challenges, followed by the legal and policy basis anchoring the objective within the African Children's Charter and related frameworks, and then the expected impact outlining the intended results. This is followed by clearly defined strategic actions that translate intent into implementation priorities. In this way, all strategic objectives are systematically framed to ensure coherence, alignment with the ACERWC mandate, and a clear link between challenges, legal obligations, expected outcomes, and practical interventions.

SO1: Strengthen Legal, Normative, and Policy Frameworks for Child Rights in Africa

Rationale

Despite widespread ratification of the African Children's Charter, gaps persist in domestication, implementation, and harmonisation of child rights standards across Member States. Fragmented legal frameworks, weak enforcement, and emerging child rights challenges (digital harms, conflict-related violations, harmful practices) require a stronger normative and interpretive role by ACERWC to guide States and ensure coherence across jurisdictions.

Legal Basis

- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Articles 1, 42)

- Agenda 2040 on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in Africa
- AU Constitutive Act (Articles 3 and 4 on human rights promotion)
- ACERWC Mandate under Article 42(a)–(c)
- Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (interpretation principles)
- Relevant AU Model Laws and policy instruments

Expected Impact

- Increased ratification, domestication, and compliance with the Charter
- Harmonised child rights legal frameworks across Member States
- Strengthened normative clarity through General Comments and guidelines
- Improved regional coherence in child rights standards
- Evidence-based legal reform informed by comparative research

Strategic actions

The committee will implement the following strategic actions to achieve the intentions of the strategic objective:

Ratification, Domestication, and Legal Alignment

- 1.1 Conduct targeted high-level advocacy missions to accelerate ratification, domestication, and withdrawal of reservations to the Charter.
- 1.2 Support Member States in aligning national legal frameworks with the African Children's Charter and Agenda 2040 commitments.

- 1.3 Provide technical assistance for legislative reform, policy review, and legal harmonization processes.
- 1.4. Advocate and strengthen the mainstreaming of the African Union Child Safeguarding policy into the AU and its mechanisms

Normative Development and Interpretation

- 1.5 Develop and adopt General Comments on priority provisions of the Charter to strengthen legal clarity and guidance.
- 1.6 Issue policy guidelines on emerging child rights issues, including digital rights, SRHR, education, and harmful practices.
- 1.7 Respond to formal requests for interpretation and legal clarification from Member States and AU organs.

Legal Research, Comparative Analysis, and Model Laws

- 1.8 Promote and support comparative legal studies and the development of model laws.
- 1.10. Undertake a study on the recruitment of children by Armed groups in the conflict zone
- 1.11. Undertake a Study to Assess the Child Rights Structure of National Parliaments in Africa
- 1.12. Undertake research and development of other studies focused on selected thematic areas to generate evidence-based findings and recommendations.

Regional Legal Harmonization and Cooperation

- 1.13 Strengthen collaboration with RECs and all other Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to harmonize the implementation of child rights standards across Africa.
- 1.14 Convene periodic regional coordination forums and technical dialogues to align legal frameworks, share best practices, and address cross-border challenges.
- 1.15 Co-develop and implement joint frameworks, action plans, and monitoring mechanisms to support harmonized domestication and enforcement of child rights standards.

SO2: Strengthen Monitoring, Accountability, Enforcement, and Implementation of Child Rights Obligations

Rationale

Weak compliance with reporting obligations, limited enforcement of recommendations, and insufficient follow-up mechanisms undermine the effectiveness of the African Children's Charter. Strengthening monitoring and accountability systems is essential to ensure that State obligations translate into measurable improvements in children's rights.

Legal Basis

- African Children's Charter (Articles 21, 22, 43, 44)
- ACERWC State Reporting Guidelines
- AU Results-Based Management Framework
- AU Human Rights Architecture (APRM, AGA frameworks)

- General Comment No. 5 (State obligations under the Charter)

Expected Impact

- Improved quality and timeliness of State Party reporting
- Strengthened compliance with ACERWC recommendations and decisions
- Enhanced enforcement of child rights obligations at the national level
- Increased transparency through compliance reporting systems
- Stronger integration of ACERWC findings into AU accountability mechanisms

Strategic Actions

During the strategic planning period, the following actions will be implemented by the Committee and its stakeholders:-

State Reporting and Compliance Systems

- 2.1 Strengthen State Party reporting systems using standardized templates and intersectional, gender-responsive analytical tools.
- 2.2 Review State reports and issue timely, evidence-based concluding observations and recommendations.
- 2.3 Monitor compliance with reporting obligations, deadlines, and submission quality.

Follow-up, Evaluation, and Field Oversight

- 2.4 Conduct follow-up, implementation, and fact-finding missions to assess State compliance.
- 2.5 Hold implementation hearings and structured country-level performance reviews.
- 2.6 Conduct structured advocacy missions to support the implementation of recommendations.

Special Procedures and Thematic Mechanisms

- 2.7 Operationalize Special Rapporteurs, working groups, and thematic mechanisms to address priority child rights issues.
- 2.8 Strengthen urgent appeals, investigative procedures, early warning, and rapid response mechanisms for serious violations.

Compliance Tracking and Accountability Systems

- 2.9 Develop compliance indicators, dashboards, and digital tracking systems for monitoring State obligations.
- 2.10 Monitor implementation of communications decisions and recommendations systematically.
- 2.11 Advocate for full integration of ACERWC decisions into regional accountability frameworks (APRM, PAP, RECs).
- 2.12 Publish periodic compliance and performance reports to enhance transparency and accountability.

SO3: Enhance Accessibility, Public Engagement, Child Participation, and Inclusive Governance

Rationale

Limited awareness of the African Children's Charter, procedural barriers, and weak child participation mechanisms constrain access to justice and inclusion. Strengthening outreach, accessibility, and participation ensures that children and stakeholders meaningfully engage with ACERWC processes and influence child rights governance.

Legal Basis

- African Children's Charter (Articles 4, 12, 17, 44)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (participation principles)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 12–17)
- AU Child Safeguarding Policy
- Agenda 2040 Goal 8 (Child Participation)

Expected Impact

- Increased awareness and utilization of ACERWC mechanisms
- Strengthened child participation in governance processes
- Improved accessibility of child rights information and procedures
- Enhanced protection of complainants and rights-holders
- Greater visibility of ACERWC jurisprudence and decisions

Strategic actions

The following actions will be implemented to achieve the intentions of this strategic objective:-

Communication, Awareness, and Outreach

- 3.1 Implement continent-wide communication and outreach strategies on child rights and ACERWC mandates.
- 3.2 Produce simplified, child-friendly, and multilingual materials on the Charter, decisions, and procedures.
- 3.3 Disseminate key decisions, jurisprudence, and best practices, including Day of the African Child visibility initiatives.
- 3.4. Produce ACERWC communication materials and maintain the ACERWC's website and Digital platform
- 3.5. Promote the full operationalization and utilization of the ACEWRC communications procedure to enable Member States and authorized actors to submit and address complaints on child rights violations.
- 3.6. Strengthen awareness, capacity, and accessibility of the Communications Procedure
- 3.7. Advocate for measures to reduce procedural delays, strengthen State responsiveness, and establish safeguards to protect complainants from reprisals, particularly in sensitive child rights cases.

- 3.8. Strengthen coordination among stakeholders, mobilize resources to support engagement with the procedure, and establish robust systems for tracking and following up on the implementation of decisions.
- 3.9. Establish a Working Group on Communications to support and streamline the Committee's communications procedure in the discharge of its protective mandate.
- 3.10. Strengthen gender-sensitive and child-friendly procedures, including safe and confidential reporting avenues for violations

Capacity Building and Knowledge Systems

- 3.11. Promote sustained capacity development and knowledge exchange on child rights and the Communications Procedure among key stakeholders.
- 3.12. Advocate for the institutionalization of child rights and ACERWC procedures within academic, legal, and professional training frameworks.
- 3.13. Advance the development and use of integrated digital knowledge platforms to enhance access, learning, and dissemination of child rights standards and jurisprudence.
- 3.14. Foster regional communities of practice to strengthen advocacy, strategic litigation, and coordinated engagement on child rights.

Child Participation and Governance Systems

- 3.15. Institutionalize meaningful child participation across ACERWC processes and engagements.
- 3.16. Promote and guide the development of child-led governance and participation structures within Member States, such as through child Parliaments.
- 3.17. Advocate for the mainstreaming of child participation within national and regional monitoring, evaluation, and policy frameworks.
- 3.18. Strengthen the adoption and implementation of continental standards and guidelines on child participation across Member States.
- 3.19. Leverage child participation to inform and shape continental advocacy and child rights agendas.

SO4: Strengthen Communications, Case Management, Protection Systems, and Strategic Partnerships

Rationale

Effective protection of children's rights requires efficient case management systems, strong protection mechanisms, and coordinated partnerships. Current fragmentation in systems and limited institutional coordination reduce the responsiveness and impact of ACERWC decisions and interventions.

Legal Basis

- African Children's Charter (Articles 16, 17, 44)
- ACERWC Communications Procedure
- AU Protocol on Human Rights Systems Coordination
- AU Data Protection and Governance Principles
- UN Guidelines on Child Justice and Protection

Expected Impact

- Improved efficiency and transparency in case handling
- Strengthened protection of complainants and vulnerable groups
- Enhanced coordination across AU, UN, and regional actors
- Increased implementation of ACERWC decisions
- Stronger continental child rights knowledge and accountability ecosystem

Strategic actions

To achieve the intentions of this strategic objective, the following actions will be implemented by ACEWRC and other partners:

Case Management, Efficiency, and Procedural Systems

- 4.1 Modernize and institutionalize integrated case management systems to enhance efficiency, transparency, and accountability in the handling of communications.
- 4.2 Strengthen compliance with procedural standards and timelines to ensure timely and effective adjudication and follow-up of communications.

- 4.3 Enhance internal coordination and workflow systems to improve institutional efficiency and reduce case backlogs.
- 4.4 Promote transparency and trust through structured communication and information-sharing with parties to communications.

Access to Justice and Protection of Rights Holders

- 4.5 Strengthen safeguards and standards to ensure confidentiality, protection against reprisals, and the safety of complainants and rights-holders.
- 4.6 Promote equitable access to the Communications Procedure through strengthened legal and technical support frameworks.
- 4.7 Advance the simplification and accessibility of procedures to enable effective engagement by diverse rights-holders.
- 4.8 Promote linguistic inclusivity and accessibility of ACERWC mechanisms and materials.
- 4.9 Address systemic, socio-cultural, and structural barriers that limit access to justice for children.
- 4.10 Prioritize inclusive engagement strategies to reach vulnerable, marginalized, and high-risk groups.

Strategic Partnerships and Ecosystem Coordination

- 4.11 Strengthen strategic collaboration with AU organs, UN agencies, CSOs, NHRIs, RECs, and academic institutions to advance child rights.
- 4.12 Promote joint continental initiatives in research, advocacy, litigation, and policy development.
- 4.13 Institutionalize multi-stakeholder engagement platforms to enhance coordination and collective action.
- 4.14 Contribute to and shape continental knowledge systems and human rights reporting frameworks.
- 4.15 Leverage strategic partnerships to mobilize sustainable technical, financial, and institutional support.

Multilateral Engagement and Institutional Coordination

- 4.16 Strengthen institutional coordination across AU organs and mechanisms to advance coherent child rights agendas.
- 4.17 Enhance engagement with international and regional human rights systems to reinforce the implementation of child rights standards.
- 4.18 Contribute strategically to continental human rights knowledge production and accountability frameworks.

4.19 Promote alignment and collaboration within the African Governance Architecture (AGA) and African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

4.20 Institutionalize and operationalise structured engagement with civil society, NHRIs, and RECs to strengthen accountability and implementation of child rights standards.

SO5: Strengthen Institutional Governance, Risk Management, Financial Integrity, and Operational Effectiveness

Rationale

Institutional audits and operational assessments highlight structural gaps in governance, financial management, HR systems, and risk management. Strengthening institutional systems is essential to ensure credibility, autonomy, efficiency, and sustainability of ACERWC in fulfilling its mandate.

Legal Basis

- African Children's Charter (Article 42)
- AU Financial Rules and Regulations
- AU Staff Regulations and Rules
- AU Internal Audit and Risk Management Framework
- AU Results-Based Management System
- Host Country Agreement provisions

Expected Impact

- Strengthened institutional independence and governance credibility
- Improved financial accountability and transparency
- Enhanced risk management and internal controls
- More efficient recruitment and HR systems
- Improved planning, budgeting, and performance reporting

Strategic actions

To achieve the strategic objective, the following actions will be implemented during the period of the strategic plan:

Governance, Institutional Autonomy, and Compliance

- 5.1 Strengthen institutional autonomy and legal standing of ACERWC within the African Union system, including full implementation of Host Country Agreement obligations.
- 5.2 Enhance financial governance and sustainability frameworks to support effective, transparent, and independent management of ACERWC resources and obligations.
- 5.3 Reinforce internal governance, accountability, and compliance systems in alignment with AU administrative and financial regulations.
- 5.4 Institutionalize mechanisms for strategic leadership, continuity, and effective functioning of the Committee.

5.5 Promote harmonization and standardization of Committee member conditions of service within the AU system.

Financial Management and Budget Credibility

5.6 Strengthen strategic financial planning frameworks to ensure alignment between institutional priorities, resource allocation, and program delivery.

5.7 Enhance financial accountability and performance systems to support credible budgeting, efficient resource utilization, and evidence-based decision-making.

5.8 Promote sustainable and predictable financing through strengthened Member State contributions and diversified resource mobilization strategies.

5.9 Reinforce fiduciary oversight and compliance systems to ensure transparency and effective management of institutional and partner resources.

Planning, Performance Management, and Data Integrity

5.10 Strengthen integrated planning and performance management systems to align targets, resources, and implementation capacity.

5.11 Enhance data governance and quality assurance frameworks to ensure the credibility, reliability, and integrity of institutional performance information.

5.12 Institutionalize results-based monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to support adaptive management and accountability.

5.13. Plan for the mid-term evaluation and end-term evaluation of the 2026-2028 strategic plan

Risk Management and Internal Control Systems

5.14 Institutionalize a comprehensive enterprise risk management framework to proactively identify, assess, and mitigate institutional risks.

5.15 Strengthen internal control and assurance systems to safeguard financial integrity, operational effectiveness, and compliance.

Human Resources and Organizational Capacity

5.16 Strengthen strategic human resource management systems to ensure timely recruitment, transparency, and alignment of workforce capacity with institutional mandate.

5.17 Enhance organizational capacity through integrated workforce planning, performance management, and strengthened coordination within AU systems.

5.18 Strengthen leadership and management capacity to drive institutional performance, accountability, and strategic delivery.

5.19 Foster an organizational culture that promotes professionalism, ethical conduct, innovation, and results-based performance.

5.20 Enhance staff retention, motivation, and well-being frameworks to sustain institutional knowledge and performance continuity.

Systems Integration and Operational Efficiency

5.21 Promote integrated institutional systems and interoperability across financial, human resource, and performance management functions to support informed decision-making.

5.22 Strengthen institutional efficiency through streamlined processes, improved coordination, and robust system governance frameworks.

SO6: Strengthen Resource Mobilisation, Financial Sustainability, and Budget Efficiency

Rationale

ACERWC faces structural financing constraints characterized by low Member State contributions, heavy reliance on external partners, and limited budget flexibility. A sustainable financing model is required to ensure predictable resources and effective delivery of the Committee's mandate.

Legal Basis

- African Children's Charter (Article 42 on resource adequacy for mandate delivery)
- AU Kigali Decision on Financing the Union (2016)
- AU Resource Mobilisation Strategy (2024–2028)
- AU Financial Rules and Contribution Mechanisms
- AU Agenda 2063 Financing Framework

Expected Impact

- Increased and predictable Member State contributions
- Reduced dependency on external donor funding
- More balanced and programmatic budget structure
- Improved financial resilience and sustainability
- Enhanced efficiency and impact of resource utilization

Strategic actions

The strategic objective will be achieved through the implementation of the following actions:-

Strengthening Member State Financing and Budget Alignment

6.1 Strengthen advocacy for predictable, sustainable, and assessed contributions from Member States to ensure full financing of the ACERWC core mandate, in line with AU financing principles.

6.2 Enhance engagement with AU policy organs, including the PRC Sub-Committee on Budget and AUC structures, to secure adequate prioritization of ACERWC within the AU programme budget framework.

6.3 Promote alignment of resource allocation with strategic priorities by strengthening the programmatic orientation of ACERWC budgeting within AU planning and budgeting processes.

6.4 Reinforce compliance with AU financial governance frameworks, including Member State contribution obligations and established financing mechanisms.

Resource Mobilisation and Funding Diversification

6.5 Develop and operationalize a diversified resource mobilization framework aligned with the AU Resource Mobilisation Strategy (2024–2028), targeting strategic partners, philanthropic actors, and innovative financing sources.

6.6 Strengthen and institutionalize strategic partnerships with development partners to support delivery of ACERWC's mandate in line with AU priorities and results frameworks.

6.7 Leverage innovative and blended financing mechanisms to complement assessed contributions and enhance financial resilience.

Financial Sustainability and Risk Mitigation

6.8 Strengthen financial resilience by reducing dependency on single funding sources and enhancing the predictability of financing streams.

6.9 Institutionalize long-term financial sustainability planning aligned with ACERWC strategic priorities and the AU Strategic Plan (2024–2028).

6.10 Promote coherence between partner financing and ACERWC priorities to ensure alignment, impact, and reduced fragmentation of interventions.

Financial Sustainability, Value Optimization, and Strategic Resource Use

6.11 Institutionalize results-based budgeting and strategic resource allocation frameworks to strengthen alignment between resources, outputs, and impact.

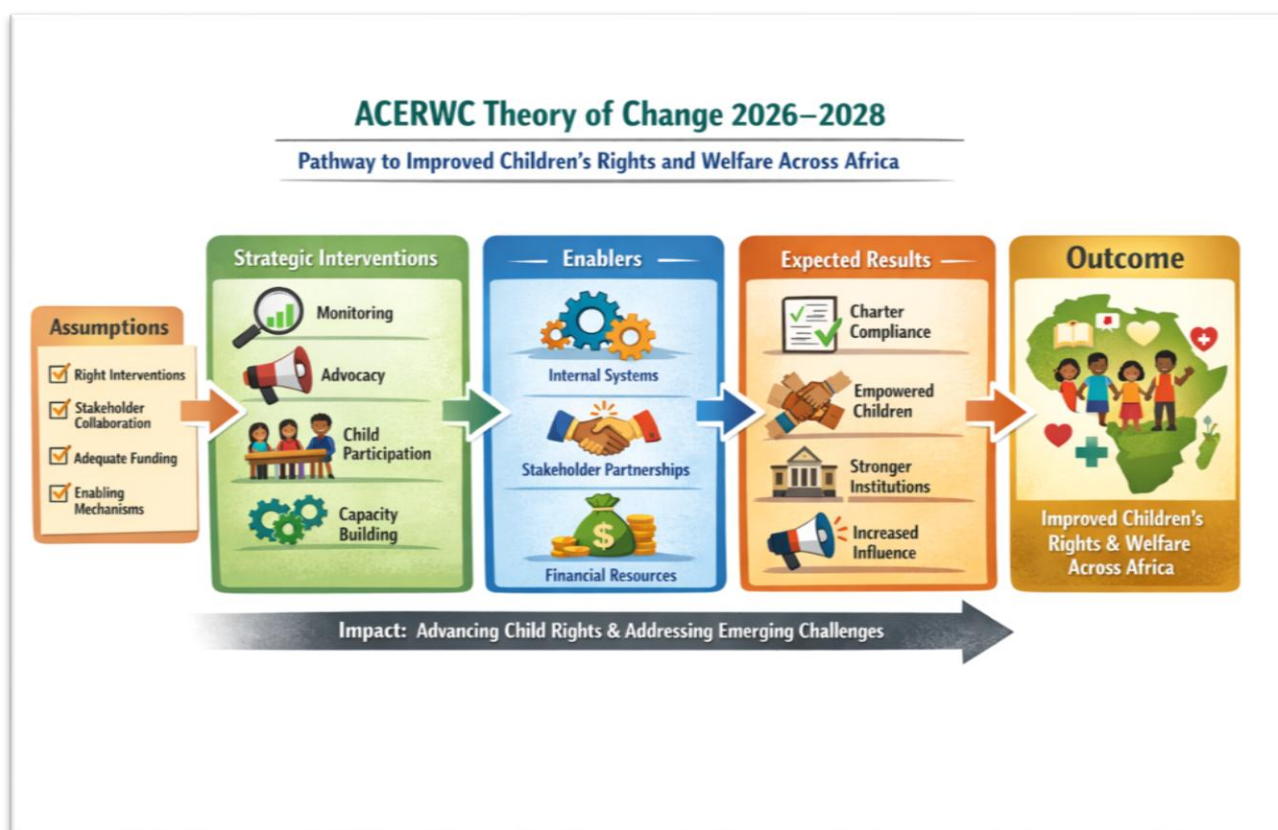
6.12 Strengthen value-for-money and expenditure efficiency systems to enhance effectiveness and accountability in the use of resources.

6.13 Enhance strategic financial intelligence systems, including funding gap analysis, scenario planning, and cost forecasting, to inform decision-making and resource mobilization.

6.14 Strengthen institutional capacity for strategic resource mobilization, financial diplomacy, and partnership engagement within the Secretariat.

4.7. Theory of Change

The ACERWC Theory of Change (ToC) articulates a clear pathway from strategic interventions to desired outcomes. This TOC is summarised in the figure below:-



4.8. Business Model

The proposed business model responds to persistent structural and operational challenges facing the ACERWC, including low State compliance with reporting obligations, weak implementation of recommendations, limited stakeholder engagement, and inadequate institutional and financial capacity at both national and regional levels. These constraints are further compounded by uneven CSO participation,

limited accessibility of key child rights instruments, and insufficient alignment of national legal and administrative frameworks with continental and international standards. Collectively, these gaps weaken accountability, coordination, and the overall effectiveness of child rights implementation across Member States.

In response, the model represents a strategic shift from a primarily norm-setting institution to one that is **implementation-focused, impact-driven, and partnership-oriented**. It places greater emphasis on closing the gap between continental commitments and national-level action by strengthening follow-up mechanisms, enhancing country engagement, and empowering Special Rapporteurs and thematic working groups to play a more active role in tracking and supporting implementation. This ensures that recommendations are not only issued but systematically monitored for uptake and results.



A core feature of the model is a strengthened **partnership and delivery ecosystem**, through which ACERWC leverages National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations, Regional Economic Communities, and other African Union organs to support implementation,

monitoring, and advocacy at national and community levels. This approach extends the Committee's reach while improving coordination,

reducing duplication, and enhancing grassroots impact. It is complemented by a robust **data-driven monitoring and evaluation system**, supported by digital tools to track reporting, compliance, and outcomes in real time, enabling evidence-based decision-making and continuous learning.

Finally, the model prioritizes **institutional strengthening and financial sustainability** to ensure long-term effectiveness. This includes improving internal systems, human resource capacity, and digital processes, while adopting a diversified resource mobilisation strategy involving Member State contributions, development partners, and innovative financing mechanisms. Enhanced governance, accountability, and operational efficiency are central to the reform, ensuring that ACERWC becomes more agile, sustainable, and capable of translating continental child rights commitments into measurable improvements in children's lives.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Introduction

The successful delivery of the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) will depend on clear institutional arrangements, coordinated stakeholder engagement, and strong accountability mechanisms. This chapter outlines how the Strategic Plan will be operationalised, including the roles of key actors, governance structures, coordination mechanisms, and enabling systems required to translate strategic objectives into measurable outcomes. The arrangements are designed to ensure efficiency, coherence, adaptability, and sustained impact in advancing children's rights across the continent.

5.2 Internal Implementation Arrangements

The Strategic Plan will be implemented following its formal approval and adoption through the ACERWC's governance structures. Implementation will be anchored in the Committee's mandate to promote, protect, and monitor the rights and welfare of children under the African Charter.

Internally, execution will be driven by a coordinated system involving the Committee, its Bureau, and the Secretariat. The Secretariat will serve as the **operational engine**, translating strategic priorities into annual workplans, programmes, and activities. Emphasis will be placed on ensuring that all internal processes are aligned with the Strategic Plan,

and that implementation remains responsive to evolving contexts and emerging priorities.

5.3 Key Implementation Actors and Roles

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be **multi-stakeholder in nature**, recognising that the realisation of children's rights requires coordinated action across different levels.

Table 4: Implementation Support Matrix

African Union Organs and Structures

Stakeholder	Key Roles and Responsibilities
African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child	Provide overall leadership, supervision, and coordination; offer normative guidance, oversight, and accountability; convene stakeholders; develop standards and guidelines
ACERWC Secretariat	Provide technical and logistical support; coordinate implementation; lead monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
Peace and Security Council (PSC)	Support implementation in conflict and post-conflict settings affecting children
Political Affairs, Peace and Security Department (PAPS)	Integrate child rights into peace and security frameworks; support child protection in conflict contexts

Health, Humanitarian and Social Development Department (HHS)	Support child rights interventions in humanitarian and social sectors; align policies
Office of Strategic Planning and Delivery (OSPD)	Provide technical support on planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
African Union Human Resources Management Directorate	Facilitate recruitment aligned with organizational structures
Directorate of Finance	Ensure budget disbursement; support financial reporting and risk management
Partnerships Management and Resource Mobilisation (PMRM)	Support resource mobilization and partnership development
Pan-African Parliament (PAP)	Support legislative alignment and advocacy at continental level
PRC & Sub-committees	Provide advisory and oversight support on policy and budgetary matters
ECOSOCC	Facilitate civil society engagement within AU processes
AGA-APSA Architecture	Support governance, peace, and security coordination relevant to child rights

Special Mandate Organs (e.g. Special Envoy on Children & Armed Conflict)	Provide thematic advocacy and high-level engagement
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Member States and National Actors

Stakeholder	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Member States	Align laws with the Charter; implement provisions; report to ACERWC; integrate child rights into planning and budgeting; implement recommendations; facilitate missions
Children	Participate in programs; engage through NHRIs/CSOs; contribute to advocacy and feedback

Regional and Sub-Regional Bodies

Stakeholder	Key Roles and Responsibilities
Regional Economic Communities (RECs/RMs)	Support regional implementation; facilitate coordination and policy harmonization

Human Rights and Civil Society Ecosystem

Stakeholder	Key Roles and Responsibilities
National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)	Advocacy; reporting; facilitate dialogue; support state reporting; monitor implementation

Network of African National Human Rights Institutions	Coordinate and strengthen NHRI engagement across Africa
Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions	Provide global standards, accreditation, and support to NHRIs
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)	Advocacy; awareness; reporting; community engagement; support implementation
Academic Institutions	Research; evidence generation, policy analysis; capacity building

International and Development Partners

Stakeholder		Key Roles and Responsibilities
UNICEF, Agencies, International & Regional Partners	UN	Provide technical and financial support; support country-level implementation; strengthen M&E systems; collect/share data; build capacity; support accountability frameworks; co-develop norms and standards; engage with Member States; participate in joint programming

5.4 Policy Oversight and Governance

Policy oversight for the Strategic Plan will be exercised through the ACERWC's **Ordinary Sessions**, which serve as the principal policy organs.

These sessions will review progress, provide strategic direction, and ensure alignment with the Committee's mandate.

The **Bureau of the Committee** will provide overall leadership and oversight of implementation. It will monitor progress, guide execution, and report regularly to the policy organs. The Bureau will also ensure coherence between strategic priorities and operational activities.

The **Executive Secretary** will play a critical strategic role by providing high-level guidance, facilitating coordination with African Union organs and departments, and strengthening partnerships with external stakeholders. This function is essential for positioning the Committee within the broader AU system and ensuring institutional influence.

5.5 Implementation Oversight and Coordination

Operational oversight will be anchored in the Bureau, which is responsible for **supervising and coordinating implementation**, including oversight of Secretariat functions such as work planning and budgeting.

The Secretariat will ensure **day-to-day execution**, providing technical and logistical support to the Committee and its mechanisms. Special Mechanisms such as working groups and rapporteurs will be deployed to deliver targeted outputs, including studies, thematic initiatives, and programme implementation.

Implementation will also rely on clearly defined roles across stakeholders:

- **Member States** will implement obligations under the Charter and facilitate in-country engagement.

- **NHRIs and CSOs** will monitor, advocate, and support reporting and implementation processes.
- **AU organs and RECs** will integrate child rights into regional and continental frameworks.
- **Partners** will provide technical, financial, and programmatic support.

A coordinated approach will be essential to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity of efforts across all actors.

5.6 Organisational Structure and Enablers

The organisational structure supporting implementation will be **inclusive, multi-lingual, regionally representative, and adaptive**, enabling the ACERWC to respond effectively to emerging challenges.

A system of **centralised coordination** will be established to ensure alignment across all initiatives. This coordinating mechanism will bring together representatives from different units within the Secretariat and will be empowered to guide implementation decisions.

In addition, **technical clusters or working groups** will be created around priority thematic areas, allowing for specialised focus and deeper technical engagement.

Implementation will be strengthened through key enablers:

- **Digital transformation**, to improve communication, monitoring, and reporting;

- **Capacity building**, through continuous training and knowledge-sharing;
- **Expanded partnerships**, to leverage expertise and resources;
- **Enhanced communication**, both internally and externally;
- **Collaboration frameworks**, linking Member States, CSOs, NHRIs, and AU organs;
- **Resource mobilisation**, ensuring sustainable financing;
- **Stakeholder engagement platforms**, enabling continuous dialogue and feedback.

These enablers directly respond to lessons from the previous Strategic Plan, particularly the need for stronger coordination, better monitoring systems, and improved institutional capacity.

CHAPTER 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

6.1 Purpose and Approach

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is central to ensuring the effective implementation of this Strategic Plan and the achievement of its intended results. The M&E framework provides a structured approach to track progress, assess performance, promote accountability, and support evidence-based decision-making.

The Committee will adopt a **results-based management approach**, focusing on measuring outputs, outcomes, and impact across all strategic objectives. Monitoring will be continuous, while evaluations will be conducted periodically to assess relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact.

6.2 M&E Framework

The M&E framework is anchored in the Strategic Objectives, Actions, and the Indicator Tracker outlined in this Plan. It establishes clear linkages between activities, outputs, and outcomes, supported by measurable indicators and defined reporting frequencies.

Key components include:

- Performance indicators aligned to each strategic action
- Defined data sources and means of verification
- Clear roles and responsibilities for data collection and reporting
- Periodic performance reviews and learning mechanisms

A centralized system will be developed to support data collection, analysis, and reporting, including digital dashboards to track implementation in real time.

6.3 Monitoring Mechanisms

Monitoring will be conducted at multiple levels to ensure comprehensive tracking of progress:

- **Routine Monitoring:** Continuous tracking of activities and outputs by the Secretariat using the Indicator Tracker.
- **Quarterly and Annual Reviews:** Periodic assessments of progress against planned targets, identifying challenges and corrective actions.
- **Field Missions and Follow-ups:** Country visits and engagement with Member States and stakeholders to validate progress and support implementation.
- **Stakeholder Feedback Mechanisms:** Inputs from children, civil society, NHRIs, and partners to assess effectiveness and relevance.

Monitoring findings will inform adaptive management and timely decision-making.

6.4 Evaluation

Evaluations will be conducted to provide an in-depth assessment of the Strategic Plan's performance and impact. These will include:

- **Mid-term Evaluation:** To assess progress, identify gaps, and inform necessary adjustments.
- **End-term Evaluation:** To evaluate overall performance, outcomes, and impact, and to generate lessons for future planning.

Evaluations will be conducted using participatory approaches, engaging key stakeholders, including Member States, partners, and children where appropriate.

6.5 Reporting

Regular reporting will ensure transparency, accountability, and effective communication of results. Key reporting mechanisms include:

- Quarterly and annual implementation reports
- Thematic and performance reports
- Reports to African Union policy organs and relevant stakeholders
- Public dissemination through publications, digital platforms, and media

All reports will be evidence-based and aligned with the indicators and reporting timelines defined in the M&E framework.

6.6 Roles and Responsibilities

The implementation of the M&E framework will involve multiple stakeholders:

- **ACERWC:** Provides oversight, strategic direction, and validation of performance reports.

- **Secretariat:** Leads coordination of M&E activities, data collection, analysis, and reporting.
- **Member States:** Provide data through reporting mechanisms and support monitoring processes.
- **Partners (CSOs, NHRIs, RECs, UN Agencies):** Contribute data, participate in evaluations, and support capacity building.

Clear accountability will be maintained through defined reporting lines and coordination mechanisms.

6.7 Learning and Adaptive Management

The M&E system will promote a culture of learning and continuous improvement. Findings from monitoring and evaluation processes will be used to:

- Inform strategic and operational decision-making
- Improve program design and implementation
- Strengthen accountability and transparency
- Share best practices and lessons learned across Member States and partners

Regular reflection and learning forums will be institutionalized to ensure that evidence is effectively translated into action.

6.8 Risk Management and Data Quality Assurance

To ensure credibility and reliability of the M&E system:

- Data quality assurance mechanisms will be established, including validation and verification processes
- Risks related to data gaps, delays, and inconsistencies will be identified and mitigated
- Capacity-building initiatives will be implemented to strengthen data management systems across stakeholders

6.9. Monitoring & Evaluation Indicator Tracker

SO1: Strengthen Legal, Normative, and Policy Frameworks for Child Rights in Africa

Cluster	Strategic Actions	Output Indicators	Outcome (Intermediate) Indicators
Ratification, Domestication & Legal Alignment	1.1–1.4	1.1.1 No. of advocacy missions conducted 1.1.2 No. of States ratifying/withdrawing reservations 1.1.3 No. of legal technical assistance interventions 1.1.4 No. of legal alignment processes supported	1.1.O1 Increased ratification and domestication of the Charter 1.1.O2 Improved alignment of national laws with Charter and Agenda 2040

Normative Development & Interpretation	1.5–1.7	1.2.1 No.of General Comments adopted 1.2.2 No.of policy guidelines issued 1.2.3 No.of legal interpretation requests processed	1.2.O1 Strengthened normative clarity on child rights obligations 1.2.O2 Improved consistency in the interpretation of Charter provisions
Legal Research & Model Laws	1.8, 1.10–1.12	1.3.1 No.of comparative legal studies completed 1.3.2 No.of model laws developed 1.3.3 No.of thematic research outputs produced	1.3.O1 Evidence-based legal reform processes strengthened 1.3.O2 Increased uptake of model laws and research findings
Regional Harmonisation & Cooperation	1.13–1.15	1.4.1 No.of regional coordination forums held 1.4.2 No.of joint frameworks developed with RECs 1.4.3 No.of harmonisation instruments adopted	1.4.O1 Improved harmonisation of child rights standards across regions 1.4.O2 Strengthened cross-border legal cooperation

SO2: Strengthen Monitoring, Accountability, Enforcement, and Implementation

Cluster	Strategic Actions	Output Indicators	Outcome (Intermediate) Indicators
State Reporting & Compliance Systems	2.1–2.3	2.1.1 No. of State reports reviewed 2.1.2 No. of concluding observations issued 2.1.3 % compliance with reporting deadlines	2.1.O1 Improved quality and timeliness of State reporting 2.1.O2 Strengthened compliance with Charter obligations
Follow-up & Field Oversight	2.4–2.6	2.2.1 No. of country missions conducted 2.2.2 No. of implementation hearings held 2.2.3 No. of advocacy missions conducted	2.2.O1 Improved implementation of ACERWC recommendations 2.2.O2 Strengthened State accountability at the national level

Special Procedures	2.7–2.8	2.3.1 No.of Special Rapporteur activities conducted 2.3.2 No.of urgent appeals processed	2.3.O1 Enhanced response to urgent child rights violations
Compliance Tracking Systems	2.9–2.12	2.4.1 No.of dashboards developed 2.4.2 No.of compliance reports published 2.4.3 % integration into AU accountability systems	2.4.O1 Increased transparency and accountability 2.4.O2 Strengthened AU-wide child rights monitoring

SO3: Accessibility, Public Engagement, Child Participation

Cluster	Strategic Actions	Output Indicators	Outcome (Intermediate) Indicators
Communication & Outreach	3.1–3.5	3.1.1 No.of awareness campaigns conducted 3.1.2 No.of materials produced/disseminated	3.1.O1 Increased awareness of ACERWC

		3.1.3 No.of digital platforms maintained	mandate 3.1.O2 Improved visibility of child rights jurisprudence
Communications Procedure & Protection	3.5–3.10	3.2.1 No.of communications received/processed 3.2.2 No.of protection measures implemented 3.2.3 # of procedural tools developed	3.2.O1 Improved access to justice mechanisms 3.2.O2 Strengthened protection of complainants
Capacity Building & Knowledge Systems	3.11–3.14	3.3.1 No.of trainings conducted 3.3.2 No.of institutions integrating ACERWC content 3.3.3 No.of knowledge platforms operational	3.3.O1 Strengthened institutional capacity on child rights 3.3.O2 Improved knowledge dissemination systems

Child Participation Systems	3.15–3.19	3.4.1 No.of child participation platforms supported 3.4.2 No.of consultations with children held 3.4.3 No.of guidelines implemented	3.4.O1 Increased child participation in governance 3.4.O2 Children's voices influencing continental policy
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SO4: Case Management, Protection Systems & Partnerships

Cluster	Strategic Actions	Output Indicators	Outcome (Intermediate) Indicators
Case Management Systems	4.1–4.4	4.1.1 No.of cases processed digitally 4.1.2 % cases resolved within timelines 4.1.3 No.of workflow systems upgraded	4.1.O1 Improved efficiency and transparency in case handling 4.1.O2 Reduced case backlog

Access to Justice & Protection	4.5–4.10	4.2.1 No.of protection measures applied 4.2.2 No.of legal aid interventions provided 4.2.3 No.of accessibility tools developed	4.2.O1 Improved access to justice for children 4.2.O2 Strengthened protection of vulnerable groups
Strategic Partnerships	4.11–4.15	4.3.1 No.of partnerships established 4.3.2 No.of joint initiatives implemented 4.3.3 No.of multi-stakeholder platforms held	4.3.O1 Enhanced coordination among child rights actors 4.3.O2 Improved resource and knowledge sharing
Institutional Coordination	4.16–4.20	4.4.1 No.of AU/UN coordination meetings 4.4.2 No.of joint frameworks developed	4.4.O1 Strengthened AU-wide coherence on child rights 4.4.O2 Enhanced integration into continental systems

SO5: Governance, Risk, HR, Systems & Institutional Effectiveness

Cluster	Strategic Actions	Output Indicators	Outcome (Intermediate) Indicators
Governance & Autonomy	5.1–5.5	5.1.1 No.of governance frameworks updated 5.1.2 % compliance with AU rules	5.1.O1 Strengthened institutional independence 5.1.O2 Improved governance credibility
Financial Management	5.6–5.9	5.2.1 Budget execution rate 5.2.2 No.of audit issues resolved	5.2.O1 Improved financial accountability 5.2.O2 Enhanced budget credibility
Planning & M&E	5.10–5.13	5.3.1 No.of performance reports produced 5.3.2 No.of evaluations conducted	5.3.O1 Strengthened evidence-based planning 5.3.O2 Improved performance tracking
Risk Management	5.14–5.15	5.4.1 No.of risk registers updated 5.4.2 # No.of	5.4.O1 Reduced institutional risks

		mitigation actions implemented	5.4.O2 Strengthened internal controls
HR & Capacity	5.16–5.20	5.5.1 % vacancies filled 5.5.2 No.of training programs delivered	5.5.O1 Improved workforce capacity 5.5.O2 Strengthened institutional culture
Systems Integration	5.21–5.22	5.6.1 No.of integrated systems operational 5.6.2 No.of efficiency tools deployed	5.6.O1 Improved operational efficiency 5.6.O2 Enhanced data-driven decision-making

SO6: Resource Mobilisation & Financial Sustainability

Cluster	Strategic Actions	Output Indicators	Outcome (Intermediate) Indicators
Member State Financing	6.1–6.4	6.1.1 % increase in assessed contributions 6.1.2 No. of AU engagement meetings held	6.1.O1 Improved predictability of funding 6.1.O2 Strengthened Member State

			financing compliance
Resource Mobilisation	6.5–6.7	6.2.1 No.of resource mobilisation strategies implemented 6.2.2 No.of partnerships secured	6.2.O1 Diversified funding base 6.2.O2 Reduced dependency on single donors
Financial Sustainability	6.8–6.10	6.3.1 No.of blended finance mechanisms developed 6.3.2 No.of financing instruments diversified	6.3.O1 Increased financial resilience 6.3.O2 Improved funding stability
Value Optimization	6.11–6.14	6.4.1 No.of VFM assessments conducted 6.4.2 No.of cost analyses/scenario models produced	6.4.O1 Improved resource efficiency 6.4.O2 Better alignment of resources to priorities

CHAPTER 7: RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

7.1 Introduction

The successful implementation of the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) will depend not only on effective execution but also on the ability to anticipate, manage, and mitigate risks that may hinder progress. This Risk Management Framework establishes a structured and proactive approach to identifying, assessing, monitoring, and responding to risks that could affect the achievement of the Strategic Plan's objectives.

The framework is designed to strengthen institutional resilience, accountability, and adaptability, ensuring that the Committee can respond effectively to both internal and external uncertainties while maintaining focus on its mandate.

7.2 Objectives of the Risk Management Framework

The primary objective of this framework is to ensure that risks are systematically managed in a way that supports effective implementation of the Strategic Plan. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Identify and assess potential risks that may impact implementation;
- Establish mitigation and response strategies;
- Strengthen institutional capacity for risk management;
- Promote a culture of proactive risk awareness and accountability;
- Ensure continuity and sustainability of programmes and operations.

7.3 Risk Management Approach

The ACERWC will adopt a **continuous and integrated risk management approach**, embedded within its planning, implementation, and monitoring processes. This approach includes four key steps:

1. **Risk Identification** – Systematic identification of potential risks across all strategic objectives and operational areas.
2. **Risk Assessment** – Analysis of the likelihood and potential impact of identified risks.
3. **Risk Mitigation** – Development and implementation of strategies to reduce or manage risks.
4. **Risk Monitoring and Review** – Ongoing tracking of risks and adjustment of mitigation measures as necessary.

7.4 Risk Categories

Risks affecting the implementation of the Strategic Plan are broadly categorised as follows:

- **Strategic Risks:** Risks affecting the achievement of core mandate objectives, including weak State compliance, limited political will, and shifting policy priorities.
- **Operational Risks:** Risks related to internal processes, capacity constraints, and inefficiencies in implementation.
- **Financial Risks:** Risks associated with inadequate or delayed funding, and over-reliance on external partners.
- **Reputational Risks:** Risks that may affect the credibility and legitimacy of the Committee.

- **External Risks:** Risks arising from factors beyond the Committee's control, such as conflicts, pandemics, or economic instability.
- **Partnership Risks:** Risks linked to coordination challenges, dependency on partners, and misalignment of priorities.

7.5 Key Strategic Risks and Mitigation Measures

The following table summarises the major risks identified, along with proposed mitigation strategies:

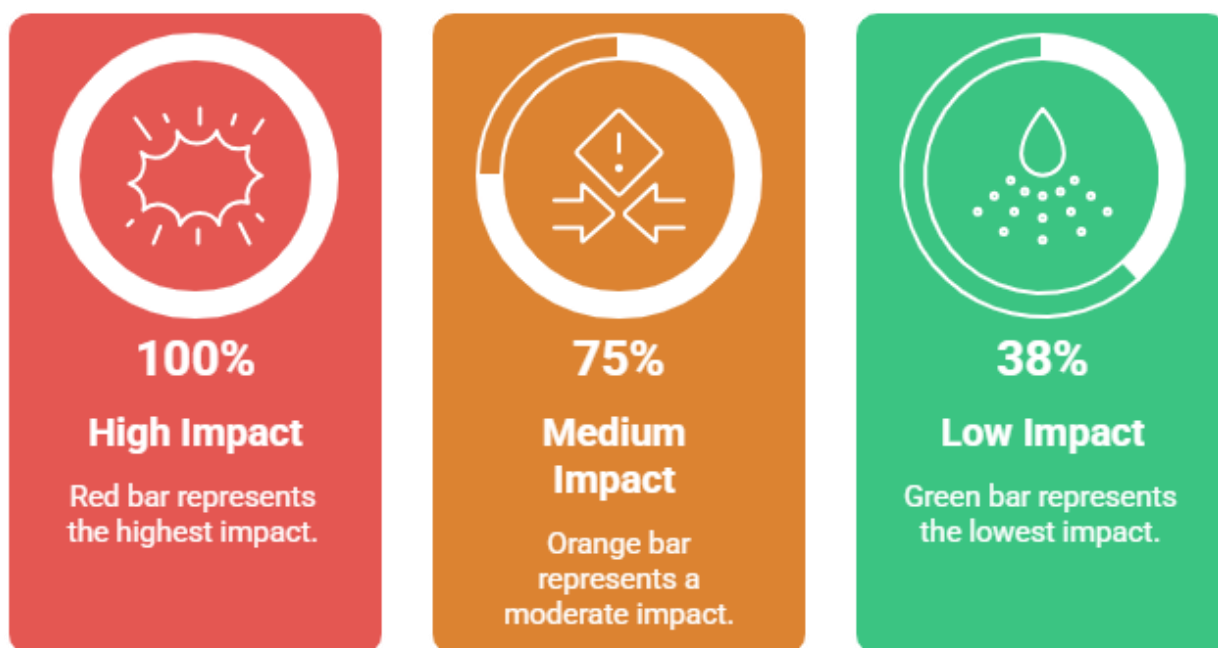
Risk		Description	Mitigation Measures
Weak compliance	State	Low reporting rates and poor implementation of decisions	Strengthen advocacy, introduce incentives, enhance follow-up mechanisms, and support capacity building for Member States
Limited resources	financial	Insufficient funding to implement planned activities	Diversify funding sources, strengthen resource mobilisation strategies, and improve financial planning
Capacity constraints		Limited human and technical capacity within the Secretariat	Invest in staff recruitment, training, and institutional capacity building

Over-reliance on partners	Dependence on a few partners for funding and implementation	Diversify partnerships and establish clear partnership frameworks
Weak monitoring and evaluation	Inadequate tracking of progress and results	Simplify M&E systems and integrate them into routine operations
Delays in Communications and reporting processes	Slow case finalisation and reporting cycles	Enforce timelines, streamline procedures, and strengthen coordination with stakeholders
Reputational risks	Perceived lack of effectiveness or independence	Enhance transparency, communication, and stakeholder engagement
External shocks (e.g. pandemics, conflicts)	Disruptions to planned activities and priorities	Develop contingency plans and adopt flexible implementation approaches

7.6 Risk Assessment Matrix

Risks will be **prioritized based on their likelihood and impact**, enabling the Committee to allocate resources to the most critical areas effectively.

Impact Levels:



7.7 Roles and Responsibilities in Risk Management

Effective risk management requires clearly defined roles across the institution:

- **The Committee and Bureau:** Provide overall oversight and ensure that risk management is integrated into strategic decision-making.
- **The Secretariat:** Lead the identification, assessment, and monitoring of risks, and implement mitigation measures.
- **Strategic Plan Steering Committee:** Monitor risk trends and ensure accountability in managing risks.
- **Member States and Partners:** Collaborate in mitigating risks related to implementation, particularly at national and regional levels.

This shared responsibility ensures that risk management is **institution-wide and collaborative**.

7.8 Risk Monitoring and Reporting

Risk management will be integrated into existing monitoring and reporting systems. This will include:

- Regular risk assessments as part of annual planning processes;
- Quarterly and annual reporting on risk status;
- Inclusion of risk analysis in performance reports;
- Periodic review and updating of the risk register.

7.9 Building a Risk-Aware Culture

A critical success factor for this framework is the promotion of a **risk-aware organisational culture**. This will be achieved through:

- Training and capacity building on risk management;
- Encouraging proactive identification and reporting of risks;
- Embedding risk considerations into decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 8: FINANCING MECHANISMS

8.1 Introduction

The effective implementation of the 2026–2028 Strategic Plan (SP) of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) is contingent upon the availability of adequate, predictable, and sustainable financial resources. This chapter outlines the financing framework that will support the delivery of the Strategic Plan, including funding sources, resource mobilisation strategies, financial management arrangements, and accountability mechanisms.

Recognising the financial constraints experienced during the previous strategic period, this framework places strong emphasis on diversification of funding sources, efficiency in resource utilisation, and strengthened financial governance.

8.2 Financing Principles

The financing of the Strategic Plan will be guided by the following key principles:

- **Sustainability:** Ensuring long-term and predictable funding to support continuous implementation;
- **Diversification:** Reducing over-reliance on a limited number of partners by broadening the funding base;
- **Alignment:** Ensuring that financial resources are aligned with strategic priorities and core mandate areas;

- **Efficiency and Value for Money:** Maximising impact through prudent and cost-effective use of resources;
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Upholding high standards of financial management and reporting;
- **Flexibility:** Allowing adaptive allocation of resources in response to emerging priorities and risks.

8.3 Financial Performance Trends (2021-2025)

The financial performance summary presents ACERWC's overall revenue, expenditure, surplus/deficit trends, and financial stability between 2021 and 2025. It shows a highly volatile revenue trajectory, with a peak in 2024 followed by a decline in 2025, reflecting inconsistent funding flows. Expenditure has closely mirrored revenue trends, indicating a largely consumption-driven budget structure with limited fiscal buffers. The surplus position has progressively weakened over time, shifting from a healthy surplus in 2021 to a near break-even position by 2024–2025, signalling reduced financial resilience and limited capacity to absorb funding shocks.

Table 5: Financial Performance Summary

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Trend Insight
Revenue (USD)	1.37M	1.26M	2.10M	2.21M	1.50M	Volatile, peak in 2024 then decline
Expenditure (USD)	1.19M	1.42M	1.96M	2.19M	1.48M	Closely tracks revenue

Surplus/Deficit	+182K	-165K	+144K	+27K	+25K	Shrinking surplus buffer
Financial Position	Strong	Weak	Stable	Break-even	Break-even	Low resilience phase

The revenue structure below illustrates the composition and stability of ACERWC's funding sources over the five years, distinguishing between AU-assessed contributions and donor funding. The data shows a clear transition from a predominantly AU-funded structure in 2021–2022 to a heavily donor-reliant model in 2023–2024, followed by a sharp collapse in donor funding in 2025, resulting in full dependence on AU financing. This shift highlights increasing funding risk and vulnerability, particularly due to high donor volatility and lack of predictable alternative financing mechanisms, ultimately exposing the institution to structural financial instability.

The budget performance matrix assesses the relationship between approved budgets and actual expenditure, reflecting implementation efficiency and absorption capacity. The period shows significant under-execution in 2021 and 2023, indicating institutional capacity constraints and challenges in translating budgets into deliverable outputs. Performance improves in 2022 and further stabilizes in 2024–2025, where variance narrows considerably, reflecting stronger financial discipline and improved budget execution systems. Overall, the trend suggests gradual strengthening of financial management practices, although earlier

inefficiencies highlight the need for continued improvements in planning accuracy and implementation capacity.

Table 6: Revenue Structure Matrix (Funding Dependence)

Year	AU Funding	Donor Funding	Total Revenue	Donor Share	Risk Level
2021	1.557M	0.114M	1.671M	6.8%	Low
2022	1.282M	0.196M	1.478M	13.3%	Low–Moderate
2023	1.673M	1.055M	2.728M	38.7%	High volatility
2024	1.571M	0.923M	2.494M	37.0%	High dependency
2025	1.581M	0	1.581M	0%	Structural risk

Table 7: Budget Performance Matrix (Efficiency vs Execution)

Year	Approved Budget	Actual Spend	Variance	% Variance	Interpretation
2021	1.671M	1.192M	+479K	29%	Under-execution
2022	1.478M	1.424M	+54K	4%	Strong alignment
2023	2.728M	1.955M	+773K	29%	Capacity constraints

2024	2.494M	2.187M	+307K	13%	Improving execution
2025	1.581M	1.477M	+104K	7%	Efficient control

The three-year budget (2026–2028) below provides a consolidated financial framework outlook for the implementation of ACERWC’s Strategic Plan across its six Strategic Objectives. It translates the Committee’s mandate under the African Children’s Charter into a costed plan aligned with the African Union’s 5% annual budget growth assumption. The budget is structured to ensure coherent allocation of resources across normative, monitoring, institutional, participation, and resource mobilisation functions, while maintaining fiscal discipline and predictable financing over the planning period.

Table 8: Consolidated Budget by Strategic Objective (3-Year Total)

Strategic Objective	2026	2027	2028	3-Year Total	Share
SO1: Legal & Normative Frameworks	279,000	293,400	290,700	863,100	17.7%
SO2: Monitoring & Accountability	341,000	358,600	393,300	1,092,900	22.4%
SO3: Accessibility & Participation	217,000	244,500	256,500	718,000	14.7%

SO4: Case Management & Partnerships	248,000	260,800	273,600	782,400	16.0%
SO5: Governance & Institutional Systems	279,000	277,100	290,700	846,800	17.3%
SO6: Resource Mobilisation & Sustainability	186,000	195,600	205,200	586,800	12.0%
TOTAL	1,550,000	1,630,000	1,710,000	4,890,000	100%

The budget is informed by historical financial trends characterized by revenue volatility, fluctuating donor dependency, and constrained implementation capacity. It therefore prioritizes stability, efficiency, and gradual institutional strengthening within a predictable funding envelope. The allocation framework reflects the need to reinforce core mandate functions, particularly legal development and compliance monitoring, while simultaneously investing in systems strengthening, accountability mechanisms, and stakeholder engagement. In addition, it responds to identified structural financing gaps by maintaining a dedicated focus on resource mobilisation and financial sustainability, ensuring that ACERWC is better positioned to deliver its mandate effectively and consistently over the strategic period.

8.4. Sources of Funding

The implementation of the Strategic Plan will be financed through a mix of **internal and external funding sources**, including:

8.4.1 African Union Budget

The primary source of funding will be allocations from the **African Union (AU) regular budget**, which supports the core operational functions of the ACERWC, including staffing, sessions, and mandated activities. Efforts will be made to advocate for **increased and more predictable budget allocations**, aligned with the Committee's expanding mandate.

8.4.2 Partner and Donor Funding

Development partners will continue to play a significant role in financing programme activities. These include:

- United Nations agencies (e.g., UNICEF and others);
- Bilateral and multilateral development partners;
- International and regional organisations;
- Foundations and philanthropic institutions.
- ACCP African Children Carter Project -SIDA project

8.4.3 Joint and Pooled Funding Mechanisms

Where feasible, the ACERWC will promote **joint programming and pooled funding arrangements** with partners and other AU organs. This approach will enhance coordination, reduce duplication, and improve resource efficiency.

8.4.4 In-kind Contributions

Support in the form of **technical expertise, secondments, training, and logistical assistance** from partners and stakeholders will complement financial contributions and strengthen implementation capacity.

8.4.5 Resource Mobilisation Strategy

To address funding gaps and ensure sustainability, the ACERWC will adopt a **proactive and structured resource mobilisation strategy**, which will include:

- **Development of a Resource Mobilisation Plan** aligned with the Strategic Plan priorities;
- **Strategic engagement with existing and new partners** to expand the funding base;
- **Strengthening visibility and communication** to position the ACERWC as a credible investment partner;
- **Leveraging evidence and results** to demonstrate impact and attract funding;
- **Exploring innovative financing approaches**, including blended financing and thematic funding windows;
- **Enhancing collaboration with AU organs and initiatives** to access joint funding opportunities.

8.5 Budgeting and Resource Allocation

The Strategic Plan will be operationalised through **annual and multi-year budgeting processes** aligned with its objectives and priorities. Resource allocation will be guided by:

- Strategic importance of programmes and activities;
- Expected impact and value for money;
- Availability of funding;
- Emerging priorities and contextual changes.

Budgets will be developed in line with **results-based budgeting principles**, ensuring a clear linkage between financial inputs and expected outputs and outcomes.

8.6 Financial Management and Controls

Financial management will be governed by **African Union financial rules and procedures**, ensuring robust systems for planning, expenditure, and reporting.

Key measures will include:

- Strengthening internal financial controls and compliance mechanisms;
- Ensuring timely disbursement and utilisation of funds;
- Enhancing coordination between programme and finance units;
- Conducting regular financial audits and reviews;
- Integrating risk management into financial planning.

8.7 Financial Accountability and Reporting

Transparency and accountability will be central to the financing framework. The ACERWC will ensure:

- **Regular financial reporting** to the Committee, AU organs, and partners;
- Integration of financial reporting into **performance and results reporting systems**;
- Clear tracking of expenditures against planned activities and outputs;
- Compliance with donor reporting requirements;
- Public disclosure of key financial information, where appropriate.

8.8 Cost Efficiency and Value Optimisation

Given resource constraints, the ACERWC will prioritise **cost efficiency and optimal use of available resources**. This will be achieved through:

- Prioritisation of high-impact activities;
- Increased use of digital platforms to reduce operational costs;
- Joint programming and shared services with partners;
- Streamlining administrative processes.

8.9 Financing Risks and Mitigation

The financing framework recognises several key risks, including:

- Dependence on external donor funding;
- Unpredictability of partner contributions;

- Budget shortfalls and delays;
- Competing funding priorities within the AU system.

Mitigation measures will include:

- Diversifying funding sources;
- Strengthening long-term partnerships;
- Improving financial planning and forecasting;
- Establishing contingency measures for funding gaps.

CHAPTER 9: CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS (CSFs)

9.1 Introduction

The successful implementation of the ACERWC Strategic Plan (2026–2028) relies on a combination of strategic enablers, robust systems, and collaborative partnerships. This chapter identifies the critical success factors (CSFs) that will underpin effective execution, ensure alignment with the Committee's mandate, and maximize impact for the rights and welfare of children across Africa. Recognizing these factors allows stakeholders to focus efforts on elements that are determinative to achieving strategic objectives.

9.2. Critical success factors

9.2.1. Strong Leadership and Governance.

Effective implementation of the Strategic Plan depends on strong leadership and governance anchored in clear accountability and strategic direction. This includes sustained commitment from the ACERWC Bureau and AU Policy Organs in providing oversight, guidance, and policy alignment to ensure institutional accountability and coherence with continental priorities. The Executive Secretary plays a central role in providing strategic leadership, facilitating coordination across AU organs and partners, and ensuring institutional positioning within the broader AU system. In addition, effective governance structures such as steering committees, technical working groups, and clear institutional hierarchies are essential to support timely decision-making, enhance coordination, and ensure efficient execution of strategic priorities.

9.2.2. Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration.

Successful implementation of the Strategic Plan requires sustained, inclusive, and well-coordinated engagement with a broad range of stakeholders. This includes Member States, National Human Rights Institutions, Civil Society Organizations, Regional Economic Communities, AU organs, UN agencies, development partners, and the private sector. Meaningful participation of children and other vulnerable and marginalized groups is also essential to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness of interventions. Strategic partnerships, institutionalized dialogue platforms, and structured feedback mechanisms such as consultations, forums, and surveys are critical for strengthening ownership, accountability, and collective action in advancing child rights across the continent.

9.2.3 Resource Availability and Financial Sustainability.

The availability of adequate, predictable, and sustainable financial resources is a critical determinant of successful implementation. The effectiveness of the Strategic Plan depends on diversified financing sources, including Member State contributions, AU budget allocations, development partner support, and innovative financing mechanisms. Equally important is the efficient and strategic allocation of resources to priority interventions, guided by results-based budgeting principles. Strong financial management systems are necessary to ensure transparency, accountability, and effective risk mitigation, thereby safeguarding the integrity and sustainability of program delivery.

9.2.4. Capacity and Competence of Implementing Teams.

The success of the Strategic Plan is closely linked to the capacity, competence, and readiness of implementing teams within the Secretariat and technical structures. This requires continuous investment in capacity development through structured training, knowledge exchange, and professional development initiatives. A skilled and well-coordinated Secretariat, supported by effective technical clusters, is essential for delivering specialized expertise and ensuring implementation efficiency. In addition, strengthening institutional memory and learning systems is critical to ensure that lessons from past implementation cycles inform improved performance and decision-making.

9.2.5. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEAL).

A robust Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning system is fundamental to ensuring results-based implementation and continuous improvement. This includes the use of clearly defined performance indicators aligned to strategic objectives, regular tracking of progress, and systematic reporting at all levels. Evidence-based decision-making should guide adaptive management and timely corrective actions. Institutionalizing learning mechanisms is equally important to ensure that lessons generated during implementation are systematically documented and used to inform future planning and strategic refinement.

9.2.6. Policy Alignment and Legal Frameworks.

The effectiveness of implementation is reinforced by strong alignment with existing legal, policy, and institutional frameworks at continental and national levels. This includes consistency with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and relevant AU policy instruments. The

integration of child rights into national legal systems, policies, and budgetary frameworks enhances domestic ownership and sustainability. Furthermore, coherence with the mandates and activities of other AU organs and Regional Economic Communities is essential to promote synergy, avoid duplication, and strengthen collective impact.

9.2.7. Technology and Innovation.

The integration of technology and innovation is a key enabler of efficiency, transparency, and enhanced coordination. Digital platforms are essential for improving communication, reporting, and stakeholder engagement across the continent. Innovative data collection, analysis, and visualization tools strengthen evidence-based decision-making and performance monitoring. In addition, robust knowledge management systems support institutional learning, enhance accessibility of information, and improve the overall effectiveness of child rights programming and advocacy.

9.2.8. Risk Management and Adaptability.

Proactive risk management and institutional adaptability are critical to ensuring resilience in a dynamic operational environment. This requires systematic identification, assessment, and mitigation of operational, financial, institutional, and external risks that may affect implementation. Flexibility in planning and execution allows the Committee to respond effectively to emerging challenges and opportunities. In addition, contingency planning is essential to ensure continuity of critical functions and safeguard strategic priorities in times of uncertainty or disruption.

9.2.9. Organizational Culture and Commitment.

A strong and enabling organizational culture is essential for sustaining performance, accountability, and institutional effectiveness. This is anchored in a shared commitment to advancing child rights across all levels of the organization. Upholding ethical standards, professionalism, and integrity is fundamental to building trust and credibility. Furthermore, fostering a culture of collaboration, continuous learning, and innovation enhances institutional efficiency, strengthens teamwork, and supports the successful delivery of strategic objectives.

ANNEXTURES

ANNEXTURE A: ACERWC STRATEGIC PLAN MONITORING & EVALUATION MATRIX (AMERT-ALIGNED)

SO1: Legal, Normative and Policy Frameworks

Indicator Code	Strategic Action Cluster	Indicator	Baseline (2025)	Target 1 (2026)	Target 2 (2027)	Target 3 (2028)	Actual 2026	Actual 2027	Actual 2028	Means of Verification
AMERT)										
SO1.1.1	Ratification & Domestication	# of advocacy missions conducted	6	8	10	12	TBD	TBD	TBD	Mission reports, AU records
SO1.1.2	Ratification & Domestication	# States ratifying/withdrawing reservations	1	2	3	4	TBD	TBD	TBD	Treaty deposit records

SO1.1.3	Legal Alignment	# technical legal assistance interventions	10	12	15	18	TB D	TB D	TB D	TA reports
SO1.2.1	Normative Development	# General Comments adopted	1	1	2	2	TB D	TB D	TB D	ACER WC publications
SO1.2.2	Guidelines	# policy guidelines issued	2	3	4	5	TB D	TB D	TB D	ACER WC reports
SO1.3.1	Research	# comparative legal studies completed	2	3	4	5	TB D	TB D	TB D	Research outputs
SO1.4.1	Regional Harmonisation	# regional coordination forums held	3	4	5	6	TB D	TB D	TB D	Forum reports

SO1.4.2	Harmoinisation	# joint frameworks with RECs	1	2	3	4	TBD	TBD	TBD	MoUs, agreements
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SO2: Monitoring, Accountability and Enforcement

Indicator Code	Cluster	Indicator	Baseline (2025)	2026	2027	2028	Actuals	MoV
SO2.1.1	Reporting	# State reports reviewed	18	20	22	24	TBD	State reports
SO2.1.2	Reporting	# concluding observations issued	18	20	22	24	TBD	ACER WC records
SO2.1.3	Compliance	% reporting compliance	65%	70%	75%	80%	TBD	AMERT
SO2.2.1	Follow-up	# country missions conducted	5	6	7	8	TBD	Mission reports
SO2.2.2	Hearings	# implement	2	3	4	5	TBD	Session reports

		ation hearings						
SO2.3.1	Special Procedur es	# urgent appeals processed	10	12	15	18	TBD	Case registry
SO2.4.1	Complia nce Tracking	# dashboards operational	1	2	3	3	TBD	AMERT system

SO3: Accessibility, Engagement and Participation

Indic ator Code	Cluster	Indicator	Basel ine	20 26	20 27	20 28	Actu als	MoV
SO3.1.1	Outreach	# awareness campaigns	4	6	8	10	TBD	Campai gn reports
SO3.1.2	Materials	# multilingual materials produced	20	25	30	35	TBD	Publicat ions
SO3.1.3	Digital platforms	# platforms maintaine d	2	3	3	4	TBD	Website analytic s

SO3.2 .1	Communications procedure	# communications processed	30	35	40	45	TBD	Case registry
SO3.3 .1	Capacity building	# trainings delivered	8	10	12	15	TBD	Training reports
SO3.3 .2	Institutionalization	# institutions integrating ACERWC content	5	8	10	12	TBD	MoUs
SO3.4 .1	Child participation	# child forums held	3	5	6	8	TBD	Forum reports
SO3.4 .2	Child engagement	# children engaged	200	300	400	500	TBD	Attendance records

SO4: Case Management & Partnerships

Indicator Code	Cluster	Indicator	Baseline	2026	2027	2028	Actuals	MoV
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SO4.1.1	Case management	% cases digitally managed	40%	60%	80%	100%	TBD	System reports
SO4.1.2	Efficiency	% cases resolved on time	55%	65%	75%	85%	TBD	Case system
SO4.2.1	Protection	# protection measures applied	10	12	15	18	TBD	Case files
SO4.3.1	Partnerships	# active partnerships	15	18	22	25	TBD	MoUs
SO4.3.2	Joint initiatives	# joint programmes	6	8	10	12	TBD	Reports
SO4.4.1	Coordination	# AU/UN coordination meetings	5	6	8	10	TBD	Meeting records

SO5: Institutional Governance & Systems

Indicator Code	Cluster	Indicator	Baseline	2026	2027	2028	Actuals	MoV
SO5.1.1	Governance	% audit issues resolved	60%	70%	80%	90%	TBD	Audit reports
SO5.2.1	Finance	Budget execution rate	75%	80%	85%	90%	TBD	Financial statements
SO5.3.1	Planning	# performance reports produced	2	3	4	4	TBD	AMERT
SO5.4.1	Risk management	# risk registers updated	1	2	2	3	TBD	Risk reports
SO5.5.1	HR capacity	% vacancies filled	65%	75%	85%	95%	TBD	HR records

SO5.6.1	Systems	# integrated systems operational	2	3	4	5	TBD	ICT reports
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SO6: Resource Mobilisation & Financial Sustainability

Indicator Code	Cluster	Indicator	Baseline	2020	2021	2022	Actuals	MoV
SO6.1.1	Member States	% assessed contributions received	60%	70%	80%	90%	TBD	Finance reports
SO6.2.1	Mobilisation	# resource mobilisation strategies implemented	1	2	3	3	TBD	Strategy docs
SO6.2.2	Partnerships	# funding partnerships	10	12	15	18	TBD	Agreements

		ps secured						
SO6.3.1	Diversification	% diversified funding	30%	40 %	50 %	60 %	TBD	Financial analysis
SO6.4.1	Efficiency	# VFM assessme nts conducte d	1	2	2	3	TBD	Evaluati on reports
SO6.4.2	Financial intelligenc e	# scenario analyses produce d	1	2	3	3		



ACERWC

African Committee of Experts on
the Rights and Welfare of the Child

Promoting and Protecting
the Rights of Every Child in Africa



PROTECT



EMPOWER



COLLABORATE



SUSTAIN



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