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COMMENT



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Africa's agenda for children: progress, but still a long way to go

A NEW report has been released that assesses the progress made in the implementation of Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 (Agenda 2040).

The goal of Agenda 2040, which was adopted in 2016, is to elaborate on aspects of Agenda 2063 relating to children, and accelerate efforts towards the implementation of the African Children's Charter. Importantly, it aims to restore the dignity of African children, and improve their lives on the continent.

The comprehensive report, produced by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, identifies progress made, challenges encountered by African governments and sets priority areas in the implementation of Agenda 2040. It also exposes emerging challenges and guides future strategies and interventions for the protection and promotion of children's rights in Africa.

Finally, it sets out the aspirations, indicators, goals and (measurable and less quantifiable) targets aimed at benefiting Africa's children. The assessment report covers the first phase – 2016 to 2020.

The report launch coincides with the 2021 Day of the African Child celebrations. This year's Day of the African Child is celebrated under the theme "Thirty years after the adoption of the charter: Accelerate implementation of Agenda 2040 For an Africa fit for children".

This is an opportunity to look back in order to look ahead.

The Agenda 2040 has 10 concrete aspirations, and outlines steps that African governments should implement to ensure the respect and protection of children's rights. These aspirations are:

- ◆ The African Children's Charter, as supervised by the ACERWC, provides an effective continental framework for advancing children's rights.
- ◆ An effective child-friendly national legislative, policy and institutional framework is in place in all member states.
- ◆ Every child's birth and other vital statistics are registered.
- ◆ Every child survives and has a healthy childhood.
- ◆ Every child grows up well-nourished and with access to the basic necessities of life.
- ◆ Every child benefits fully from quality education.
- ◆ Every child is protected against violence, exploitation, neglect and abuse.
- ◆ Children benefit from a child-sensitive criminal system.
- ◆ Every child is free from the impact of armed conflicts and other disasters or emergency situations.
- ◆ African children's views matter.

The report notes that there are a range of issues that need to be addressed as a consequence of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on children across the continent.

These include access to education, health services, and disruptions in family life. Covid-19 has had, and continues to have, a negative effect on children's well-being, learning, development and protection.

Another critical issue is the need to build and accelerate efforts to end violence against children, individually and collectively.

Going forward: governments, civil society, children and other stakeholders should play their part in accelerating the implementation of Agenda 2040, for an Africa fit for children.

Progress has been partially made in the first five years of Agenda 2040, but still there is a long way to go.

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