

RESULTS SUMMARY

Advocacy to Influence Policy direction with the Africa Union

Author: SOS Children's Village in Denmark, 2025

PROJECT	<i>Title</i>	Leave No Youth Behind Project
	<i>Partner</i>	African Union/ACERWC, African governments, Civil Society Organizations in the region.
	<i>Country</i>	African Union and Member States
	<i>Period</i>	Jan 2022 – December 2026.

CHANGE: The 45th Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) adopted the General Comment on Article 25 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), reinforcing the continent's human rights policy framework. Member states are now required to incorporate the policy directions from this General Comment into their strategies for addressing the challenges faced by children without parental care (CWPC). Additionally, a monitoring tool developed in collaboration with the ACERWC was adopted during the session. This tool will enable countries to aggregate and analyze data on selected indicators related to CWPC from various sources, facilitating a comprehensive assessment of progress in upholding their rights.

CONTEXT: There are an estimated 35 million CWPC in Africa, facing challenges stemming from war, conflict, climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, and poverty. Alarming, over 70% of countries across Africa lack explicit child protection policy frameworks. In East and West Africa, up to 80% of countries are without such policies, while 70% in Southern Africa and 87.5% in Central Africa similarly lack explicit guidelines for protecting children without parental care.

CONTRIBUTION: Fifty-one of the 55 AU member states that have signed and ratified the Charter will integrate recommendations from the General Comment into their periodic progress reports to the Committee. The newly adopted monitoring tool will assist countries in organizing and analyzing data on CWPC from various sources, guiding them on what data to collect, and identifying areas for improvement in child rights policies and implementation. This initiative is a critical step towards enhancing the protection and welfare of children without parental care across the continent.

IMAGES:



ACTIVITY: A consultant was recruited and seconded to the Secretariat of the ACERWC at the African Union to facilitate the development of the General Comment and the accompanying monitoring tool. This role involved providing technical support for the General Comment, including policy recommendations on care leaving preparation, aftercare services, gatekeeping, and reintegration. Additionally, support was given—both technically and financially—to the AU in developing the monitoring tool. A validation workshop was organized to gather input from governments, academics, and practitioners, ensuring a comprehensive approach to the tools' development.

LESSONS LEARNED: Navigating partnerships on contentious topics requires patience, flexibility, and adaptable strategies to effectively influence outcomes. The withdrawal of UNICEF from the process due to trust issues and disagreements over the continental study highlighted the challenges faced. However, strengthening collaboration with the African Union and the Committee, the legally mandated bodies for children's rights in Africa, proved crucial to the process's success.

EVIDENCE: The continental study revealed that over 70% of governments in various regions of Africa lack explicit child protection policy frameworks and guidance. The General Comment will now serve as a foundation for member states to advocate for changes in local policies and practices. The ACERWC and AU will disseminate the General Comment to all 51 state parties, conduct follow-ups on its implementation, and provide input for ongoing assessments in periodic concluding remarks.

DOMAINS: Development strategy priorities:

Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability,
Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights **X**
Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights,
Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights,
Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability,
Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work,