



ECOWAS COMMISSION  
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# ECOWAS CHILD POLICY 2019-2030

# **ECOWAS CHILD POLICY 2019 - 2030**



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## **Foreword for the new ECOWAS Child Policy**

It is my pleasure to write the Foreword of this new ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2019-2030). This Policy reflects the regional commitment to recognize, respect and promote Children's Rights and their overall wellbeing. I fully concur with the view that 'it takes a community to raise a child', since a child's wellbeing is the responsibility of various stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental; mainly the family, community and state.

The new Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action provide a comprehensive conceptual architecture and concrete guidance for coordinating the efforts of all stakeholders in the ECOWAS region towards achieving the goals of extant international instruments relative to child rights. These include, specifically the SDGs 1 – 6 (no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality and clear water and sanitation); the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACEWC); and the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

Operationally, the accompanying Strategic Plan of Action will ensure effective thematic and issue-based coordination towards specific results within the ECOWAS Commission as a whole, with all institutions of ECOWAS (including the West Africa Health Organization), within Member States and across all States and Non-State Actors. This Policy highlights the individual context of each child and adopts a life-course approach to child-wellbeing. The Policy envisions that all children are to be loved, supported and protected. Children are to be encouraged, guided and assisted to reach their maximum potential, both in childhood, as well as to eventually mature into responsible and active citizens, who contribute to the overall enrichment of the region.

The new Child Policy is the result of an in-depth review and update of the first ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2009-2013) and provides a comprehensive, holistic and gender-based approach to the protection and promotion of the rights of children in the ECOWAS region. The first ECOWAS Child Policy (2009-2013) was developed to support the promotion and fulfilment of children's rights in West Africa, focusing on four key priority areas: Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. The first Child Policy drew its inspiration from the ECOWAS Revised Treaty guaranteeing the fundamental principles of human rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; and was also anchored on the fundamental principle of the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security.

Furthermore, the rights of children in ECOWAS are guaranteed under Article 41 of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and also encapsulated within the broader scope of *ECOWAS Vision 2020: Towards a Democratic and Prosperous Community-the Region's Strategic Document* adopted in 2007.

The journey to the adoption of the new Child Policy effectively began in 2015 with Member States and other stakeholders emphasizing the need to review the first ECOWAS Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action. The process of developing an initial draft of the new Child Policy and Plan of Action started in earnest in 2016 with the support of an ILO Consultant hired through the ECOWAS- EU Free Movement and Migration in West Africa Program (FMM) and led by the Directorate of Humanitarian and Social Affairs. Subsequently ECOWAS held consultative meetings with Regional Partners and Experts in Lagos, Nigeria and Dakar, Senegal in 2017. Advanced drafts were circulated to key partners for review in March 2018 and finalization of the Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action was supported by a UNICEF Consultant between October and November 2018. Adoption by the Ministers in charge of the Rights of the Child was in January 2019 and later approved by the Summit of the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government in June, 2019.

This new Child Policy should be read and used in conjunction with the *ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa*. The Strategic Framework builds on existing policy and legal frameworks within the region and was adopted by ECOWAS in 2017 to promote accountability and provide direction and guidance to Members States on child protection and to influence national level programme initiatives that promote a protective environment for children in both emergency and non-emergencysituations.

It is my earnest desire that in the collective implementation of the new Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action, that results be pursued and achieved at local/community levels, sub-National, National and Regional levels. The need for effective monitoring and evaluation and the application of evidence-based interventions cannot be overemphasized. Accordingly, the Strategic Plan of Action prescribes specific and clearly defined reporting processes and the requirement for an independent review mechanism as well as a strong coordination function. Resource Mobilization will be key to the realization of the vision of the Policy. Also, it is undeniable that successful implementation of the Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action will require the mobilization of the collective consciousness of all West Africans. We might then hope to create a conducive and protective living space for all children and in doing so significantly contribute to the realization of the Human Security of our Region.

**Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne**  
**Commissioner, Department of Social Affairs and**  
**Gender ECOWAS Commission**  
**June, 2020**

## **Acknowledgement**

This new ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action (2019-2030) was a collective effort that relied on the skills, talents, perseverance, dedication and political will of a number of people from the ECOWAS Commission, Member States, Partners and other Associates. The quest for a new Child Policy for the Region effectively began in 2015 when Member States and other stakeholders emphasized the need to review the first ECOWAS Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action.

First, I want to acknowledge the exemplary leadership of the immediate past and current Commissioners of the Department of Social Affairs and Gender, ECOWAS Commission, Dr. Fatimata Dia Sow and Dr. Siga Fatima Jagne respectively; whose political commitment and support enabled the development and adoption of the new ECOWAS Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action. My gratitude also goes to all the ECOWAS staff that had contributed in many ways to this laudable achievement.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the International Labour Organization (ILO) who supported the hiring of the first Consultant in 2016 through the ECOWAS- EU Free Movement and Migration (FMM) Program in West Africa, to develop the initial drafts of the Policy. I am also grateful to the UNICEF for supporting the hiring of a Consultant in 2018 for the finalization of the draft Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action.

I would also like to commend the efforts of the Member States Experts, Non-State Actors and other Partners who by their comments and observations throughout the process of development and adoption subjected the new Child Policy to rigorous quality control.

This is one of the giant steps that builds on previous efforts towards creating an ECOWAS region which respects and values every child, and works towards the realization of the full potential and well-being of all children. This Policy with a life span of about eleven years provides the normative framework and practical guidance for the promotion and protection of all dimensions of Child Rights in non-emergency and emergency situations like the current COVID-19 Pandemic.

### **Dr. Sintiki Tarfa UGBE**

Director, Humanitarian and Social Affairs  
ECOWAS Commission.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>ACERWC</b>	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>ACRWC</b>	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
<b>ARV</b>	Antiretrovirals
<b>ATD</b>	Alternatives to detention
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based Organization
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GVAP</b>	Global Vaccine Action Plan
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index
<b>HIV and AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Person
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>ITN</b>	Insecticide Treated Net
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>MTCT</b>	Mother-to-child transmission
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SAM</b>	Severe Acute Malnutrition
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and gender-based violence
<b>SRGBV</b>	School related gender-based violence
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>TVET</b>	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
<b>UASC</b>	Unaccompanied and Separated Children
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNAIDS</b>	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
<b>UNDESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The initial ECOWAS Child Policy was developed to support the promotion and fulfilment of children's rights in West Africa, focusing on four key priority areas: Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. The Child Policy was adopted in December 2008 by ECOWAS Heads of State and Government. The accompanying Strategic Plan of Action provided a roadmap linking the Child Policy objectives to actionable strategies under the four key priority areas and ran from 2009 to 2013. The current Child Policy is the result of an in-depth review and update of both the initial Child Policy and the Strategic Plan of Action, and provides a comprehensive, holistic and gender-based approach to protect and promote the rights of children in the ECOWAS region. The ECOWAS Child Policy provides the broad-based structure and a policy direction for Member States in their common regional and international aspirations towards fulfilling child rights in West Africa.

The imperative for a regional Child Policy stems from ECOWAS Member States' commitment to fulfil their obligations towards children in accordance with the Revised ECOWAS Treaty of 1993 and its associated instruments. Article 4 of the Treaty guarantees the fundamental principles of human rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights. With respect to child well-being, all ECOWAS Member States have ratified and domesticated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990). A child is defined as any person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood lower.

In conformity with international and regional instruments and commitments, ECOWAS drafted and adopted a range of documents aimed at promoting and protecting children's rights and reinforcing respect for the rights of the child within the region. In December 2001, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Governments adopted the Declaration on the Decade of a Culture of the Rights of the Child in West Africa (2001-2010), affirming the critical role of children in the future of the region, and acknowledging that investing in children will ensure peace, security and sustainable development. The Child Policy also falls within the broader scope of the *ECOWAS Vision 2020: Towards a Democratic and Prosperous Community*, the region's strategic document adopted in 2007. Other commitments include the African Union's 2001 New Partnership for African Development; and the UN Millennium Development Goals. The ECOWAS Child Policy also fully recognises and integrates the targets set out in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's). The SDGs comprise 17 Goals and 169 targets to be delivered by 2030 of which 48 targets are directly relevant to children, while 47 are somewhat relevant.

Additionally, the Child Policy should be read in conjunction with the *ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa*. The Strategic Framework builds on existing policy and legal frameworks within the region and was adopted by ECOWAS in 2017 to promote accountability and provide direction and guidance to Members States on child protection and to influence national level programme initiatives that promote a protective environment to children in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

The Child Policy is organised into five chapters. Chapter one provides a background with an overview of the legal and policy framework and the rationale for the Child Policy. Chapter two outlines key issues and challenges in the region that have a serious impact on children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation and therefore require priority action in the region their universal and indivisible rights relating to survival, development, protection and participation in West Africa. These issues affecting children in realising their rights are interrelated with the overarching contextual issues the region is facing, including poverty, disasters and environmental hazards, gender inequalities, unemployment, weak governance structures, conflict and violence, and the impact of rapid urbanisation and globalisation. Millions of children in West Africa are still denied their rights to education, health, protection and participation because of poverty, gender, ethnicity and nationality, lack of documents or geographical location. Four key issues have been identified that impact on children's survival, development, protection and participation rights within the ECOWAS region:

- Multi-dimensional child poverty;
- Impact of climate change, natural disasters and environmental hazards on children;
- Crises, conflicts and children in emergencies;
- Gender inequalities affecting children and other cross-cutting vulnerabilities and issues. Children in the region with specific needs and vulnerabilities that need to be addressed include those with disabilities, those affected by HIV/AIDS, children on the move including forcibly displaced children (for example refugee and asylum seeking children), and children in contact with the law.

Chapter two further provides an overview of the situation of children across these four key areas vis-à-vis the four clusters of universal and indivisible rights relating to survival, development, protection and participation enshrined in the CRC and the ACRWC:

- **Survival rights** include the child's right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services;
- **Development rights** include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- **Protection rights** ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee, asylum seeking, trafficked and forcibly displaced children; safeguards for children in contact with the law; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered violence, exploitation or abuse of any kind;
- **Participation rights** encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their capacities develop, children should have increasing opportunity to participate in the activities of society, in preparation for adulthood.

With regard to promoting and protecting the rights of children in West Africa, a complex interplay of the many factors that exist might cut across all four levels of the child's existence, namely the Individual, Family, Community, and the Societal levels (as per the Socio-Ecological Model).

Chapter three sets out the vision, mission, the objectives and guiding principles of the Child Policy. The ECOWAS vision is *a child-friendly West African region, in which the member states and people collaborate to create an enabling environment for the survival, development, protection and participation of all children*. Its mission is *to ensure that the highest priority is accorded to the allocation of the necessary human and financial resources in the time-bound, sustainable enforcement and implementation of the rights of the child for the irreversible development of the region*. The broad objective of the Child Policy is *to assist ECOWAS Member States to create an environment that is conducive to child survival, development, protection and participation across the entire region*. To achieve this, Member States should i) ratify and domesticate all relevant international agreements affecting children's rights; ii) formulate, implement and monitor programmes to ensure improvements in child survival, development, protection and participation; iii) identify, budget and allocate sufficient resources for child-related matters; and iv) establish a stronger leadership within ECOWAS with regard to promoting and fulfilling child rights, which can forge stronger collaboration and partnerships across Member States.

The Child Policy's guiding principles encompass that i) children are rights-holders and active participants in realising child rights, who can hold duty bearers to account, and may claim rights which are violated or gaps in their provision; ii) child rights are inherent, inalienable, and indivisible and they apply to all children without discrimination; iii) the best interests of a child shall be the primary consideration in any decision-making which affects the child; iv) States have an obligation to ensure adequate resources are available to effectively guarantee children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation; v) children have a right to have their views heard in decision-making that affects their lives, and a right to be protected against all forms of discrimination and to enjoy positive advantages to ensure that all children have equal access to their rights; vi) children should benefit from child-friendly procedures in all matters concerning them; and vii) Member States shall ensure that all duty bearers, ranging from parents to care-givers, communities and the State, are empowered with a support system within an enabling environment to serve the best interests of children in their care, and respect and ensure the protection and fulfilment of the rights of the child.

Chapter four provides an overview of priority goals, broken down by objectives that have been identified for priority action among the four clusters of child rights:

- Goal statement 1: Children of all ages in the region live healthy lives and enjoy total well-being (Survival);
- Goal statement 2: Every child enjoys the right to intellectual, emotional and psycho motor development and care from the early years until adulthood, as well as equal opportunities to inclusive quality education, leisure and recreation (Development);
- Goal statement 3: Every child is protected from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation and has access to prevention and response services (Protection);
- Goal statement 4: Children's voices are amplified by enabling platforms for self-expression and participation in decisions on matters affecting children, taking into account their diverse ages and evolving capacity (Participation).

Specific objectives and implementing strategies for each of the four priority goals have been designed to guide ECOWAS Member States in addressing identified priorities, gaps and challenges. The four priority goals provide a framework for fulfilling their international, continental and regional commitments and accelerate the rate of implementation of existing international and regional standards and instruments and the global SDGs and targets. As such, the policy goals and strategies to be defined at Member State levels shall cut across diverse thematic areas within these four clusters of child rights.

Chapter five is focused on the need to effectively implement the Child Policy across the ECOWAS Member States. The role of key stakeholders is described, including ECOWAS, Member States, Civil Society Partners, and children, families and communities. Member States shall adopt those policy goals and devise strategies that are best suited to their national priorities. The integration of the goals and objectives of the Child Policy into national planning as well as development programmes, strategies and other development plans will facilitate its implementation. A Child Rights desk will be established at ECOWAS Commission to oversee implementation of the ECOWAS Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action, to oversee monitoring, annual reporting and further enhance accountability. To this end, the ECOWAS Commission shall develop detailed guidelines and a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for reporting and M&E compliance by the Member States in line with the four priority objectives and strategies in the Child Policy. Further, Member states shall ensure that the budgetary priority to enhance child rights by investing in children is realised at national and sub-national levels, in accordance with the CRC and the 2030 Agenda. Child rights implementation requires sufficient financial resources that are mobilised, allocated and spent in an accountable, effective, efficient, equitable, participatory, transparent and sustainable manner.

The ***Strategic Plan of Action*** for the ECOWAS Child Policy 2019-2030 can be found in the Annex of the policy document. The Strategic Plan of Action presents the specific objectives and strategies of the rights of children under four clusters of universal and indivisible rights relating to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation for a five year term, as outlined in Chapter 4. As such, the policy goals and strategies to be defined at Member State levels shall cut across diverse thematic areas within these four clusters of child rights. The Plan of Action also provides an overview of suggested activities, anticipated outcomes and indicators for each cluster of rights. Two additional goals have been added to the four clusters of child rights that have been addressed in Chapter 5. Goal 5 reiterates the importance of resource mobilisation, budget allocation and expenditure for the realisation of child rights and Goal 6 focuses on regional actions for effective implementation of the Child Policy:

- Goal statement 5: Revenue mobilised and budget allocated to implement the ECOWAS Child Policy and the Plan of Action at the regional, state and local levels is commensurate with the priority accorded child right issues;
- Goal statement 6: The ECOWAS Child Policy and Plan of Action effectively implemented through regional level support to Member States.

A time frame of (2019 -2030) is set for delivering progress against the six Priority Goals.

## **I. BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional economic union between 15 States in West Africa. ECOWAS was established by the Treaty of Lagos on 28 May 1975, to promote cooperation and development in economic, social and cultural activities, and to raise the standard of living of the people of the Member States. Its current Member States are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia and Togo.

In line with the aspirations of ECOWAS Vision 2020, regional economic integration remains the most viable and appropriate tool for achieving and accelerating the sustainable development of West African countries. The ECOWAS Vision 2020 is aimed at setting a clear direction and goal to significantly raise the standard of living of the people through conscious and inclusive policies and programmes that will guarantee a bright future for West Africa and shape the destiny of the region for many years to come.

Among the impediments to the attainment of the ECOWAS objectives are poverty and the incidence of natural or human-made disaster, resulting in population movements and displacement, destruction to property and key socio-economic infrastructures, flood-induced epidemics, food insecurity and malnutrition, and weakening of already fragile coping capacities. Today, the region is confronted with an increasing number of inter-connected and transnational challenges, constituting obstacles to integration and development. These will be further outlined in Chapter 2.

### **1.2 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The ECOWAS Revised Treaty (1993) guarantees the fundamental principles of human rights as follows: *“recognition, promotion and protection of human and people’s rights in accordance with the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.”* Furthermore, Article 61 of the same Treaty defines the scope of work of its Social Affairs and Gender Commission as follows: *“Member States undertake to cooperate with a view to mobilising the various sections of the population and ensuring their effective integration and involvement in the social development of the region.”*

With respect to child well-being, all ECOWAS Member States have ratified and domesticated the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1990). A child is defined as any person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood lower.

Regarding content, both documents recognise the full spectrum of child rights to survival, development, protection and participation, and establish that children are not merely passive recipients of rights, entitled to adult protective care, but rather, that they are subjects of rights as

individual rights holders. Children occupy a unique and privileged position in African society, where society places a high premium on the child as an essential element of procreation and sustainability of the family lineage. Traditionally, West African societies held the immediate or extended family of the child as the primary basis for his or her protection and the *best interests of the child* were pursued through these social units as they were understood at the time. However, as a result of modernisation, urbanisation and the rise of the urban poor within the wider contexts of poverty (both rural and urban), traditional systems and attitudes to protect and promote the rights of the child in West Africa are changing – with the principles of the *best interests of the child* and *child participation* – and the need to give the views of the child due weight – being fairly recent concepts in most West African societies.

With regard to international standards, the Child Policy aligns with the CRC and its three Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; and on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure; as well as the ACRWC, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Inter-Country Adoption (1993), the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (2010), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2007) and its Optional Protocol (2008), relevant Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comments, and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (The Beijing Rules) (1985). The four Geneva Conventions (1949) and their Additional Protocols (1977) also contain important child protection provisions relevant in situations of conflict. Regarding preventing and eliminating the risks of violence in the lives of children on the move, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Repress and Punish Trafficking in Persons supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, Especially Women and Children (Palermo, 2000), the UN Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (1990) and the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (2016) provide clear guidance on upholding children’s rights.

In conformity with international and regional legal and policy instruments, ECOWAS drafted and adopted a range of legal, policy and strategy documents aimed at promoting and protecting children’s rights and reinforcing respect for the rights of the child within the region. In December 2001, the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government adopted the Declaration on the Decade of a Culture of the Rights of the Child in West Africa (2001 - 2010), affirming the critical role of children in the future of the region, and acknowledging that investing in children will ensure peace, security and sustainable development. Other commitments include the African Union’s 2001 New Partnership for African Development; and the UN Millennium Development Goals. World leaders, including ECOWAS Member States, committed in 2015 to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of a broad agenda.

The SDGs comprise 17 Goals and 169 targets to be delivered by 2030 of which 48 targets are directly relevant to children, while 47 are somewhat relevant. Goals One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six are of direct consequence to children, while Goals Eight, Ten, Eleven, Twelve, Thirteen and Sixteen have targets directly or closely linked to the realisation of child rights. Within the next twelve years, an end to new-born-and-under-five mortalities must be realised, which requires the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, ending child malnutrition and controlling communicable diseases affecting

children, such as HIV, malaria, polio and water-borne diseases (Goals One, Two, Three, and Six). Universal completion of primary and secondary education, with equal access for boys and girls is of critical importance (Goal Four). Goal Six on access to safe drinking water and hygiene will help in the realisation of Goal Three. Goal Five addresses gender disparity and child, early and forced marriage. Goal Eight requires States to take immediate measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and to end child labour in all its forms by 2025. Finally, Goal Sixteen calls for an end to abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children. All the targets relating to children are closely linked and cannot be realised in isolation. To tackle these challenges, the rule of law should be promoted at national and international levels, and equal access to justice for all should be ensured. By 2030, legal identity for all should be provided, including birth registration for effective planning, alongside efficient and transparent regulations and comprehensive, responsive government budgets, to build more peaceful, inclusive societies.

The ECOWAS Child Policy is in line with ILO Minimum Age and Worst forms of Child Labour Conventions No. 138 and 182 respectively. Furthermore the promotion of good nutritional outcomes for children in the first six months is also well captured in the Policy, as it recognises the importance of the ILO Maternity Protection Convention 2000 (No. 183) and its accompanying Recommendation (No.191).

The Policy is consistent with the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood development which supports the holistic development of children from pregnancy to age 3 years through multi-stakeholder approach and programming in the areas of health, nutrition, education, labour, finance, water and sanitation and social and child protection.

The ECOWAS Child Policy is also consistent with these goals as well as the priorities laid out in broader continental initiatives under the auspices of the African Union (AU): the seven “Aspirations” in Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want and the AU Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016 - 2025) which was developed in the context of the AU 2063 Agenda. It is also in synch with the Common African Position on the Post-2015 Development Agenda; and the Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children, adopted in November 2015 by the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). Building on the 2030 SDG Agenda, ECOWAS Member States have agreed on an African Union Common African Position to “eradicate all forms of violence against women and children, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriage” which aligns with the AU Child Marriage Campaign launched in 2014.

At the regional level, the Child Policy falls within the broader scope of the *ECOWAS Vision 2020: Towards a Democratic and Prosperous Community*. The region’s strategic document was adopted by West African Heads of States in 2007, with the aim to “create a borderless, peaceful, prosperous and cohesive region, built on good governance and where people have the capacity to access and harness its enormous resources through the creation of opportunities for sustainable development and environmental preservation.”

Additionally, the Child Policy should be read in conjunction with the *ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa*. The Strategic Framework builds on existing policy and legal frameworks within the region and was adopted by ECOWAS Member States in 2017 [see Annex 3], to promote accountability and provide direction and guidance to Members States on child protection and to influence national level programme initiatives that promote a protective environment for children in both emergency and non-emergency situations.

Within this framework, ECOWAS developed ten Commitments for ECOWAS and the Member States to propose a system that helps to reduce child vulnerability, build children's resilience and prevent and protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence. Additionally, five key Priority Areas were identified that are particularly prevalent in the West Africa region:

- Preventing and responding to violence against children (including sexual, physical and emotional; with FGM/C meriting a special mention)
- Child marriage
- Child labour
- Birth registration and vital statistics; and
- Children on the move.

Other core ECOWAS frameworks relating to child rights in the region include the ECOWAS Protocols relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, the Protocol relating to the Definition of Community Citizenship, the Protocol Relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security and its supplementary Protocol on Good Governance; and the Protocol on Education and Training. Closely related to the foregoing is the ECOWAS Common Approach on Migration and the General Convention on Social Security.

There are also a number of relevant ECOWAS Policies and Plans of Action in relation to the rights of children including the ECOWAS Gender Policy (2004) and Supplementary Act on Equality of Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development within the ECOWAS Region (2015), ECOWAS/ECCAS Multilateral Cooperation Agreement to Combat Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children in West and Central Africa (2006) and the ECOWAS Policy on Protection and Assistance to Victims of Trafficking in West Africa (2009) and Plans of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, the most recently adopted in 2017. The ECOWAS Humanitarian Policy and its Plan of Action (2012), the Policy on Security Sector Reforms (2016) and Plan of Action on Implementation of International Humanitarian Laws (IHL) (2019- 2023) are all key to the realisation of the rights of the child in West Africa.

The work of the ECOWAS Commission with respect to the four clusters of children's rights also benefits from ECOWAS programming, founded on related instruments including the ECOWAS Guidelines on Protection, Assistance and Support to Witnesses, Regional Action Plan for the Elimination of Child



Labour, especially the Worst Forms (2012), Regional Plan of Action for Combating Obstetric Fistula in West Africa (2015), Framework for Harmonization of Basic Education in ECOWAS (2017) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy for Skills Improvement and Employability (2017 –2026).

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE CHILD POLICY**

The imperative for a regional Child Policy stems from ECOWAS Member States’ commitment to fulfil their obligations towards children with respect to the ECOWAS Revised Treaty, its associated instruments, and related regional and international instruments and commitments. The Child Policy was developed to promote and address the rights of the child within the West Africa region. As such, ECOWAS Heads of State and Government adopted the initial Child Policy in December 2008, with a Strategic Plan of Action that ran from 2009 to 2013. Adhering to the constitutional mandate and guiding principles of the CRC, the Child Policy identifies the rights of children under four clusters of universal and indivisible rights relating to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation.

The accompanying Strategic Plan of Action 2009 - 2013 provided a roadmap linking the Child Policy objectives to actionable strategies under the four key priority areas. The Child Policy document and the Strategic Plan of Action aimed at establishing effective coordination and convergence among all stakeholders - the ECOWAS Commission, national Governments of Member States, international partners and civil society organizations (CSOs). However, emerging issues such as children in emergencies and children on the move were not adequately captured in the Child Policy and its Plan of Action. The Policy also obviously does not reflect emerging themes and priorities on the global stage after its initial adoption, including the SDG’s, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risks Reduction, the outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Global Compact on Refugees and Migrants.

This Policy draws from an in-depth review process to update the 2008 Child Policy and address the initial policy gaps. The current Child Policy provides a comprehensive, holistic and gender-based approach to protect and promote the rights of children in the ECOWAS region, taking into account regional, continental and global child rights’ standards and instruments and the imperatives of achieving the child-related SDGs.

## **II. KEY ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE FULFILMENT OF CHILD RIGHTS IN WEST AFRICA**

West Africa has experienced significant demographic, political, economic, social and environmental changes in the forty years since the founding of ECOWAS in 1975. These changes have had both positive and negative implications for regional integration and development within the region. Key issues that affect children in realizing their rights to survival, development, protection and participation in the West Africa region are interrelated with the overarching contextual issues the region is facing, including poverty, disasters and environmental hazards, gender inequalities, unemployment, weak governance structures, conflict and violence, and the impact of rapid urbanisation and globalisation.

### **2.1 REGIONAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The ECOWAS region has an annual average population growth rate of 2.7 per cent, which is one of the highest in the world. The population of West Africa was estimated to be at least 377 million in 2018. The region has the fastest growing youth population growth in Africa, projected to grow even further in the next few years. About 43 per cent of West Africans live below the international poverty line.

West Africa remains the most dynamic regional economic community in Africa. Between 2012 and 2015, many West African countries experienced high growth. But in 2016, growth slowed, averaging about 0.5 per cent. The 2016 slowdown was widespread, with Nigeria and Liberia recording negative growth, though some countries had very high growth, such as Côte d'Ivoire at almost 9 per cent. The slowdown in Nigeria, because of that economy's size relative to the region, meant a considerable decline in West Africa's average. In 2017, regional growth rebounded, averaging about 2.5 per cent. In 2018, it is projected to increase to 3.6 per cent, and in 2019 to 3.8 per cent. Despite these rates, average per capita income is low and has been declining in some countries over the past forty years. Factors accounting for this include distorted and underdeveloped structures of production, poor macro-economic management, population explosion and an unfavourable international economic environment. The fact of an underdeveloped industrial base yields low levels of job creation; this within the context of the youth bulge. Employment is concentrated in agriculture and urban informal sectors, with the formal sector unable to absorb more than 15 to 20 percent of the work force. The foregoing and rapid urbanization has meant an increase in numbers of the urban poor. These structural weaknesses cause an increase in the dependency burden in ECOWAS states and communities and could be a destabilizing factor to regional development.

Although ECOWAS was set up primarily as an economic union, underdevelopment has heightened its susceptibility to political instability and insecurity. This has expanded the body's focus to questions of good governance, constitutionalism, human rights and to the need to increase capacities to reap the developmental dividends of democracy. In some parts of the region, development is compromised by organised crime, drugs and arms trafficking, human trafficking and migrant smuggling, and ineffective judicial and security systems.

## 2.2 FOUR KEY ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE FULFILMENT OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The lack of a safe and conducive environment for children in the West Africa region is reflected in the slow rate of progress towards curtailing increasing rates of multi-dimensional child poverty, low birth registration, the impact of climate change, natural disasters and conflicts, and consequent family and communal displacements. Millions of children in West Africa are still denied their rights to education, health, protection and participation due to poverty, gender, issues around ethnicity and nationality, lack of documentation or geographical location. Children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move are among categories of children in the region with specific needs and vulnerabilities that need to be addressed.

Children's relationships should be understood as interdependent and interconnected, and their rights can be violated – but also defended – by a range of duty bearers within the family, the community and wider society, including institutions and the international community. This holistic approach can only work if an overarching system to protect children is put in place – a system in which duty bearers understand and assume their roles and responsibilities, and can be held accountable for protecting and promoting children's rights.

Four key issues have been identified that impact on children's survival, development, protection and participation rights within the ECOWAS region:

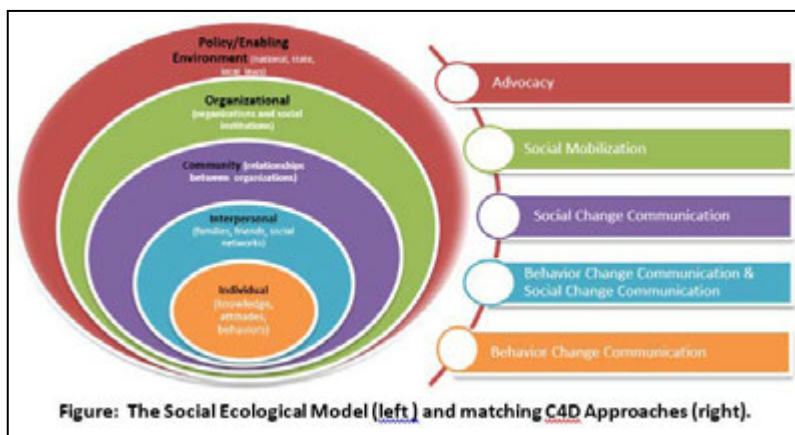
- Multi-dimensional child poverty;
- Impact of climate change, natural disasters and environmental hazards on children;
- Crises, conflicts and increased vulnerability of children in emergencies;
- Gender inequalities affecting children and other cross-cutting vulnerabilities and issues.

The following sections present the situation of children across these four key areas vis-à-vis the four clusters of universal and indivisible rights relating to survival, development, protection and participation enshrined in the CRC and the ACRWC:

- **Survival rights** include the child's right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, an adequate living standard, and access to medical services;
- **Development rights** include the right to education, play, leisure, cultural activities, access to information, and freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- **Protection rights** ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation, including special care for refugee, asylum seeking, trafficked and forcibly displaced children; safeguards for children in contact with the law; protection for children in employment; protection and rehabilitation for children who have suffered violence, exploitation or abuse of any kind;
- **Participation rights** encompass children's freedom to express opinions, to have a say in matters affecting their own lives, to join associations and to assemble peacefully. As their capacities

develop, children should have increasing opportunity to participate in the activities of society, in preparation for adulthood.

With regard to promoting and protecting the rights of children in West Africa, a complex interplay of the many factors that exist might cut across all four levels of the child's existence, namely the Individual, Family, Community, and the Societal levels (as per the Socio- Ecological Model, SEM, see *Figure 1 to the right*).



The current Child Policy should be read in conjunction with the 2017 ECOWAS *Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa*. The *Strategic Framework* integrates the SDG targets, especially those relating to protection rights, and focuses on Five Priority Areas: preventing and responding to violence against children (including sexual, physical and emotional violence and FGM); child marriage; child labour; birth registration and vital statistics; and children on the move. As a result, these Five Priority Areas will not be addressed in detail in the 2018 ECOWAS Child Policy.

### 2.2.1 Multi-Dimensional Child Poverty

Poverty is more than the lack of income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. Its manifestations include hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other basic services, social discrimination and exclusion as well as the lack of participation in decision-making. *Child poverty* is defined as non-fulfilment of children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation. Multidimensional child poverty is not only about monetary poverty, but about **all** the deprivations that children might be experiencing at any given time. Therefore, the elements or dimensions of child poverty are identified in terms of 'deprivations' in housing, water, sanitation, education, health, access to information, nutrition or any other basic social service. It affects every aspect of a child's life and creates irreparable losses for children, who become trapped in poverty and are likely to remain within the poverty trap as they become adults.

Being deprived by any measure is damaging to a child's development, particularly when deprivations are experienced in early childhood. Deprivations of health, nutrition or stimulation in the earliest months and years of life when the brain is developing at a rapid pace, can lead to damage that is difficult or even impossible to overcome later. While there is a second window of opportunity during adolescence, it must be noted that remedial interventions are far more expensive compared to preventive interventions aiming at promoting early childhood development and survival rights, including through protection of young children.

Multi-dimensional child poverty impacts the **survival rights** of the child, including the right to life and basic needs such as nutrition, shelter, the quality of child-care, adequate standard of living, access to medical services and the prevention and management of childhood illnesses. Deficiencies at the family level and in relation to children born to adolescent mothers have severe outcomes for children; this as well as inappropriate understanding of disease prevention. Poverty is also a basic cause of child malnutrition as measured by poor child growth and is an important indicator for monitoring the nutritional status and health of a population. The World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards asserts that poor child growth results in low weight-for-age and that malnutrition [including foetal growth restriction, suboptimum breastfeeding, stunting, wasting and Vitamin A and zinc deficiencies] is an underlying cause of deaths in an estimated 45 percent of all deaths among children under the age of five years.

Multi-dimensional child poverty is also reflected in the infectious disease burden in relation to children. Malaria remains a significant cause for concern despite the sustained campaign for the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) in the past decade. The malaria scourge in West Africa has not abated significantly, and according to UNICEF, it is estimated that currently 36 percent of all under-five deaths in Africa still result from pneumonia, malaria and diarrhoea. In relation to waterborne diseases, while the population in ECOWAS region with access to an at least basic source of drinking water doubled from 2000 to 2015, by 2015 only 25 percent of the population enjoyed the convenience and associated health benefits of a water supply source available on premises. This factor is closely linked to the paucity in terms of sanitation facilities and the practice of open defecation despite 36 million people gaining access to an at least basic sanitation facility since 2000. In terms of sanitation facilities, only 28 percent of the population in the ECOWAS region use an at least basic sanitation facility; and the population without access grew by 81 million within the same time-frame.

At community levels, poor health systems, especially primary health care, is a major constraint. Inadequate numbers of professional health-care personnel to ensure provision of antenatal care and skilled attendance at birth is also a major constraint. WHO has established a direct link between antenatal care, skilled attendance at birth and the neonatal mortality rate. Even where health centres and facilities exist, they are sometimes out of reach for many children and women who live far away from such facilities. Others lack access to affordable health-care and to health insurance, which is also a major factor militating against child-health. Women's lack of economic and decision-making autonomy within the household represents another important barrier limiting access to health-care. With the level of poverty in the region, free access for women and proximity to *emergency obstetric care and maternal care during pregnancy and delivery* is critical to any child survival programme, as is access to neonatal care.

Vaccine preventable diseases are also unfortunately still significant contributors to neonatal and child deaths in West Africa. Since 2009, national and subnational immunization coverage levels have either stagnated or even declined, with huge disparities within and among countries. In 2017, the region had the lowest childhood vaccination coverage worldwide. Consequently, many countries in ECOWAS are

confronted with recurrent vaccine preventable outbreaks which are disrupting existing health-care delivery services and diverting scarce human and financial resources.

**Development rights** focus on the rights of the child to develop to his or her full potential. This requires adequate care and stimulation in early childhood, universal access to quality education at all levels, vocational training and a well-charted transition through adolescence to early adulthood. Education should begin with early childhood development (ECD) and continues with quality learning opportunities that provide all children, especially the most disadvantaged with a fair chance to thrive. However, there are often problems with education quality and consequently with achievement rates, and both retention and cross-over rates from primary to secondary school and (in cases of free tuition for basic education), burdensome school levies which continue to exclude millions of children from accessing universal basic education. Inadequate budgetary funding for education remains a major limiting factor in the region.

**Play**, along with the basic needs of nutrition, health, shelter and education, is vital to developing the potential of all children. Play is an important aspect of a child's development, including stimulation during the first 1,000 days of a child's life. These interactions and engagement with peers – at home, on the streets, in the playground and in recreational facilities for children - improve children's communication, expression and decision-making skills. Play encourages teamwork and cooperation skills, combining thought and action, and builds up children's confidence, a feeling of achievement and leadership qualities. Yet poverty, insecurity, rapid and unstructured urbanisation and socio-economic factors among others, contribute to children's limited access to safe spaces for leisure, play, and recreation and development.

The region has the potential to use play, such as games and activities, to increase school enrolment and attendance rates; and to improve quality education by teaching valuable class lessons in health, sanitation, peace and conflict-resolution. When properly harnessed in classrooms, play helps children develop physically, mentally, emotionally and socially and helps children to realize their potential.

**Protection rights** ensure children are safeguarded against all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation. An important prerequisite for the full realisation of children's rights is legal identity achieved through birth registration. The CRC, the ACRWC and most national constitution's guarantee every child's right to a name and a nationality; however, the rate of **birth registration** remains low in West Africa. Even in countries where birth registration has higher rates of implementation, it merely exists as a form of documentation rather than as a planning tool for development purposes, with low adherence to birth registration resulting in denial of children of their rights in relation to health, education etc. (Birth registration can help to ensure that children can access primary and secondary education, enrol in school at the right age and sit for examinations, thereby providing a counterweight to child marriage and improving the protection of children in justice and security systems (including providing a basis for adherence to the minimum age for employment, child labour and minimum age for military service), amongst many other practical issues.

Illiteracy remains a major causative factor at the family level for non-registration of children and for the lack of awareness of the importance of birth registration in ensuring inclusiveness for children in national and sub-national development plans; And because home births are still popular for women in many poor households and communities, birth registration facilities in major hospitals do not provide the total picture as they do not capture the data on children born at home. National birth registration efforts are hindered by the absence of adequate numbers of birth registration centres in close proximity and accessible to families both in rural and urban centres. Consequently, many children are invisible and unaccounted for in terms of government policies, planning, budgeting and implementation of projects; and in the provision of services.

There are three principal forms of **violence against children**: physical, sexual, and emotional violence, whether perpetrated by parents or other caregivers, peers, romantic partners, or strangers. Child-specific forms of violence defined by WHO and endorsed for action by ECOWAS include maltreatment (including violent punishment); youth violence (including bullying); intimate partner violence (or domestic violence); and sexual violence. Experiencing violence in childhood has devastating consequences on children, and impacts lifelong health and well-being. The consequence of violence could be permanent - negatively impacting children not only when it occurs, but also detrimental to their well-being as adults.

Violence is still prevalent due to its acceptance by the society, weak criminal justice systems (and the lack of law enforcement protection for especially vulnerable groups including children) and the scale and scope of armed conflicts in the West African Region. Children in the region experience not only extreme types of violence such as sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, FGM/C, forced and early marriage, (worst forms of) child labour and the impact of armed conflict or disasters. They also experience **physical, sexual and psychological violence** in their daily settings and other environments in which they live, grow, develop, work, play and interact. This includes the experience of **violent discipline**. Such settings and environments include families, homes, schools, institutions (including care institutions and detention facilities), communities, and online (where child abuse and exploitation increasingly originates). Violence also affects children when interacting with the media and with basic social systems, including but not limited to health, education, social welfare, and justice. In ECOWAS countries, seven percent of girls between 15 and 19 have experienced **sexual violence**.

In addition, **child marriage and early pregnancy** significantly hinder girls' educational development and easily accounts for 20 per cent of dropouts from schools in the ECOWAS region (2008 estimates). Child marriage hampers efforts to eradicate poverty, has a significant impact on fertility and population growth and puts the child at increased risk of intimate partner violence, and sexually transmitted diseases. For girls, additional risks include death during childbirth, obstetric fistula and many other health consequences.

Uneducated girls are significantly more vulnerable to early marriage than their peers with secondary and/or tertiary education. Of the top ten countries in the world with the highest rates of child marriage,

four are West African: Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, and Niger (the latter taking the lead at 76 per cent before the age of 18). It is recognised that education is an effective panacea to child marriage. The longer a girl stays in school, the more likely she is to get married later.

In relation to **FGM/C**, more than 46 million women and girls have undergone some form of FGM/C in West Africa. The percentage of girls aged 15 - 19 who have undergone FGM/C is estimated at 23 per cent. The prevalence in West Africa varies widely from 94 per cent in Guinea, 88 per cent in Mali and 76 per cent in the Gambia, to 74 per cent in Sierra Leone.

**Participation rights:** Participation yields numerous potential benefits for children, including enhanced personal development and skills, self-efficacy, and interpersonal relationships, and for communities through improved social connections and networks and disaster preparedness. Children's access to information about their health and sexuality is largely derived from peers and from the television and new media. The lack of age and context appropriate Comprehensive Sexuality Education in and out of school limits the availability of suitable information that children, and adolescents in particular, can access on sexuality, reproductive health, human rights, gender equality and managing relationships. In addition, girls may face additional barriers due to their lower access to information channels and platforms, including their lower participation in youth groups and activities at community level. This increases the lack of adequate knowledge, skills and abilities to properly manage their relationships as well as their health and sexual and reproductive lives, thereby exposing them to the risks of teenage/unwanted pregnancies, sexually-transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and drug abuse. Young girls who get pregnant (and their babies) are exposed to the dangers of social marginalization, stigma and the risk of exploitation. The lack of access to appropriate information that can be empowering, limits the child's ability to articulate his/her views and to challenge violence, abuse or exploitation.

**Placing children at the heart of poverty reduction** is the key to breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty and creating a level playing field for every child. Social protection mechanisms such as fee waivers, child support grants, cash transfers and pensions are an effective approach that can reduce vulnerability to poverty and deprivation, strengthen family capacities to care for children and help overcome barriers to accessing essential services. There is a clear need for improving public finance management, strengthening the efficiency of allocation and expenditures and progressively increasing budgetary allocation by Member States to areas that impact the lives of children, especially in areas of social protection including social security and social insurance.

Additionally, **cash transfers** could play a key role in the reduction of child poverty. Universal schemes, such as a universal child benefit, would contribute significantly to reducing child poverty and should be available in many countries. Cash transfer programmes provide financial support for poor families to help them send their children to school, for immunisation and to access other services for children. By identifying the different deprivations that children experience in crucial aspects of their lives, countries can better target policies and programmes that benefit the most disadvantaged, and minimize childhood experiences of poverty, poor health, and malnutrition.



## 2.2.2 Impact of climate change, natural disasters and environmental hazards on children

West Africa is one of the world's **climate change** hotspots. Climate change affects the social and environmental determinants of health: clean air, safe drinking water, sufficient food and secure shelter. Increasingly unpredictable weather patterns, more frequent droughts and floods and land degradation threaten the livelihoods of the population, especially with the majority relying on agriculture for survival. Chronic crises arising from changes in temperature and precipitation, due to climate change, also results in more systemic changes in natural processes. This leads to diminishing groundwater supplies used for drinking and irrigation, increases in communicable diseases, drought and desertification in new areas - further resulting in food insecurity. Mortality rates are also rising from extreme conditions such as flooding, high winds, landslides, or droughts. Africa is said to be at the high end of risk exposure, and experiences the most severe and damaging impact of **climate change and global warming**. This is a risk that the continent is ill-prepared for, and one that disproportionately affects children more than adults. Income-loss and food supply shortages caused by **droughts** can lead to **nutritional deprivations** that can have both immediate and lifelong impacts. As children need to consume more food and water per unit of body weight than adults, they are more vulnerable to any deprivation of food and water. Undernutrition contributes to the severity of a range of diseases, and is responsible for nearly half of all under-five deaths. Moreover, untreated undernutrition during the first two years of life can lead to irreversible *stunting*. This affects both physical and cognitive development of the child, which has implications on her or his schooling, health and livelihoods. Drought can also contribute to food insecurities resulting in additional risks and vulnerabilities for children. **Floods** also threaten children's survival, development and protection due to its impact on both family livelihoods and food security.

Environmental factors are also implicated in health outcomes for children: **lethal and debilitating diseases**, like malaria and dengue fever, are highly susceptible to changes in the climate, which also leads to increases in the incidence of cholera, meningitis and other infectious diseases. Other **Environmental risks and hazards** such as indoor pollution arising from the use of harmful energy sources (like firewood and charcoal); and industrial pollution arising from the use of unsafe technologies in the few existing industries, tremendously affect the survival of children in West Africa. Such threats also emanate from human and industrial waste especially in major cities and urban slums; the results of illegal mining activities, oil exploration, pipeline vandalism and gas flaring in the oil producing regions of Nigeria; importation of outdated technological equipment such as computers, fridges, televisions and cars resulting in an overwhelming amount of physical waste and e-waste, in countries that lack the capacity to treat or handle such waste. **Erosion** remains a serious challenge in both coastal and non-coastal areas affected by flooding and water and waste management, is an issue of grave concern and a danger to the health and welfare of children.

## 2.2.3 Crises, conflicts and increased vulnerability of children in emergencies

In recent years, complex and fragmented conflicts and a rise in acts of terrorism have caused both

**internal displacements** of thousands of children and their families, and to a lesser extent, displacements beyond international borders, leading to additional protection concerns for children (e.g. additional difficulties in tracing and reunifying them, administrative hurdles). **Emergencies, conflicts, and epidemics** are a critical issue as family separations and community displacements tend to have serious implications for child survival and lead to distress and psychosocial and mental health issues. The customary and treaty rules of International Humanitarian Law that protect children are often violated: children are subjected to sexual violence, are victims of indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks, are unlawfully recruited, suffer from attacks on healthcare and educational facilities, are unlawfully denied access to humanitarian assistance, and suffer violations when detained for reasons related to armed conflict. It must be recalled that as a rule of customary international humanitarian law, all children affected by armed conflict are entitled to special respect and protection by parties to conflict. In contemporary conflicts, combatants often fail to apply the legal protections to which children are entitled and as a consequence, children are often killed or injured indiscriminately. With many children living in conflict-prone regions of West Africa, children's development rights in education, early childhood care, play, leisure and recreation are greatly compromised.

The lack of emergency preparedness and the absence of strong health systems is a major problem in most West African countries. The **Ebola Virus Disease epidemic** of 2014 - 2015 for example, ravaged some sections of the region leaving thousands of children dead or orphaned. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone were particularly affected with over 10,000 deaths before the epidemic was brought under control. The epidemic left an increased number of child-headed households in its wake, and mounted pressure on the health services and infrastructure in the affected countries. Also, the death of 106 health workers during the crisis further depleted the affected countries' already limited number of skilled providers; underlying the importance of institutionalization of community health systems not only to contain epidemics and deliver vital interventions, but to help countries and communities become more resilient.

The impact of the activities of non-State armed groups in the region is a matter of grave concern. This includes abduction of boys and girls, use of children in the commission of terrorist acts (with UNICEF estimating that over 200 children were exploited in carrying out suicide bombings in the four Lake Chad Basin countries, in 2017 alone). Children born to girls abducted by these groups are at risk of stigmatisation upon release or escape, and rape and other forms of gender-based violence are rife in conflicts even within the confines of refugee and IDP camps.

In 2017, about 475,000 children were at risk of SAM and possible death across the Boko-Haram afflicted Lake Chad Basin region. The Boko Haram insurgency cuts across Nigeria, Niger, and non-ECOWAS countries such as Cameroon and Chad and is described as one of the world's largest humanitarian crisis zones, with about 17 million people living in the most affected areas. Violence and conflict-related displacement have increased dramatically in Nigeria since the crisis began, resulting in large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) - including children, 7.7 million people requiring humanitarian assistance, including 4.3 million children and 1.6 million internally displaced persons, more than half

of whom are children. According to Humanitarian Action for Children Nigeria 2018 data, the protracted crisis has compromised the physical safety and psycho-social well-being of 2.5 million children, who require immediate assistance. An estimated 400,000 children in Borno and Yobe states of Nigeria are severely malnourished. An estimated 1.5 million people lack access to safe water, while over one million children in the country are currently out of school. Nearly 1,400 schools have been damaged or destroyed with many unable to reopen for safety reasons.

In post-conflict situations, children may be severely traumatised by having witnessed and/or experienced abuses and violence. The peculiar need for rehabilitation and reintegration of child survivors; particularly girls who are rescued and make it back home from captivity, either alone or with babies, is also a complex issue. Some children, especially those having been associated with a party to the conflict (or perceived as such) might be highly stigmatised and face challenges in terms of acceptance when they return to their communities. Refugee children do not also appear to enjoy the special protection envisaged for children who are refugees or seeking refugee status.

**Child participation** is further hindered in emergency situations, although this has been found to be very important to resolving humanitarian situations. Very often children do not receive life-saving information about early warning systems and emergency response protocols, whether in schools or in the community. Research suggests that children are resources to be cultivated and mobilised for disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and resilience. Attention is needed to identify approaches to appropriately enlist, engage, and involve children in disaster risk reduction activities; to promote these efforts; and to evaluate these approaches. The United States Department of Health and Human Services concluded in 2017 that children are resources to be nurtured and mobilised in support of disaster preparedness and resilience for the present and future.

#### **2.2.4 Gender inequalities affecting children and other cross-cutting vulnerabilities and issues**

Children in West Africa face a variety of inequalities. Gender inequalities and the low value of women and girls affect both boys and girls, however girls pay the highest price due to harmful traditional practices and lack of educational opportunities. Children with disabilities, children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move including forcibly displaced children (for example internally displaced, refugee and asylum-seeking children), stateless children and children in contact with the law are among groups of children in the region with specific needs and vulnerabilities that need to be addressed. Furthermore, the right to participate in decision-making processes that may be relevant in their lives and to influence decisions taken in their regard - within the family, the school or the community

- is a cross-cutting issue.

**Gender inequality and Harmful Traditional and Socio-Cultural Practices.** These cost Sub-Saharan Africa an average of \$US95 billion a year, peaking at US\$ 105 billion in 2014 – or six per cent of the region’s GDP, and thus jeopardizing the continent’s efforts for inclusive human development and economic

growth. African women are said to achieve only 87 per cent of the human development outcomes of men.

Gender inequalities and negative socio-cultural practices affect children in diverse ways. Gender inequalities between men and women as principal duty bearers of children have an impact on outcomes for all children. Women's lower levels of literacy, income, and their limited access to information and to decision-making within the household affect their capacity to make informed decisions and to access relevant services for their own health and that of their children. Moreover, gender inequalities affect children directly, giving rise to differential outcomes for boys and girls. Gender discrimination and socio-cultural expectations often burden young and adolescent girls to take on unpaid care within the home, including fetching water, cooking and looking after siblings, hinder their access to education and perpetuate harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting. Inheritance laws and low value of girls means that families inadequately promote greater family investment in boys rather than girls, particularly regarding school enrolment and inheritance.

Gender inequalities are accentuated in adolescence, determining access to opportunities across a lifetime. Low levels of girls' education and high prevalence of child marriage and child pregnancy prevents girls from fully realising their potential during childhood and fuels the transmission of poverty, inequalities and deprivation across generations.

Lower outcomes for girls are further reinforced by a consistent lack of female teachers and role models, an array of household responsibilities (e.g. domestic labour/chores and child/sibling-care) given to the girl child, poor menstruation management and hygiene practices, and school-related gender based violence (SRGBV) often on the way to school or on the premises. Girls are further affected by adolescent pregnancies as school policies and peer bullying forces them to drop out. Boys are merely affected by these pressures. Consequently, girls are more likely to be out-of-school than boys, particularly when financial resources are in short supply and when policies do not account for the specific barriers faced by girls in terms of access, retention, and completion of primary and secondary education.

Educational curricula and teaching practices often reinforce negative gender norms, perpetuating gender stereotypes rather than promoting gender equitable relations between boys and girls through education. The situation can be reversed by using education as an entry point to vehicle important gender equitable socialisation among boys and girls, improve teaching practices and pedagogical methodologies, and introduce life-skills education as a vehicle to equitable gender roles and positive comprehensive sexual education.

The multiple benefits of girls' education are widely recognised: equal educational outcomes for boys and girls can not only close the gender gap in education, but have a high impact on preventing child marriage, reducing maternal and child mortality, promoting smaller and more sustainable families, improved employment, better wages and economic growth, better parenting practices, reduction in

domestic violence and harmful practices. A recent World Bank Analysis showed that if universal secondary education were achieved in West and Central Africa, child marriage would be virtually eliminated and the prevalence of early childbearing would be reduced by up to three-fourths.

The analysis also showed that ending early childbearing and improving educational attainment for mothers would have important impact on reducing child mortality (by one fifth) and malnutrition (by one third) as well as a positive impact on women's decision-making ability in the household, and the increased likelihood that new-borns will be registered at birth.

Yet, the potential for girls, especially in secondary education has not been realized. In the past two decades, despite global progresses in reducing gender disparities in primary and secondary education, West and Central African countries have not reached parity and current trends predict that it will take another 70 years to have all girls completing primary education. And, for multiple reasons, girls continually drop-out of school or fall behind, especially between the ages of 10 - 16 years.

In ECOWAS countries about sixteen million girls of primary and lower secondary school age do not have access to education. In addition, up to 30 per cent of girls who completed primary school do not transition to secondary education. For every 100 boys starting secondary education there are 90 girls. Regional estimates indicate that 57 per cent of primary school girls and 55 per cent of lower secondary school girls are at risk of dropping out.

The reasons for girls' exclusion from school are diverse and combine factors related to: institutional barriers due to weak gender-responsiveness of sector policies; geographic and poverty-related barriers that limit girls' access to education, particularly at secondary level; issues related to the low quality of education, with school environments that do not respond to girls' needs and often perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes; discriminatory gender norms and perceptions on the value of the girl, as well as risks of gender-based violence in and around schools, all of which influence the opportunity costs of educating girls, with early marriage seen as a more protective solution for girls.

The root causes of gender inequality lie with the society/community, and with governance structures that need to be reformed in terms of the perception and treatment of women and girls. The 2016 Africa Human Development Report traces the problem to the unequal distribution of resources, power and wealth, combined with social institutions and norms that sustain inequality and other deeply-rooted structural obstacles which are holding African women, and the rest of the continent, back in their equal enjoyment of rights and access to resources. The report estimates that a one per cent increase in gender inequality will significantly reduce a country's negative HDI rating by 0.75 per cent. Similarly, recent World Bank estimates showed that ending child marriage and educating girls through to secondary education would help countries yield \$64 billion in annual welfare gains.

### ***Children with disabilities***

The situation of children with disabilities is compounded by the absence of data on populations with disabilities in official government records. Furthermore, families and communities lack the understanding of and underestimate the challenges of living with disabilities, thus stigmatizing and constantly discriminating against this group of children. Inconsistent screening and social stigma can mean that many children with disabilities are unidentified or under-identified, and not provided with the specialized support they require. Disability is also compounded by other types of marginalization and discrimination, causing some children - such as children with disabilities from ethnic minority groups - to be disproportionately vulnerable relative to their peers. This is critical, more so in situations of emergency. Children with disabilities are nearly 3.7 times more affected than children without disabilities by all types of violence, often beginning the day they are born and in some cases, are victims of infanticide. Children with disabilities also experience violence from parents, teachers, peers or community members, and such violence is experienced differently depending on the type of impairment.

### ***Children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS***

As of 2017, UNAIDS estimated that three million children and adolescents aged 0 - 19 years were living with HIV in Sub-Saharan Africa, representing 87 percent of the global burden. About 25 percent of the global burden is on West and Central Africa (WCA), with Nigeria carrying the largest burden in the region. Despite progress in reducing new HIV infections among children over the past ten years, there is still an alarming 67,000 children who became infected with HIV in 2017 alone in WCA. Close to 90 percent of these new HIV infections in children occurred mainly through mother-to-child transmission (MTCT). Unfortunately, compared to other regions in Sub-Saharan Africa, pregnant women in WCA have the least access (47%) to effective antiretroviral medications (ARVs) for the prevention of MTCT - versus 93 percent in Eastern and Southern Africa.

The picture is even worse for treatment of children living with HIV. Only two out of ten children living with HIV between the age of 0 and 14 years were receiving lifesaving medicines in West Africa in 2017; the lowest paediatric HIV treatment coverage on the African continent. Adolescents (aged 10 - 19) represented nearly a quarter (23%) of the West and Central Africa population in 2017, and are projected to reach 50 per cent by 2030, with the largest share in West Africa. This demographic trend - the so-called 'youth bulge' - will determine the future of the HIV epidemic and its response among adolescents. New HIV infections are decreasing in the region, but not fast enough to keep up with the increasing population of adolescents susceptible to infection. It is evident that ECOWAS member states have not devised and implemented at scale, effective comprehensive strategies to eliminate new HIV infections among children and adolescents, and to optimise HIV and AIDS treatment, care and protection for children, adolescents and their parents.

Children are affected either directly or indirectly by HIV and AIDS; indirectly when their communities and the services these communities provide, are strained by the consequences of the AIDS epidemic. Health workers may suffer from the disease, threatening health-care and the entire health system; teachers may become ill, disrupting education. Children live with chronically ill parents or adults and

may be required to work or put their education on hold as they take on household and caregiving responsibilities, their households may experience greater poverty due to the disease; and they may be subject to stigma and discrimination because of their association with a person living with HIV. Children can also become orphans, losing one or both parents to AIDS-related illnesses.

### ***Children on the move***

West Africa has a long tradition of human mobility following networks and routes based on ethnic, linguistic or religious ties. Each year, an estimated 12 million people cross borders in WCA. While large numbers move irregularly to Europe from West Africa, these remain the minority. ‘Children on the move’ is an umbrella term used to describe those children who are on the move for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, between or within countries, with or without parents or other primary caregivers, and whose movement, while it may open up opportunities, might also place them at risk (or at an increased risk) of inadequate care, economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect, and violence. Migration flows within West Africa are facilitated and enabled by the ECOWAS 1979 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, although it needs to be pointed out that all 15 Member States have set specific restrictions for minors.

A large number of children are part of mixed movement flows, crossing borders irregularly and in unsafe ways to avoid the official border points and stay in the shadows. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) data indicates that there were an estimated 2.3 million children and adolescent migrants (including refugees and asylum-seekers, excluding IDPs and irregular migrants) in West Africa in 2015 (ages 0 - 19 years), representing almost 35 per cent of all international migrants in the region. Out of all international migrants between 0 - 19 years old, 51.4 per cent are female.

The mass movement of children in the region has created grey areas that enable the activities of unscrupulous – even criminal – forces, subjecting children to human rights violations, such as human trafficking, sexual and physical abuse, violence, exploitation, forced labour or abduction for extortion and ransom. The cultural context of West Africa is characterised by the widespread practice of “confiage” – informal adoption and placement of children in extended families, and the early involvement of children in productive activities as a form of socialisation. Within the changing social and economic context, these two cultural practices constitute a source of vulnerability for children. The circulation of children now takes place in a wider space where communal responsibilities for child protection are weakened and where the best interests of the child are not always respected. These children - in particular unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) - often fall through the cracks of the system because of their high vulnerability, irregular status, and (in many cases) invisibility. They are often at risk of becoming victims of violence, abuse or exploitation, or discrimination, stigmatisation and xenophobia; and largely denied access to basic social services.

The lack of adherence to birth registration requirements by families in the region leaves most children on the move without official recognition of their name and nationality, making them more vulnerable to trafficking and other forms of violence and exploitation, and less able to return to the country of their

origin because they lack official documents. There are no direct initiatives that target birth registration for children born to families on the move, or born to children on the move, both at the community levels and at the national or sub-national levels. Children on the move, in particular UASC, often live outside the protective environment of a caregiver, family members, community or government authority.

Exploring children's choices and engagement in decision-making is crucial to understanding their migration in a manner that neither romanticizes their strengths nor presents them as passive victims. It is especially important as missing from many accounts are what children themselves think about their movement and what role they play in their migration, as most children make the decision to move themselves.

### ***Child labour***

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labour as work that deprives children of their childhood, their potential and their dignity, and any work that is harmful to a child's physical and mental development. It refers to work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling by depriving them of the opportunity to attend school; obliging them to leave school prematurely; or requiring them to attempt to combine school attendance with excessively long and heavy work. Whether particular forms of "work" can be called "child labour" depends on the child's age, the type and hours of work performed, the conditions under which it is performed and the objectives pursued by individual countries.

It is worth noting that not all work done by children should be classified as child labour, or targeted for elimination. Children's or adolescents' participation in work that does not affect their health and personal development or interfere with their schooling is generally regarded as something positive. However, any work that qualifies as child labour and the worst forms of child labour must be eliminated as a matter of urgency. The weaknesses in application of laws and policies contributes to the problem and an environment affected by conflicts further exacerbates the risk.

In West Africa, child labour is highly persistent in the semi-formal and informal sectors with a few cases in the formal sector. In its worst forms, child labour in West Africa is exhibited as the involvement of children in armed conflicts, commercial sexual exploitation, child trafficking, mining and quarrying and in industries involving the use of chemicals, to name a few. Child labour constitutes an assault on the health, safety, morals and overall development of the child. It is a serious derogation from the peace, security and development aspirations of the ECOWAS region. It also contributes to the structural causes of future poverty, instability, and youth unemployment, caused by children's absence from education opportunities.

The prevalence of child labour and its worst forms in West Africa is attributable to many factors, including the problems of widespread poverty and the use of coping measures by families to augment household income, by involving children in economic activity, especially in the informal economy, which is barely regulated. The situation is made worse by conflicts and political instability, natural and



man-made disasters accentuating vulnerabilities and a generally weak protective environment for the child, the absence of social protection, social welfare and other structural issues.

**Children in contact with the law** are those children in contact with the justice system who are presumed victims, offenders (or in conflict with the law), witnesses and those for other reasons including custody, adoption, protection or inheritance (child parties to a justice process). The child justice system is the primary system used to handle children who are suspected or convicted of a criminal offence. The system must be specific and adapted for children and intervenes in delinquent behaviour through police, court and correctional involvement as well as social services, with the ultimate goal of rehabilitation and the limitation of child detention by developing non-custodial measures. In many instances, cases involving children are handled by the informal justice system - through community mediation - especially in rural areas, without connection to the formal system. This often results in children being victimised and stigmatised within their communities, and offenders not being punished for crimes against children to 'save the family's name.' Similarly, children in need of protection from State Authorities are in some cases detained in juvenile centres or in other cases detained in police-run childcentres.

In most jurisdictions, the child justice system is not distinct from the criminal justice system and the child in conflict with the law is handled in the same manner as an adult within the regular justice system. This is contrary to international standards of child justice - in particular the CRC, ACRWC and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice ("The Beijing Rules"). Also, the number of children in contact with the justice system is unknown, especially for child victims and witnesses of crimes. According to UNICEF, the reported number of children in detention in West and Central Africa was 9,307 in 2017; the real number is likely to be much higher given underreporting, taking into account children in both administrative and pre-trial detention.

Variations in the age of criminal responsibility among Member States or even within Member States is a matter of concern as is the fact of the lack of a specific status for minors in most national legislations. In many instances, children are detained alongside adults; or in institutions without regard to the nature of offences and age desegregation, sentenced as adults with little or no regard to diversion measures, alternative to (pre-trial) detention and other alternative measures to imprisonment in most jurisdictions, such as counselling, probation and community service. Furthermore, the weakness of post-detention reintegration processes reinforces the vulnerability of these children and expose them to recidivism. In some cases, children are detained for immigration purposes, such as children on the move - including those ones that move with their parents or caregivers, or those who are unaccompanied or separated. This is sometimes occasioned by the lack of required documentation.

In many prisons and institutions, children and young persons are denied the right to medical care, education, individual development and family contact. Children are kept in unhealthy conditions, are subjected to inhuman treatment and detained for lengthy periods of time. Detention has a profound and negative impact on children's health and development, psychological and physical well-being, and

is not in their best interests. Children in detention are more vulnerable to harm, including sexual and gender- based violence, abuse and HIV infection, and at risk of suffering depression, anxiety, and frequently exhibit symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder such as insomnia, nightmares and bedwetting. Additionally, such children are often denied their **participation rights** including being informed promptly and directly of the charges against her or him, and, if appropriate, through their parents or legal guardian, and to have legal or other appropriate assistance in the preparation and presentation of his or her defence. This extends to the absence of child-appropriate mechanisms such as interview techniques, other procedures and methods and the physical environment of the justicesystem.

### ***Child participation***

#### ***Children’s rights to participation at the Family and Community Levels.***

Participation rights for children are centred on the rights of freedom of expression, thought, and conscience as well as rights to express their opinion on issues concerning them, depending on children’s evolving capacity. These rights are not just fundamental but also serve as an underlying principle which must inform the implementation of all other rights, including the child’s right to freedom of religion, conscience, association, privacy and information. In realizing this right, parents and caregivers have a right and responsibility to provide direction and guidance in the exercise of the right by their children with due regard to their evolving capacities. However, parents or caregivers often under-estimate children’s capacities and desires to exercise control at individual, family and community levels on issues that affect them. Children are thus not provided with the necessary information or opportunity to make (informed) decisions affecting their lives in line with their age and level of maturity. Such decisions might be in relation to the child’s educational pursuits, domicile, health and well-being.

Consequences of failing to acknowledge the evolving autonomy and agency of the child (through the time and care required to meaningfully involve the child in decision-making) include decisions possibly made not in the best interests of the child (examples would be force into early marriage, to undergo FGM/C etc.) and children (especially at adolescence) rebelling against adult control (a factor in the motivations of some children on the move). It must be acknowledged that even in situations in which the desire exists to recognize the role of children, adult caregivers, community members and teachers often lack the necessary skills to smoothly transit from exercising total control over children to being partners who trust and instil leadership skills in their wards.

In relation to child participation, the internet has a tremendous impact, though access to this technology is limited for children in West Africa, the number of users is rapidly on the rise. While the internet or digital media is a very powerful tool that enables children to realize their rights, from

accessing information, playing games, to expressing themselves freely and even anonymously, it also portends dangers (including cyber bullying, sexual grooming, pornography, radicalization etc.,) and requires informed and responsible adult supervision.

The key is to expand opportunities for children in the region, giving them access to the benefits of participation and inclusion in the use of the internet, while ensuring that those risks are contained. Also access to technology in the region must be improved and parents and caregivers better equipped with knowledge in relation to the use of the internet by children.

### ***Children's right to participate in decision-making and governance***

There are critical gains to be made from children in the region becoming active and effective advocates for the realization of their own rights as well as in the wider development of the region. Children in the region are not distinctly engaged in the process of drafting legislation, policy formulation, budgeting and service provision and although a Children's Parliament exists at the regional level and in some Member States, membership of these bodies is not adequately representative of all children, and is often run with adult-led - not child-led - participation (i.e. consultation). Child participation is hindered by the absence of laws and policies establishing the right of children to set up democratic bodies in schools, affirming the obligations of parents to listen to their children, and introducing complaints mechanisms and appeal procedures in diverse sectors such as in education, health, child protection, and juvenile justice. Similarly, there is no provision for resorting to independent advocacy or representation when seeking redress against rights violations or defending against prosecution, for example a Child Rights Ombudsman.

The exclusion of children from decision-making also hinders their ability to learn critical life skills such as negotiation [rather than conflict], mutual respect, democracy and statesmanship principles. The children are further limited in their ability to contribute to public life, community or government decisions, and are incapable of holding the state and public officials accountable for fulfilling their commitments.

Children's relationships should be understood as interdependent and interconnected, and their rights can be violated – but also defended – by a range of duty bearers within the family, the community and wider society, including institutions and the international community. This holistic approach can only work if an overarching system to protect children is put in place – a system in which duty bearers understand and assume their roles and responsibilities, and can be held accountable for protecting and promoting children's rights.

### **III. VISION, MISSION, POLICY OBJECTIVES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The ECOWAS Child Policy aligns with the principles and values exemplified in the ECOWAS Treaty and its Protocols, as well as in the CRC and the ACRWC. The Child Policy was conceived by the ECOWAS Commission, and is designed, reviewed and adopted in association with relevant state and non-state actors, stakeholders and development partners, in compliance with international best practice standards for child rights. It also draws from the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, the ECOWAS Gender Policy of 2004 (revised in 2015), amongst others, in underscoring the intersection and indivisibility of rights around women and children.

#### **3.1 VISION**

A child-friendly West African region, in which the Member States and people collaborate to create an enabling environment for the survival, development, protection and participation of all children.

#### **3.2 MISSION**

The mission of ECOWAS is to ensure that the highest priority is accorded to the allocation of the necessary human and financial resources in time-bound, sustainable enforcement and implementation of the rights of the child for the irreversible development of the region.

#### **3.3 POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The broad objective of the Child Policy is to assist ECOWAS Member States to create an environment that is conducive to child survival, development, protection and participation across the entire region.

**The Specific Objectives of the Child Policy** are to assist ECOWAS Member States to:

- i. Ratify and domesticate all relevant international agreements affecting children's rights, including the CRC and its three Optional Protocols, the ACRWC; the ILO Minimum Age and Worst Forms of Child Labour Conventions (Nos. 138 and 182, respectively), the ILO Maternity Protection Convention 2000 (Convention No. 183) and its accompanying Recommendation (191), the UN Standard Minimum rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing rules); CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol; the joint ECOWAS and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) inter-regional agreement to combat trafficking in persons; and the ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa;
- ii. Formulate, implement and monitor programmes to ensure improvements in child survival, development, protection and participation;
- iii. Identify, budget and allocate sufficient resources for child-related matters, including child protection, health, education and social protection;

- iv. Establish a stronger leadership within ECOWAS to advance child rights, which can forge stronger collaboration and partnerships across Member States.

### **3.4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The ECOWAS Child Policy is in tandem with basic human rights principles [universality of rights, indivisibility, participation and accountability], as well as the fundamental child rights principles [Survival and Development, Non-discrimination, Participation and Best Interest of the Child]. The four clusters of internationally recognised child rights to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation, and the set standards as adapted to the regional context, underlie the guiding principles of this Policy which are that:

- i. Children have rights and responsibilities. They are rights-holders and active participants in realizing child rights, who can hold duty bearers to account, and may claim rights which are violated or gaps in their provision;
- ii. Child rights are inherent, inalienable, and indivisible and they apply to all children without discrimination;
- iii. The best interests of a child shall be the primary consideration in any decision-making which affects the child;
- iv. States have an obligation to ensure adequate resources are available to effectively guarantee children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation;
- v. Children have a right to have their views heard in decision-making that affects their lives.
- vi. Children have a right to be protected against all forms of discrimination and to enjoy positive advantages to ensure that all children have equal access to their rights;
- vii. Children should benefit from child-friendly procedures in all matters concerning them;
- viii. To ensure that all duty bearers, ranging from parents to care-givers, communities and the State, are empowered with a support system within an enabling environment to serve the best interests of children in their care, and respect and ensure the protection and fulfilment of the rights of the child.

## **IV. CHILD POLICY GOALS: KEY PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES**

Chapter 2 highlights the key issues and challenges in the region that have an impact on children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation and therefore require priority action in the region. In addressing those gaps, appropriate strategies have been designed to build on and accelerate the rate of implementation of existing international and regional policy instruments that promote children's well-being. The Child Policy goals, key priorities and strategies enunciated here provide a framework for ECOWAS Member states in fulfilling their commitments to the global SDGs and targets. It builds on previous initiatives such as the Renewed Call for Accelerated Action on the Implementation of the *Plan of Action towards an Africa Fit for Children 2008 - 2012* and the 2013 - 2017: '*Accountability for Investment in Children.*'

As outlined in Chapter 1, the goals and priorities are also in line with the regional and continental aspirations in the African Union (AU) *Agenda 2063* and the ACERWC-driven Africa's Agenda for Children 2040 – Fostering an Africa Fit for Children. Specifically, the 6<sup>th</sup> aspiration of Agenda 2063 leans towards having an Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children. Under that aspiration, it is envisaged that Africa shall be an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded, based on gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation, locality, age or other factors.

Furthermore, the third Policy goal which addresses child protection is also linked to the benchmarks for child protection in the *ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection System to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa.*

### **4.1 KEY PRIORITIES AMONG THE FOUR CLUSTERS OF CHILD RIGHTS: SURVIVAL, DEVELOPMENT, PROTECTION AND PARTICIPATION**

#### **GOAL 1: CHILD SURVIVAL**

Survival rights include the child's right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence, such as nutrition, shelter, the quality of child care, an adequate living standard, access to medical services, and the prevention and management of the major childhood illnesses. Child survival interventions are designed to address the most common causes of child death that occur, especially for those under five, which include diarrhoea, pneumonia, malaria and neonatal conditions.

**Goal Statement: Children of all ages in the region live healthy lives and enjoy total well-being**

**Objective 1: Ensure reduction of the maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030:**

Implementation Strategies: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Ensure access to and utilisation of antenatal and postnatal care for mothers and their new-borns, especially adolescent pregnant mothers; and safe and clean delivery, preferably in a health facility with a skilled birth attendant;
2. Ensure access to information to pregnant women including adolescent pregnant mothers the importance of early stimulation during pregnancy;
3. Ensure an end to preventable deaths of new-borns and children under five years of age by 2030, while aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-five mortality to as low as 25 per 1,000 live births.
4. Ensure that all pregnant women, including women and adolescent girls in rural areas, have access to and undergo free or subsidised ante-natal care with guaranteed access to hospital treatments in addressing life-threatening emergencies. The State shall ensure that mothers are attended to by skilled attendants at the time of delivery, and that there is adequate WASH at each health centre to assure safe and hygienic delivery of infants, and protect the health and dignity of women and children.
5. Support Vitamin A supplementation programmes and explore the use of locally fortified foods to reduce the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies in children, for children aged 6 - 59 months.
6. Support all ECOWAS countries to reach and sustain at least 50 per cent as the percentage of infants under six months who are exclusively breastfed.
7. Reduce iron deficiency anaemia in women and girls of reproductive age (15 - 49) through weekly iron-folic acid supplementation, education and information, while increasing the number of women and girls, 15 - 49 years of age, who consume at least five out of ten refined food groups.

**Objective 2: Support Primary Health Care (PHC), a foundation for health systems designed to achieve health for all.**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Support PHC's focus on three pillars:
  - Integrated individual and public health services, of good quality, delivered close to where people live and work;
  - Gender equitable community health systems support the empowerment of people, and engagement of communities, including women and young people, in designing and overseeing these health services, ensuring accountability, and
  - Multi-sectoral action to ensure that all sectors – not the health sector alone – contribute to promoting and enhancing the health of individuals and populations. Furthermore,
2. Increase awareness and endorsement of new PHC declaration made in Astana, Kazakhstan, in 2018.

**Objective 3: Improve immunisation systems in an equitable manner, in line with WHO Global Vaccine Action Plan targets and national vaccination schedules.**

Implementation Strategies:

Ensure that child and adolescent health policies and strategies, such as the second year of life immunisation initiative, result in increased percentage of fully immunised children, reduction in infant

and Under-5 mortality rates, and increased access to family life education.

**Objective 4: Malnutrition is eradicated in the ECOWAS region.**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Invest more resources towards child health and nutrition; including for adolescents/adolescent pregnant mothers, and direct investments towards supporting research and evidence-informed solutions to malnutrition.
2. Ensure continuous access to nutritionally adequate food, balanced diet and food supplementation programmes targeted at children in school and out of school.
3. Reduce the proportion of the population living below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption.
4. Support all countries to double the percentage of children aged 6 - 23 months with minimum diet diversity as well as the minimum acceptable diet.
5. Increase in all countries, the proportion of children aged 6 - 59 months treated for severe acute malnutrition.

**Objective 5: To end open defecation, with the aim of progressively moving towards safely managed services**

Implementation Strategies:

- 1) Support all countries to work with communities to eliminate open defecation to reduce the risk of diarrhoea, decrease intestinal helminths, improve nutritional outcomes, and protect the safety and dignity of children.
- 2) Communities should be empowered to obtain the necessary support and resources from their governments, participate in WASH-related processes, advocate for their right to WASH, and hold duty bearers accountable to realising this right.
- 3) Work with countries to strengthen the enabling environment for sanitation at national and decentralised levels, by improving policies and strategies, institutional arrangements, financing and budgeting (with a target of at least 0.5 per cent of the GDP spent on sanitation), planning monitoring and review, and capacity building. This includes engagement in the AfricaSan movement led by the Africa Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW) and ensuring progress towards the N'gor commitments on Sanitation and Hygiene.
- 4) Strengthen the engagement of the private sector in the provision of products and services for sanitation, by improving the regulatory and enabling environment for private sector actors.
- 5) Support governments to leverage sustainable financial resources for WASH, which includes investigation of new funding sources and financing mechanisms to generate the required resources for sustainable and equitable WASH services at scale.
- 6) Develop, promote and strengthen inter-sectorality between WASH and Health for government and private sector service providers.
- 7) Improve preparedness capacity and efficient cholera emergency response.



- 8) Reduce the risk of cholera by developing and supporting long-term durable solutions in cholera hotspots to prevent the resurgence of epidemics.

**Objective 6: Ensure elimination of new HIV infections in children and adolescents and access to treatment for children and adolescents living with HIV (accessible, affordable, high-quality primary health care services)**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Differentiate the HIV response to accelerate progress towards the targets. In practice this refers to prioritizing resources based on geographical spread and population in greatest need.
2. Promote the integration of gender-responsive HIV services within a resilient and sustainable development response. HIV-specific services should be integrated into the various platforms and service packages, including those focusing on antenatal care and maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, and education.
3. Prioritise community ownership and local governance of the HIV response. Families and community members remain best placed to address the enduring HIV-related stigma that has inhibited progress towards ending AIDS.
4. Invest in innovations to remove the barriers to scale-up. West must leverage innovations and foster collaborative learning to improve efforts to identify infants, children, adolescents, pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV; link them to treatment, and retain them in care.
5. Countries should adopt new diagnostic and biomedical approaches such as point-of-care technology, HIV self-testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and proven technology-based innovations, and adapt these to their local contexts.
6. Commit to collect and collate disaggregated data on new HIV infections and access to treatment for those living with HIV.
7. Optimise HIV treatment, care and protection services for children, adolescents and their parents/caregivers by promoting linkages between HIV services and social welfare systems to prevent HIV transmission.
8. Increase access to appropriate, child-friendly and reliable sexual and reproductive health education for children and youths in and out-of-school and strengthen access to adolescent-friendly health services.
9. Support parents and caregivers to talk to children about HIV and AIDS.

**Objective 7: Ensure survival rights of all children and provide child-friendly health services and programmes, in particular children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move including forcibly displaced children (i.e. internally displaced, refugee and asylum seeking), stateless children and children in contact with the law**

Implementation Strategies:

1. State Health care systems incorporate measures to address the increasing burden of climate-related under-nutrition, diarrhoea, cardio-respiratory and infectious diseases; as well as the

related health effects of heatwave, flood, drought-related morbidity and mortality, and changed distribution of disease vectors.

2. Substantially reduce the number of children exposed to hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination.
3. Increase access to appropriate, child-friendly and reliable sexual and reproductive health education for children and youths in and out-of-school and strengthen access to adolescent-friendly health services.
4. Ensure appropriate capacity-building for health care providers for adolescent-friendly services, and adequate rehabilitation of health centres.
5. Ensure that families enjoy the right to health care facilities accessible to all communities, including high-quality medical care, and accessible and economical medicines and vaccines.
6. Improve social safety net programmes for children and mothers.
7. Increase access to information and training programmes at primary health care centres targeted at parents and caregivers on diet enrichment to reduce the number of malnourished children.
8. Strengthen gender equality measures in health system strengthening and ensure these include effective measures for advancing gender parity and gender equality in the health sector, including in community health systems.
9. Collect the correct data to better allocate the available resources and to maximise investments and reach all children without discrimination.
10. Strengthen social accountability measures at national and local levels to ensure that men, women, girls and boys have meaningful and equitable opportunities to participate in the governance of health services.
11. Ensure access of particularly vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced children) stateless children, children in contact with the law, and children who experienced violence and abuse to appropriate health care.
12. Ensure survival rights of all children, in particular for children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced children), stateless children, children in contact with the law, and children who experienced violence and abuse.

## **GOAL 2: CHILD DEVELOPMENT**

Development rights focus on the rights of the child to develop to her or his full potential. This requires adequate care and stimulation in early childhood, universal access to quality education at all levels, vocational training and a well-charted transition through adolescence to early adulthood.

***Goal Statement: Every child enjoys the right to intellectual, emotional and psycho-motor development and care from the early years until adulthood, as well as equal opportunities to inclusive quality education, leisure and recreation***

**Objective 1: Every child born in the region receives comprehensive birth registration**

#### Implementation Strategies:

1. Employ active and passive methods of birth registration, especially in hard to reach areas.
2. Scale-up information campaigns on the importance of birth registration in local communities.
3. Integrate the function of birth registration into local health facilities.
4. Engage local community gatekeepers in ensuring active notification of births and ensuring actual birth registration.
5. Promote digitisation of birth registration systems.

#### **Objective 2: All girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary programmes in readiness for primary education, to ensure that children survive and thrive during their early years, by 2030**

#### Implementation Strategies:

1. Advocate for national scale-up of investments in early childhood programmes that include education, stimulation, nurturing, health, nutrition and social protection components as a means of addressing inequality, breaking the cycle of poverty and improving the child's capacity to learn later in school, with increased productivity in adulthood.
2. Enrol all children below the age of five in ECD programmes in support of their physical growth and overall development [cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional and psychomotor] through the establishment of more ECD centres well equipped with qualified staff and appropriate materials.
3. Increase the percentage of children between 36 - 59 months receiving at least one year of a quality pre-primary education programme.
4. Communicate to change social norms towards ECD programmes.

#### **Objective 3: By 2030, all girls and boys have access to and complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes**

#### Implementation Strategies:

1. Ensure all children of primary and secondary school age are enrolled in school.
2. Ensure the provision of universal, free and compulsory basic education, through increased availability and access to formal and non-formal education to all children; and the provision of equal access to education for boys and girls.
3. Establish credible national benchmark and improve all aspects of quality of primary education to increase the primary school completion rates for girls and boys and to enhance the percentage of girls and boys who master a broad range of foundational skills, including in literacy and mathematics by the end of the primary school cycle.
4. Establish credible national benchmarks and improve all aspects of quality of primary education to increase the secondary school completion rates for girls and boys and enhance the proficiency of girls and boys across a broad range of learning outcomes, including in literacy and in mathematics by the end of lower secondary schooling cycle.
5. Ensure that Education Sector Plans are gender responsive and include costed and targeted

measures to address barriers faced by girls in accessing and completing basic education to close gender inequalities in and through education.

6. Promote all alternative education in relation to national contexts (Accelerated Learning Programme, Koranic Education, Non-Formal Education that are properly reviewed and quality-assured).
7. Consult with community and religious leaders on desired learning outcomes.

**Objective 4: Every child expresses the right to play, leisure and recreation, including the most vulnerable and marginalised**

1. Ensure schools have play, recreational and leisure spaces.
2. Create safe spaces for children of all ages and gender to play and participate in recreational activities wherever children are found in communities, and in IDP camps and other communities of displaced persons.
3. Adopt play as a primary teaching tool in junior classrooms and in after school programmes to give children knowledge, skills and attitudes for survival and development through focused play.

**Objective 5: Adolescents and youth have access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) to enable them to find and maintain gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Provide more opportunities for technical and vocational training to adolescents and youths to improve their job prospects by increasing the share of public budgets allocated to this sub-sector and building more facilities.
2. Increase the number of scholarships for vocational and technical training for children and youths.

**Objective 6: Ensure inclusion and access of all children to education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and TVET) as well as provision for special services; including children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move and in situations of displacement, stateless children and children in contact with the law**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Member States to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol alongside implementation of the CRC, the ACRWC and this regional Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action.
2. Adopt an integrated approach which focuses on the holistic development of the child through early and preventive intervention services, access to provision, and support mechanisms in all sectors and levels of governance.
3. End inequality in educational opportunities between boys and girls, for children with special needs, children in the rural areas, children in emergency situations, children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move and in situations of displacement, stateless children and children in contact with the law, by addressing possible

obstacles related to a lack of documentation, language or cultural barriers, etc.

4. Improve school facilities to provide an inclusive, safe and positive environment for all children.

**Objective 7: Reduce disparities between girls and boys in education and promote gender equality in and through curricula**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Adopt and implement strategies and interventions to reduce gender inequalities in education with a focus on addressing girls' barriers to staying in school and to successfully completing secondary education.
2. Adopt policies and measures that address child marriage and adolescent pregnancy within the education system so that girls can fulfil their right to education even when married or when having children.
3. Develop and ensure quality delivery of gender responsive curricula and pedagogy, which address socio-cultural factors promoting gender equality and skills-building opportunities for all boys and girls.
4. Create level playing fields for girls and boys to nurture a new generation of young women as confident role models and active citizens that contribute to their communities equally with boys and men.

**Objective 8: Ensure safe, inclusive and protective learning environment for all boys and girls**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Develop policies and accountabilities frameworks to ensure that schools are protective, safe and inclusive environments where children can grow and learn, and take all measures to end school-related violence against children (including Sexual and Reproductive Based Violence- SRBGV) in and around schools.
2. Provide safe transportation services between homes and schools.
3. Ensure effective prevention and response mechanisms to eliminate related violence against children (including Sexual and Reproductive Based Violence- SRBGV) and create solutions by engaging youth, communities and teachers.
4. Strengthen links between home, school and services and engage youth, communities and teachers in creating solutions.

**Objective 9: Improve skills of teachers to provide quality education to enhance children's interest in learning and teach important skills in health, sanitation, protection and participation**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Increase the number of trained and qualified teachers in schools at all levels and in all communities at national and sub-national levels.
2. Strengthen investments and incentives to increase gender parity of teachers, strengthening equal opportunities for female and male teachers.
3. Integrate the use of play, positive discipline and non-violent communication in teacher training

curriculums and classroom activities.

4. Improve children's life chances, enhancing their interest in learning and desire to stay in school, safeguarding children's health, developing leadership skills, and empowering all children to speak up for themselves and gain self-confidence.

### **GOAL 3: CHILD PROTECTION**

*Child Protection is concerned with the prevention and response to situations of violence, abuse and exploitation of children. It is focused on strengthening the protective environment of children and takes account of key societal and systemic pillars relevant to child wellbeing.*

***Goal Statement: Every child is protected from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation and has access to prevention and response services***

**Objective 1: Each Member State adopts relevant laws and policies and establishes institutions to support prevention and response actions that will protect children in the region from violence, abuse and exploitation in compliance with international and regional legal frameworks**

#### **Implementation Strategies:**

1. Ensure ratification of all relevant legal instruments establishing internationally acceptable standards of child protection in preventing and prohibiting abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children, in particular the CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
2. Ensure a Policy and Legislative Framework for Family tracing and reunification for children in emergency situations.
3. Ensure domestication of the relevant international instruments by the passage of domestic legislation to prevent and criminalise acts of violence against children and all other forms of abuse and exploitation of children, including child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, sexual exploitation, unlawful recruitment of children and the use of children in hostilities.
4. Specifically ensure ratification of International legal instruments and domestication of laws and policies prohibiting the unlawful recruitment and use of children as instruments of violence in conflict situations and shall criminalize attacks on children and educational institutions in line with international legal standards (*this means that Member States would criminalise the age limit specific to whatever treaty (API and APII, Optional Protocol UNCRC) they have ratified, be it 15 or 18 years*).
5. Formulate and implement national child protection policies in accordance with the commitments set out in the ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa, and the commitments set out in the Supplementary Act on Equal Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS Region. National policies should be holistic and include, among other things, provisions for the protection of children with disabilities, children living with

or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced children), stateless children, children in contact with the law and other vulnerable groups, in line with local context.

6. Develop and implement costed national action plans to reduce the prevalence of child marriage and other forms of violence and harmful practices against girls.
7. Implement ECOWAS Support Procedures for the Protection of Children on the Move and Young Migrants. Establish, support and strengthen functional child protection law enforcement agencies or institutions, including the establishment of child protection units in law enforcement agencies; and functional coordination systems (institutions, task forces and committees) at all levels: national, sub-national, local/community.
8. Where appropriate, adopt and implement national policies to ensure strict adherence and commitment to the Paris Commitments and the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, which provide guidelines on the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all categories of children associated with armed groups. Government Policies shall be directed at protecting children during military operations, and ensure the handling of children associated with armed groups in accordance with international standards of juvenile justice.
9. Establish effective national Information Management Systems and Monitoring and Evaluation systems to ensure the protection of all children including children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced children), stateless children and children in contact with the law.

**Objective 2: Ensure International Standards are met in relation to children in detention and this measure is used as an absolute last resort**

Implementation Strategies

1. Ratification and implementation of international standards relating to juvenile justice, in particular, the CRC, the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children and Armed Conflict, the ACRWC, the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Protection of Juvenile Justice 1985 (the Beijing Rules), the UN Guidelines for the Administration of Juvenile Delinquency 1990 (the Riyadh Guidelines), and the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty 1990.
2. In line with international juvenile justice standards, promote specific policies for children in conflict with the law by reinforcing access to justice, developing non-custodial measures, specific detention areas, reintegration support, and specialisation of legal actors and all measures relative to juvenile justice administration for children in contact with the law (witnesses, offenders, victims) as well as children in (migration) detention.
3. End the detention of children for immigration purposes (children seeking refugee status and migrant children) and detention of potential victims of a crime (for instance, trafficked children).
4. Establish functioning Alternatives To Detention (ATD) as part of strengthening national child protection systems.

**Objective 3: At least three per cent budget increase of National Budgets dedicated to Ministries in charge of child protection to finance prevention and response actions that will protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Increase investments in social protection/cash transfer schemes to respond to the needs of children in emergency situations.
2. Strengthening and equipping school buildings and physical structures like medical facilities with safeguards that can withstand floods, natural disaster and climate-related impacts.
3. Leverage domestic resources in the national budgets for child-sensitive social protection programmes to facilitate access to basic services for children.

**Objective 4: Key community institutions develop increased positive attitude to social protection programmes for children**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Increase investments in social protection/cash transfer schemes to respond to the needs of children in emergency situations and forcibly displaced children. Strengthening and equipping school buildings and physical structures like medical facilities with safeguards that can withstand floods, natural disaster and climate-related impacts.
2. Advance social mobilisation of key community groups, including traditional and religious leaders, youth, and women.
3. Develop and increase awareness of a “child-child adoption” campaign that allows a child to take interest in and report protection issues affecting other children in various contexts.
4. Increase awareness of the ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa.

**GOAL 4: CHILD PARTICIPATION**

Participation rights are centred around the child’s rights of freedom of expression, thought, religion, conscience and association as well as rights to express their views, wishes and opinion on issues concerning them depending on children’s evolving capacity.

***Goal Statement: Children’s voices are amplified by enabling platforms for self-expression and participation in decisions on matters affecting children, taking into account their diverse ages and evolving capacity***

**Objective 1: Ensure respect for the views of all children in all spheres of their lives, in particular**



**with regard to children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced and stateless children) and children in contact with the law**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Adopt and implement the appropriate legislation, policies and services to support child participation in family, community and institutional structures in line with the standards of the CRC and the ACRWC.
2. Ratify and implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (2011).
3. Ensure that the national and sub-national child rights agendas promote understanding of child rights by all, and ensure the visibility of children's perspectives.
4. Adopt policies and laws to ensure gender equality including dedicated investments in the girl child to address discriminatory norms and practices regarding her education, protection, health and well-being.

**Objective 2: Promote children's knowledge of their rights (as informed actors on their rights, especially on their own protection)**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Promote child rights, especially protection and participation rights, in school curricula at all levels of the education system; as well as in the "knowledge of their individual and family health issues".
2. Embrace participatory mechanisms such as student councils, student representatives in school governance structures, youth/girls platforms in schools, children's clubs and youth groups and child and youth participation in community child protection committees.

**Objective 3: Increase visibility and protection of children's rights in the media (including digital/social media) and children's participation and engagement with the mass media as a whole**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Media institutions contribute to building the awareness needed to enhance child rights visibility, and engage children in the process of developing media programmes that are specifically child-related.
2. Portray children's perspectives through the involvement of children in debates and discussions that are related to them.
3. Media houses adopt a proactive approach [including self-regulatory guidelines, strategies and enhanced capacity-building initiatives] on digital safety and citizenship, towards safeguarding the best interests of children in every circumstance including emergency situations and for

children on the move.

4. Institute a system of responsible reporting to ensure the media practitioners are accountable for protecting children from adverse media reporting or coverage.

**Objective 4: Children participate in decision-making and governance at all levels – community, district, regional, national, international, etc.**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Adopt and practice child rights principles of participation in all community settings, including early childhood educational providers to support the holistic development of children.
2. Institute effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms towards ensuring compliance with the set standards of child rights participation.
3. Encourage and enhance cooperation between all stakeholders and child rights actors, as well as promote partnerships with children and child led groups.
4. Enhance the participation of youths in the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment.
5. Enhance the participation of youths in eradicating violence against children and GBV, child marriage and FGM/C.
6. Include dedicated measures and spaces for girls to address their specific barriers in decision making and governance.

**Objective 5: Families, schools, communities, and society partners to promote child participation in all relevant sectors of society and public life**

Implementation Strategies:

1. Facilitate the efforts of communities, educational institutions and other structures to enable children to exercise their participation rights.
2. Support public-private partnership models of collaboration geared towards creating a society which puts focus on children, and to respect and support children's rights, at all levels of government.
3. End all forms of discriminatory practises and traditions against girls in the family, communities, schools and in public life that may impair the physical, mental and psychological well-being of girls and limit their active participation in society.
4. Create equal opportunities for girls to be heard and to have real opportunities to participate in school, family and communal life.
5. Formally recognise child-led and youth-led organisations and allow for their active participation, on equal terms as other stakeholders, in policy debates and decision making processes.

## **V. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS, MONITORING, REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY, RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR CHILDREN**

### **5.1 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION**

The ECOWAS Child Policy provides the broad-based structure and a policy direction for Member States in their common regional and international aspirations towards fulfilling child rights in the region. The primary responsibility for the implementation of the ECOWAS Child Policy rests with national, state and local governments. Even though Member States share some common identities, States are sovereign nationalities with distinct and diverse needs and developmental challenges. The child rights situation, and specific priorities and challenges to address, varies from country to country, as do national resources.

Within the framework of the minimum standards set forth in the ECOWAS Child Policy and the Strategic Plan of Action, Member States shall adopt those policy goals and devise strategies that are best suited to their national priorities and needs to enhance the situation of children in each country within the time- frame of the Strategic Plan of Action (2019 – 2023). The integration of the goals and objectives of the Child Policy into national planning as well as development programmes, strategies and other development plans will facilitate its implementation.

### **5.2 THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS.**

#### **5.2.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the ECOWAS COMMISSION**

The Department of Social Affairs and Gender of ECOWAS Commission serves as a rallying point for unifying and mobilising citizens across the region towards ensuring that children enjoy the same standards of rights within and across national boundaries. Within this framework, ECOWAS Commission takes responsibility for leadership to initiate, coordinate, harmonise policies and programmes to implement the regional Child Policy:

- i. Stimulate political will and buy-in from Member states to adopt the ECOWAS Child Policy, and develop and submit national Plans of Action as part of the implementation process;
- ii. Facilitate implementation of the ECOWAS Child Policy and Plan of Action, through continuous advocacy for adoption, promotion and strategic implementation of National Child Policies and Plans of Action;
- iii. To serve as a point of convergence for Member States on all global, regional and sub-regional child rights' instruments; and provide technical guidance and support to Member States to internalise and adapt international and regional standards to a local context within the shared interests and commonalities of the people of ECOWAS;

- iv. Institute capacity-building among, and strengthen coordination and cooperation within ECOWAS institutions and departments to support the implementation of the Child Policy at Member State levels;
- v. To enhance ECOWAS accountability in monitoring, reporting and tracking progress and oversee Member States' compliance with implementation of the Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action;
- vi. Ensure that Member States prioritise child rights issues, and plan and allocate budgets accordingly, in accordance with the SDGs, Agenda 2040, AU 2063 and international, continental and regional child rights instruments.
- vii. Establish the Regional Child Rights Working Group (inclusive of the of the civil society groups) in the implementation of its mandates.
- viii. Develop and implement a Communications Plan for the Policy and Strategic Plan of Action.

### **5.2.2 The Roles and Responsibilities of Member States**

The Child Policy identifies the rights of children under four clusters of universal and indivisible rights relating to Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. As such, the policy goals and strategies to be defined at Member State levels shall cut across diverse thematic areas within these four clusters of child rights. Notably, the Protection goals must align with the *ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa*, as adopted by Member States in 2017. As such member States should:

- i. Ensure harmonization of national policies on child rights with the regional Child Policy and with ACRWC;
- ii. Ensure effective coordination of service delivery in all areas of the rights of the child and the adherence to standards.
- iii. Institute measures for the enhancement of community engagement in promoting the rights of children.
- iv. Ensure adherence to the international and regional child rights standards and instruments in their child rights aspirations and priorities.
- v. Ensure that all children are entitled to the same rights without discrimination of any kind, while considering their best interests as the primary consideration.
- vi. Ensure the effective mainstreaming of the rights of the child (including children with disabilities, in emergencies, children with HIV/AIDS, children on the move, displaced children and children in contact with the law) in all areas of national development planning.
- vii. Ensure that all children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and their opinions are given due weight in keeping with their maturity and evolving capacities, especially through the establishment of a functional Children Parliament.
- viii. Deliver family support and protective services for children within the context of families, communities and kinship networks,
- ix. Implement effective resource mobilization strategies integrating all sectors of society including the private sector, civil society and faith based organizations.

### **5.2.3 The Roles and Responsibilities of Civil Society Partners.**

Member States shall establish and promote partnerships with civil society groups, networks and other private bodies to promote child rights at all levels of governance. Partnerships and collaborations shall draw on the strength and capacity of all state and non-state actors, including child and youth-led groups, the UN System, donors, national and international NGOs, private sector entities, social workers, academic and research institutions, faith-based organisations, CBOs and other civil society platforms and networks.

The collaboration between State and non-state child rights actors shall be articulated for purposes of preventing and responding to child rights violations through the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), participatory project development and implementation, joint advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns, press statements, convening and participating in forums, platforms and networks to share experiences, learning and best practices on child rights related issues, joint capacity building initiatives and joint resource mobilisation. The Civil Society Partners should:

- i. Adopt effective communication and mobilisation strategies, with the optimal use of local and modern media resources and tools to promote a positive change in attitudes, behaviour and beliefs regarding children's rights, especially child protection and child participation rights.
- ii. Intensify awareness creation, sensitisation and behaviour change amongst stake-holders on child rights at local, community, and national levels through various print and electronic media, including social media.
- iii. Support Child-focal ministries in the member states in resource mobilisation.
- iv. Engage in effective service delivery to children.

### **5.2.4 The Roles and Responsibilities of Children, the Family and Communities.**

Children are considered rights holders and active participants in child rights realisation, who must be empowered to make claims and hold duty bearers to account for upholding children's rights. Government and its agents (social workers, judges, police, health care workers, teachers, etc.) are the primary duty bearers responsible for realising the rights of all children. Parents, community members and others who care for children are secondary duty bearers, with specific legal responsibilities for upholding the rights of children under their care. Families and communities must be supported to raise their children in ways that keep them safe and to end harmful traditional and parenting practices. Duty bearers are empowered with a support system within an enabling environment to serve the best interests of children in their care, and respect and ensure the protection and fulfilment of the rights of the child. To ensure the realisation of the above:

- i. Community engagement and community-based approaches should be designed and built on the strengths of the family and draw upon the assets of the community. Community-based approaches also support prevention efforts, such as community-based child Protection Committees.
- ii. Engage in community organization efforts to ensure the protection and promotion of the rights

- of children and the especially vulnerable.
- iii. Provide care and protection for all children in the West Africa space without discrimination of any kind, while considering their best interests as the primary consideration.
  - iv. Ensure that all children exercise the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and their opinions are given due weight in keeping with their maturity and evolving capacities.
  - v. Children shall be aware of their rights and the commensurate responsibilities of citizenship and shall be peer to peer educator and advocates of the rights of all children.

## **5.6 MONITORING, EVALUATION, REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

Successful implementation of the Child Policy is also predicated on co-operation and collaboration among Member States; enhanced by effective coordination by ECOWAS Commission at the regional level.

The ECOWAS Commission shall apply its convening power to coordinate, monitor and supervise compliance by state actors to this Child Policy; as well as in building consensus around acceptable norms and standards at the regional level. Civil society organisations and other relevant child rights actors shall monitor implementation and compliance with the Child Policy at national and sub-national levels, and with the States' National Action Plans.

There shall be established a Child Rights desk at ECOWAS Commission to oversee implementation of the ECOWAS Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action, and to further enhance accountability. ECOWAS Commission shall develop detailed guidelines and a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework (involving children and youth) for reporting and M&E compliance by the Member States in line with the four priority objectives and strategies in the Child Policy. This shall be done taking into account the need to establish coordination between the Child Rights desk and the ECOWAS Planning and Statistics Department on child rights budgeting. Priority will also be given to mobilising resources for the Planning and Statistics Department (which can also key into existing national data collection systems), to collect and collate disaggregated data on survival, development, protection and participation rights in the region. Member States on their part, shall strictly fulfil their reporting obligations regularly and in line with the following time-frames to enable periodic monitoring and evaluation.

The Member States commit to periodic reviews and on-going monitoring and evaluation at regional and national levels, particularly as children's rights priorities may change in view of emerging scenarios in the Member States. This may call for modification of the objectives and strategies outlined in this Child Policy and its Strategic Plan of Action as the need arises.

ECOWAS will implement an efficient reporting and follow-up mechanism to monitor the level of implementation of child rights in Member States through the receipt of annual reports by ECOWAS Commission, based on set guidelines developed by the Commission. A synthesis report shall be drawn

up from the annual reports and shared as a form of feedback to the Member States.

In addition, monitoring and accountability for child rights as envisaged in this Child Policy, shall be within the context of the SEM, reflect the role and participation of all levels of government, ministries, agencies and diverse actors [state and non-state], in promoting child rights. Monitoring of the ECOWAS Child Policy should seek to align with existing instruments to enhance effectiveness and coherence; an electronic Child Protection Systems Strengthening Accountability Tool will serve as a transparent barometer to assess progress for ECOWAS Member States and as an advocacy tool for Civil Society groups. In coordination with the Directorate of Planning and Statistics, a tool will be developed to initiate data collection on child rights at regional level.

An electronic monitoring platform will be established at the Child Rights desk, to serve as a regional reporting tool to provide a standard of reporting for all countries on their compliance with the CRC, the ACRWC, CEDAW and the regional Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action. The monitoring system will also be aligned to UNCRC, and ACRWC reporting requirements and mechanisms.

This Policy will be reviewed periodically to progressively advance its fit with emerging issues and trends converging around children's rights in the region. Monitoring and evaluation of the Plan of Action will be prioritised to ensure effective implementation (additionally through evaluation of national level translation of key strategic measures into National Policies and Plans and their implementation). Implementation of the Plan of Action shall also be evaluated through annual review exercises, at mid-term and at the expiry of the Strategic Plan of Action prior to enactment of a new Plan of Action.

The 2030 Agenda lays great emphasis on the role of dialogue and review at the regional and sub-regional levels. Regional reviews — including peer learning and assessments of progress and policies — allows for the identification of overall trends, lessons learned, good practices, implementation gaps, and issues specific to a region, while helping to boost regional cooperation and partnerships. Regional reviews of progress can provide important inputs to support implementation efforts by countries of a region, as well as to report on progress and challenges at the global level - including to the UN High Level Political Forum. This Child Policy highlights the role that regional institutions can play to promote enhanced accountability for children's rights.

The Child Rights desk will therefore establish a regional Child Rights Working Group, consisting of child rights experts representing government, UN agencies, civil society organisations, CBOs and children and youth from the fifteen Member States. The working group will serve as a platform to support the implementation and monitoring of the Child Policy within the region, to share information, best practices and progress on regional and national developments on child rights, and to support the timely reporting of Member States to the ECOWAS Commission as well as the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

## 5.7 SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND BUDGET ALLOCATION FOR CHILDREN

In the drive to implement the ECOWAS Child Policy, the ECOWAS Member States commit to mobilising all available resources of Government and all societal resources including human and material resources, ensuring that these resources are working in favour of children everywhere in an efficient and accountable manner. Member States shall collaborate with the international donor community, development partners, civil society groups and other private sector partners to mobilise financial, technical and other material support and resources for child protection.

Member states shall ensure that the budgetary priority to enhance child rights by investing in children is realised at national and sub-national levels, in accordance with the CRC and the 2030 Agenda. **In addition Member States shall ensure allocation of at least three per cent of the national budget to Ministries in charge of child protection to finance prevention and response actions that will protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation**

Child rights implementation requires sufficient financial resources that are mobilised, allocated and spent in an accountable, effective, efficient, equitable, participatory, transparent and sustainable manner. To this end, the State shall mobilise all human and material resources towards achieving child rights including available local resources, human and material. Government funding shall be increased and opportunities enhanced for increase in donor and private sector funding. All State and non-state actors shall step up advocacy for increased funding for child rights.

The State shall establish appropriate legislative and policy frameworks and programmes for child friendly budgeting and for budget tracking to ensure efficiency and proper utilisation of funds allocated based on identified needs and priorities at all levels of government. The policy and regulatory framework shall also ensure transparent use of resources, improved financial and programming audits and audit reports. Information on allocation and expenditure of resources shall be made publicly available. Children's rights should be taken into consideration throughout all stages of their budget processes and administrative systems at national and sub-national levels (namely planning, enactment, execution and follow-up)

– in particular for children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move, including forcibly displaced children, stateless children and children in contact with the law.



## **ANNEXES**

**ANNEX 1: STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE CHILD POLICY 2019 – 2030**

**ANNEX 2: GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

**ANNEX 3: ECOWAS STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION AGAINST CHILDREN IN WEST AFRICA**

**ANNEX 4: BACKGROUND DOCUMENT ON KEY ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE FULFILMENT OF CHILD RIGHTS IN WEST AFRICA**

## STRATEGIC PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE ECOWAS CHILD POLICY 2019 – 2030

### GOAL 1: CHILD SURVIVAL

**Goal Statement:** *Children of all ages in the region live healthy lives and enjoy total well-being*

**Objective 1:** Ensure reduction of the maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030:

**Strategies:**

Increase access to and utilisation of antenatal and postnatal care for mothers and their new-borns, especially adolescent pregnant mothers; and safe and clean delivery, preferably in a health facility with a skilled birth attendant;

1. To reduce neonatal mortality to as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to as low as 25 per 1,000 live births by 2030 Ensure that all pregnant women, including women and adolescent girls in rural areas, have access to and undergo free or subsidised ante-natal care with guaranteed access to hospital treatments in treating life-threatening emergencies.
2. The State shall ensure that mothers are attended to by skilled attendants at the time of delivery, and that there is adequate WASH at each health centre to assure safe and hygienic delivery of infants, and protect the health and dignity of women and children.
3. Support Vitamin A supplementation programs and explore the use of locally fortified foods to reduce the prevalence of micronutrient deficiencies in children, for children aged 6-59 months.
4. Support all ECOWAS countries to reach and sustain at least 50% as the percentage of infants under six months who are exclusively breastfed.
5. Reduce iron deficiency anaemia in women and girls of reproductive age (15-49) through weekly iron-folic acid supplementation, education and information, while increasing the number of women and girls, 15 - 49 years of age, who consume at least 5 out of 10 refined food groups.

**Objective 2:** Support Primary Health Care (PHC), a foundation for health systems designed to achieve health for all

**Strategies:**

1. Support PHC's focus on three pillars:
  - Integrated individual and public health services, of good quality, delivered close to where people live and work;
  - Gender equitable community health systems support the empowerment of people, and engagement of communities, including women and young people, in designing and overseeing these health services, ensuring accountability;
  - Multi-sectoral action to ensure that all sectors – not the health sector alone – contribute to promoting and enhancing the health of individuals and populations; and
2. Increase awareness and endorsement of new PHC declaration made in Astana, Kazakhstan, in 2018.

**Objective 3:** Improve immunisation systems in an equitable manner, in line with WHO Global Vaccine Action Plan targets and national vaccination schedules

**Strategy.**

Ensure that child and adolescent health policies and strategies, such as the second year of life immunisation initiative, result in increased percentage of fully immunised children, reduction in infant and Under-5 mortality rates, and increased access to family life education.

**Objective 4:** Malnutrition is eradicated in the ECOWAS region

**Strategies:**

1. Invest more resources towards child health and nutrition; including for adolescents/adolescent pregnant mothers, and direct investments towards supporting research and evidence-informed solutions to malnutrition.
2. Ensure continuous access to nutritionally adequate food, balanced diet and food supplementation programmes targeted at children in school and out of school.
3. Reduce the proportion of the population living below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption.
4. Support all countries to double the percentage of children aged 6 - 23 months with minimum diet diversity as well as the minimum acceptable diet.
5. Increase in all countries, the proportion of children 6 - 59 months treated for severe acute malnutrition.

**Objective 5:** To end open defecation, with the aim of progressively moving towards safely managed services

**Strategies:**

1. Support all countries to work with communities, and to empower women and girls, to obtain the necessary support and resources from their governments, participate in WASH-related processes, advocate for their right to WASH, and hold duty bearers accountable to realising this right.
2. Work with countries to strengthen the enabling environment for sanitation at national and decentralised levels, by improving policies and strategies, institutional arrangements, financing and budgeting (with a target of at least 0.5 per cent of the GDP spent on sanitation), planning monitoring and review, and capacity building.
3. Strengthen the engagement of the private sector in the provision of products and services for sanitation, by improving the regulatory and enabling environment for private sector actors.
4. Develop, promote and strengthen inter-sectorality between WASH and Health for government and private sector service providers.
5. Improve preparedness capacity and efficient cholera emergency response.

**Objective 6:** Ensure elimination of new HIV infections in children and adolescents and access to treatment for children and adolescents living with or affected by HIV and AIDS (accessible, affordable, high-quality primary health care services)

**Strategies:**

1. Differentiate the HIV response to accelerate progress towards the targets. In practice this refers to prioritizing resources based on geographical spread and population in greatest need.
2. Promote the integration of gender-responsive HIV services within a resilient and sustainable development response. HIV-specific services should be integrated into the various platforms and service packages, including those focusing on antenatal care and maternal health, sexual and reproductive health, and education.
3. Prioritize community ownership and local governance of the HIV response. Families and community members remain best placed to address the enduring HIV-related stigma that has inhibited progress towards ending AIDS.
4. Invest in innovations to remove the barriers to scale-up. West Africa must leverage innovations and foster collaborative learning to improve efforts to identify infants, children, adolescents, pregnant and breastfeeding women living with HIV; link them to treatment, and retain them in care.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Countries should adopt new diagnostic and biomedical approaches such as point-of-care technology, HIV self-testing and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and proven technology-based innovations, and adapt these to their local contexts.</li> <li>6. Commit to collect and collate disaggregated data on new HIV infections and access to treatment for those living with HIV and AIDS.</li> <li>7. Optimise HIV treatment, care and protection services for children, adolescents and their parents/caregivers by promoting linkages between HIV services and social welfare systems as a way to prevent HIV transmission.</li> <li>8. Increase access to appropriate, child-friendly and reliable sexual and reproductive health education for children and youths in and out-of-school and strengthen access to adolescent-friendly health services.</li> <li>9. Support parents and caregivers to talk to children about HIV and AIDS.</li> </ol>			
<p><b>Objective 7:</b> Ensure survival rights of all children and provide child-friendly health services and programmes, in particular children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move and children in situations of displacement; and children in contact with the law</p>			
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. State health care systems incorporate measures to address the increasing burden of climate-related under-nutrition, diarrhoea, cardio-respiratory and infectious diseases; as well as the related health effects of heatwave, flood, drought-related morbidity and mortality, and changed distribution of disease vectors.</li> <li>2. Substantially reduce the number of children exposed to hazardous chemicals and air, water, and soil pollution and contamination.</li> <li>3. Increase access to appropriate, child-friendly and reliable sexual and reproductive health education for children and youths in and out-of-school and strengthen access to adolescent-friendly health services.</li> <li>4. Ensure appropriate capacity-building for health care providers for adolescent-friendly services, and adequate rehabilitation of health centres.</li> <li>5. Ensure that families enjoy the right to health care facilities accessible to all communities, including high-quality medical care, and accessible and economical medicines and vaccines.</li> <li>6. Improve social safety net programs for children and mothers.</li> <li>7. Increase access to information and training programmes at primary health care centres targeted at parents and caregivers on diet enrichment to reduce the number of malnourished children.</li> <li>8. Strengthen gender equality measures in health system strengthening and ensure these include effective measures for advancing gender parity and gender equality in the health sector, including in community health systems.</li> <li>9. Collect the correct data to better allocate the available resources and to maximise investments and reach all children without discrimination.</li> <li>10. Strengthen social accountability measures at national and local levels to ensure that men, women, girls and boys have meaningful and equitable opportunities to participate in the governance of health services.</li> <li>11. Ensure access of particularly vulnerable children, including children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move and children in situations of displacement, children in contact with the law, and children who experienced violence and abuse to appropriate health care.</li> </ol>			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>RELATED OBJECTIVE(S)</b>	<b>ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES</b>	<b>VERIFIABLE INDICATORS</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.1 Establish more health care facilities and disease control centres and upgrade already existing ones.</li> <li>• Introduce policies and increase incentives to retain doctors, and to encourage them to work in rural areas.</li> <li>• Train more health personnel, including skilled birth attendants.</li> <li>• Train health personnel on child rights, including child protection, provision of child-friendly services and gender parity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1,2, 3, 6 &amp; 7</b></p> <p>☒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better equipped health facilities and disease control centres.</li> <li>• Better equipped health facilities in urban and rural areas.</li> <li>• Increased number of skilled health personnel including birth attendants.</li> <li>• Increased number of safe deliveries.</li> <li>• Improved and equal access to quality health services for all children in the sub-region. Improvement in the quality and number of (youth-friendly) reproductive health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with percentage increase in establishment/ enhancement and operation of well-equipped health centres in ratio to the population.</li> <li>• Number of countries with percentage increase in number of health workers retained in rural areas.</li> <li>• Number of countries with significant percentage increase in health workers trained and retained.</li> <li>• Number of countries with significant percentage reduction in maternal and child mortality rates.</li> <li>• Number of countries with effective and sustained awareness raising programmes.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.2 Train more health personnel in health care facilities, including on WASH, nutrition as well as data collection.</li> <li>• Construct functional WASH facilities (including gender separated toilets).</li> <li>• Inclusion of WASH in national policies and strategies related to health centre services</li> <li>• Increase the numbers and quality of sanitation facilities in communities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1,2 ,3 4 &amp; 5</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved health services and centres with safe clean water, hygiene and sanitation facilities.</li> <li>• Improved coordination of WASH delivery across key sectors in the national development framework.</li> <li>• Increased access to safe clean water and hygiene and sanitation facilities by local communities, especially the underserved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with percentage increase in trained and retained health workers.</li> <li>• Number of countries with percentage improvements in proportion of health centres with functional WASH facilities, including gender separated toilets.</li> <li>• Number of national policies and coordination mechanisms across sectors into which WASH is integrated.</li> <li>• Number of local communities with increased access to WASH facilities.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.3 Intensify immunisation coverage for all children.</li> <li>• Sensitise parents on the importance of immunisation.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 2,3 &amp;6.</b></p> <p>☒</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved immunisation coverage.</li> <li>• Increased community outreaches targeting Community gate-keepers and the reproductive population on the benefits of immunisation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with percentage rate of reduction in deaths due to vaccine-preventable diseases.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with percentage increase by the local population of the benefits of immunisation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.4 Develop community health education programmes for pregnant women, which includes the importance of iron-folic acid supplementation.</li> <li>• Introduce schemes to ensure that pregnant women attend at least four prenatal visits at a health facility.</li> </ul>	☒ <b>Obj. 1, 2, 3 &amp; 6.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased community outreaches targeting Community gate-keepers and the reproductive population on care in pregnancy, breast feeding and nutrition for both the mother and child.</li> <li>• Reduced malnutrition, low birth weight, stunting and wasting.</li> <li>• Improvements in safe pregnancy and delivery in local communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with percentage improvements in relation to birth weight, stunting and wasting measurements.</li> <li>• Number of countries with percentage improvement in knowledge by local community stakeholders especially of pregnant women/parents on nutrition, breastfeeding etc.</li> <li>• Number of countries with percentage level of improvement in safe pregnancy and delivery.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.5 Educate parents on the imperative of breast-feeding and proper nutrition, including Vitamin A supplementation.</li> </ul>	☒ <b>Obj.1, 2 &amp; 4.</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.6 Implement programmes and policies to eliminate open defecation to reduce the risk of all water borne infectious diseases and other epidemics, etc.</li> <li>• Improve Knowledge, Information management and exchange mechanisms on these diseases.</li> <li>• Emergency preparedness for these diseases.</li> <li>• Train and provide information to parents and caregivers on diet enrichment and WASH.</li> </ul>	• <b>Obj. 5.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant reduction in the practice of open defecation in all Member States.</li> <li>• Improved emergency forecasting, preparedness and response on infectious diseases like cholera.</li> <li>• Improved Knowledge, Information management and exchange mechanisms on cholera.</li> <li>• Improved household implementation of diet enrichment and WASH measures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage reduction in the practice of open defecation per country.</li> <li>• Number of countries with improved emergency forecasting, emergency preparedness and response to cholera, diarrhoea and other water borne infectious diseases.</li> <li>• Number of countries with significant levels of percentage improvement in information and knowledge management systems on managing cholera and related infectious diseases.</li> <li>• Percentage improvements per country on household implementation of diet enrichment and WASH measures.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.7 Develop communication materials that encourage parents</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 6 &amp; 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in number of parents and caregivers who talk to their children about HIV and AIDS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of countries with percentage increase in numbers of children that</li> </ul>

<p>and caregivers to talk to children about HIV /AIDS and other STDs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce and share information and make services available to in-school and out of school adolescents on sexuality, unwanted pregnancies, STDs and HIV/AIDS, involving children and youth.</li> <li>• Identify pregnant women, children and adolescents living with HIV; and treat and retain children, adolescents and pregnant /breastfeeding women living with HIV in comprehensive care and support services. Also share information on the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV infection.</li> <li>• Invest in strengthening key social services (health, education and protection) and integrate HIV-relevant and child-sensitive interventions into their social sector development responses.</li> </ul>	<p>¶</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase in uptake of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care services by adolescents and young children.</li> <li>- Increased levels of pregnant women, children and adolescents living with HIV retained in comprehensive care and support programmes.</li> <li>- Community groups advocate for Improvement in the quality and number of (youth-friendly) reproductive health services.</li> <li>- Structural and social drivers of vulnerability to HIV/AIDS addressed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- have discussions with their parents or other critical caregivers on HIV and AIDS.</li> <li>- Number of countries with percentage Increase in uptake of HIV&amp;AIDS prevention, treatment and care services by adolescents and young children.</li> <li>- Number of countries with percentage reduction in national rates of adolescent infection with HIV/AIDS.</li> <li>- Number of countries with percentage Increase in uptake of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care services by pregnant and breastfeeding women.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.8 Involve youth groups, children’s clubs and parents’ groups in improving accountability at primary health facilities in their communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 2, 3, 6 &amp; 7.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth groups, children’s clubs and parents groups engaged in improving accountability at health facilities in their communities.</li> <li>• Improvement in the quality and number of (youth- friendly) reproductive health services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with percentage improvement in the quality and number of (child and youth-friendly) health services.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.9 Develop “Child Rights Training Tools” for civil society</li> <li>• Carry out a regional sensitisation campaign on the “Child rights</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 2, 3, 4&amp; 7.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Child rights Tools” developed</li> <li>• Improved awareness on Child rights in the region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of “Child Rights Training tools” available for the civil society.</li> <li>• Number of CSOs trained in the region.</li> </ul>

Training tools” among civil society organisations.			
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## PRIORITY GOAL 2: CHILD DEVELOPMENT

**Goal Statement:** *Every child enjoys the right to intellectual, emotional and psycho motor development and care from the early years until adulthood, as well as equal opportunities to inclusive quality education, leisure and recreation*

**Objective 1:** Every child born in the region receives comprehensive birth registration

**Strategies:**

1. Employ active and passive methods of birth registration, especially in hard to reach areas.
2. Scale-up information campaigns on the importance of birth registration in local communities.
3. Integrate the function of birth registration into local health facilities.
4. Engage local community gatekeepers in ensuring active notification of births and ensuring actual birth registration.
5. Promote digitisation of birth registration systems.

**Objective 2:** All girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary programmes in readiness for primary education to ensure that children survive and thrive during their early years by 2030

**Strategies:**

1. Advocate for national scale-up of investments in early childhood programs that include education, stimulation, nurturing, health, nutrition and social protection components as a means of addressing inequality, breaking the cycle of poverty and improving the child's capacity to learn later in school, with increased productivity in adulthood.
2. Enrol all children below the age of five in ECD programs in support of their physical growth and overall development [cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional and psycho-motor] through the establishment of more ECD centers well equipped with qualified staff and appropriate materials.
3. Increase the percentage of children between 36 - 59 months receiving at least one year of a quality pre-primary education programme.
4. Communicate to change social norms towards ECD programmes.

**Objective 3:** By 2030, all girls and boys have access to and complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

**Strategies:**

1. Ensure all children of primary and secondary school age are enrolled in school.
2. Ensure the provision of universal, free and compulsory basic education, through increased availability and access to formal and non-formal education to all children; and provision of equal access to education for boys and girls.
3. Establish credible national benchmark and improve all aspect of quality of primary education to increase the primary school completion rates for girls and boys and to enhance the percentage of girls and boys who master a broad range of foundational skills, including in literacy and mathematics by the end of the primary school cycle.
4. Establish credible national benchmarks and improve all aspects of quality of primary education to increase the secondary school completion rates for girls and boys and enhance the proficiency of girls and boys across a broad range of learning outcomes, including in literacy and in mathematics by the end of lower secondary schooling cycle.

<p>5. Ensure that Education Sector Plans are gender responsive and include costed and targeted measures to address barriers faced by girls in accessing and completing basic education to close gender inequalities in and through education.</p> <p>6. Promote all alternative education in relation to national contexts (Accelerated Learning Programme, Qur’anic Education, Non-Formal Education that are properly reviewed and quality assured).</p> <p>7. Consult with community and religious leaders on desired learning outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Objective 4:</b> Every child expresses the right to play, leisure and recreation, including the most vulnerable and marginalised</p>
<p>1. Ensure schools have play, recreational and leisure spaces.</p> <p>2. Create safe spaces for children of all ages and gender to play and participate in recreational activities wherever children are found in communities, and in IDP camps and other communities of displaced persons.</p> <p>3. Adopt play as a primary teaching tool in junior classrooms and in after school programs to give children knowledge, skills and attitudes for survival and development through focused play.</p>
<p><b>Objective 5:</b> Adolescents and youth have access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) to enable them to find and maintain gainful employment and sustainable livelihoods</p>
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <p>1. Provide more opportunities for technical and vocational training to adolescents and youths to improve their job prospects by increasing the share of public budgets allocated to this sub-sector and building more facilities.</p> <p>2. Increase the number of scholarships for vocational and technical training for children and youths.</p>
<p><b>Objective 6:</b> Ensure inclusion and access of all children to education (pre-primary, primary, secondary and TVET) as well as provision for special services; including children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move, displaced children and stateless children and children in contact with the law</p>
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <p>1. Member States to ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol alongside implementation of the CRC, the ACRWC and this regional Child Policy and Strategic Plan of Action.</p> <p>2. Adopt an integrated approach which focuses on the holistic development of the child through early and preventive intervention services, access to provision, and support mechanisms in all sectors and levels of governance.</p> <p>3. End inequality in educational opportunities between boys and girls, for children with special needs, children in the rural areas, children in emergency situations, children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV and AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move, displaced children and stateless children) and children in contact with the law, by addressing possible obstacles related to a lack of documentation, language or cultural barriers, etc.</p> <p>4. Improve school facilities to provide an inclusive, safe and positive environment for all children.</p>
<p><b>Objective 7:</b> Reduce disparities between girls and boys in education and promote gender equality in and through curricula</p>
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <p>1. Adopt and implement strategies and interventions to reduce gender inequalities in education with a focus on addressing girls’ barriers to staying in school and to successfully completing secondary education.</p>

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Adopt policies and measures that address child marriage and adolescent pregnancy within the education system so that girls can fulfil their right to education even when married or when having children.</li> <li>3. Develop and ensure quality delivery of gender responsive curricula and pedagogy, which address socio-cultural factors promoting gender equality and skills building opportunities for all boys and girls.</li> <li>4. Create level playing fields for girls and boys in order to nurture a new generation of young women as confident role models and active citizens that contribute to their communities equally with boys and men.</li> </ol>			
<b>Objective 8:</b> Ensure safe, inclusive and protective learning environment for all boys and girls			
<b>Strategies:</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop policies and accountabilities frameworks to ensure that schools are protective, safe and inclusive environments where children can grow and learn, and take all measures to end school related violence against children (including gender-based violence- SRBGV- in and around schools).</li> <li>2. Provide safe transportation services between homes and schools.</li> <li>3. Ensure effective prevention and response mechanisms to eliminate violence against children (including SRBGV) and create solutions by engaging youth, communities and teachers.</li> <li>4. Strengthen links between home, school and services and engage youth, communities and teachers in creating solutions.</li> </ol>			
<b>Objective 9:</b> Improve skills of teachers to provide quality education to enhance children’s interest in learning, and teach important skills in health, sanitation, protection and participation			
<b>Strategies:</b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase the number of trained and qualified teachers in schools at all levels and in all communities at national and sub-national levels.</li> <li>2. Strengthen investments and incentives to increase gender parity of teachers, strengthening equal opportunities for female and male teachers.</li> <li>3. Integrate the use of play, positive discipline and non-violent communication in teacher training curriculums and classroom activities.</li> <li>4. Improve children’s life chances, enhancing their interest in learning and desire to stay in school, safeguarding children’s health, developing leadership skills, and empowering all children to speak up for themselves and gain self-confidence.</li> </ol>			
<b>ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>RELATED OBJECTIVE(S)</b>	<b>ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES</b>	<b>VERIFIABLE INDICATORS</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.1 Member states to ensure enforcement of provisions of relevant legislations to guarantee the rights of all children to education and development.</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 6 &amp; 7.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective legal framework in place and implemented at national and local levels in ECOWAS Member States.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries that ratified and enforced international and regional instruments and passage of domestic legislation.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2.2 Develop, produce and widely disseminate communication materials on the rights of the child to identity.</li> <li>• Develop training and communication material in relation to the rights of the</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 1.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls and boys have their births registered with an accompanying birth certificate through a functioning civil registration and vital statistics system.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with significant percentage increase in the proportion of children under five years of age whose births have been registered with a civil authority, by age.</li> </ul>

child and in relation to sexual and reproductive health.			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.3 Establish and equip high standard Early Child Development (ECD) in all communities, especially in hard to reach areas.</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 2, 4, &amp; 6.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased number of children ready for primary and secondary education from point of access to completion.</li> <li>Children and mothers benefit from increased bonding time without sacrificing income derived from remaining in the workforce.</li> <li>Continuous improvement in ECD techniques and methodologies based on feedback from practice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Numbers of countries with increased percentage pre-school 'readiness's of children.</li> <li>Number of countries with percentage increase in number and quality of crèches established in work places.</li> <li>Number of countries with improved access to schooling and completion rates in primary and secondary education.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.4 Establish crèches in work places.</li> <li>Develop mechanisms for monitoring learning outcomes of ECD.</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 2, 4 &amp; 6.</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.5 Recruit, train and deploy more female teachers.</li> <li>Develop, finance and measure targeted interventions and strategies to address barriers to girls' education.</li> <li>Ensure that Education Sector Plans are gender responsive.</li> <li>Mainstream child rights, child protection and gender parity into teacher education in relation to the primary and secondary school curriculum.</li> <li>Identify and assist children with learning problems.</li> <li>Identify gifted children and facilitate greater creativity.</li> <li>Ensure adequate training on positive discipline and positive parenting for teachers, parents and caregivers and children.</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 2, 3 7 &amp; 9.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieved qualitative care of children.</li> <li>Reduced incidence of underachievement amongst children and youths, especially girls.</li> <li>Prevalence of more female teachers and role models.</li> <li>Girls benefit from targeted interventions to address specific barriers hindering their access to and complete basic education.</li> <li>Education sector plans include measures to promote gender equality.</li> <li>Reduced drop-out rates from primary and secondary schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of countries with improved gender parity in the teaching profession.</li> <li>Number of countries with increased levels of improvement in skills and competencies of teachers relative to delivery of qualitative, child friendly education.</li> <li>Number of countries with increased percentage of qualified teachers in primary and secondary schools distributed over both rural and urban areas.</li> <li>Number of countries with significant increase in primary and secondary school enrolment, completion and learning achievement rates.</li> <li>Number of countries with significant improvements in the identification and assistance to children with learning disabilities.</li> <li>Number of countries with improved execution of programmes for identification and assistance to gifted children.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish mentoring and networking platforms in schools for girls and boys.</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of countries with child rights, child protection and gender responsive education sector plans.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.6 Strengthen families and advocate to communities to improve mechanisms for coping with disabilities.</li> <li>Ensure adequate training of teachers to be sensitive and able to manage/respond to disabilities.</li> <li>Dismantle barriers to inclusion in all children’s environments – schools, health facilities, public transport etc., facilitating access and encouraging the participation of children with disabilities alongside their peers.</li> <li>Provide ramps and special toilets in schools.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 2, 3, 6, 7 8 &amp; 9.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in number of students enrolled in Technical Vocational and Educational Training (TVET).</li> <li>Unrestricted, un-segregated access to health, educational and social services achieved for children with disabilities.</li> <li>Child-friendly pedagogy for disabled children.</li> <li>Enhanced capacity of parents and communities to cope with disabilities.</li> <li>Mobility and inclusion of disabled children enhanced.</li> <li>Institutionalized national systems that are responsive to the specific needs of disabled persons, including children.</li> <li>Families are supported to meet the higher costs associated with caring for children with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of countries with an increased percentage of students enrolled in TVET.</li> <li>Number of countries with increased percentage of students enrolled in and completing non-Formal Educational programmes.</li> <li>Number of countries with increased percentages of children with disabilities integrated into formal school systems.</li> <li>Number of countries with increased number of school and community programmes and percentage increases of parents of disabled children participating.</li> <li>Number of countries with percentage increase in improved income opportunities for parents of disabled children.</li> <li>Number of countries with percentage increases in installation of ramps and special toilets etc. in schools.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2.7 Develop and implement ‘Safe School’ - risk and vulnerability assessments in schools in both emergency and non-emergency situations.</li> <li>Train education authorities, school administrators, teachers and children on ‘Safe School’ methodologies and emergency risk preparedness and response.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 2, 3, 8 &amp; 9.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children experience schooling in a safe and child friendly environment.</li> <li>Improved risk awareness and understanding by key stakeholders translated into early warning and early action.</li> <li>Military and security forces implement appropriate policies to ensure a child friendly and safe environment in schools in areas of operation (AOR) in situations of conflict or crisis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of countries that develop and implement ‘child friendly’ and ‘safe-school’ policies in both emergency and non-emergency situations.</li> <li>Number of Member States with improvements in policies and programmes to ensure risk awareness and early warning are integrated in actions of stakeholders relative to child friendly and safe schools.</li> <li>Number of countries with improved integration of child friendly and safe school</li> </ul>

- Develop and integration into the training and doctrine of military and security forces of modules on child friendly schools and spaces within the context of emergencies.			policies in training and doctrine of military and security forces.
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### **PRIORITY GOAL 3: CHILD PROTECTION**

**Goal Statement:** *Every child is protected from all forms of violence, abuse and exploitation and has access to prevention and response services*

**Objective 1:** Each Member State adopts relevant laws and policies and establishes institutions to support prevention and response actions that will protect children in the region from violence, abuse and exploitation in compliance with international and regional legal frameworks

1. Ensure ratification of all relevant legal instruments establishing internationally acceptable standards of child protection in preventing and prohibiting abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against, and torture of, children, in particular the CRC Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
2. Ensure a policy and legislative framework for family tracing and unification for children in emergency situations.
3. Ensure domestication of the relevant international instruments by the passage of domestic legislation to prevent and criminalise acts of violence against children and all other forms of abuse and exploitation of children, including child labour, child trafficking, child marriage, sexual exploitation, unlawful recruitment of children and the use of children in hostilities.
4. Specifically ensure ratification of International legal instruments and domestication of laws and policies prohibiting the use of children as instruments of violence in conflict situations shall criminalize attacks on children and educational institutions in line with international legal standards.
5. Formulate and implement national child protection policies in accordance with the commitments set out in the ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa and the commitments set out in the Supplementary Act on Equal Rights between Women and Men for Sustainable Development in the ECOWAS region. National policies should be holistic and include, among other things, provisions for the protection of children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced and stateless children), children in contact with the law, and other vulnerable groups, in line with local context.
6. Develop and implement costed national action plans to reduce the prevalence of child marriage and other forms of violence and harmful practices against girls.
7. Implement ECOWAS Support Procedures for the Protection of Children on the Move and Young Migrants. Establish, support and strengthen functional child protection law enforcement agencies or institutions, including the establishment of child protection units in law enforcement agencies; and functional coordination systems (institutions, task forces and committees) at all levels: national, sub-national, local/community.
8. Where appropriate, adopt and implement national policies to ensure strict adherence and commitment to the Paris Commitments and the Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups, which provide guidelines on the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of all categories of children associated with armed groups. Government policies shall be directed at protecting children during military operations, and ensure the handling of children associated with armed groups in accordance with international standards of juvenile justice.
9. Establish effective national Information Management Systems and Monitoring and Evaluation systems to ensure the protection of all children including children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move (including forcibly displaced and stateless children) and children in contact with the law.

**Objective 2:** Ensure International Standards are met in relation to children in detention and this measure is used as an absolute last resort

**Strategies**

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ratification and implementation of international standards relating to juvenile justice, in particular, the CRC, the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children and Armed Conflict, the ACRWC, and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Protection of Juvenile Justice 1985 (the Beijing Rules), the UN Guidelines for the Administration of Juvenile Delinquency 1990 (the Riyadh Guidelines), and the UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty 1990.</li> <li>2. In line with international juvenile justice standards, promote specific policies for children in conflict with the law by reinforcing access to justice, developing non-custodial measures, specific detention areas, reintegration support, and specialisation of legal actors and all measures relative to juvenile justice administration for children in contact with the law (witnesses, offenders, victims) as well as children in (migration) detention.</li> <li>3. End the detention of children for immigration purposes (children seeking refugee status and migrant children) and detention of potential victims of a crime (for instance, trafficked children).</li> <li>4. Establish functioning Alternatives To Detention (ATD) as part of strengthening national child protection systems.</li> </ol>			
<p><b>Objective 3:</b> At least three per cent budget allocation of national budgets for Ministries in charge of child protection to finance prevention and response actions that will protect children from violence, abuse and exploitation</p>			
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase investments in social protection/cash transfer schemes to respond to the needs of children in emergency situations.</li> <li>2. Strengthening and equipping school buildings and physical structures like medical facilities with safeguards that can withstand floods, natural disaster and climate-related impacts.</li> <li>3. Leverage domestic resources in the national budgets for child-sensitive social protection programs to facilitate access to basic services for children.</li> </ol>			
<p><b>Objective 4:</b> Key community institutions develop increased positive attitude to social protection programmes for children</p>			
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase investments in social protection/cash transfer schemes to respond to the needs of children in emergency situations. Strengthening and equipping school buildings and physical structures like medical facilities with safeguards that can withstand floods, natural disaster and climate-related impacts.</li> <li>2. Advance social mobilisation of key community groups, including traditional and religious leaders, youth, and women.</li> <li>3. Develop and increase awareness of a “child-child adoption” campaign that allows a child to take interest in and report protection issues affecting other children in various contexts.</li> <li>4. Increase awareness of the ECOWAS for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems.</li> </ol>			
ACTIVITIES	RELATED OBJECTIVE(S)	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	VERIFIABLE INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.1 Conduct national legal review of the status of ratification and domestication of relevant legal instruments establishing international standards on child protection.</li> <li>• Advocate for ratification, domestication and enforcement of relevant International legal</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1 &amp; 2.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National legal review conducted across 15 Member States.</li> <li>• An effective legal framework at national and local level is in place and implemented in ECOWAS Member States.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Member States with established baselines on alignment of national policies with international legal obligations.</li> <li>• Number of countries that have domesticated ratified conventions and Protocols.</li> </ul>



<p>instruments with national parliaments and other key stakeholders.</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries with domestic legislation in line with extant international legal obligations with respect to the rights of the child.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.2 Fully implement the ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa.</li> <li>• Adopt and implement the ECOWAS Support Procedures for the Protection of Children on the Move and Young Migrants and mainstream the standards into operational processes of both government service providers and non-governmental actors.</li> <li>• Develop and implement costed National Action Plans to eliminate child marriage and other forms of violence and harmful practices against girls.</li> </ul>	<p>☒ <b>Obj. 2, 3 &amp; 4.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ECOWAS Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa implemented.</li> <li>• ECOWAS Support Procedures for the Protection of Children on the Move and Young Migrants adopted and implemented.</li> <li>• Costed, multisectoral strategies and National Action Plans developed and implemented and coordinated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries that submit periodic reports on progress recorded in implementation of the Strategic Framework for Strengthening National Child Protection Systems to prevent and respond to Violence, Abuse and Exploitation against Children in West Africa.</li> <li>• Number of countries that submit periodic reports on application of the ECOWAS Support Procedures for the Protection of Children on the Move and Young Migrants.</li> <li>• Number of countries with costed multi-sectoral strategies and national action plans.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.3 Integrate the rules of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) into training, doctrine and rules of engagement of armed forces, law enforcement, intelligence and other security forces, with a particular focus on child protection.</li> </ul>	<p>☒ <b>Obj. 1,2 ,3 &amp; 4.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rules of Human Rights and IHL, in particular child protection, incorporated into training, doctrine and rules of engagement of armed forces, law enforcement, intelligence and other security forces.</li> <li>• Existence of specialised and functional child protection coordination mechanisms at national and local level in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of training institutions of armed forces, law enforcement, intelligence and other security forces that have mainstreamed rules of Human Rights and IHL, in particular child protection.</li> <li>• Number of specialised child protection units / departments established in the armed forces and other relevant security institutions at different levels of command.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure specific institutionalisation of a ‘child protection’ role and operational function in the armed forces and other relevant security institutions.</li> <li>• Ensure that children are not recruited as combatants in armed conflicts by the State and non-state actors</li> </ul>		<p>the armed forces and other relevant security institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The reduction of children’s engagement in armed conflicts as combatants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduction of the phenomenon of child soldiers in the Member States</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3.4 Collect (disaggregated) data on the number of children in detention; including children detained pre-trial, pre-sentence and post-sentencing in any type of facility (including police custody and children detained for immigration purposes).</li> <li>• Conduct a review of national laws, policies and practice on children in contact with the law and the juvenile justice system against international and regional standards.</li> <li>• Integrate the protection of children in contact with the law, accountability and compliance procedures into the processes of criminal justice sector and security sector reform.</li> <li>• Promote effective implementation of legal clinics and pro-bono arrangements for children in conflict with the law.</li> <li>• Promote the use of alternatives to detention for children in conflict with the law.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 2, 3 &amp; 4.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children in detention in relation to the overall child population in the ECOWAS Member States.</li> <li>• National laws and policies substantially comply with international and regional obligations.</li> <li>• Protection, accountability and compliance procedures integrated into the criminal justice system.</li> <li>• Legal clinics and pro-bono arrangements established and functional and children in contact with the law have access to free legal representation and advice.</li> <li>• Increased use of alternatives to detention by Member States</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of children in detention per 100,000 child population.</li> <li>• Number of Member States with functional and specialised juvenile justice systems.</li> <li>• Number of countries with percentage increase in children in conflict with the law who benefit from child-friendly procedures.</li> <li>• Number and percentage of children in conflict with the law who have access to and benefit from legal aid and assistance.</li> <li>• Number of children in conflict with the law who benefit from free legal representation and advice.</li> <li>• Number of Member States that adopt and implement focused programs ensuring alternative measures to detention for children in conflict with the law.</li> </ul>

## GOAL 4: CHILD PARTICIPATION

**Goal Statement:** *Children’s voices are amplified by enabling platforms for self-expression and participation in decisions on matters affecting children, taking into account their diverse ages and evolving capacity*

**Objective 1:** Ensure respect for the views of all children in all spheres of their lives, in particular with regard to children with disabilities, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, children on the move, displaced children and stateless children) and children in contact with the law

**Strategies:**

1. Adopt and implement the appropriate legislation, policies and services to support child participation in family, community and institutional structures in line with the standards of the CRC and the ACRWC.
2. Ratify and implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (2011).
3. Ensure that the national and sub-national child rights agenda promotes understanding of child rights by all, and ensure the visibility of children’s perspectives.
4. Adopt policies and laws to ensure gender equality including dedicated investments in the girl child to address discriminatory norms and practices regarding her education, protection, health and well-being.

**Objective 2:** Promote children’s knowledge of their rights (as informed actors on their rights, especially on their own protection)

**Strategies:**

1. Promote child rights, especially on protection and participation rights, in school curricula at all levels of the education system.
2. Embrace participatory mechanisms such as student councils, student representatives in school governance structures, youth / girls platforms in schools, children’s clubs and youth groups and child and youth participation in community child protection committees.

**Objective 3:** Increase visibility and protection of children’s rights in the media (including digital/social media) and children’s participation and engagement with the mass media as a whole

**Strategies:**

1. Media institutions contribute to building the awareness needed to enhance child rights visibility, and engage children in the process of developing media programmes that are specifically child related.
2. Portray children’s perspectives through the involvement of children in debates and discussions that are related to them.
3. Media houses adopt a proactive approach [including self-regulatory guidelines, strategies and enhanced capacity-building initiatives] on digital safety and citizenship, towards safeguarding the best interests of children in every circumstance including emergency situations and for children on the move.
4. Institute a system of responsible reporting to ensure the media practitioners are accountable for protecting children from adverse media reporting or coverage.

**Objective 4:** Children participate in decision making and governance at all levels – community, district, regional, national, international, etc.

**Strategies:**

1. Adopt and practice child rights principles of participation in all community settings, including early childhood educational providers to support the holistic development of children.
2. Institute effective monitoring and accountability mechanisms towards ensuring compliance with the set standards of child rights participation.
3. Encourage and enhance cooperation between all stakeholders and child rights actors, as well as promote partnerships with children and child led groups.

<p>4. Enhance the participation of youths in the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment.</p> <p>5. Enhance the participation of youths in eradicating violence against children and GBV, in particular child marriage and FGM/C.</p> <p>6. Include dedicated measures and spaces for girls to address their specific barriers in decision making and governance.</p>			
<p><b>Objective 5:</b> Families, schools, communities, and society partners to promote child participation in all relevant sectors of society and public life</p>			
<p><b>Strategies:</b></p> <p>1. Facilitate the efforts of communities, educational institutions and other structures to enable children to exercise their participation rights.</p> <p>2. Support public-private partnership models of collaboration geared towards creating a society which puts focus on children, and to respect and support children's rights, at all levels of government.</p> <p>3. End all forms of discriminatory practises and traditions against girls in the family, communities, schools and in public life that may impair the physical, mental and psychological well-being of girls and limit their active participation in society.</p> <p>4. Create equal opportunities for girls to be heard and to have real opportunities to participate in school, family and communal life.</p> <p>5. Formally recognise child-led and youth-led organisations and allow for their active participation, on equal terms as other stakeholders, in policy debates and decision making processes.</p>			
ACTIVITIES	RELATED OBJECTIVE(S)	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	VERIFIABLE INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.1 Ratify and implement the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.</li> <li>Formulate and implement national policies mandating institutional child and youth participation in decision making structures in educational institutions at all levels.</li> <li>Provide child friendly versions of laws and policies concerning participation rights.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 3 &amp; 4.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mechanism in place for children, groups of children or their representatives, who claim that their rights have been violated by their State, to bring a communication before the UN and AU Committees on the Rights of the Child (after domestic remedies have been exhausted).</li> <li>National policies on child participation are formulated and implemented in ECOWAS Member States.</li> <li>Child friendly versions of laws and policies concerning participation rights available, disseminated and implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of countries that ratified the Optional Protocol on a communication procedure and passage of domestic legislation.</li> <li>Number of countries that adopt, disseminate and implement child participation policy documents.</li> <li>Number of countries that develop, disseminate and implement child-friendly versions for various categories of children.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.2 Member States to guarantee participation of children and youth in coordination and decision-making mechanisms,</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 2, 4 &amp; 5.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families, programme planners and professionals know and respect the participation rights of children, and integrate opportunities for their relevant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of countries with specific awareness raising programs on child participation.</li> <li>Number of countries with functional Children's Parliament.</li> </ul>

<p>review and accountability processes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocacy and awareness raising to promote respect for the views of children in families, schools, communities and administrative processes, targeting socio-cultural practices inimical to child participation.</li> </ul>		<p>participation into programmes and mechanisms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Functional Children’s Parliament established</li> <li>• Awareness raising in schools and other settings frequented by children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries that report increased child participation in various settings involving children (including families, schools, religious settings etc.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4.3 Engage with social and religious bodies in developing standards and guidelines for meaningful child and youth participation at all levels.</li> <li>• Encourage formation of children’s groups, associations and youth groups in which children can feel comfortable and learn to participate.</li> <li>• Develop targeted efforts and platforms for engaging girls and young women (safe spaces, girls clubs and other) to build their self-esteem and participation capacity.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1, 2, 3, 4 &amp; 5.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards and guidelines for participation.</li> <li>• Children and youth have the competencies and support mechanisms to actively engage in the decisions that affect their lives.</li> <li>• Girls and young women have the competencies and support mechanisms to actively engage in the decisions that affect their lives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries that develop and implement specific standards and guidelines on meaningful child and youth participation at all levels.</li> <li>• Number of countries that achieve increases in dedicated child and youth group involvement in governance, development, planning and decision making.</li> <li>• Number of countries with improvements in establishment and functioning of platforms for empowering girls and young women.</li> </ul>

## PRIORITY GOAL 5: REVENUE MOBILISATION, BUDGET ALLOCATION & EXPENDITURE FOR THE REALISATION OF CHILDREN'S

**Goal Statement: Revenue mobilised and budget allocated to implement the ECOWAS Child Policy and the Plan of Action at the regional, state and local levels is commensurate with the priority accorded child right issues**

**Objective 1:** To ensure that the priority in budgets at national and sub-national levels to enhance child rights by investing in children is realised, in accordance with article 4 of the CRC, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 19 (2016) on Public Budgeting for the Realisation of Children's Rights and Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2015)

### Strategies:

1. Member States to prioritise the advancement of child rights in their planning and budgeting in line with Article 4 of the CRC; General Comment No. 19, and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development.
2. Ensure that sufficient financial resources are mobilised, allocated and spent in an accountable, effective, efficient, equitable, participatory, transparent and sustainable manner.

**Objective 2:** Realise children's rights through effective, efficient, equitable, transparent and sustainable public budget decision-making, especially for children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS, children in emergencies, **children on the move** (including forcibly displaced and stateless children) and children in contact with the law

### Strategies

1. Member States to take children's rights into consideration throughout all stages of their budget processes and administrative systems at national and sub-national levels (namely planning, enactment, execution and follow-up)
2. Efficient national budgeting for children's rights - which includes public revenue mobilisation, budget allocation and expenditures of Member States - will be promoted and tracked.
3. Ensure the allocation of at least 3% of the national budget to Ministries responsible for child protection.
4. Ensure that laws and policies are in place to support resource mobilisation, budget allocation and spending to advance children's rights.
5. Increase budgetary allocation on child rights' programmes.
6. Encourage inter-sectoral and inter-ministerial cooperation and partnerships as well as regional cooperation to avoid duplication.
7. Develop and implement social protection strategies and (fiscal) policies; and child protection systems that are inclusive of child rights to health, education, protection and participation.
8. Assuring children's meaningful participation in relation to public budgets throughout the budget process.

ACTIVITIES	RELATED OBJECTIVE(S)	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	VERIFIABLE INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5.1 Member States to undertake review of existing national strategies, policies and approaches to children's rights against the aspirations of international and</li> </ul>	<b>Obj. 1 &amp; 2.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study on child rights budgeting conducted leading to increase in investment (budgetary allocation) in children's rights.</li> <li>Adequate budget for implementation and enforcement of ECOWAS Child Policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Member States implementing an increased percentage of government expenditures allocated to child rights.</li> </ul>

<p>continental instruments, the SDGs, and Agendas 2040 and 2063.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member States to conduct child rights budgeting analysis, involving children and youth.</li> <li>- Member States to develop child rights budgeting methods or Trust Funds to promote change in the way budgets are planned, enacted, executed and followed up.</li> <li>• Systematic assessment of child-related budget and expenditure.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective, efficient, equitable, transparent and sustainable public budget decision-making to realise children’s rights.</li> <li>• Long-lasting positive impacts on future economic growth, sustainable and inclusive development, and social cohesion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Member States with well-defined child rights budgets and revenue for implementation policies and practices.</li> <li>• Number of countries with specific systems including baselines established to plan, monitor, track and follow-up budgets and expenditure on child rights.</li> <li>• Number of Member States that have conducted specific analysis documenting the contribution of different sectors to programmes and services on child rights.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5.2 Member States to give greater priority to budget programmes that advance the child’s right to education, health, welfare, development, protection and justice.</li> <li>• Establish and improve social safety net programmes and services for children, their families and/or caregivers, for instance through poverty reduction schemes.</li> <li>• Capacity building of government branches (executive, legislative and judicial), levels (national and subnational) and structures (ministries, departments and agencies) on child rights budgeting.</li> <li>• Coordination between government branches (executive,</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1 &amp; 2.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget for child rights across four priority areas of survival, development, protection and education enhanced and expenditure monitored.</li> <li>• Increased and effective social safety net programmes and services for children, their families and / or caregivers.</li> <li>• Inter-ministerial, cross-sectoral, interdepartmental and inter-agency coordination and collaboration enhanced throughout budget process.</li> <li>• All levels of and structures of the executive, legislature and judiciary equipped with resources and information to advance rights of all children.</li> <li>• Increased awareness on the importance of child rights budgeting to advance children’s rights.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of countries that have set nationally appropriate spending targets.</li> <li>• Number of Member States that measure and track quality and quantity of implementation of child rights programmes.</li> <li>• Number of countries with effective inter-ministerial, cross-sectoral and interdepartmental coordination on the rights of the child.</li> <li>• Number of countries that have developed effective approaches to the provision of social safety nets and services for children, their families and caregiver.</li> <li>• Number of countries with improved awareness, advocacy and knowledge relative to promotion and protection of the rights of the child.</li> </ul>

<p>legislative and judicial), levels (national and subnational) and structures (ministries, departments and agencies).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Education and public awareness concerning budget decision making processes and impacts they have, engaging children, their families and care-givers.</li></ul>			
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## PRIORITY GOAL 6: REGIONAL ACTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE CHILD POLICY

**Goal Statement: The ECOWAS Child Policy and Plan of Action effectively implemented through regional level support to Member States**

**Objective 1: A child-friendly West African region for the survival, development, protection and participation of all children**

**Strategies:**

1. Support Member States in domesticating all relevant international, continental and regional agreements affecting children's rights.
2. Design and operationalise strategies and policies for improvement of child rights.
3. Establish a coordination mechanism on child rights at ECOWAS that is responsible for overseeing the implementation, monitoring and tracking of progress of the Child Policy at Member States' level.
4. Support Member States in submitting periodic reports to the CRC Committee, the Committee of Experts of the ACRWC and the CEDAW Committee.

ACTIVITIES	RELATED OBJECTIVE(S)	ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES	VERIFIABLE INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.1 Establish a Child Rights Desk at ECOWAS to oversee implementation, monitoring and reporting on the Child Policy and Plan of Action.</li> <li>• Create an Internal Coordination Mechanism within the ECOWAS Commission and with relevant ECOWAS Agencies (including the West Africa Health Organization – WAHO) for implementation of the Policy and Plan of Action.</li> <li>• Mainstream the rights of the child within all ECOWAS programming including in the areas of political affairs peace and security, social policy, macro-economic planning, health, free movement, industry and agriculture; amongst others.</li> <li>• Create a Regional Working Group on Child Rights, led by the Child Rights Desk at ECOWAS for</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☒ ECOWAS Child Policy and Plan of Action implemented.</li> <li>☒ Child Rights Desk at ECOWAS established and functioning.</li> <li>☒ Child Rights/Protection Internal Coordination Mechanism established and functioning.</li> <li>☒ Regional Working Group on Child Rights established and functioning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of support and oversight activities conducted by the ECOWAS Commission in collaboration with partners.</li> <li>• Number of Child Rights functional units established and functional in the different Directorates of the ECOWAS Commission.</li> <li>• Internal coordination mechanisms for implementation of the child policy and plan of action and integrating key ECOWAS agencies and Institutions established and functional.</li> <li>• Regional Working Groups on Childs Rights established and functional.</li> </ul>

<p>cohesive and aligned implementation of the Child Policy and Plan of Action across all partners' organizations in Member States.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.2 Create a tool to track progress of policy implementation over a ten-year period in each Member State.</li> <li>• Produce implementation guidelines for the Child Policy and Plan of Action, involving Children and youth.</li> <li>• Develop an M&amp;E framework for the Child Policy and Plan of Action, involving children and youth.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tool exists and is functioning (and linked to ECOWAS CPSS Accountability Tool).</li> <li>• Implementation Guidelines exists.</li> <li>• M&amp;E framework exists.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools in place and in use and linked to ECOWAS CPSS Accountability Tool.</li> <li>• Number of Member States that have put in place tools in use and linked to ECOWAS CPSS Accountability Tool</li> <li>• Number of Implementation Guidelines developed and in use.</li> <li>• Number of M&amp;E Frameworks established and in use.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.3 Establish coordination and collaboration between Child Rights Desk and ECOWAS Planning and Statistics Department on child rights planning and budgeting.</li> <li>• Mobilise resources for the ECOWAS Planning and Statistics Department to collect, generate and disseminate (disaggregated) data and information about children and their right to survival, development, protection and participation from Member States in the region.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Rights Desk and Planning and Statistics Department work together on child rights planning and budgeting.</li> <li>• Child rights planning and budgeting incorporated in Department of Planning and Statistics work plan.</li> <li>• Resource mobilised and disaggregated data / statistics on survival, development, protection and participation in each of the Member states available, collected and collated at regional level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of agreed procedures agreed on and implemented by the Child Rights Desk and the Planning and Statistics Department.</li> <li>• Number of coordination and working sessions held between the Child Rights desk and the Department of Statistics</li> <li>• Number of research activities conducted focused on disaggregated data/statistics relative to outcomes for children in the Region.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.4 Development and promotion of 'Child Rights Standards' in all areas of ECOWAS programming to ensure a 'whole of institution approach to the realisation of child rights.</li> <li>• ECOWAS to develop a 'Child Health' programme led by the WAHO as a collaborative oversight mechanism for children's health outcomes with the WHO and Member States Ministries of Health and Ministries responsible for Child Rights.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Child Rights Standards' developed and mainstreamed across ECOWAS programming.</li> <li>• 'Child Health' Framework developed, adopted by ECOWAS Member States' Ministers responsible for Health and Child Rights, and implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of ECOWAS initiatives integrating the rights of the child across Departments and Directorates.</li> <li>• Number of joint activities implemented by ECOWAS under the Child Health Framework.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6.5 Carry out a regional situation analysis on child rights in 15 Member States, including a review of national laws and policies for their adherence to the rights of the child.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Obj. 1.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional baseline/situation analysis on child rights available.</li> <li>• Improved reporting to treaty bodies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Regional Baselines/situation analysis on child rights developed.</li> <li>• Number of internal reports to ECOWAS Statutory bodies on implementation of obligations on the rights of the child in the Region.</li> </ul>



ECOWAS COMMISSION  
COMMISSION DE LA CEDEAO  
COMISSÃO DA CEDEAO

101 Yakubu Gowon Crescent  
Asokoro District · P.M.B. 401  
Abuja · Nigeria