

THE AFRICAN UNION



# ACERWC

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

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2025

2020

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ACCP** – African Children’s Charter Project
- ACERWC** – African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- ACHPR** – African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- ACRWC** – African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- AfCFTA** - Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement
- AGA** – African Governance Architecture
- APRM** – African Peer Review Mechanism
- AU** – African Union
- AUC** – African Union Commission
- CSO** – Civil Society Organization
- GANHRI** – Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions
- NHRI** – National Human Rights Institution
- PAP** – Pan-African Parliament
- PSC** – Peace and Security Council
- RECs** – Regional Economic Communities
- SMART** – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely
- SWOT** – Strengths, weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- PESTLE** - A Political, Economic, Socio-cultural, Technological, Legal and Environmental analysis
- UNICEF** – United Nations Children’s Fund
- M&E** – Monitoring and Evaluation

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**FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR**

## INTRODUCTION

This Strategic Plan covers the period 2021-2025. Anchored in the mandate of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the Committee), this Strategic Plan is intended to achieve three main internal and external goals:

Internally,

- Deliberately focus the work of the Committee,
- Lay the foundation of a strong, internationally renowned, and independent Committee;
- Maximise the Committee's contribution to creating an Africa fit for children and where children's rights are enjoyed by all children, everywhere and every day.

Externally,

- The Strategic Plan will provide a guiding framework for partners of the Committee as to areas of priorities for funding and support;
- Serve as a common basis for assessing result-based performance of the Committee,
- Facilitate collective, coherent, comprehensive and complementary engagement between the Committee and other peer institutions, the AUC and State Parties.

The strategic planning process was informed and influenced by:

- The experience of the Committee over the past strategic period of 2015-2019;
- The findings and recommendations of the evaluation of the mandate, procedures, functions and systems of the Committee,
- A scan of the working environment of the Committee was undertaken;
- An analysis of the Committee's strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats were undertaken to determine strategic responses.

This Strategic Plan is predicated on the basis that the mandate of the African Children's Committee is indispensable to the realization of Agenda 2063 with its seven aspirations namely:

- Aspiration 1: A Prosperous Africa based on Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development  
Aspiration 2: An Integrated Continent, Politically United based on the ideals of Pan Africanism  
Aspiration 3: An Africa of Good Governance, Democracy, Respect for Human Rights, Justice and the Rule  
of Law
- Aspiration 4: A Peaceful and Secure Africa  
Aspiration 5: An Africa with a Strong Cultural Identity, Values and Ethics  
Aspiration 6: An Africa where Development is People-driven, relying particularly on the potential of Women and Youth
- Aspiration 7: Africa as a Strong and Influential Global Player and Partner

Children's rights and welfare are cross-cutting issues. Promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of children today is the only guarantee for a peaceful Africa. A stable and peaceful Africa is a sine qua non for sustainable development. The capacity Africa needs to meet the challenges

of tomorrow is the children of Africa. On the other hand, children suffer children suffer disproportionately in war, and they benefit disproportionately less in peace time in many African countries. Thus children's rights and welfare stand at the epicenter of the AU's peace and security pan-African agenda as well as its sustainable development drive. The true measure of a shared African values system is determined by how well Africa attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies into which they are born.

This strategic plan was adopted by the ACERWC at its 35<sup>th</sup> session which was held virtually in September 2020. The strategic plan covers the period 2021-2025. Indeed there is a disconnect between the last strategic plan which began in 2014 -2019. There are several reasons why 2020 is missing in the current strategic plan. Firstly, the current strategic plan adopted late, as earlier mentioned. When it was adopted in September 2020, there was little time to rally efforts to achieving great milestones as initially envisaged. It is however worth noting that some activities which were low hanging fruits were implemented. Secondly, the year 2020 is missing due to the tyranny of COVID-19 and its inevitable dictates for people to work from home and restrictions on travel. Most of the activities that had been scheduled for 2020 which required travel had to be postponed or conducted virtually due to the pandemic. In a bid to contain the pandemic, several, if not all, African countries issued travel restrictions. The Africa Union did the same by issuing a memo that suspended all missions except those of the African Centre for Disease Control. It is in view

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a dynamic, living document that changes to reflect new lessons learnt and adapts to changing internal and external operating environment. It is result orientated and performance based. It is made up of five parts:

**Part One: The Committee-** introduces the Committee, its structure, mandate, mission, vision, values, guiding principles, as well as its main functions.

**Part Two: SWOT Analysis-**presents an overview of identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities as well as threats, internally and externally, to the work of the Committee. This section also outlines the Committee's rationalized response to these opportunities, as well as challenges.

**Part Three: Strategic Direction** – provides for the objectives, strategies as well as the programs and projects that the Committee will prioritize for the period 2010-2014 in order to realize its core mandate.

**Part Four: Elaboration of the strategies-** provides elucidation on the identified strategies and how they contribute to the goals.

**Part Five: Monitoring and evaluation framework-** outlines plans and systems for implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategic Plan.

## PART ONE: THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD

## About The Committee

The ACERWC is unique in Africa's human rights system as the only regional treaty body set up to promote and protect child rights and welfare on the continent. Africa sought to address the plight of her children through the adoption of the African Charter of the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in July 1990. Based on the provisions enshrined in this fundamental document, the ACERWC, set up in July 2001, is mandated to promote and protect the rights and welfare of the child in Africa.

Through the ACRWC, Africa adopted a normative document reflecting its social and cultural values. Thus, the preamble of the ACRWC recognizes the 'unique and privileged position of the child in African society' and declares that the 'reflection on the concept of the rights and welfare of the child' should take into consideration the 'virtues of their cultural heritage, historical background and the values of the African civilization'. The four cardinal principles of the ACRWC are non-discrimination<sup>1</sup>, best interest of the child<sup>2</sup>, life, survival and development<sup>3</sup>, and participation<sup>4</sup>.

The ACERWC is composed of 11 members of high moral standing, integrity, impartiality and competence in matters of the rights and welfare of the child. The members are appointed by the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Governments from a list of persons nominated by states parties. Members of the ACERWC serve in their personal capacity for a renewable five-year term. Members elect the Bureau for a period of two years with the possibility of re-election. The ACERWC's Bureau consists of a Chairperson, two Vice Chairpersons, a Rapporteur and a Deputy Rapporteur.

The ACERWC has appointed ten of its members to serve as Special Rapporteurs on thematic areas<sup>5</sup>, who examine and advise on the specific areas of their mandates. Also, as part of their tasks, they set standards and develop strategies for better promotion and protection of child rights, engage in dialogue with member states, as well as cooperate and collaborate with various stakeholders and strategic partners.

The ACERWC is supported by a Secretariat, as provided for by Article 40 of the ACRWC. Headed by a Secretary, the Secretariat is the ACERWC's operational center, in charge of its day-to-day operations and providing support. It receives State Party reports, shadow reports from civil society, communications from complainants about alleged violations of charter rights, as well as all other correspondence or documents addressed to the ACERWC. It manages the preparations in relation to the ACRWC's activities, including the sessions, fact-finding missions, conferences and studies undertaken by the ACERWC, among others.

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<sup>1</sup> Article 3 of the ACRWC.

<sup>2</sup> Article 4 of the ACRWC.

<sup>3</sup> Article 5 of the ACRWC.

<sup>4</sup> Articles 7 and 12.

<sup>5</sup> These thematic areas are: 1. Violence against children; 2. Children and armed conflict; 3. Birth registration name and nationality; 4. Child marriage and other harmful practices; 5. Child participation; 6. Children in vulnerable situations; 7. Health, welfare and development; 8. Children on the move; 9. Children in conflict with the law, parental responsibilities and child responsibilities; 10. Education.

The Secretariat, currently hosted within the Department of Social Affairs, is set to relocate to the Kingdom of Lesotho. While no time frame is currently available for this relocation, the Executive Council has called upon the Kingdom of Lesotho to facilitate this move by the end of 2020. Relocating the Secretariat to the Kingdom of Lesotho has provided the ACERWC an opportunity for greater autonomy and facilitated the approval of a new staffing structure to meet its operational requirements.

The ACERWC considers that the fundamental purpose of its strategic planning process is to align its functions with its vision, thus avoiding its existence in a vacuum. The strategic planning process links what the ACERWC does on a daily basis to the desired destination, its vision. The strategic plan provides the roadmap that helps the ACERWC to navigate from one to the other.

### The Mandate of the Committee

Article 42 of the African Children’s Charter mandates the Committee with the following functions:

- (a) To promote and protect rights enshrined in this Charter and in particular to:
  - i. collect and document information, commission inter-disciplinary assessment of situations on African problems in the fields of the rights and welfare of the child, organize meetings, encourage national and local institutions concerned with the rights and welfare of the child, and where necessary give its views and make recommendations to Governments;
  - ii. formulate and lay down principles and rules aimed at protecting the rights and welfare of children in Africa;
  - iii. Cooperate with other African, international and regional Institutions and organizations concerned with the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child.
- (b) To monitor the implementation and ensure protection of the rights enshrined in this Charter.
- (c) To interpret the provisions of the present Charter at the request of a State Party, an Institution of the Organization of African Unity or any other person or Institution recognized by the Organization of African Unity, or any State Party.
- (d) Perform such other tasks as may be entrusted to it by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Secretary-General of the OAU and any other organ of the OAU or the United Nations.

The table below illustrates the key working methods that the ACERWC uses to deliver on its mandate.

Mandate	Methods of delivery
<b>To promote and protect the rights enshrined in this Charter – Article 42 (a)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promotional missions</li> <li>➤ Sensitization campaigns and seminars</li> <li>➤ Capacity-building for stakeholders</li> <li>➤ Publication and dissemination of information</li> <li>➤ Research studies</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Collaborative activities with partners and other institutions with human rights mandates</li> <li>➤ Special Mechanisms working on specific thematic areas of concern.</li> <li>➤ Strategic continental frameworks for the promotion and protection of children’s rights such as Africa’s Agenda for children (Agenda 2040).</li> </ul>
<b>To monitor the implementation and ensure protection of the rights enshrined in this Charter – Article 42 (b)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Individual complaints handling (communications)</li> <li>➤ Receiving and considering State party reports, making concluding observations, and conducting follow-up missions on implementation of concluding observations</li> <li>➤ Investigative missions for fact finding and making recommendations to redress violations</li> <li>➤ Responding to emergency child rights situations through urgent appeals, letters of concern, press releases, fact finding missions and other appropriate methods.</li> </ul>
<b>To interpret the provisions of the present Charter at the request of a State Party, an Institution of the Organization of African Unity or any other person or Institution recognized by the Organization of African Unity, or any State Party – Article 42 (c)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Elaborating charter provisions through Guidelines, Rules, Resolutions, General Comments, Declarations, Model Laws, and other instruments.</li> </ul>
<b>Perform such other task as may be entrusted to it by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, Secretary-General of the OAU and any other organs of the OAU or the United Nations – Article 42 (d)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Determined by the nature of the task.</li> </ul>

### Vision of the Committee

An Africa fit for children

### Mission of the Committee

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child is a treaty body committed to playing a leading role in the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child in Africa through informing and influencing child friendly laws, policies and practices, empowering children and their parents to understand and exercise their rights, keeping governments accountable, and secure the African Children’s Charter.

## Core Values

In discharging its mandate, the Committee shall be guided by the universality, interdependence, interrelationship and indivisibility of children's rights as provided for in the African Children's Charter and other international children's rights instruments. It shall do this in an independent and objective manner. The Committee shall strive to be accessible, accountable and open. In delivering on its mandate, the ACERWC shall be:

- I. **Committed** to applying the concepts of universality, inalienability, indivisibility and interdependence of all rights protected in the Children's Charter and other international child rights instruments;
- II. **Inclusive** in its approach to promote equality and diversity ;
- III. **Participatory** – working with children and key stakeholders in its activities;
- IV. **Balanced** by acting impartially, independently and objectively;
- V. **Accountable** to all stakeholders;
- VI. **Respectful** in all that it does, to create an environment where all are valued.

## Guiding Principles

- The Committee will work to ensure that laws, policies and practices relating to children's rights and welfare in Africa compare favorably with the highest international and regional standards.
- When and where children's rights and wellbeing are violated, undermined or inadequately protected, the Committee will act swiftly, proactively and responsively in a clear, impartial and unequivocal manner to advocate for the promotion and protection of children's rights and wellbeing.
- The Committee shall work in concert and tandem, where relevant and appropriate, with domestic, sub-regional, regional and international stakeholders to facilitate dialogue, consultation and collaboration to ensure the promotion and protection of children's rights and welfare in Africa.
- In order to use scarce resources wisely and attain maximum effect, the Committee will avoid duplication, and work collaboratively and collectively with other organisations, agencies and individuals to secure the African Children's Charter.

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## **PART TWO: ANALYSIS OF THE STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OF THE COMMITTEE**

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### **Assessment Of Previous Strategic Plan 2015 – 2019**

The 2015-2019 plan adopted a goal-based planning model; it recommended a shift from a plan focused on the activities of the Committee, to one that focused on the achievement of results for

the children of Africa. The plan was structured around the achievement of three outcomes: (I) *the achievement of political commitment and national ownership of the Charter by 2015/2016*; (II) *the realization, by 2017, of country-level enabling legal and policy environment for the implementation of the Charter*; and (III) *the removal, by 2019, of major bottlenecks (weaknesses in partnership, coordination and knowledge generation and use) to the acceleration and sustained progress towards children's enjoyment of rights*.

It defined five strategic shifts to strengthen the functioning of the ACERWC and its achievement of results: (I) *consolidating institutional structures within the ACERWC (financial, human and systems capacity)*; (II) *increased capacity through use of special mechanisms and interns*; (III) *greater emphasis on generation of evidence to support advocacy, public information and decision-making*; (IV) *greater emphasis on performance monitoring*; and (V) *a results oriented approach*.

The evaluation of the 2015-2019 plan noted that there was weak implementation of the plan. It found that out of the 53 activities defined in the strategic plan only 8 had been fully implemented (15%), 18 had been partially implemented and were on course for completion (34%), and 27 lacked evidence to show that they had been completed (51%). The evaluation noted that while the ACERWC implemented several activities over the 5-year period that were in line with its mandate and aligned to their annual work plans, there was very little reference to the strategic plan as a guiding framework for their operations. It found that only 22%, 50% and 42% of ACERWC work plan activities of 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively were strategic plan activities.

The evaluation attributed the low level of implementation to weaknesses within the strategic plan itself, as well as capacity and procedural challenges of the ACERWC. The following is a summary of some of its key findings:

- Only a few of the indicators met the SMART criteria. For example, the target of full ratification of the ACRWC by 2015/2016 was noted to be too ambitious and not achievable given the low rate of implementation over the years.
- A total of 26 indicators was noted to be too many for an organization that had few staff with limited technical competences and weak system.
- The majority of the indicators lacked specificity and clarity and could not be easily understood or used.
- The majority of the indicators were not cost-effective - it would be very expensive to collect data for a number of the indicators.
- The strategic plan focused on the promotion mandate of the ACERWC and almost entirely neglected its protection mandate.
- The ACERWC did not regularly review the implementation of the Plan. No evidence was found to show the ACERWC conducted programmatic reviews or discussions on the progress of the Plan.
- The ACERWC Secretariat has a lean staff who have limited technical competencies and inadequate financial resources which all affected the rate of implementation of the Plan.
- It was established that the Secretariat lacked specialized units to perform specialized functions e.g. Finance, M&E, HR, procurement. The low level of achievement was attributed to a great degree to weak M&E competencies and lack of solid project management skills within the Secretariat.
- Bureaucratic bottlenecks of the AUC were also noted as a factor that contributed to the low level of achievement. The report states that the semi-autonomous status nature of

the ACERWC implies it must depend on the AUC for its HR, finance, procurement, audit, logistics needs which negatively impacted the ACERWC's ability to implement activities effectively in a timely manner. An example was given of the recruitment of a Project Officer which took over 12 months.

The report made several recommendations and identified some key success factors that were factored into the current strategic planning process:

- Boosting the capacity of the ACERWC in a cost-effective manner in the short/medium term while proactively seeking to secure resources for a fully staffed Secretariat in the long term. The report noted how the use of interns and consultants considerably aided the ACERWC to deliver on its mandate.
- Strengthening Committee oversight over the Secretariat, and clarifying functions and reporting lines within the Secretariat.
- Aligning the new strategic plan with Agenda 2040.
- Increasing visibility through stronger social media presence, proactively engaging traditional media, and maintaining/improving the ACERWC website.
- Proactively seeking and formalizing partnerships that would aid the ACERWC to deliver on its mandate, and aligning partnership activities with its strategic plan.
- Developing and implementing a resource mobilization strategy.

### SWOT Analysis Table

Before preparing this Strategic Plan, an evaluation exercise was undertaken to assess the sufficiency or otherwise of the mandate, functions, procedures and systems of the Africa Children's Committee. As part of that exercise, the relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the Committee vis-a-vis its internal and external operating environment were carried out. The following are the summary of the findings:

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Recent trend by the AU to fund 100% of the ACERWC's budget (programs and Operational)</b></li> <li>- <b>More than 100% increase in the ACERWC's budget allocation from the AU in 2020 (from \$800,000 in 2019 to \$1,900,000 in 2020)</b></li> <li>- <b>Commitment of Committee members and Secretariat staff which has enabled the ACERWC to make significant progress with limited resources</b></li> <li>- <b>Good reputation with partners for its flexibility, approachability and responsiveness</b></li> <li>- <b>Established partnerships for technical support and wider reach.</b></li> <li>- <b>Good relationship with states– more collaborative, less confrontational which has made states more willing to engage with the ACERWC.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Small staff (only 2 permanent staff, and 3 short term and 6 secondment contracts) not sufficient to implement mandate</b></p> <p><b>Lengthy recruitment process – can take more than a year to recruit new staff on account of bureaucratic procedures that the ACERWC has no control over</b></p> <p><b>Bureaucratic bottlenecks in the AUC that impede timely implementation of activities</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Agenda 2040 – an important tool developed by the ACERWC to raise the profile of child rights in the AU and member states, and accelerate implementation of the ACRWC.</b></li> <li>- <b>New measures for follow-up on decisions (implementations hearings)</b></li> <li>- <b>Endeavors to create synergies and collaborate with other Organs of the Union, like the ACHPR, African Court, PSC and RECs</b></li> <li>- <b>Guidelines and working documents of the ACERWC covering a broad range of functional and thematic issues.</b></li> <li>- <b>Timely finalization of concluding observations and recommendations</b></li> <li>- <b>ACERWC using untapped procedures in its previous engagements, such as issuance of letters of urgent appeals</b></li> <li>- <b>Increased visibility of the ACERWC in the continent in the context of child right issues</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>Culture of politicizing human rights within AU which affects the responses of the ACERWC to child rights violations</b></p> <p><b>Special Mechanisms not fully operationalized</b></p> <p><b>Insufficient funding – while there has been a significant increase in the ACERWC’s budget allocation, it still falls short of what the ACERWC would require to function optimally (optimal budget for 2020 was estimated at \$4,200,000)</b></p> <p><b>ACERWC and can only interact directly at the national level by undertaking country missions, which are limited in number on account of insufficient funding or lack of political will.</b></p> <p><b>Limited expertise within the ACERWC and Secretariat to effectively cover the full breadth of violations affecting children on the content</b></p> <p><b>Lack of systematic gender integration. While the ACERWC has started to engage more directly on gender issues, there is need for a more systematic and consistent approach.</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Raised profile of child rights globally and within the AU. For example, Agenda 2063 aspiration 6 emphasizes the need to empower children through the full implementation of the ACRWC.</b></li> <li>- <b>Related to the above, mainstreaming child rights within the broader AU architecture has gained traction over the past five years. For</b></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>THREATS</b></p> <p>Uncertainty about the impact of the AU decision to provide 100% funding on the use of funds from external donors. The assumption is that these would be excluded.</p> <p>Related to the above, there could be challenges meeting</p>

**example, the recruitment of a child protection specialist by the PSC and designation of a special envoy for children affected by armed conflict.**

- **Good will from states as a result of more collaborative engagement over the past five years.**
- **The recent decision of the Executive Council, raising the number of staff of the Secretariat to 46**  
**[https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/38181-ex\\_cl\\_dec\\_1073 - 1096 xxxvi e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/38181-ex_cl_dec_1073_-_1096_xxxvi_e.pdf)**
- **The AU reform process in so far as one of its main aims is to address bureaucratic bottlenecks**
- **Increased engagement on child rights issues by RECs and efforts to establish partnerships with them. RECs provide an important avenue to engage more effectively with states on account of their proximity.**
- **Relocation to Lesotho – an opportunity for increased autonomy, develop more partnerships and establish a continental hub for children’s rights in Lesotho.**

budget shortfalls in the event of total exclusion of external donor funds.

In the event that some external funding is possible, changes in donor priorities are a threat (for example SIDA’s recent decision not to provide funding for two years and uncertainty about whether their new framework will prioritize child rights).

Growing tendency to regulate the work of Human rights organizations and their relationship with CSOs. Changes in political will towards the ACERWC; especially in the implementation of the protection mandate. Relocation to Lesotho could initially affect access to partners and AU organs on account of physical distance. Situations of armed conflict on the continent which threaten to reverse the gains made by the ACERWC in the protection of children’s rights.

Recent downturn in submission of state party reports affecting access to updated information on the situation of children at the country level

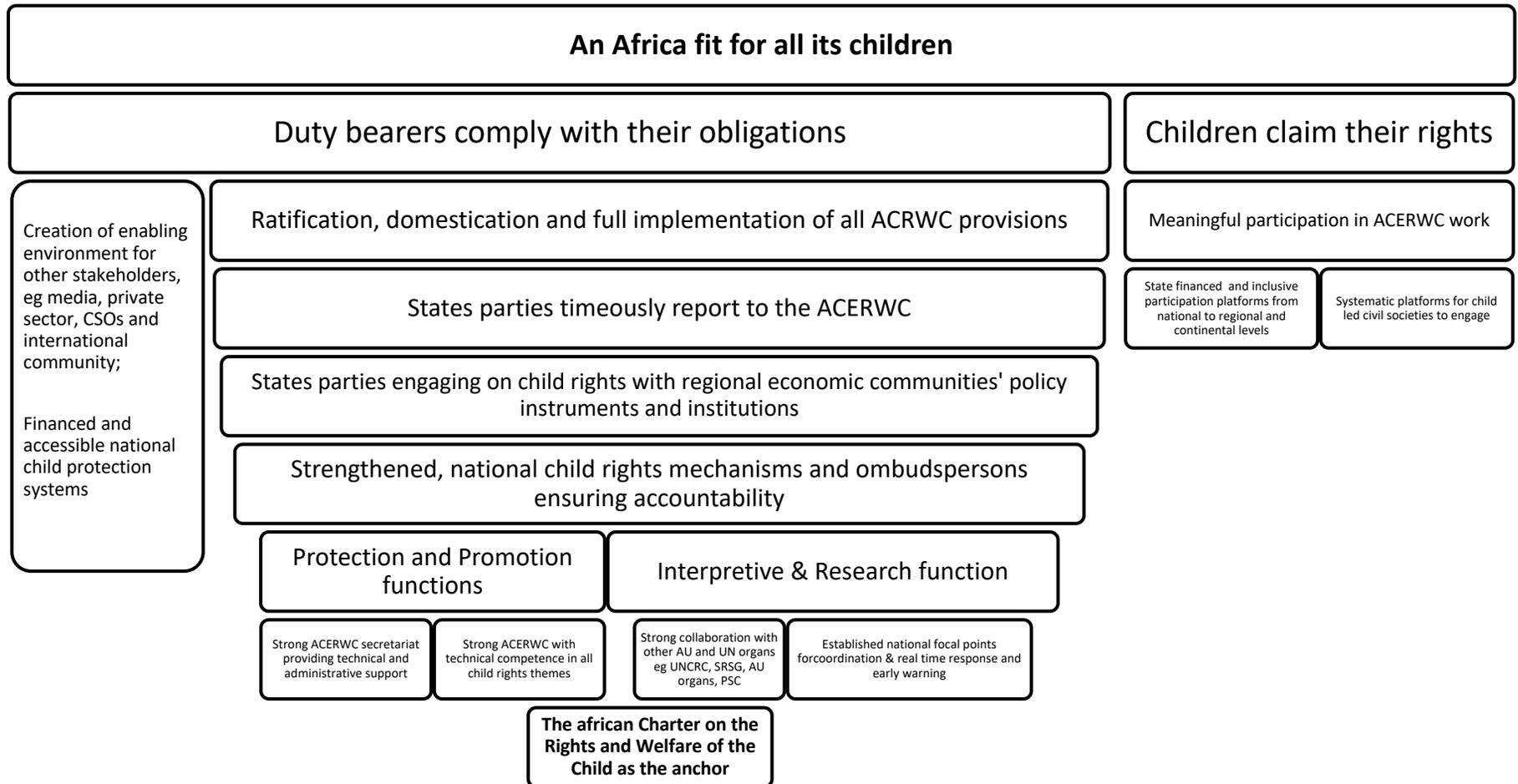
Shrinking civil society space in member states which could negatively impact their (CSOs) ability to engage with the ACERWC.

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## **PART THREE: THE ACERWC THEORY OF CHANGE**

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The ACERWC theory of change is anchored on the ACRWC with a vision for an Africa that is fit for children. The vision is an Africa that is fit for all its children.



The theory of change is showing several variables that will get us to the vision of an Africa that is fit for all children. Fundamentally, the vision aspires for an enabling environment for all the children to realize their potentialities. For this vision to be realized, there are several enablers that have to be met within the repertoire of the scope of mandate of the ACERWC.

**Children's agency:** One indispensable variable is the strengthening of the children's agency to mobilize, associate and assert their agency to influence policies that affect them. In this regard, meaningful participation starts at local level where the families are in their natural environments. At national level, there should be state financed child participation platforms. These platforms should endeavor to be inclusive of all children, including those with disabilities as well as in so called rural and remote areas. It is when such platforms exist at national level that child participation can have credibility and legitimacy at regional and continental levels. Children who will participate meaningfully at regional and continental levels usually come from organized structures at national level. More often, it is not possible to have meaningful participation at regional level when there are no platforms at national level.

**Enabling environment:** We acknowledge that the states are the primary duty bearers. In dispensing their obligations, they are assisted by civil societies, international partners and so forth. It is important that the states create enabling environments for the secondary duty bearers to function well. We have witnessed on the continent some instances of NGO bills that are restrictive, raising the cost of internet and social media, suspending social media access. Some of these measures have been done to limit the functionality of civil societies which may be working for the protection and fulfilment of children's rights. Whilst we acknowledge the fact that civil societies have to be accountable, the governments however should create enabling environments that will succor in the realization of children's rights.

**States parties complying:** at the centre of the theory of change is the aspiration of states parties complying with their obligations as set out in the ACRWC. Indeed the first step is ratification of the instrument. At the time of writing this strategy, there are five member states that are yet to ratify the Charter with four more having reservations on a raft of provisions in the Charter. The aspiration for the change to take place is universal ratification, followed by wholesale domestication of the ACRWC. Beyond domestication, the focus is on ensuring that there is implementation of provisions of the ACRWC. For this to happen, the theory of change has critical elements which are considered to be vital:

- i. State parties honor their reporting obligations for the Committee to be able to appreciate extent of domestication and implementation of the charter. This is the up end of the accountability chain. Linked to this is states parties implementing recommendations and decisions of the Committee.
- ii. Ensuring that national level child rights accountability mechanisms, firstly exist, are resourced and decentralized to be accessible to all children. Having vibrant national child rights accountability mechanisms such as ombuds offices help in ensuring real time accountability for child rights violations.

**Focal institutions for coordination:** whilst it is acknowledged that children's issues are cross cutting in several government ministries, each government however should establish a clear coordination institution that will galvanize all child rights efforts. It is usually this institution that will work with the Committee in state party reporting and following up on concluding observations and recommendations.

For real time communications, whilst diplomatic channels will be followed, having a focal institution will expedite government to ACERWC and vice versa communications.

### ACERWC institutional strengths

At the ACERWC level, the theory of change recognizes certain ingredients that will engender the efficient functioning of the Committee in dispensing its duties. The following are the necessary ingredients:

**Committee Members with competence on all child rights themes:** While control in the selection of Committee members lies in the parlance of member states using gender and geographical representation, little regard is put on ensuring that there is balance of competence within the Committee. As a result, some of the child rights themes may get neglected. There is therefore need to build the capacity of the Committee members on various child rights themes so that they can have all round technical content. This is coming from a recognition that each member comes with a specific expertise but the expectation is for them to engage on the generality of child rights issues. As such, there has to be deliberate effort to orient Committee members on basic child rights as well as emerging issues.

**ACERWC secretariat technical competence:** the secretariat of the Committee plays a key role in ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Committee members. There is need therefore to make sure that there is balance of expertise within the secretariat as well. Further, the secretariat needs to be abreast with emerging child rights issues so that they can give guidance to the Committee when making decisions.

**Strong collaboration with similar UN and AU organs:** The Committee is one of the strategic cogs in the entire machinery of realization of children's rights on the continent. There are other players from the UN as well as AU. There has to be deliberate engagement with these institutions and embed child rights within their work. For those that are into child rights already, collaboration plans have to be developed possibly each year to make sure that there is no duplication of efforts, but complementarity.

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# **PART FOUR: THE STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

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## VISION

An Africa fit for Children

## MISSION AND MANDATE

The mission of the ACERWC is to promote and protect the rights of children in Africa enshrined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

## GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES (Statements of results that the ACERWC will achieve during the strategic period)	OBJECTIVES (what the ACERWC plans to accomplish during the planning period 2021 -2025 to make progress on achieving its goals)	STRATEGIES (methods used to accomplish objectives)
<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME ONE</b> <b>Universal ratification, domestication, and implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child achieved</b>	<b>Objective 1.1 – To lobby states parties for increase domestication and implementation of the Charter.</b>	<b>Strategy 1.1.1 –</b> Establish engagement platforms for the commemoration of the Charter <b>Strategy 1.1.2 –</b> Institute biennial experience sharing forums on implementation of the ACRWC <b>Strategy 1.1.3 –</b> Follow-up on state commitments on domestication and implementation.  Strategy 1.1.4- Follow up on Committee decisions, concluding observations and recommendations for implementation at national level

		Strategy 1.1.5- Provide detailed report on the situation of children’s rights in member states to the relevant AU policy organs
	<b>Objective 1.1:</b> To lobby African member states for universal ratification of the charter and revoking of reservations	<p><b>Strategy 1.1-</b> Lobby the member states through promotional initiatives</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.1.2 –</b> Strategic engagement with the PAP and other relevant organs on ratification, withdrawal of reservations and domestication of the Charter</p>
	<b>Objective 1.3 –</b> To build alliances for more robust action on ratification, domestication, and implementation.	<p><b>Strategy 1.2.1 –</b> Establish child protection architecture within RECs;</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.2 –</b> Operationalization of the guidelines of the Affiliate status of the NHRIs</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.3 - Strengthen collaboration with the ACHPR</b> and the African Court</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.4 –</b> Strategic engagement in the AGA</p> <p><b>Strategy 1.2.5 –</b> Strengthen CSO engagement</p>
<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME TWO</b> <b>Child Rights accountability mechanisms for the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child effective</b>	<b>Objective 3.1 –</b> To strengthen state reporting & individual complaints handling -	<p><b>Strategy 2.1.1 –</b> Engage with the state parties to comply with their reporting obligations</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.2 –</b> Engage with other AU organs and counterpart UN organs on state reporting reforms</p>

		<p><b>Strategy 2.1.3</b> – Popularize state reporting and communications procedures</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.4</b> – Strengthen follow-up on the decision of the Committee communications</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.5</b> Follow up on the implementation of concluding observations and decisions;</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.6</b>-Enhancing the committee’s report to the policy organs to include the status of children’s rights</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.7</b> -Capacity building of members states on state party reporting</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.1.8</b> Conduct state of ‘state party reporting in Africa’ study</p>
	<p><b>Objective 2:</b> To collect real time evidence on child rights violations in Africa undertake investigative missions</p>	<p><b>Strategy 2.2.1</b> Conducting fact finding missions;</p> <p><b>Strategy 2.2.2</b> Conduct research on emerging child rights issues;</p>
<p><b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME THREE</b>  <b>Robust normative standards, policies and agendas for child rights practices inspired by the ACRWC developed and implemented</b></p>	<p><b>Objective 3.1</b> – To operationalize Agenda 2040 as a guiding framework for the ACERWC’s work and establish it as a rallying point for promotion of child rights on the continent</p>	<p><b>Strategy 3.1.1</b> – Integrate Agenda 2040 in all ACERWC programs</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.1.2</b> – Popularize Agenda 2040 amongst African citizens</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.1.3</b> – Popularize Agenda 2040 in the AU through relevant organs such as ECOSOC, CSO Forum</p>

		<p><b>Strategy 3.1.4</b> – Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2040 within the ACERWC</p> <p>Strategy 3.1.5- Assessment of implementation of the Agenda 2040</p>
	<p><b>Objective 3.2</b> – To develop guidelines, policy documents and frameworks on strategic and emerging child rights issues</p>	<p><b>Strategy 3.2.1</b> - Engage with the PSC to develop a comprehensive framework for child protection in conflict situations</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.2.2</b> - <b>Establish collaboration towards establishing a child protection mechanism with AFTA secretariat</b></p> <p><b>Strategy 3.2.3</b> – Periodic child focused assessments of the impact of humanitarian emergencies and other emerging humanitarian crises such as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-the COVID 19 crisis;</li> <li>-locusts;</li> <li>-floods</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p><b>Strategy 3.2.4-</b> Mainstream child safeguarding into the AUC and its organs</p>
	<p><b>Objective 3.3</b> – To develop child centered working methods, policies, and practices</p>	<p><b>Strategy 3.3.1</b> – Finalize, adopt, and disseminate child participation guidelines</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.3.2</b> – Fully operationalize the special mechanism on child participation</p> <p><b>Strategy 3.3.3</b> – Engage Children in Agenda 2040</p>
	<p><b>Objective 3.4</b> – To establish disability and gender as a crucial pillars in the work of the ACERWC</p>	<p><b>Strategy 3.4.1</b> – Gender mainstreaming into the work of the Committee</p>

		<b>Strategy 3.4.2</b> – Disability mainstreaming into the work of the Committee
<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME FOUR</b> <b>ACERWC established as an African reference point for child rights promotion and protection in Africa</b>	<b>Objective 4.1</b> – To enhance visibility of the ACERWC in order to increase use of ACERWC standards and mechanisms	<b>Strategy 4.1.1</b> – Build partnership with media houses and media organs <b>Strategy 4.1.2</b> –Enhance ACERWC virtual presence <b>Strategy 4.1.3</b> – Mainstream communications functions and public relations into the work of the ACERWC <b>Strategy 4.1.4</b> – Update and review the communication strategy  <b>Strategy 4.1.5-</b> Development of Knowledge management strategy.
	<b>Objective 4.2</b> - To establish a platform for knowledge generation, debate and knowledge dissemination	<b>Strategy 4.2.1</b> Conduct Quarterly Open Sessions  <b>Strategy 4.2.1</b> Produce a year book on emerging and ground breaking research
<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME FIVE</b> <b>Fully operational and well-resourced Secretariat and Committee of Experts</b>	<b>Objective 5.1-</b> To increase staffing to fill positions required for effective implementation of the ACERWC’s mandate.	<b>Strategy 5.1.1-</b> Recruit additional staff according to approved staffing structure.
	<b>Objective 5.2</b> - To establish rolling internship and fellowship programs.	<b>Strategy 5.2.1</b> – Develop internship and fellowships policies <b>Strategy 5.2.2</b> – Popularize internship and fellowships programs in academic and research institutions

		<b>Strategy 5.2.3</b> – Establish partnership arrangements for regular supply of interns
	<b>Objective 5.3</b> - To fully operationalize ACERWC Special Mechanisms	<b>Strategy 5.3.1</b> – Assign secretariat staff and interns to each special mechanism <b>Strategy 5.3.2</b> – Develop strategic partnerships with CSOs and counterpart mechanisms in the UN system <b>Strategy 5.3.3</b> – Develop annual action plans for each mechanism <b>Strategy 5.3.4</b> – Institute a reporting system for special mechanisms <b>Strategy 5.3.5</b> – Establish working groups on emerging child rights issues <b>Strategy 5.3.6</b> – Establish a system of regular review for improvement of special mechanisms <b>Strategy 5.3.7</b> – Develop a manual of operations for special mechanisms
	<b>Objective 5.4</b> - To secure sufficient resources to support the ACERWC’s staffing and operational requirements.	<b>Strategy 5.4.1</b> – Continued engagement with the AUC to increase the ACERWC’s budget ceiling <b>Strategy 5.4.2</b> – Develop a resource mobilization strategy
	<b>Objective 5.5</b> To enhance internal capacity of the ACERWC	<b>Strategy 5.5.1</b> – Integrate emerging child rights issues in all ACERWC activities  <b>Strategy 5.5.2</b> – Build internal capacity of the ACERWC to work with children  <b>Strategy 5.5.3</b> - mainstream child safe guarding into the work of the ACERWC

		<b>Strategy 5.5.3-</b> Strengthen ACERWC secretariat working systems
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## **PART FIVE: ELABORATION OF THE STRATEGIES**

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## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVES UNDER OUTCOME ONE

### **STRATEGIC OUTCOME ONE**

***Universal ratification, domestication, and implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child achieved***

**Objective 1.2 – Objective 1.1 – To lobby states parties for increase domestication and implementation of the Charter.**

#### **Strategy 1.1.1 – Establish engagement platforms for the commemoration of the Charter**

The conference, tentatively titled “*the Children’s Charter at 30, where are we now?*” that will take stock of the status of ratification, domestication, and implementation and encourage additional commitments from states. The conference will be an opportunity for the ACERWC to present the findings of its study on the harmonization of laws, as well as sensitizing states and other stakeholders on General Comment no 5 regarding measures for implementation.

#### **Strategy outputs**

- 1 Regional conferences commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Charter conducted for all five regions of the continent
- 2 Virtual commemorative seminars hosted each quarter on emerging child rights issues

**STRATEGY 1.1.2 – Institute biennial experience sharing forums on implementation of the ACRWC.** These forums will help to identify and share exemplary practices on implementation. It is anticipated that holding these forums on a regular basis will encourage more concerted action on implementation of the ACRWC by states and other key stakeholders, as well as providing the ACERWC with crucial data for future interventions on implementation. The ACERWC will institute these forums in 2022. **Strategy outputs**

- 1 Two experience sharing platforms hosted by the ACERWC reflecting on the implementation of the Charter;
- 2 Publication on exemplary practices issued by the ACERWC based on country experiences;

#### **Strategy 1.1.3 – Follow-up on state commitments on domestication and implementation.**

#### **Strategy outputs**

- 1 Fact finding missions conducted in purposively sampled state parties;
- 2 Note verbales issued to states parties lagging behind on their reporting obligations and with low scores on indicators on child rights;

#### **Strategy 1.1.4- Follow up on Committee decisions, concluding observations and recommendations for implementation at national level**

The ACERWC will define systematic measures for follow-up on state commitments made on ratification and withdrawal of reservations under the previous strategic plan, as well as commitments that will be made under this strategic plan through the forms of engagement elaborated above by December 2020. These will include: taking every opportunity to engage with relevant state representatives at the African Union, periodically sending a note verbale to relevant states, and incorporating follow-up in examination of state reports. The ACERWC will also work through key strategic partners who provide additional avenues for monitoring state party commitments as elaborated in objective 2.2 below.

### ***Strategy outputs***

Follow up missions conducted to states parties issued with concluding observations and recommendations;

Implementation template developed and shared with states parties for ease of implementing Committee decisions and concluding observations

### **Strategy 1.1.5- Provide detailed report on the situation of children’s rights in member states to the relevant AU policy organs**

The ACERWC presents its report to the Permanent Representative Council of the African Union each year. This is an opportunity for the Committee to showcase the state of children’s rights in various African countries. If the report is forthright flagging child rights abuses, then attention will be accorded to child rights violations in those respective countries.

### ***Strategy outputs***

Reporting template developed for documenting situation of children’ rights in member states;

Quarterly ACERWC report produced to feed into the main report each year

Annual report compiled flagging child rights violations in member states

### ***Objective 1.1: To lobby African member states for universal ratification of the charter and revoking of reservations***

**Rationale:** Over the past five years the ACERWC has engaged in several efforts to raise awareness of the status of ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Charter, with the aim of achieving full ratification of the Charter, securing withdrawal of reservations, and facilitating domestication and implementation of the Charter. In 2015, the ACERWC launched a campaign to press non-ratifying states to expedite the ratification process, encourage withdrawals of reservations, and facilitating initial reports from states which were yet to submit them. Key achievements of this campaign include ratification of the Charter by Sao Tome and Principe in 2019; commitments from Botswana, Egypt, and Sudan to consider withdrawal of their reservations to the Charter; commitments from Swaziland, Mauritius, Equatorial Guinea, and Seychelles to expedite the process of submitting their initial reports; and adopting a General

Comment on general measures of implementation<sup>6</sup>. Building on the successes and lessons learned in this campaign, over the next five years the ACERWC will revitalize the campaign through the strategies elaborated below.

### **Strategy 1.1- Lobby the member states through promotional initiatives**

This strategy provides for those initiatives that will be proactive ensuring that there is universal ratification of the Charter and the member states with reservations, revoke those reservations.

#### ***Strategy outputs***

Advocacy missions conducted to all the countries that have not ratified the Charter

Note Verbales sent to the countries that have not ratified the ACRWC or have entered reservations.

### **Strategy 1.1.2 – Strategic engagement with the PAP and other relevant organs on ratification, withdrawal of reservations and domestication of the Charter**

***Strategic engagement with the PAP and other relevant AU organs.*** The PAP provides a crucial avenue for lobbying for ratification and domestication of the ACRWC at the national level which has not yet been fully explored by the ACERWC. Over the next five years, the ACERWC will seek to build a working relationship with the PAP. A first step will be to establish communication channels with the PAP and regularly disseminate information to them on ACERWC activities and products. The ACERWC will also strive to ensure regular participation of PAP representatives at its meetings and sessions. The ACERWC's relocation to the Kingdom of Lesotho will provide an opportunity to strengthen engagement on account of its proximity to the PAP offices in Midrand, South Africa.

#### ***Strategy outputs***

ACERWC and PAP collaboration framework developed

Capacity strengthened of relevant PAP structures on child rights

**Objective 1.3** – To build alliances for more robust action on ratification, domestication, and implementation.

#### **Rationale**

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<sup>6</sup> General Comment no 5 on “state party obligations under the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child (article 1) and systems strengthening for child protection”, ACERWC, 2018.

The ACERWC has always recognized that securing the rights and welfare of children enshrined in the Charter is a shared responsibility. Article 42 of the Charter emphasizes cooperation with other African, international and regional Institutions and organizations concerned with the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child. **The emphasis of this objective is on building sustainable relationships with key strategic actors for ratification, domestication, and implementation.** The ACERWC has chosen to use the term “building alliances” in order to emphasize the need for these collaborations to be undergirded by mutual interests that can sustain a long-term relationship.

Specific strategies for alliance building over the next five years include:

- Establishing a working relationship with RECs;
- Establishing a working relationship with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs);
- Strengthening working relationship with the ACHPR and the African Court;
- Strategic engagement in the AGA;
- Strengthening CSO engagement.

***STRATEGY 1.2.1 – Establish child protection architecture within RECs;***

RECs are recognized as useful intermediaries between the AU and national entities that can help to harmonize processes for ratification, domestication, and implementation in their respective regions<sup>7</sup>. They provide an important avenue for more direct access to states, and for greater contextual understanding which has a bearing on ratification, domestication and implementation. It is noteworthy that increasing collaboration between the AU and RECs is a key feature of the AU institutional reforms which seek to establish more effective division of labor and coordination with regional mechanisms and member states based on the principle of subsidiarity<sup>8</sup>. A central aspect of the ACERWC’s collaboration with RECs over the next five years will be the need for alignment of priorities, procedures, and regulations, in order to enhance a sense of shared responsibility and avoid duplication.

***Strategy outputs***

- Finalize collaboration plans with all RECs since a draft collaboration plan already exists and will be circulated to all RECs for their inputs.
- Systematic engagement platforms established between RECs and ACERWC; Hold a meeting for RECs by the end of 2021 to adopt the collaboration plan and sensitize them on the ACERWC and Agenda 2040.
- Agenda 2040 dissemination with the RECs conducted

Review platforms established for regular correspondence. ***STRATEGY 1.2.2 - Operationalization of the guidelines of the Affiliate status of the NHRIs***

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<sup>7</sup> Accelerating the ratification and domestication of African Union treaties, UNDP, 2018, UNDP%20ratification%20doc.pdf

<sup>8</sup> See <https://au.int/en/aureforms/overview>. **Subsidiarity** is a principle of social organization that holds that social and political issues should be dealt with at the most immediate (or local) level that is consistent with their resolution.

NHRIs that are in compliance with the Paris Principles<sup>9</sup> have been described as one of the best relay mechanisms at country level to ensure the application of international human rights norms<sup>10</sup>. Strategically positioned between states, civil society and other actors, NHRIs also potentially provide a neutral and objective space in which to interact on implementation issues<sup>11</sup>. It is also noteworthy that many NHRIs already possess some level of child rights expertise. A joint mapping study carried out by the Global Alliance for National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) and UNICEF in 2017 found that all NHRI respondents (save for one that had recently been accredited) were working on children's rights<sup>12</sup>.

The ACERWC believes that NHRIs will play a fundamental role facilitating implementation of the ACERWC at the national level through their monitoring and documentation mandates. This is already happening to some level with many NHRIs who include child rights monitoring and documentation in their work<sup>13</sup>, however closer collaboration with them would engender a more comprehensive approach.

### **Strategy outputs**

- Workshops conducted between NHRIs and the ACERWC to sensitize them on the ACERWCs mandate and procedures, and define a collaboration plan.
- Awareness raised with the NHRIs on the Affiliate status guidelines
- Platform established for NHRIs to engage with the ACERWC during the Committee sessions and other platforms.
- Database of of NHRI contacts developed for strategically disseminating information to the NHRIs on the ACERWCs activities and products by the end of 2021.

**Strategy 1.2.3 - Strengthen collaboration with the ACHPR and the African Court** As counter-part mechanisms working in the same context, the value of relationship building between the ACERWC, ACHPR and African Court for more effective action on ratification, domestication, and implementation cannot be overstated. Each mechanism has valuable experiences to share that would be of value to the other, but these are often lost on account of insufficient engagement between them. In addition, joint action on identified areas of mutual concern would have greater impact. A draft collaboration plan between the ACERWC, ACHPR, and African Court was initiated by the ACERWC under the ACCP, but the parties did not reach consensus on implementing the plan due to conflicting priorities.

### **Strategy outputs**

Joint collaboration agreements developed with the ACHPR and African Court.

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<sup>9</sup> Principles relating to the status of national human rights institutions, providing the international benchmarks against which NHRIs can be accredited by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

<sup>10</sup> See for example OHCHR and NHRIs at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/NHRI/Pages/NHRIMain.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> See UNDP-OHCHR toolkit for collaboration with National Human Rights Institutions, December 2010

<sup>12</sup> See Children's rights in National Human Rights Institutions: a mapping exercise, GANHRI/UNICEF <https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/News/Documents/GANHRI%20UNICEF%20-%20Children%E2%80%99s%20Rights%20in%20National%20Human%20Rights%20Institutions.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

Shared learning platform established for addressing emerging human rights challenges and how the organs can respond.

Focal persons for the joint collaboration nominated in each of the organs

**Strategy 1.2.4 – Strategic engagement in the AGA** One of the AGA’s primary objectives is to accelerate the ratification, domestication, implementation and monitoring of African Shared values instruments, which includes the ACRWC<sup>14</sup>. While the ACERWC does regularly engage on the AGA platform, it has noted the need to engage more strategically moving forward to intensify action on ratification, domestication, and implementation of the ACRWC. For example, through this platform the ACERWC could collaborate more closely with the APRM process on issues of ratification and domestication of the ACRWC.

### **Strategic outputs**

Platform for systematic collaboration with the APRM established;

Child rights issues placed on the AGA agenda

ACERWC integrated into the AGA plans and initiatives

### **STRATEGY 1.2.5 - Strengthen CSO engagement**

CSOs play a crucial role in pressing for ratification, domestication, and implementation of the ACRWC at the national level. Low levels of awareness by CSOs has been cited as one of the reasons for slow ratification and domestication of AU treaties<sup>15</sup>. The ACERWC has always recognized the value of CSO collaborations and has worked closely with them since its inception, largely through consortiums such as the ACCP.

### **Strategy outputs**

Collaboration plan with the CSO Forum established

ACERWC focal persons, both in the secretariat and Committee members identified

Capacity of the CSO Forum strengthened on state party reporting, complementary reporting and following up on Committee decisions and concluding observations

Capacity of the CSO Forum strengthened on the ACERWC complaints mechanism.

Research agenda jointly set on emerging child rights issues.

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.aga-platform.org/about>

<sup>15</sup> Accelerating the ratification and domestication of African Union treaties, UNDP, 2018, UNDP%20ratification%20doc.pdf

## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVES UNDER OUTCOME TWO

### **STRATEGIC OUTCOME TWO**

***Child Rights accountability mechanisms for the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child effective***

### ***Objective 3.1 – To strengthen the ACERWC’s key accountability mechanisms – state reporting & individual communications handling***

**Rationale:** There have been some significant developments in the ACERWC’s state reporting and communications mandates over the past five years, including a more collaborative framework for state reporting, critical standard-setting decisions on communications, and the establishment of implementation hearings, amongst other procedural developments. Nevertheless, these essential accountability mechanisms remain underutilized. The ACERWC has noticed a downward trend in the submission of state reports despite initial enthusiasm from states for the collaborative framework it provided; and to date the ACERWC has only received 14 communications. In addition, follow-up on concluding observations and decisions on communications remains a serious challenge for the ACERWC.

**STRATEGY 2.1.1 – – Engage with the state parties to comply with their reporting obligations** The ACERWC recognizes that a deeper understanding of state reporting challenges should be the foundation of its interventions to improve the rate of state reporting. Starting in 2021, the ACERWC will take every opportunity for bilateral engagement with states on reporting challenges – at ACERWC sessions, and promotional, follow-up, and investigative missions. In addition, Committee members will reach out to relevant government departments in their home countries to establish a rapport on state reporting and other pertinent issues. The ACERWC will be deliberate about gathering data from these interactions (i.e. including this data in mission and session reports as well as reports from individual Committee members) which will be processed into actionable data to define future interventions.

#### **Strategy outputs**

Bilateral engagement with member states that are not honoring their reporting obligations

Advocacy missions conducted to purposively sampled countries

A state party reporting campaign launched

Annual shared learning platform for member states and state parties established

#### **STRATEGY 2.1.2 - Engage with other AU organs and counterpart UN organs on state reporting reforms**

The ACERWC recognizes that the state reporting challenges it faces are not unique to it; although being a newer and less-known institution it has a lower reporting rate than some of the older more

established organs. Over the next five years the ACERWC will engage in the broader conversation on state reporting reforms taking place at various levels, including efforts to simplify state reporting in the UN system.

### **Strategy outputs**

Joint annual planning for state reporting conducted each year with AU and UN organs;

### **STRATEGY 2.1.3- Popularize state reporting and communications procedures**

The ACERWC will produce easy to understand information brochures on its communications procedures in all four AU languages that will be distributed at sessions, meetings, missions, and sent to some strategic partners for wider distribution. Electronic versions of these brochures will be downloadable on the ACERWC website and regularly popularized on the ACERWC's social media platforms. The ACERWC will also encourage strategic partners to popularize their procedures and provide links to the information brochures on their websites and social media platforms. Considering that we live in an increasingly visual world<sup>16</sup> the ACERWC will also produce a short video on their communications procedures by the end of 2022, using simple animations to explain its procedures.

### **Strategy outputs**

State party reporting simplified and disseminated to state parties

Media advocacy tools produced and shared with all stakeholders by 2021

### **Strategy 2.1.4 – Strengthen follow-up on the decisions of the Committee on received communications**

The ACERWC has adopted guidelines for follow-up on communications (including providing for an implementation hearing) which set out measures for monitoring and dialogue with states on implementation. Over the next five years, the ACERWC has defined the following actions to strengthen follow-up on communications:

- i. As it increases its human resources as described in objective 1.1, allocating sufficient staff time to communications-follow up which will be integrated in the roles of its legal and protection staff.
- ii. Taking measures to popularize decisions on communications at the national level in order to garner support for implementation from stakeholders by for example strategically disseminating its decisions to key media outlets starting in 2021.

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<sup>16</sup> See article on tech.co news, the world is more visual now than it has ever been, <https://tech.co/news/world-now-visual-ever-2017-01>.

- iii. The ACERWC will endeavor to be more elaborate in its decisions about the measures that states need to take to rectify violations, which will provide better direction to states on what they need to do to implement the decision.
- iv. Partnering with NHRIs. As already noted in strategy 2.2.2, NHRIs are strategically positioned to provide a neutral space to interact on implementation issues, and many of them already have a child rights focus. In addition, the Network for National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), has for the past five years been engaging closely with the ACHPR and African Court on the role of NHRIs in implementation of their decisions/judgments<sup>17</sup>, and published guidelines on this role<sup>18</sup>.
- v. Continuing to engage in broader discussions on strengthening implementation of decisions within the AU.
- vi. Strategic use of the AGA platform for collaborative action on implementation, for example incorporating follow-up on ACERWC decisions in the APRM review process.

### **Strategic outputs**

Staff designated for each communication decision follow through

State parties who have received decisions from the ACERWC assisted to develop implementation plans/ roadmaps for implementation of the decisions;

Capacity of NHRIs strengthened on ACERWC decisions and accountability mechanisms that can be put in place at national level.

ACERWC decisions embedded into the APRM review process

### **Objective 2: To collect real time evidence on child rights violations in Africa**

One of the key aspirations of this strategy is to have the ACERWC to be responsive in real time to child rights violations on the continent. This efficiency is important in ensuring that accountability is realized. Indeed part of the process is to ensure that the special mechanisms are functional. The other aspect, covered under this objective is about developing early warning systems that helps the Committee to be in touch with what will be happening in the fifty five member states of the AU.

#### **Strategy 2.2.1 Conducting fact finding missions;**

##### **Strategy outputs**

Fact finding missions conducted in purposively sampled countries

Fact finding mission reports produced

#### **Strategy 2.2.2 Conduct research on emerging child rights issues;**

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<sup>17</sup> See for example 2016 workshop report on this topic:

<file:///C:/Users/anagg/Downloads/Role%20of%20NHRIs%20in%20Implementation%20ACHPR%20judgments.pdf>

<sup>18</sup><https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/ExternalPublications/Guidelines%20on%20Implementation%20of%20decisions%20of%20Regional%20Human%20Rights%20Organs%20English%20Version.pdf>

Research agenda for the ACERWC developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders such as the CSO Forum, African research centers at various universities

Media observatory established within the ACERWC secretariat which produces weekly reports from 2021

Continental researches conducted on emerging child rights issues.

## STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVES UNDER OUTCOME THREE

### **STRATEGIC OUTCOME THREE**

***Robust normative standards, policies and agendas for child rights practices protection and promotion inspired by the ACRWC developed and implemented***

***Objective 3.1 - To operationalize Agenda 2040 as a guiding framework for the ACERWC's work and establish it as a rallying point for the promotion of child rights and welfare on the continent***

**Rationale:** In 2015, the ACERWC launched Agenda 2040, Africa's Agenda for Children: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children. Over the past 5 years Agenda 2040 has received acceptance from some key child focused organizations and is gaining traction in a couple of RECs. As the clock races towards 2040, the ACERWC has identified the following key strategies to accelerate progress towards attaining these aspirations:

- Integrating Agenda 2040 in all ACERWC programs
- Popularizing Agenda 2040 amongst African citizens
- Popularizing Agenda 2040 within the AU
- Strengthening monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2040 at the ACERWC

### **STRATEGY 3.1.1 - Integrate Agenda 2040 in all ACERWC programs**

The ten aspirations of Agenda 2040 encompass a broad range of critical child rights and welfare issues that are already being addressed by the ACERWC at various levels. Over the next five years, the ACERWC will make direct reference to Agenda 2040 aspirations (at every opportunity, where applicable) in its programs, and establish it as a success indicator. For example, programs will be assessed, and interventions defined on the basis of their contribution to the achievement of Agenda 2040, in addition to other relevant indicators. The ACERWC will continuously review integration of Agenda 2040 in its programs at its second annual ordinary session as a standing agenda item. Some specific integration areas for the planning period include:

- i. Integrating Agenda 2040 in the State reporting system by the end of 2021;
- ii. Integrating Agenda 2040 in the activities and reporting system for Special Mechanisms ;
- iii. Integrating Agenda 2040 in DAC celebrations – starting in 2021 the themes of the DAC will be crafted around the ten aspirations;
- iv. Integrating Agenda 2040 in the broader promotional mandate of the ACERWC so that in all promotional work Agenda 2040 is promoted alongside the Charter by the end of 2021;

- v. Integrating Agenda 2040 in the Job description of the proposed M&E officer who will play a crucial role in establishing it as a success indicator.

### **Strategy outputs**

*Agenda 2040 integrated into the revised state party reporting guidelines by 2021*

*Agenda 2040 embedded into the activities and reporting system for Special Mechanisms*

Secretariat staff job profiles include Agenda 2040 deliverables.

Virtual promotional activities conducted on Agenda 2040 i.e. Quarterly webinars on each of the ten aspirations;

### **STRATEGY 3.1.2 - Popularize Agenda 2040 amongst African citizens**

The ACERWC believes that the time is right for African citizens to rally around an agenda that seeks to place the rights and welfare of its children firmly at the center of policy/decision making. Conflicts, natural disasters, biting poverty, and the breakdown of social norms, have taken their toll on childhood in Africa. The past three decades have witnessed what can only be termed “an abuse of childhood” that would have previously been unconscionable. It is time for a new narrative that values childhood, and the ACERWC believes that popularizing agenda 2040 can contribute to that new narrative. As a communications principle over the next five years, Agenda 2040 will be referred to more regularly in public discourse by its full name “Africa’s Agenda for children 2040” in order to promote a sense of ownership of the agenda by Africans.

In the past five years the ACERWC has made efforts to popularize Agenda 2040 specifically with some Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and child focused organizations. Popularizing Agenda 2040 over the next five years will take two forms: (i) getting more states to know about Agenda 2040 and incorporate it in their child policies; and (ii) getting African citizens, including children, to know and identify with Agenda 2040, and use it as tool to advance children’s rights and welfare on the continent.

**i.** *Getting more states to know about Agenda 2040 and incorporate it in their child rights policies.* The ACERWC will continue to work with RECs to popularize Agenda 2040 in their regional blocks. Because of their proximity, RECs provide easier access to member states and a more contextual approach to implementing Agenda 2040. Where RECs already have child policies<sup>19</sup>, the ACERWC will work with those RECs to align their policies with Agenda 2040. The ACERWC has developed a draft collaborative action plan for RECs<sup>20</sup> in which collaboration on Agenda 2040 will be a key feature.

**ii.** *Getting African citizens to know and identify with Agenda 2040 and use it as a tool to advance child rights and welfare.* By increasing knowledge and buy-in from African states as described above, there will naturally be a trickle-down effect to African citizens. However, the ACERWC will also seek to engage African citizens more directly so that they can use Agenda 2040 as a tool to advance children’s rights in their various capacities,

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<sup>19</sup> The EAC and ECOWAS have child rights policies, see the EAC framework for child protection systems <file:///C:/Users/anagg/Downloads/EAC%20Framework%20Child%20Protection%202018.pdf>, and the ECOWAS child policy 2019-2023.

<sup>20</sup> See strategy 2.2.1

thereby accelerating progress towards realizing the Agenda by 2040<sup>21</sup>. The ACERWC's engagement with African citizens on Agenda 2040 will involve the following:

- Developing promotional materials for Agenda 2040 that will be based on key principles of messaging to promote understanding and buy-in (as already noted above, a key communication principle will be to use the full citation of Agenda2040 to promote a sense of ownership as Africa's agenda for children), and communicating to diverse audiences including children and young people.
- Advertising Agenda 2040 at popular African events such as the Africa Cup of Nations and the Africa U-20 Cup of Nations.
- Engaging more closely with CSOs on Agenda 2040 as a means of reaching the key constituencies that they represent, as well as seeking their input in 'unpacking' Agenda 2040 for public consumption. In this regard, the ACERWC will work with the CSO forum preceding its ordinary sessions to incorporate discussions on Agenda2040 in the forum, and also provide space for discussions with CSOs on the Agenda during its open sessions.
- Directly engaging traditional media on Agenda 2040 by for example writing newspaper articles and getting Committee members involved in popular radio and TV programs in their home countries where they can speak about the Agenda (see more on traditional media engagement in strategy 5.1.1 below). The ACERWC will also popularize the agenda through its social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- Branding Agenda 2040. The ACERWC will develop an eye-catching logo for Agenda 2040 that will be included in all its external communications (letters, email signatures, reports etc.). In addition, the ACERWC will -working through its partners - distribute Agenda 2040 T-shirts and other branded materials at DAC celebrations and other identified strategic events.

### **Strategy outputs**

Child friendly versions of Agenda 2040 developed, both virtual and hard copies

The Agenda integrated into the CSO Forum sessions

A blog account hosted for the Committee elucidating the ten aspirations

Branding products developed on Agenda 2040.

### **Strategy 3.1.3 – Popularize Agenda 2040 in the AU through relevant organs such as ECOSOC, CSO Forum**

The ACERWC will work to integrate Agenda 2040 in the broader AU system. Agenda 2040 dovetails with Agenda 2063 in that it flows from paragraph 53 which provides that 'African children shall be empowered through the full implementation of the African Charter on the Rights of the Child'. Further, children are viewed as the custodians of Agenda 2063 on account of its long-term nature, and as such it is essential that their full potential is unlocked by fully protecting their rights

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<sup>2121</sup> It is also noteworthy that connecting with African citizens is a central aspect of the AU reform process which seeks to make the AU's relevance to citizens. See <https://au.int/en/aureforms/overview>.

so that they can take charge of Africa's future<sup>22</sup>. Over the next five years, the ACERWC will lobby at the highest AU levels to include Agenda 2040 in all Agenda 2063 discussions. In addition, the ACERWC will organize a popularization event within the

### **Strategy outputs**

Agenda 2040 integrated into the ECOSOC sessions

One of the two PSC sessions each year focus on Agenda 2040

Agenda 2040 awareness session with AU Commissioners and Heads of Divisions conducted by December 2021.

### ***STRATEGY 3.1.4 - Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2040 within the ACERWC***

The ACERWC has the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2040. This has proved challenging for the ACERWC in the first phase of its implementation on account of lack of sufficient human and financial resources and systems within the ACERWC to gather the required data for effective monitoring. In addition, Agenda 2040, requires significant investment from states to facilitate effective data gathering (through national annual review mechanisms and progress reports), and there has of yet been little knowledge and buy-in of Agenda 2040 by states.

Facilitating greater engagement by states is discussed in the preceding strategies. Internally, integrating Agenda 2040 in all ACERWC programs – which includes integrating Agenda 2040 in the state reporting procedures and proposed reports from special mechanisms, provides an additional avenue for data gathering and monitoring. Further, as the ACERWC increases its human resources to include an M&E officer as already noted, an M&E plan will be developed specifically for Agenda 2040.

### **Strategy outputs**

Agenda monitoring and evaluation framework produced

Each November Committee session encapsulating Agenda 2040 for reflection and reviews.

Annual report produced on the implementation of Agenda 2040 in member states

***Objective 3.2 -To develop guidelines, policy documents and frameworks on strategic and emerging child rights issues.***

**Rationale:** Since its founding the ACERWC has sought to be on the cutting edge of child rights protection issues in order to ensure the rights of children in Africa are fully realized. Over the past five years the ACERWC began to work more closely with the PSC on issues of children affected by armed conflict (CAAC), including lobbying for the appointment of a Special envoy on CAAC,

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<sup>22</sup> See background to Agenda 2040, Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

developing continental studies and general comments, and delivering a training on child protection to human rights observers being deployed to conflict situations. The ACERWC has furthermore elaborated a draft General Comment on Children in situations of conflict tension and strife. Moving forward the ACERWC will strengthen its engagement with the PSC with the aim of developing a comprehensive framework for child rights protection in conflict situations. In addition, the ACERWC will engage on issues concerning the implications of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) on cross border issues affecting children, in order to develop clear guidelines for child protection in the AfCFTA. Further, the ACERWC has made representations on the impact of the COVID 19 crisis on children's rights in conflict situations through a Guiding Note to Member States of the African Union<sup>23</sup>, and will continue to track to developments more broadly in order to formulate concrete policy recommendations.

**STRATEGY 3.2.1 -- Engage with the PSC to develop a comprehensive framework for child rights protection in conflict situations.** Through its Special Mechanism on children and armed conflict, the ACERWC will engage more closely with the PSC to raise the profile of child rights in the PSC. Starting in 2021, the Special Rapporteur will provide briefings to the PSC at least biannually, on situations of children in conflict situations and make recommendations to redress violations. The Special Rapporteur will also seek to establish a close working relationship with the CAAC Special envoy once appointed. In addition, the AERWC will popularize its General Comment on Children on Armed Conflict (once finalized) in order to ensure that the standards articulated therein are fully implemented

#### **Strategic outputs**

Joint annual plan produced between the CAAC focal person in the ACERWC and the Civilians Advisor or Child protection advisor.

Two PSC sessions organized each year during the strategic period according to the PSC decision;

Annual report on state of children's rights in conflict settings produced

Child protection embedded into the Peace Support Operations policy documents and mandates

Collaboration and joint action plan developed between the office of the Special Envoy on CAAC and the ACERWC Special rapporteur.

#### **Strategy 3.2.2 - Establish collaboration with AFTA secretariat towards establishing a child protection mechanism**

As a first step the ACERWC will organize a continental meeting of key stakeholders to discuss the implications of the AfCFTA on children's rights by mid-2022. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this meeting will provide the basis for the guidelines which the ACERWC aims to complete during the strategic period.

#### **Strategy outputs**

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.acerwc.africa/Latest%20News/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-children-in-conflict-situation/>

Annual collaboration plan developed between the ACERWC and the AfCFTA;

Capacity of AfCFTA secretariat strengthened on child rights and child safeguarding;

***Strategy 3.2.3 – Periodic child focused assessments of the impact of humanitarian emergencies and other emerging humanitarian crises***

The continent of Africa has been ravaged by many humanitarian crises such as droughts, floods, locusts, conflicts, epidemics like ebola and recently the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have far reaching impact on the lives of children on the continent. The Committee therefore needs to have a plan on how to respond to such crises in real time. The Committee needs an institutional arrangement to respond to these crises, starting with having the technical capacity for it.

***Strategic outputs***

Humanitarian crises focal person identified within the ACERWC secretariat;

Capacity of the ACERWC, both secretariat and Committee members, strengthened to be able to respond to humanitarian crises;

Regular reports produced on humanitarian emergencies and their impact on children’s rights in Africa

***Objective 3.3 - To develop child centered working methods, policies, and practices.***

***Rationale:*** The ACERWC believes that Girls and Boys views should be at the center of all policies and mechanisms that are developed to protect and promote their rights. Over the past five years the ACERWC has made efforts to engage children in its processes, for example children have been given space to present a statement at the ACERWC’s ordinary session and engage with Committee members during the session. In addition, the ACERWC’s has, with the support of the ACCP, developed draft guidelines on child participation which are in the process of being reviewed.

Over the next five years, the ACERWC will take the following steps to develop more child centered working methods, policies, and practices:

- Finalize, adopt, and disseminate guidelines on child participation.
- Fully operationalize the ACERWC special mechanism on child participation.
- Engage children in Agenda 2040.
- Integrate child participation in all ACERWC promotional activities.
- Build internal capacity to work with children.

***STRATEGY 3.3.1 - Finalize, adopt, and disseminate guidelines on child participation***

As a matter of priority, the ACERWC will finalize and adopt the existing draft guidelines by the end of 2020. Once completed the guidelines will be widely disseminated to government

departments (specifically those responsible for children), NHRIs, RECs, CSOs, and other identified strategic target groups. In addition, in 2022, the ACERWC will hold a sensitization workshop on the child participation guidelines for the aforementioned target groups.

### **Strategy outputs**

Child participation guidelines adopted by the ACERWC in 2021

Child participation guidelines disseminated through workshops to the following stakeholders:

-CSO Forum

-RECs

-NHRIs

Capacity of the ACERWC strengthened on using the Child Participation Guidelines

### ***STRATEGY 3.3.2- Fully operationalize the ACERWC special mechanism on child participation***

The steps needed to fully operationalize the ACERWC's Special Mechanisms are provided in objective 5.3 above.

### **Strategy outputs**

Focal ACERWC member nominated to be the special rapporteur;

Focal secretariat staff identified;

Budget provided for each session to have children participate in Committee activities

### ***STRATEGY 3.3.3- Engage children in Agenda 2040***

The ACERWC will seek to engage children in Agenda 2040 through the following initiatives:

- i. Developing promotional materials on Agenda 2040 that are suitable for child consumption
- ii. Organizing a children's forum on Agenda 2040 by the end of 2022. The forum will also be used to sensitize children on the ACRWC. The forum will be held close to an ordinary session of the ACERWC in order to facilitate the children's participation in the ordinary session where they can present the conclusions of their meeting. The ACERWC will work closely with child focused CSOs to develop a structure and agenda for this forum that will ensure that the issues are presented in an age appropriate manner, and that it provides a space in which children can engage freely. The ACERWC anticipates that this forum will serve as a prototype for a standing children's forum preceding the ordinary sessions of the ACERWC in the long-term.

### **Strategy outputs**

Child friendly promotional materials developed;

Children's Forum organized each year in the five regions of the Continent

### **STRATEGY 3.3.4 - Build internal capacity to work with children**

As the ACERWC works to increase its staffing as described in strategy 1.1.1 above, building in-house capacity to work with children will be a crucial factor in recruitment for some positions. Experience working with children from diverse backgrounds will also be a factor that will be considered in recruitment of interns, and the ACERWC will also seek these skills through the African Youth Volunteers program. Further, the ACERWC will institute staff seminars on child engagement as it relates to different staff roles in 2023.

### **Strategy outputs**

Capacity building workshops conducted for ACERWC and the secretariat on child participation from 2021

Quarterly learning seminars for the secretariat conducted from 2022;

### **Objective 3.4 – To establish disability and gender as a crucial pillars in the work of the ACERWC**

**Rationale:** The ACERWC recognizes that effective child protection requires an understanding of the impact of gender on the vulnerabilities that girls and boys face. Therefore, it is essential that gender underlies all the ACERWC's efforts to develop child promotion and protection standards, and the ACERWC will seek to achieve this by mainstreaming gender in all its programming. Over the past five years the ACERWC has made strides towards incorporating gender in its work by highlighting gender issues in its state reporting process, various research reports, policy documents, decisions on communications, and recent general comments. Moving forward, the ACERWC will mainstream gender in its programming by integrating a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all its programs. This process will be accelerated by the recruitment of a Gender Officer in 2022.

### **Strategy 3.4.1 – Gender mainstreaming into the work of the Committee**

This objective is premised on the understanding that girls are affected disproportionately by most child rights violations. As such, the Committee will make a deliberate effort to address the power imbalances and structural barriers that perpetuate the subjugation of the girl child. In dispensing its promotion and protection mandate, the Committee will pay attention to gender dimensions to all the issues.

### **Strategy outputs**

ACERWC gender policy developed

Gender mainstreaming guide developed for the ACERWC

Gender officer recruited

### **Strategy 3.4.2 – Disability mainstreaming into the work of the Committee**

#### ***Strategy outputs***

Disability mainstreaming guide developed for the ACERWC

Disability officer recruited

ACERWC disability strategy developed

## **STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVES UNDER OUTCOME FOUR**

### ***STRATEGIC OUTCOME FOUR***

***ACERWC established as an African reference point for child rights promotion and protection in Africa***

***Objective 4.1 - To enhance the visibility of the ACERWC in order to increase use of ACERWC standards and mechanisms.***

**Rationale:** In order for the ACERWC to be established as a premier reference point for child rights promotion and protection, its mandate needs to be more widely known and understood. The ACERWC's limited visibility has been noted as a major hindrance to its effective operation<sup>24</sup>. Many of the strategies already elaborated in this plan will contribute to increased visibility for the ACERWC by strengthening its ability to more effectively deliver on its mandate, engaging with a broader range of stakeholders, and popularizing its mandate and key programs.

#### ***Strategy 4.1.1 – Build partnership with media houses and media organs***

The ACERWC will compile a database of key media contacts in Africa (television, newspapers, radio) by December 2020, and regularly disseminate information to them on key ACERWC activities and products. In addition, the ACERWC will invite media contacts to ACERWC sessions, and, working in collaboration with RECs, organize regional media sensitization workshops in 2022 and 2023.

#### ***Strategy outputs***

Child friendly reporting handbook developed for media houses

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<sup>24</sup> See report of evaluation of strategic plan 2015-2019. This was also strongly highlighted in the interviews carried out for development of this strategic plan.

Capacity of media houses strengthened on child rights and child friendly reporting

***Strategy 4.1.2 –Enhance ACERWC virtual presence***

The ACERWC has relatively active Twitter and Facebook pages with 5000+ followers, however interactions with individual posts (likes, shares, comments) are quite low, rarely attracting more than 25 likes and 5 shares. The ACERWC will review its social media content to make it more engaging, with a specific lens on attracting a more youthful audience. Specifically, the ACERWC will provide more visual content of its field activities especially those that involve interacting directly with children; posting impact stories (e.g. successful communications and how they have impacted children’s lives); and encouraging discussions on child rights issues by regularly posting questions to its followers.

***Strategic outputs***

ACERWC website updated weekly and sharing child rights information on the continent;

ACERWC virtual platforms such as twitter, blog account and facebook, each week sharing child rights information;

***Strategy 4.1.3 – Mainstream communications functions and public relations into the work of the ACERWC***

Secretariat staff will incorporate communications into their roles by: taking non-professional pictures during missions, meetings and events; bringing back media contacts to the communication officer when they are part of delegations that go on missions and visits; taking video footage of public sessions and events of public character with their smart phones for future elaboration of video clips; using smart phones for live streaming public events, such as press conferences, through Facebook and Twitter; and live tweeting during visits and missions, among other activities.

***Strategic output***

Communication strategy reviewed and updated

***Strategy 4.1.5- Development of Knowledge management strategy.***

The Committee generates a lot of knowledge in dispensing its mandate. There is need for a deliberate plan of documenting this knowledge and disseminating it to the different stakeholders of the ACERWC, including the children. Further, the Committee will need to provide guidance and strategic direction on child rights topical issues on the continent. This will all be some of the deliverables of the knowledge management strategy.

***Strategy outputs***

Knowledge management strategy developed

## **Objective 4.2 - To establish a platform for knowledge generation, debate and knowledge dissemination**

Rationale: this objective is premised on the understanding that for the ACERWC to be the reference point for child rights, this can be achieved by being content driven. The ACERWC needs to be driving the child rights discourse and settling debates on the continent through research, platforms for debate and engagement and producing high quality publications that are peer reviewed.

### **Strategy 4.2.1 Conduct Quarterly Open Sessions**

The ACERWC will host open sessions to discuss topical child rights issues on the continent. The open sessions will also be a platform for debate on controversial issues. In some way, the ACERWC will become more like an adjudicator of the issues. The Committee will also set the tone and direction of the discourse through these open sessions. The product of these will be shared in light of the knowledge management strategy.

#### **Strategy outputs**

Quarterly open sessions on emerging issues and Agenda 2040 aspirations

### **Strategy 4.2.1 Produce a year book on emerging and ground breaking research**

In light with its mandate, the ACERWC will set a research agenda that will seek to address continental issues. Collaboration with universities, journals and think tanks will be established for the Committee to produce high quality knowledge in a systematic fashion. It will mean that the Committee will produce a '*Child Rights in African Year Book*' which will have contributions from stakeholders, scholars and practioneers.

#### **Strategy output**

Child Rights in Africa Year Book produced each year

## **STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVES UNDER OUTCOME FIVE**

### **STRATEGIC OUTCOME FIVE**

***Fully operational and well-resourced Secretariat and Committee of Experts***

**Objective 5.1 – To increase staffing to fill positions required for effective implementation of the ACERWC’s mandate.**

**Rationale:** Staffing shortages and other institutional weaknesses were identified as one of the main reasons for the ACERWC’s low delivery on its previous Strategic Plan<sup>25</sup>. At present, the ACERWC is running with approximately 30% of its required staffing, of whom approximately 27% percent are short-term positions. It is noteworthy that at the time of developing this Strategic Plan, the ACERWC Secretariat was lacking any senior executive management staff – the position of Executive Secretary vacant since 2018 and yet to be filled.

**STRATEGY 5.1.1 – recruit additional staff according to the order of priority reflected in the table below.**

There is need for continued engagement with the AUC to increase the ACERWC’s budget ceiling. Over the next five years the ACERWC will continue to engage closely with the AUC on its budgetary needs targeting an increase of at least 50% in the next budget cycle. In addition, the ACERWC will seek to identify “champion states” with a commendable track record in promoting and protecting children’s rights, to press for its interests within the AUC. The table below illustrates the ACERWC’s optimum staffing requirements as presented to the Executive Council in its request for a new structure. In line with the Executive Council’s decision that implementation of the ACERWC’s new staffing structure should be phased and subject to budget availability<sup>26</sup>, the ACERWC has defined an order of priority for recruitment reflecting its most pressing needs for the period 2020-2024. According to this order of priority, the ACERWC is targeting **61% fulfilment** of its optimum staffing requirements by 2024.

Position	Number	Scale	Target recruitment date
Executive Secretary	1	P6	By end of 2021
Deputy Secretary	1	P5	By end of 2021
Principal Child Rights protection Officer	1	P4	By end of 2021
Principal Child Rights promotion Officer	1	P4	By end of 2021
Senior Child Rights Promotion officer	2	P3	By end of 2022
Senior Child Rights Protection officer	2	P3	By end of 2022
Senior Social Worker Officer	1	P3	By end of 2021

<sup>25</sup> Report of Evaluation of ACERWC Strategic Plan 2015-2019

<sup>26</sup> Decisions of the Executive Council at its 36<sup>th</sup> ordinary session, 6-7 February 2020, paragraph 17 [https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/38181-ex\\_cl\\_dec\\_1073\\_-\\_1096\\_xxxvi\\_e.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/decisions/38181-ex_cl_dec_1073_-_1096_xxxvi_e.pdf)

Social Worker	1	P2	By end of 2022
Child Rights Promotion Officer	2	P3	1 position by end of 2021 2 <sup>nd</sup> position in next strategic plan.
Child Rights Protection officer	2	P3	1 position by end of 2021 2 <sup>nd</sup> position in next strategic plan
Senior Program Officer	1	P3	By end of 2021
Senior Communication officer	1	P3	By end of 2021
Senior Legal Officer	1	P3	By end of 2021
Senior Finance Officer	1	P3	By end of 2021
Senior HR Officer	1	P3	By end of 2022
Interpreter and Translator	4	P3	2 positions by end of 2021 Additional 2 positions in next strategic plan.
Senior Procurement Officer	1	P2	By mid-2021
ICT Officer	1	P2	By end of 2021
Protocol Officer	1	P2	By mid-2021
Liaison officer	1	P2	By end of 2021
Communication officer	1	P2	In next strategic plan
Program Officer (M&E)	1	P2	By mid-2021
Gender Officer	1	P3	By end of 2022
Legal Researcher	6	P2	1 positions by end of 2021 Additional 4 positions in next strategic plan

### Strategy outputs

Staff recruited according to the approved structure

Permanent Representative Council members (budget committee) lobbied to allocate more resources for recruitment of the requisite staff;

### **Strategy 5.1.2 Establishment of a rolling internship and fellowship programs**

**Rationale:** Internships are a cost-effective way of increasing the ACERWC’s workforce. The evaluation of the 2014-2019 strategic plan noted that interns and consultants considerably aided the ACERWC to deliver on its mandate<sup>27</sup>. Over the next five years, the ACERWC will establish a rolling internship program to support its core functions with the aim of having a constant flow of interns to boost its workforce as it continues to seek the required resources to fill all its professional positions. Interns will be attached to all key program areas and critical support functions such as ICT and communications. The ACERWC will also institute a fellowship program beginning in 2022, targeting a total of four fellows per year representing the four main language groupings of the African Union – Anglophone, Francophone, Lusophone, and Arabic. The fellows will be drawn from African youth with a strong passion for children’s rights, and selected through an open and competitive process.

#### **Strategy outputs**

Internship and fellowship policy developed

Internship and fellowships programs popularized among academic and research institutions by the end of 2021.

Memorandum of understanding signed with various universities for regular supply of interns.

### **Objective 5.2 – To fully operationalize Special Mechanisms**

**Rationale:** Special Mechanisms are a central element of the work of regional and international human rights institutions. They provide a means to more effectively engage on human rights issues from a thematic and country perspective. At its 30<sup>th</sup> ordinary session held in Khartoum in December 2017, the ACERWC established 10 Special Mechanisms for thematic areas: violence against children; children and armed conflict; birth, registration, name and nationality; child marriage and other harmful practices; child participation; children in vulnerable situations; health, welfare, and development; children on the move; children in conflict with the law, parental responsibilities and child responsibilities; and education. In addition, committee members have been given a specific country focus. The ACERWC’s Rules of Procedure provide scope for the creation of additional special mechanisms such as working groups, study groups, sub-committees and other subsidiary bodies<sup>28</sup>. Over the next five years, the ACERWC will work to fully operationalize its thematic and country mechanisms through the strategies described below, and establish working groups.

#### **STRATEGY 5.2.1 – Institutionalize the special mechanisms into the ACERWC and its secretariat**

This implementation of this strategy is heavily dependent on recruitment of additional staff and establishing a rolling internship program. The ACERWC targets assigning 1 staff member and 1 intern to each special mechanism by 2025. Action plans for each special mechanism will be

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<sup>27</sup> See page 22, Report of Evaluation of ACERWC Strategic Plan 2015-2019

<sup>28</sup> See preamble to the Revised Rules of Procedure.

developed at the beginning of every year, and shared with strategic partners to identify possible areas of collaboration and support. The ACERWC provide for the ordinary sessions agenda to allow for reports from special mechanisms as a standing agenda item. The ACERWC will also develop clear guidelines on the methodology of reporting from special mechanisms. Further, the ACERWC will seek to establish working groups on critical and emerging child rights issues over the next five years. Working groups provide an additional avenue for the ACERWC to engage on critical thematic issues. By bringing together key experts on the identified issues, they help build the ACERWC's knowledge base and define appropriate and timely interventions. The ACERWC should develop a 'Manual of Operations for Special Mechanisms of the ACERWC' to assist the Special Mechanisms by explaining and elaborating on their methods of work and providing guidance to them. The Manual should assist mandate holders, member states, civil society and other potential interlocutors in their interactions with the mandate holder. The Manual should also reflect best practices relating to their endeavors to promote and protect children's rights. The ACERWC anticipates developing this manual by mid- 2022.

### **Strategy outputs**

Secretariat staff members and interns assigned to each special mechanism;

Annual action plans for each mechanism developed;

Manual of operations for Special Mechanisms developed

A reporting system for special mechanisms designed;

Working groups on emerging child rights issues established;

Collaboration plans developed between ACERWC special mechanisms and similar mechanisms in the other AU organs and the UN.

Monitoring and evaluation framework for the special mechanisms developed.

### ***Objective 5.3 - To secure sufficient resources to support the ACERWC's staffing and operational requirements.***

**Rationale:** Funding constraints have greatly hindered the ACERWC's ability to deliver on its mandate<sup>29</sup>. While there has been a significant increase in the ACERWC's budget allocation, it still falls short of what the ACERWC would require to function optimally<sup>30</sup>.

### **Strategy 5.4.1 – Continued engagement with the AUC to increase the ACERWC's budget ceiling**

Engagement with the AUC on increasing budget ceiling established by December 2021

Identification of 2 "champion states" to help advocate for increased resources from AUC by 2024

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<sup>29</sup> See Report on the evaluation of strategic plan 2015-2019.

<sup>30</sup> \$1.9 million budget allocation for 2020, yet optimal budget was \$4.2 million. See SWOT analysis.

### ***STRATEGY 5.3.2 – Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy.***

The ACERWC will recruit a consultant (an expert in resource mobilization) to explore innovative funding solutions in light of the current restrictions on external funding sources<sup>31</sup> by mid-2021. The strategy will clearly delineate the boundaries for external funding in the current context, explore possibilities of direct programmatic support, public donations, as well as how the ACERWC can lobby more effectively for more resources within the AU. The strategy will also make recommendations on how to institutionalize resource mobilization at the ACERWC. The ACERWC anticipates that this strategy will be developed by January 2022.

#### **Strategy outputs**

Stakeholder mapping study conducted

Stakeholder engagement strategy developed

Secretariat staff assigned in dealing with identified stakeholders

### **Objective 5.4 To enhance internal capacity of the ACERWC**

This strategic plan is coming into place when the secretariat of the ACERWC just moved from the African Union Headquarters where the ACERWC was under the department of social affairs oversight. It meant that the organ, which ideally is supposed to be independent, relied on the African Union Commission systems, procedures and processes. With an independent headquarters now established in Maseru, the ACERWC organ needs to wean off from the AUC systems. Below are the strategies to help in this regard:

#### ***Strategy 5.4.1- strengthen ACERWC secretariat working systems***

##### **Strategy outputs**

Office procedures manual developed

Finance management systems adapted and adopted

#### ***Strategy 5.4.2- strengthen secretariat programmatic response***

##### **Strategy outputs**

Child safeguarding mainstreamed into the work of the ACERWC

Secretariat staff capacity strengthened on inter alia emerging child rights issues, working with children and dealing with humanitarian crises and emergencies.

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<sup>31</sup> Decision of the AU to fund 100% of the ACERWC's budget. See SWOT analysis (threats).

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# **PART SIX: THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

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## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Learning from its experience in implementing its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, the ACERWC is committed to deliver on the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan to advance child rights in Africa as an effective, responsive and sustainable organization, while preserving the essence of its mandate. As the central point of its approach to monitoring and evaluation, the ACERWC will make strategic decisions in a timely and transparent manner while communicating its results regularly. The ACERWC will prioritize suitable supervisory and management oversight over the functioning of the Secretariat.

The main elements of the ACERWC's Monitoring and Evaluation Plan are as follows:

- The ACERWC will hold performance and planning review meetings on a quarterly basis to specifically analyze progress on the Strategic Plan targets as being implemented through an annual operational plan.
- The M & E Plan will provide a consolidated source of information to analyze the ACERWC's achievements and setbacks, with a view to improve and to take any required corrective measures.
- The ACERWC will develop a tracking system to record all meetings regarding the status of implementation of the Strategic Plan, generating reports which contribute to accountability and transparency, while allowing for lessons learnt to be shared easily.
- The ACERWC will align its annual work plans to the Strategic Plan as illustrated in the integration matrix below.
- As it increases its human resources, the ACERWC will assign a senior member of its Secretariat to have oversight over the monitoring and evaluation of this plan.
- The log frame matrix elaborated below<sup>32</sup> will provide the basis for assessment of progress implementing the strategic plan.

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<sup>32</sup> See pages 42-54

**IX LOGFRAME MATRIX**

**IX LOGFRAME MATRIX**

\*\*\* As already noted above in the introduction to the strategies, wherever meetings are proposed, the ACERWC will also consider the possibility of web conferencing where practical\*\*\*

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY	BASELINE	STRATEGIC OUTPUTS	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
<b>Strategic Outcome One</b> <b>Universal ratification, domestication, and implementation of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child achieved</b>					
<b>Objective 1.1 – To lobby states parties for increase domestication and implementation of the Charter.</b>	<b>Strategy 1.1.1 – Establish engagement platforms for the commemoration of the Charter</b>	None	-Regional conferences commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Charter conducted for all five regions of the continent  -Virtual commemorative seminars hosted each quarter on emerging child rights issues		Commemoration reports from state parties and RECs/RMs
	<b>Strategy 1.1.2 – Institute biennial experience sharing forums on implementation</b>	Forums have been held but not on a regular basis	-Two experience sharing platforms hosted by the ACERWC reflecting on the implementation of the Charter;  -Publication on exemplary practices issued by the ACERWC based on country experiences;	Experience sharing forums held biennially	Forum reports

	on of the ACRWC				
	<b>Strategy 1.1.3 – Follow-up on state commitments on domestication and implementation.</b>	The harmonization of laws study adopted by the Committee in 2020 provides the baseline	-Fact finding missions conducted in purposively sampled state parties;  -Note verbales issued to states parties lagging behind on their reporting obligations and with low scores on indicators on child rights	-Number of fact finding missions conducted  -Number of note verbales produced	-Fact finding reports;  -Note verbales issued to state parties;
	<b>Strategy 1.1.4- Follow up on Committee decisions, concluding observations and recommendations for implementation at national level</b>		-Follow up missions conducted to states parties issued with concluding observations and recommendations;  -Implementation template developed and shared with states parties for ease of implementing Committee decisions and concluding observations	-number of communications received and finalized;  -Number of follow up missions conducted;  -implementation checklist/ template developed;  -	-concluding observations and decisions;  -mission reports;  Implementation template/checklist
	<b>Strategy 1.1.5- Provide detailed report on the situation</b>	The ACERWC previous reports provide the baseline. They do not outline	-Reporting template developed for documenting situation of children' rights in member states;  -Quarterly ACERWC report produced to feed into the main report each year;	Number of detailed reports produced for the executive council;	ACERWC reports to the AU organs;  Quarterly reports;

	<b>of children's rights in member states to the relevant AU policy organs</b>	the situation of children's rights in AU member states. They just outline what the Committee did in the reporting period.	-Annual report compiled flagging child rights violations in member states	-Number of quarterly reports produced;  Number of annual reports produced.	ACERWC annual reports on the state of children's rights on the continent.
	<b>Strategy 1.1.3 – Strategic engagement with the PAP</b>	Very limited, ad hoc, engagement with the PAP	Establish communication channels with the PAP by December 2020;  Invite PAP reps to ACERWC sessions and meetings beginning in 2021; Regularly disseminate information on ACERWC activities and products. Participate at the PAP sessions.	Collaboration plan with PAP; Participation of PAP reps in ACERWC sessions and meetings.	Email communications, session reports, meeting reports.
	<b>Strategy 2.1.4 – Follow-up on state commitments on ratification, domestication, and implementation.</b>	Follow up limited and not structured	Systematic follow-up measures defined and implemented by December 2020	Systematic follow-up measures established	Documents elaborating follow-up measures; Evidence of follow-up from reports, emails etc.
<b>Objective 1.1: To lobby African member states for</b>	<b>Strategy 1.1- Lobby the member states through</b>	The harmonization of laws study as well as Agenda 2040 study of 2020	Advocacy missions conducted to all the countries that have not ratified the Charter;	Number of advocacy missions conducted;  Number of note verbales sent to	Advocacy missions;  Note verbales.

<b>universal ratification of the charter and revoking of reservations</b>	<b>promotional initiatives</b>	provide a good baseline	Note Verbales sent to the countries that have not ratified the ACRWC or have entered reservations.	the relevant member states.	
	<b>Strategy 1.1.2 – Strategic engagement with the PAP and other relevant organs on ratification, withdrawal of reservations and domestication of the Charter</b>	The engagement is not currently systematic	ACERWC and PAP collaboration framework developed Capacity strengthened of relevant PAP structures on child rights		
<b>Objective 1.2 – To build alliances for more robust action on ratification, domestication</b>	<b>STRATEGY 12.2.1 – Establish child protection architecture within RECs; a</b>	Regular contact established with 2/8 RECS, some sensitization done, draft collaboration plan	-Finalize collaboration plans with all RECs since a draft collaboration plan already exists and will be circulated to all RECs for their inputs.  -Systematic engagement platforms established between RECs and ACERWC;  -Hold a meeting for RECs by the end of 2021 to adopt the collaboration plan (and define an	Meetings with RECs held;  Collaboration plan finalized and adopted by all RECs;  Focal point for RECs established	Meeting reports;  Adopted collaboration plan;  Staff assignment reflecting

tion, and implementation.		developed by ACERWC	<p>action plan for an agreed period) and sensitize them on the ACERWC and Agenda 2040;</p> <p>-Agenda 2040 dissemination with the RECs conducted;</p> <p>-Institutionalize collaboration with RECs by assigning a Committee member and focal point within the secretariat;</p> <p>-Hold yearly meetings with the RECs to strengthen the collaboration;</p>	within the Secretariat.	focal point work.
	<b>STRATEGY 12.2.2 - Operationalization of the guidelines of the Affiliate status of the NHRIs</b>	Low level engagement. Affiliate status procedures adopted but not used. No collaborative activities.	<p>-Workshops conducted between NHRIs and the ACERWCs to sensitize them on the ACERWCs mandate and procedures, and define a collaboration plan.</p> <p>-Awareness raised with the NHRIs on the Affiliate status guidelines</p> <p>-Platform established for NHRIs to engage with the ACERWC during the Committee sessions and other platforms.</p> <p>-Database of NHRI contacts developed for strategically disseminating information to the NHRIs on the ACERWCs activities and products by the end of 2021.</p>	<p>-NHRIs with affiliate status;</p> <p>-Committee members engaging with NHRIs in their home countries;</p> <p>-Sensitization workshop for NHRIs held.</p>	<p>Application documents for affiliate status;</p> <p>Communique s granting affiliate status to NHRIs;</p> <p>Session reports reflecting NHRI attendance;</p> <p>Workshop reports.</p>
	<b>Strategy 1.2.3 - Strengthen collaboration with the</b>	Medium level engagement. Contacts established, attendance of	-Joint collaboration agreements developed with the ACHPR and African Court;	Joint collaboration plans agreed on by all parties	Joint collaboration plans

	<b>ACHPR and the African Court</b>	meetings/sessions quite regular, draft collaboration plan defined but not agreed on, some joint statements and one joint general comment.	-Shared learning platform established for addressing emerging human rights challenges and how the organs can respond;  -Focal persons for the joint collaboration nominated in each of the organs		
	<b>Strategy 1.2.4 – Strategic engagement in the AGA</b>	ACERWC participating in the AGA platform albeit remotely	Embed AGA activities into the work of the Committee  -Platform for systematic collaboration with the APRM established;  -Child rights issues placed on the AGA agenda;  -ACERWC integrated into the AGA plans and initiatives	Number of joint activities between AGA Platform members and the Committee	Joint planning and resource mobilization
	<b>Strategy 1.2.5 – Strengthen CSO engagement</b>	Medium level engagement. Key CSO consortiums ending, CSO forum re-instituted but engagement limited, space for CSO report in ordinary sessions provided.	-Collaboration plan with the CSO Forum established;  -ACERWC focal persons, both in the secretariat and Committee members identified;  -Capacity of the CSO Forum strengthened on state party reporting, complementary reporting and following up on Committee decisions and concluding observations;  -Capacity of the CSO Forum strengthened on the ACERWC complaints mechanism;	Bilateral agreements with CSOs; CSO key strategic partners forum held annually;  Committee members participating in CSO Forum preceding ordinary sessions.	Partnership agreement documents; Minutes of key CSO partners forums;  CSO forum reports reflecting attendance by committee members.

			<p>-Research agenda jointly set on emerging child rights issues.</p> <p>-Establish bilateral collaborations on identified issues (ongoing 2020-2024).</p>		
<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME TWO</b>					
<b>Child Rights accountability mechanisms for the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child effective</b>					
<b>Objective 2.1 – To strengthen the ACERWC’s key accountability mechanisms – state reporting &amp; individual complaints handling</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2.1.1 – Engage with the state parties to comply with their reporting obligations</b>	Notable downward trend in submission of state party reports; Very limited data on state reporting challenges.	<p>Bilateral engagement with states on state reporting challenges at every opportunity (missions, sessions, etc.) starting in 2021;</p> <p>-Bilateral engagement with member states that are not honoring their reporting obligations;</p> <p>-Advocacy missions conducted to purposively sampled countries</p> <p>-A state party reporting campaign launched</p> <p>-Annual shared learning platform for member states and state parties established</p>	Established rapport with states on reporting challenges; Established contact between Committee members and relevant government departments in their home countries; Data available on state reporting challenges.	Mission and session reports showing engagement with states; Reports from committee members, email communications.
	<b>Strategy 2.1.2 – Engage with other AU organs and counterpart UN organs on state reporting reforms</b>	Medium level. State reporting of the ACERWC has been aligned with the UNCRC. Ad hoc engagement with ACHPR on state	<p>Regular engagement with broader AU and UN mechanisms on state reporting reforms (2020-2024);</p> <p>- Joint annual planning for state reporting conducted each year with AU and UN organs;</p>	ACERWC regularly participating in discussions on state reporting reforms	Minutes of meetings, email communications.

		reporting challenges; Engagement on AGA platform.			
	<b>Strategy 2.1.3 – Popularize state reporting and communications procedures</b>	Limited popularization. No structured efforts to popularize procedures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Produce and distribute simplified (and downloadable) brochures on communications procedures in all four AU languages by the end of 2021;</li> <li>-State party reporting simplified and disseminated to state parties</li> <li>-Media advocacy tools produced and shared with all stakeholders by 2021</li> </ul>	<p>Simplified downloadable brochures on communications available on website and social media platforms;</p> <p>Short animated videos on communications procedures available on website and social media platforms.</p>	Brochures and videos
	<b>Strategy 2.1.4 – Strengthen follow-up on the decisions of the Committee on received communications</b>	Low – medium level. Notable low implementation of decisions. Follow up takes place largely during missions and through direct engagement but with limited results. Follow-up not systematic/structured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Popularize decisions on communications at national level through key media outlets starting in 2021;</li> <li>-Collaborate with NHRIs on communications follow up;</li> <li>-Staff designated for each communication decision follow through;</li> <li>-State parties who have received decisions from the ACERWC assisted to develop implementation plans/ roadmaps for implementation of the decisions;</li> </ul>	<p>Decisions on communications featured in national media outlets;</p> <p>Established collaboration with NHRIs on communications follow-up;</p> <p>Staff working on communications follow-up more systematically.</p>	Media reports Work plans

			<p>-Capacity of NHRIs strengthened on ACERWC decisions and accountability mechanisms that can be put in place at national level.</p> <p>-ACERWC decisions embedded into the APRM review process</p>		
<b>Objective 2: To collect real time evidence on child rights violations in Africa</b>	<b>Strategy 2.2.1 Conducting fact finding missions;</b>		<p>Fact finding missions conducted in purposively sampled countries</p> <p>Fact finding mission reports produced</p>	Number of fact finding missions conducted	Fact finding reports
	<b>Strategy 2.2.2 Conduct research on emerging child rights issues;</b>		<p>-Research agenda for the ACERWC developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders such as the CSO Forum, African research centers at various universities;</p> <p>-Media observatory established within the ACERWC secretariat which produces weekly reports from 202;</p> <p>-Continental researches conducted on emerging child rights issues.</p>	<p>-Number of continental researches commissioned by the Committee</p> <p>-The scheduled research agenda</p>	Continental studies
<p><b>STRATEGIES FOR OBJECTIVES UNDER OUTCOME THREE</b></p> <p><b>Robust normative standards, policies and agendas for child rights practices protection and promotion inspired by the ACRWC developed and implemented</b></p>					
<b>Objective 3.1 – To operationa</b>	<b>Strategy 4.1.1 – Integrate</b>	Agenda 2040 often referenced but	-Agenda 2040 integrated into the revised state party reporting guidelines by 2021;	Agenda 2040 integrated in all	Program documents ;

<p><b>lize Agenda 2040 as a guiding framework for the ACERWC's work and establish it as a rallying point for promotion of child rights on the continent</b></p>	<p>Agenda 2040 in all ACERWC programs</p>	<p>not integrated in ACERWC programming.</p>	<p>Agenda 2040 embedded into the activities and reporting system for Special Mechanisms;</p> <p>-Secretariat staff job profiles include Agenda 2040 deliverables;</p> <p>-Virtual promotional activities conducted on Agenda 2040 i.e. Quarterly webinars on each of the ten aspirations;</p> <p>Starting in 2021 DAC themes to be structured around the 10 aspirations;</p> <p>Integrate Agenda 2040 in JD of proposed M&amp;E officer.</p>	<p>ACERWC programming;</p> <p>DAC themes structured around Agenda 2040 aspirations.</p>	<p>DAC concept notes.</p>
	<p><b>Strategy 3.1.2 – Popularize Agenda 2040 amongst African citizens</b></p>	<p>Popularization largely through workshops on the popularization of Agenda 2040.</p>	<p>Working with RECs to popularize Agenda 2040 in their regional economic communities and regional mechanisms;</p> <p>-Child friendly versions of Agenda 2040 developed, both virtual and hard copies;</p> <p>-The Agenda integrated into the CSO Forum sessions;</p> <p>-A blog account hosted for the Committee elucidating the ten aspirations;</p> <p>-Branding products developed on Agenda 2040;</p> <p>Popularizing Agenda 2040 amongst African citizens (developing promotional materials, advertising at strategic/popular events, working with CSOs, engaging traditional</p>	<p>Agenda 2040 incorporated in REC discussions with Member States;</p> <p>Promotional and branded materials on Agenda2040 developed;</p> <p>Agenda 2040 featured in national media;</p> <p>Agenda 2040 advertised at strategic/popular events</p>	<p>REC meeting reports;</p> <p>Promotional and branded materials;</p> <p>Media reports;</p> <p>Advertisements</p>

			media, social media engagement, producing and distributing branded materials)		
	<b>Strategy 3.1.3 – Popularize Agenda 2040 in the AU through relevant organs such as ECOSOC, CSO Forum</b>	Agenda 2040 not well known in the AU, very limited reference in AU discussions.	<p>Lobbying for Agenda 2040 to be referenced in all Agenda 2063 discussions;</p> <p>-Agenda 2040 integrated into the ECOSOC sessions;</p> <p>-One of the two PSC sessions each year focus on Agenda 2040;</p> <p>-Agenda 2040 awareness session with AU Commissioners and Heads of Divisions conducted by December 2021;</p> <p>-Holding a popularization event for AU Commissioners and Heads of Division by December 2021.</p>	<p>Agenda 2040 referenced in Agenda 2063 discussions;</p> <p>-number of sessions conducted with AU organs where Agenda 2040 is referenced;</p>	<p>Copies of speeches, meeting discussions etc where Agenda 2040 is referenced;</p> <p>Report of popularization event</p>
	<b>Strategy 3.1.4 – Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of Agenda 2040 within the ACERWC</b>	Weak monitoring. Limited human resources for effective monitoring.	<p>-Agenda 2040 monitoring and evaluation framework produced;</p> <p>-Each November Committee session encapsulating Agenda 2040 for reflection and reviews;</p> <p>-Annual report produced on the implementation of Agenda 2040 in member states</p>	<p>M&amp;E framework developed;</p> <p>-number of Committee sessions addressing Agenda 2040 contents;</p> <p>Number of annual reports</p>	M&E plan
<b>Objective 3.2 – To develop guidelines, policy document</b>	<b>Strategy 3.2.1 – Engage with the PSC to develop a comprehensi</b>	Medium level engagement – recognition of ACERWC role by PSC, participation in	-Bi-annual PSC briefings by Special Rapporteur on children and armed conflict starting in 2021;	<p>Joint ACERWC-PSC sessions on a bi-annual basis;</p> <p>Joint annual plan;</p>	<p>Briefing reports;</p> <p>Minutes of meetings;</p>

<b>s and framework s on strategic and emerging child rights issues</b>	ve framework for child rights protection in conflict situations	some meetings/sessions; PSC beginning to engage more strategically on child protection issues	-Joint annual plan produced between the CAAC focal person in the ACERWC and the Civilians Advisor or Child protection advisor; -Two PSC sessions organized each year during the strategic period according to the PSC decision; -Annual report on state of children’s rights in conflict settings produced;  -Child protection embedded into the Peace Support Operations policy documents and mandates;  Collaboration and joint action plan developed between the office of the Special Envoy on CAAC and the ACERWC Special rapporteur.	Regular communication/collaboration with CAAC special envoy once appointed	Email communications;  Workplans.
	<b>Strategy 3.2.2 - Establish collaboration with AFTA secretariat towards establishing a child protection mechanism</b>	No direct engagement on AfCFTA	-Hold a continental meeting on child rights and AfCFTA by June 2022;  -Annual collaboration plan developed between the ACERWC and the AfCFTA;  -Capacity of AfCFTA secretariat strengthened on child rights and child safeguarding;	Continental meeting on AfCFTA held;  AfCFTA secretariat and ACERWC workshop conducted;  -Annual collaboration plan	Meeting report;  Joint ACERWC-AfCFTA collaboration plan;
	<b>Strategy 3.2.3 – Periodic child focused assessments of the</b>	New issue, limited engagement One guiding note on impact on children in	-Integrate tracking of COVID 19 impacts in the work of all thematic rapporteurs by December 2021;  -Humanitarian crises focal person identified within the ACERWC secretariat;	COVID 19 impact tracking integrated in the work of thematic mechanisms	Resolution of the Committee Reports of thematic mechanisms

	<b>impact of humanitarian emergencies and other emerging humanitarian crises</b>	conflict situations	-Capacity of the ACERWC, both secretariat and Committee members, strengthened to be able to respond to humanitarian crises;  -Regular reports produced on humanitarian emergencies and their impact on children's rights in Africa.		
<b>Objective 4.3 – To develop child centered working methods, policies, and practices</b>	<b>Strategy 4.3.1 –</b> Finalize, adopt, and disseminate child participation guidelines	Draft guidelines available.	Child participation guidelines adopted by the ACERWC in 2021 Child participation guidelines disseminated through workshops to the following stakeholders: -CSO Forum -RECs -NHRIs Capacity of the ACERWC strengthened on using the Child Participation Guidelines Hold a sensitization workshop on guidelines by June 2022.	Child participation guidelines adopted and disseminated; Sensitization workshop held.	Child participation guidelines; Evidence of distribution (emails, reports); Workshop report.
	<b>Strategy 4.3.2 –</b> Fully operationalize the special mechanism on child participation	See objective 5.3 on operationalizing special mechanisms	-Focal ACERWC member nominated to be the special rapporteur;  -Focal secretariat staff identified;  -Budget provided for each session to have children participate in Committee activities	Committee member appointed as special rapporteur	The child participation guidelines;  Children's events
	<b>Strategy 4.3.3 –</b> Engage Children in Agenda 2040	No targeted child engagement	Child friendly promotional materials developed;  Children's Forum organized each year in the five regions of the Continent.	Availability of child friendly promotional materials;  Children's forum held.	Child friendly promotional materials;  Report of Children's forum.

	<b>Strategy 4.3.4</b> – Build internal capacity to work with children	Limited in-house child engagement skills	Capacity building workshops conducted for ACERWC and the secretariat on child participation from 2021;  Quarterly learning seminars for the secretariat conducted from 2022;	Staff/interns/volunteers with child engagement skills.	Staff/intern/volunteer CVs and profiles
<b>Objective 3.4 – To establish disability and gender as a crucial pillars in the work of the ACERWC</b>	<b>Strategy 4.4.1</b> – Gender mainstreaming training for Secretariat staff and committee members	Gender recognized as an important factor in child protection but no specific focus on gender mainstreaming ; No specific skills on gender mainstreaming existing in-house.	ACERWC gender policy developed;  Gender mainstreaming guide developed for the ACERWC;  Gender officer recruited.	-gender policy available;  Training on gender mainstreaming conducted  The gender officer	The gender policy;  Gender mainstreaming guide  The officer
	<b>Strategy 3.4.2</b> – Disability mainstreaming into the work of the Committee	Currently the Committee does not have a disability strategy.	Disability mainstreaming guide developed for the ACERWC  Disability officer recruited  ACERWC disability strategy developed	Disability strategy;  Disability officer	Disability strategy  Disability officer
<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME FOUR</b>					
<b>ACERWC established as an African reference point for child rights promotion and protection in Africa</b>					

<b>Objective 4.1 – To enhance visibility of the ACERWC in order to increase use of ACERWC standards and mechanisms</b>	<b>Strategy 4.1.1 – Build partnership with media houses and media organs</b>	<p>Low level engagement, no targeted efforts to engage the media</p>	<p>Develop a database of key media contacts by December 2020;</p> <p>Invite media contacts to ordinary sessions starting in 2021;</p> <p>Regional media sensitization workshops in collaboration with RECs in 2022 and 2023 (4 in total for north, west, east, and south);</p> <p>Child friendly reporting handbook developed for media houses;</p> <p>Capacity of media houses strengthened on child rights and child friendly reporting</p>	<p>Regular attendance of media at ACERWC sessions;</p> <p>Regional media sensitization workshops held in collaboration with RECs.</p>	<p>Session reports;</p> <p>Workshop reports.</p>
	<b>Strategy 4.1.2 – Enhance ACERWC virtual presence</b>	<p>Website not frequently updated;</p> <p>Fairly good followership on social media pages (5000+ on average) but very limited engagement from followers on content.</p>	<p>more staff time allocated to website updating;</p> <p>More visual content on social media pages, impact stories, and posting questions to followers. (2020-2024)</p> <p>ACERWC website updated weekly and sharing child rights information on the continent;</p> <p>ACERWC virtual platforms such as twitter, blog account and Facebook, each week sharing child rights information;</p>	<p>Website regularly updated;</p> <p>Social media engagement strengthened through visual content, impact stories, and questions engaging followers.</p>	<p>Website and social media pages</p>
	<b>Strategy 4.1.3 – Mainstream communications functions and public relations</b>	<p>Communications functions not formally mainstreamed</p>	<p>Communication strategy reviewed and updated</p> <p>Formally incorporate communications functions in staff roles starting in 2021.</p>	<p>Communications functions incorporated in staff work methods.</p>	<p>Staff reports and work plans</p>

	<b>into the work of the ACERWC</b>				
	<b>Strategy 4.1.5- Development of Knowledge management strategy.</b>	No knowledge management strategy	Knowledge management strategy developed (2021-2024)	The knowledge management strategy	The knowledge management strategy
<b>Objective 4.2 - To establish a platform for knowledge generation, debate and knowledge dissemination</b>	<b>Strategy 4.2.1</b> Conduct Quarterly Open Sessions where Committee members share their expertise and engage with other experts	Currently no systematic open sessions to engage on child rights issues with child rights experts on the continent	Quarterly open sessions on emerging issues and Agenda 2040 aspirations	The open session	Open session reports online

	<b>Strategy 4.2.1</b> Produce a year book on emerging and ground breaking research	No year book produced by the Committee	Child Rights in Africa Year Book produced each year	The Child Rights in Africa Year Book	
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<b>STRATEGIC OUTCOME FIVE</b>					
<b>Fully operational and well-resourced Secretariat and Committee of Experts</b>					
<b>Objective 5.1-</b> <b>To increase staffing to fill positions required for effective implementation of the ACERWC's mandate.</b>	<b>Strategy 5.1.1-</b> recruit additional staff	Staffing at 30% of full capacity	61% of optimum staffing capacity recruited by 2024;  Staff recruited according to the approved structure;  Permanent Representative Council members (budget committee) lobbied to allocate more resources for recruitment of the requisite staff;	Staff recruited	Additional staff in office; Staff contracts
<b>Objective 5.2 -</b> <b>To establish rolling internship and</b>	<b>Strategy 5.2.1</b> Establishment of a rolling internship and	No policies	Secretariat to develop policies by December 2021;	Policies developed;  MOUs with universities	Policy documents  MOUs

fellowship programs.	fellowship programs		<p>Internship and fellowship policy developed;</p> <p>Internship and fellowships programs popularized among academic and research institutions by the end of 2021;</p> <p>Memorandum of understanding signed with various universities for regular supply of interns.</p>		
<b>Objective 5.3 - To fully operationalize Special Mechanisms</b>	<b>STRATEGY 5.3.1 – Institutionalize the special mechanisms into the ACERWC and its secretariat</b>	No staff and interns specifically assigned to special mechanisms	<p>Secretariat staff members and interns assigned to each special mechanism;</p> <p>Annual action plans for each mechanism developed;</p> <p>Manual of operations for</p>	<p>Staff members and interns with specific assignments to support special mechanisms</p> <p>Develop annually a joint plan with mutually reinforcing deliverables.</p> <p>Established communication channels with counterpart UN mechanisms.</p>	<p>Staff job descriptions and work assignments; Intern work assignments</p> <p><b>Evidence of joint work (joint missions); Email communications.</b></p>

			<p>Special Mechanisms developed A reporting system for special mechanisms designed;</p> <p>Working groups on emerging child rights issues established;</p> <p>Collaboration plans developed between ACERWC special mechanisms and similar mechanisms in the other AU organs and the UN;</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation framework for the special mechanisms developed.</p>	<p>Agenda for ordinary sessions amended to include reporting from special mechanisms</p> <p>Manual of operations available inter alia establishing procedure for real time response to child rights issues on the continent of the special mechanisms.</p>	
<p><b>Objective 5.4 -</b> To secure sufficient resources to support the ACERWC's</p>	<p><b>Strategy 5.4.1 –</b> Continued engagement with the AUC to increase the</p>	<p>Budget ceiling currently at 45% of optimal budget</p>	<p>Regular engagement with the AUC on increasing budget ceiling</p>	<p>Two champion states identified;</p> <p>Regular communication channels established with AUC on budget issues;</p>	<p>Budget document; email communications and minutes of meetings with AUC;</p>

staffing and operational requirements.	ACERWC's budget ceiling		established by December 2021  Identification of 2 "champion states" to help advocate for increased resources from AUC by 2024	Budget ceiling increased by 50%	Communications with representatives from identified champion states.
	<b>STRATEGY 5.4.2 – Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy.</b>	No resource mobilization strategy	Stakeholder mapping study conducted by December 2021;  Stakeholder engagement strategy developed;  Secretariat staff assigned in dealing with identified stakeholders  Strategy developed by January 2022	Stakeholder engagement strategy developed	The strategy