



Comité Africain d'Experts sur les Droits et le Bien-être de l'Enfant
Comité Africano dos Direitos e Bem-Estar da Criança
لجنة الخبراء الإفريقية المعنية بحقوق الطفل ورفاهه



The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child has just concluded its follow-up mission in the Republic of Sierra Leone

**11 August 2023
Freetown-Sierra Leone**

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) has conducted a follow-up mission to Sierra Leone from 08-11 November 2023. The Mission was conducted in the context of assessing the status of implementation of the Concluding Observations and Recommendations of the Committee sent to the State Party in 2017. During the Mission, the Delegation engaged various Ministries and Authorities, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare; the Ministry of Basic, Primary and Secondary Education; the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, Sierra Leone Correctional Services, and Family Support Unit and the National Human Rights Commission. The Committee also met with UNICEF, the Child Rights CSO Coalition and the Children's Forum Network; and visited a children's court and remand home.

From its engagements, the Delegation has noted the gains in the legislative and institutional measures undertaken to address various issues underlined in the Concluding Observations and Recommendations of the Committee. For instance, in the education sector, the delegation notes the development of the Radical Inclusion Policy, the Decentralization of schools and the increase in the number of teachers; Similarly, in the health sector, the Delegation has been informed of the significant decrease in infant mortality. More has been done in the areas of birth registration and development and revisions of policy frameworks, such as the National Development Plan 2019-2023, the amendment of the Sexual Offences Act in 2019, and the adoption of the Cyber Security Protection Act 2021.

Despite the progress, the Committee notes there are still prevailing challenges which need immediate attention of the Government and all stakeholders in Sierra Leone. The

dire situation of children in conflict and in contact with the law is a case in point; the challenges of children in street situations; children involved in hazardous work; the ever-increasing cases of drug use by children; the persistent challenges of the girl child including FGM and child marriage; severe limitation in budgetary allocation to the child rights and welfare sector; limited child participation; the challenges around water, sanitation and hygiene, especially in the remand homes and other residential spaces; the case of children on the move and emerging challenges such as online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

Concluding its Mission, the Delegation of the ACERWC strongly recommends for the Government of Sierra Leone to expedite the amendment of the Child Rights Act in accordance with the Charter in order to fill the legislative gaps and to deploy all efforts to address the challenges and child rights violations. Operationalization of specific programs and initiatives, such as accelerating the implementation of the diversion programs, are also among the key measures that the Committee amplifies.