STUDY ON **CHILD PARTICIPATION** IN DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS IN AFRICA

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Global Campus
of Human Rights

Centre for
Human Rights
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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PREFACE

The overall aim of this study is to ascertain the extent to which children are involved in the implementation of development frameworks in Africa. Broadly, the study seeks to promote and increase public awareness on the importance of applicable processes of ensuring child participation in national, regional and global development initiatives in Africa. The development frameworks considered in this study are, principally, the Sustainable Development Goals (Agenda 2030), The Africa We Want (Agenda 2063) and Africa's Agenda for Children: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children (Agenda 2040).

The research methods used to realise this study include a desk-based review of existing regional platforms of child participation and a child-focussed consultation with children to establish the extent of children's knowledge, understanding and involvement in the implementation of development frameworks at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. The primary data analysed in this study was collected from children (respondents) to a survey sampled in collaboration with several child-led forums that promote child participation and CSOs with operational mandates designed to track the implementation of development frameworks from varied African countries. A number of countries were selected from each of the five sub-regions of the continent. These are Burundi (Central Africa), Egypt (North Africa), Kenya (East Africa), Senegal (West Africa), and Lesotho and Zambia (Southern Africa). These countries are unique in the sense that they all have active national child participation forums, including active national children's assemblies and sub-regional child participation networks. These forums and others have been elaborated, mapped and annexed to this study as Annexure 3.

This study makes a valuable contribution to existing studies on child participation in an African context. Its importance lies in the historic assessment of children's involvement in the implementation of these critical global and regional development frameworks at the national, sub-regional and regional settings in Africa. Further, this study tracks and spotlights child participation forums and CSOs interested in promoting and protecting a child's right to participate across Africa.

Frans Viljoen (Prof)
Director, Centre for Human Rights
Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AfCHPR	African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
AfDB	African Development Bank
Agenda 2030	Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
Agenda 2040	Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children
Agenda 2063	Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want
AMWCY	African Movement of Working Children and Youth
APRM	Africa Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
CAP	Common African Position on the post-2015 Development Agenda
Charter	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
CRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRC Committee	UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRMs	Country Review Missions
CSO	Civil society organisations
DGD	Day of General Discussion
EAC	East African Community
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ERC	Environmental child rights
FGD	Focus group discussion
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FTYIP	First Ten Year Implementation Plan of Agenda 2063 (2013-2023)
GC	General Comment
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
ICT	Information Communications and Technology
ILO	International Labour Organisation
KII	Key informant interview
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPIC-CRC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
MDAs	Government Ministry, Departments and Agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RNCYPT	Regional Network of Children and Young People Trust
SCI	Save the Children International
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRSG VAC	Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Violence Against Children
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
TDH	Terre des Hommes
UN	United Nations
UNMGCY	United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth
UNDP/RBA	United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Africa
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
URT	United Republic of Tanzania
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
VNR	Voluntary National Reports
WVI	World Vision International

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study is an overview of the participation of children in the implementation of three development agendas in Africa. These Agendas, include the Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (Agenda 2063) and Agenda 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children (Agenda 2040). At the global level, also applicable to Africa, is Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030), also known as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Broadly, the SDGs and Agenda 2063 contain goals and targets that are integral to the growth, wellbeing and development of everyone, including children. However, Agenda 2040 is specific to children.

Children's right to participate is, amongst others, one of the highlights of both the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Charter or ACRWC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The legal basis of child participation is established in articles 4(2) of the ACRWC, and article 12 of the CRC. Both provisions are emphatic on the requirement for children to be meaningfully involved in the decision-making process of all matters concerning them. Meaningful participation entails providing children with knowledge and the space to express their opinions. Further, the treaties require authorities to give a child's opinion due weight in a decision-making process in all matters affecting them. Jointly, both instruments are and remain a medium for the realisation of children's rights in Africa. A number of studies spotlighting child participation emphatically, distinguish between the formal and informal settings through which a child's right to

"While State Parties have made significant progress in including children and making child participation more accountable, more effort is needed to ensure that children's perspectives are meaningfully channelled and considered, particularly in development agenda that directly impact on realisation of their rights."

participate in realised. The informal setting refers to 'private' decision-making structures with a narrow or precise impact, for example, a family decision-making setting, where decisions absolutely affect a specific child or children. On the other hand, a formal setting refers to 'public' decision-making structures with a wider impact beyond the individual child or a group of children who submit an opinion to any matter concerning them. This study is concerned with children's participation in a public setting, specifically on the implementation of development agendas, with a wider impact spectrum.

Thus, the overall goal of the study is to promote (and increase public awareness on the importance of) child participation in national, regional and global development processes in Africa. This goal is achieved through three main interventions: research for evidence and knowledge building on the
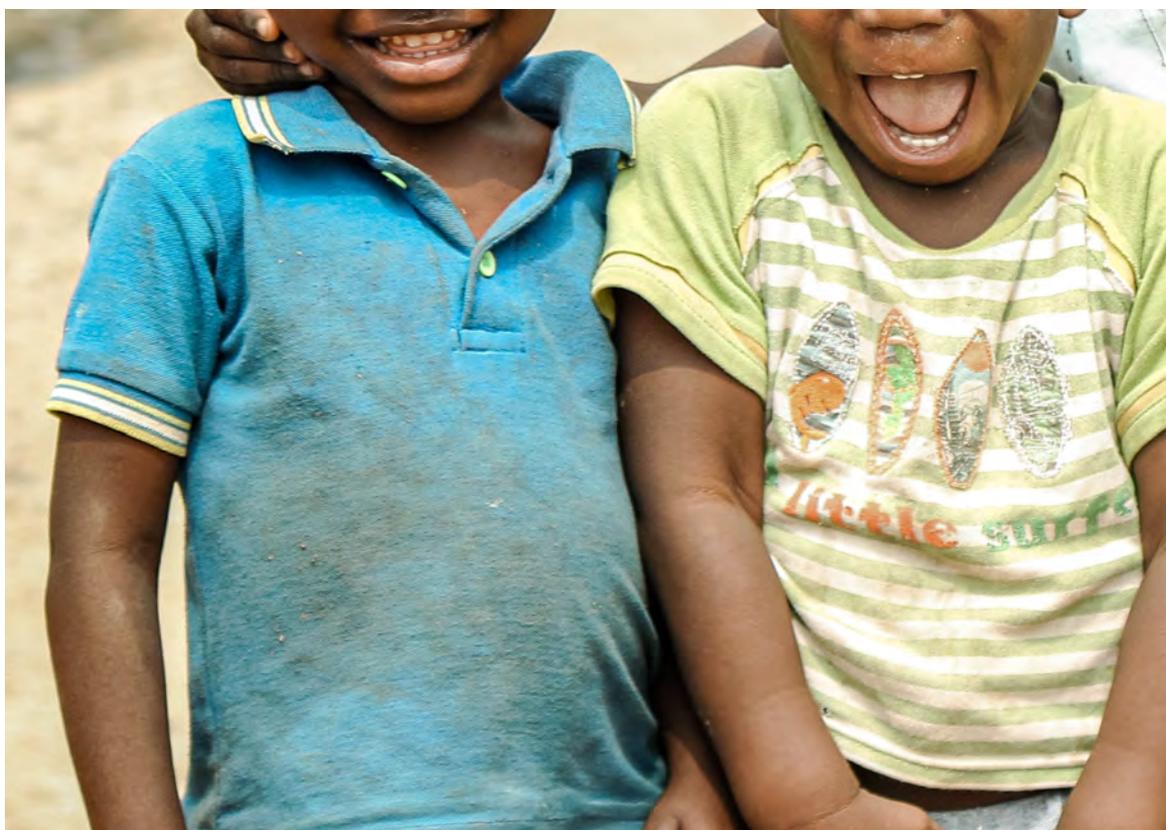
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standards and practice on child participation in development governance; evidence-based advocacy for child participation in development governance; and capacity building to enhance the implementation of child participation in the frameworks.

To realise this goal, the study adopts a two-way approach which began with desk-based research, focused on child participation in development frameworks in Africa; and was later followed by a child focussed empirical study and consultation with children; capacity building for key stakeholders; and regular engagement with stakeholders on the need and means of child participation.

While State Parties have made significant progress in including children and making child participation more accountable, more effort is needed to ensure that children's perspectives are meaningfully channelled and considered, particularly in development agenda that directly impact on realisation of their rights.

Child respondents from the five regions had a good understanding of child participation. Many understood participation to include a space or platform to engage in issues affecting them. Some children were able to identify that child participation includes their right to 'freely express themselves in matters that affect them' and that children 'need to be listened to and their views have to be equally respected, the same way that we respect other views'.

In assessing the extent of awareness of, and involvement in, the development amongst children and other key stakeholders, the study found that the SDGs are the most familiar of the three agendas. There was a general lack of awareness of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040, with most children learning about these two frameworks for the first time through participation in this study. Despite increased awareness of the

SDGs, there were disparities in the level of knowledge. The main source of information for children on these agenda frameworks was school club activities, classroom/curriculum, own research and participation in conferences and national voluntary national reports (VNR).

Child participation forums were identified at regional level, some at sub-regional level, national and subnational level and at community level. These were child/youth-led; supported by child-focused CSOs; and initiatives/forums which are systematised by the State such as Children's Parliaments. They have facilitated child participation by support to influence changes to policies and programmes at the country level with the view of realising the goals set in the development agendas; focusing on implementation of the development agendas and involving children in programmes and projects targeted at achieving outcomes of the development agendas and facilitating children in monitoring & reporting (VNR).

The assessment of African voluntary national review reports (VNRs) from 2019 to 2021 discovered that children were discussed across several reports, often through the use of particular words or groups, such as girls, new-born, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), children living on the streets, infants and children in armed conflict, and actions implemented by the States (multi-sectoral plans, dedicated budgets, legal and policy reforms, and system reinforcing) to ensure they are not left behind due to the prevailing violence. While more must be done to incorporate child rights into state policies on a systematic basis, the VNR process has progressively enabled the discovery and sharing of specific instances of applying a child rights perspective to SDG implementation strategies at the national level.

The desk-based assessment reveals that

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"Child involvement forums and initiatives are essential for promoting child engagement in a variety of activities, including needs assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, and eventually documenting lessons learned."

African countries are making steps to integrate a child-rights perspective in SDGs reporting and, more crucially, to include children in SDG implementation. To some extent, children have been involved in the VNR reporting process. States, on the other hand, might take a holistic, integrated child-rights approach to the 2030 Agenda, recognising the universal and indivisible character of children's rights and Agenda 2063.

On the regional front, ACERWC has made some progress in engaging children as the AU treaty body tasked with promoting, protecting, and interpreting both the ACRWC and Agenda 2040. Regardless of the setting or subject matter under consideration, it is critical to regularly monitor and analyse the forms and structures of child involvement being used to ensure they are suitable, safe, and relevant for children's needs. Child involvement forums and initiatives are essential for promoting child engagement in a variety of activities, including needs assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, and eventually documenting lessons learned. The survey revealed several child involvement forums running across the African continent, with some working at the regional level, others at the sub-regional level, national and subnational levels, and at the community level.

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GAPS AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

Barriers to effectiveness of these child participation forums include space was not readily available for children to participate. In North Africa, for example, there is strong cultural influence, State-related control, and the fear of contradicting religious leaders; the organisations facilitating the child participation is often limited to their strategic focus and funding area thus limiting children to the same development goals; the audience that the children meet, is in some cases not the most relevant or not fully appreciative of child participation. In relation to influence, children felt that their views are often not taken to account in decision making and no feedback is provided to them on which of their opinions is taken into account.

Therefore, barriers to child participation remain similar across the continent, resulting in either their voices being silenced or their involvement constituting tokenistic participation that is meaningless. Cultural attitudes towards children's agency in decision-making, a lack of systematisation of child participation as an obligatory state-funded democratic process, lack of age appropriate IEC materials, a lack of adequate platforms for participation as forums and events are held on an ad hoc basis, and budgetary constraints are among the key barriers. These impediments should be overcome, and children should be put at the forefront of the agenda, ensuring that they meaningfully exercise their right to express themselves, to participate, and to be heard, as outlined in the African Children's Charter and Agenda 2040 for Children.

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INTRODUCTION

The development agenda is set forth in Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030 or SDGs); Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (Agenda 2063); and Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children (Agenda 2040). These frameworks represent the shared vision for securing future progress, peaceful co-existence and well-being, and the zeal towards the realisation of the potential that exists in the African continent. Accounting for nearly half of Africa's population, the voices of children and youth are key to shaping this discourse.

The SDGs, Agenda 2063, and Agenda 2040 recognise the importance of involving children in the development agenda as key actors with the capacity to drive this change. The development agenda also recognises that children's rights principles, including child participation, are to guide the monitoring and implementation of the development agenda. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Charter, ACRWC), the African Youth Charter (AYC), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provide the legal basis for the participation of children and youth in the development agenda. Together with Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and Agenda 2040, this enabling framework sets the basis for ensuring that children and young people are present and meaningfully participate in the development agenda.

Meaningful participation means that children are provided with information and the

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opportunity to express their views, influence decision-making and achieve change at different levels in matters that concern them. When duly undertaken, and in accordance with the evolving capacity of the child, child participation can advance the rights and welfare of the child,[1] as well as the development agenda. It also enables children to develop capacities, increases contributions to community and civic engagement, and enhances greater accountability. Child participation, however, is still one of the least developed and understood areas in practice, despite being one of the general principles of children's rights, a right unto itself, and its growing acceptance in practice.

While recognising important progress made by State Parties to include children and make child participation more accountable, greater efforts are still required to ensure that children's views are meaningfully channeled and taken into account, especially when it comes to development and human rights' realisation.[2] Barriers to child participation persist across the continent and result in either exclusion of their voices or tokenistic participation, which is not meaningful. Among the key barriers are cultural attitudes to a child's agency in decision-making, lack of systematisation of child participation as an obligatory state-funded democratic process, lack of adequate platforms for participation as forums and events are held on an ad hoc basis, as well as budgetary constraints. These obstacles should be addressed and children placed at the centre of the agenda thus ensuring that they meaningfully exercise their right to express their views, participate and be heard in accordance with the African Children's Charter.[3]

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1   See ACERWC 'Resolution on the appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Child Participation' (2017).

2   ACERWC (n 1). See also ACERWC 'Agenda 2040: Assessment of the first phase of implementation (2016-2020)' (March 2021).

3   See ACERWC 'Concept Note for the Commemoration of the Day of the African Child (DAC) 2017: Theme – The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Children in Africa: Accelerating Protection, Empowerment and Equal Opportunity' (2017) para 13.

1   PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1.1   Objectives

The overall goal of this study is to establish the extent to which child participation is anticipated, and implemented in the design and implementation of global (UN) and regional (AU) development frameworks. This study seeks to better understand the extent to which children participate and are involved in the implementation and monitoring of the development agenda in Africa.

The study:

i   Provides a critical review of the normative basis for child participation in governance processes;

ii   Analyses the opportunities for child participation in the frameworks;

iii   Identifies the extent of awareness of and involvement in the development frameworks amongst children and other key stakeholders;

iv   Maps the forums and initiatives for child participation across the continent, and analyses the extent to which these forums and platforms facilitate engagement on development matters;

v   Establishes the gaps and missed opportunities for child participation in the content of the frameworks; and

vi   Recommends ways for children's participation in the implementation and monitoring of the frameworks.

1.2   Research questions

In pursuing the above research objectives, information was collected from primary and secondary sources to gather evidence on the following four key research questions:

i   What are the global and regional normative frameworks for children's participation?

ii   To what extent have children in Africa been involved in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of the global and regional development frameworks?

iii   What are the gaps and missed opportunities in the content of the development frameworks?

iv   What are the potential opportunities that could be utilised to accelerate children's participation in the implementation and monitoring of the frameworks?

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LITERATURE REVIEW

1 THE NORMATIVE FRAMEWORK ON CHILD PARTICIPATION

> **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the right to participation**
> Article 4(2): In all judicial or administrative proceedings affecting a child who is capable of communicating his/her own views, an opportunity shall be provided for the views of the child to be heard either directly or through an impartial representative as a party to the proceedings, and those views shall be taken into consideration by the relevant authority in accordance with the provisions of appropriate law.

Child participation is defined as the right to freely take part, express views, lead and be informed in all matters concerning the child.[4] It is recognised as both a right and a core principle of children's rights underpinning the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Children's Charter) (article 4(2)[5] and the UN

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4   ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (2022) at 4 and para 2

5   ACERWC, General Comment 5 on State Party obligations under the African Charter on the rights and Welfare of the Child (article 1) and systems strengthening for child protection (2018); ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (n 4) para 2.

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Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (article 12). The application of this right and principle has been broadly conceptualised as 'participation', although the term itself neither appears in the African Children's Charter nor in the CRC.[6]

Child participation, along with the three other general principles of children's rights – non-discrimination (article 3), the best interests of the child (article 4(1)) and the right to life, survival and development (article 5) – must be observed and respected at all times during all decision-making processes on any matter concerning children. Closely linked to the right of a child to be heard, child participation places value on the contributions of children in matters affecting them, and in the handling of responsibilities of the child.[7] A number of other provisions of the African Children's Charter also give effect to child participation, including the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (article 9), protection and privacy (article 10), and leisure and recreation (article 12), among others.[8] These rights underline children's status as individuals who are capable

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6   Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment 12: The right of the child to be heard, 20 July 2009, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/12 (2009).

7   ACERWC, General Comment on article 31 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child on 'The Responsibilities of the Child' (2018)   https://www.acerwc.africa/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ Website_version_GC_Booklet_General_Comment_ACERWC_ART31_2018.pdf (accessed 29 September 2022); ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (2022) para 6.

8   ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (n 4) at 1.

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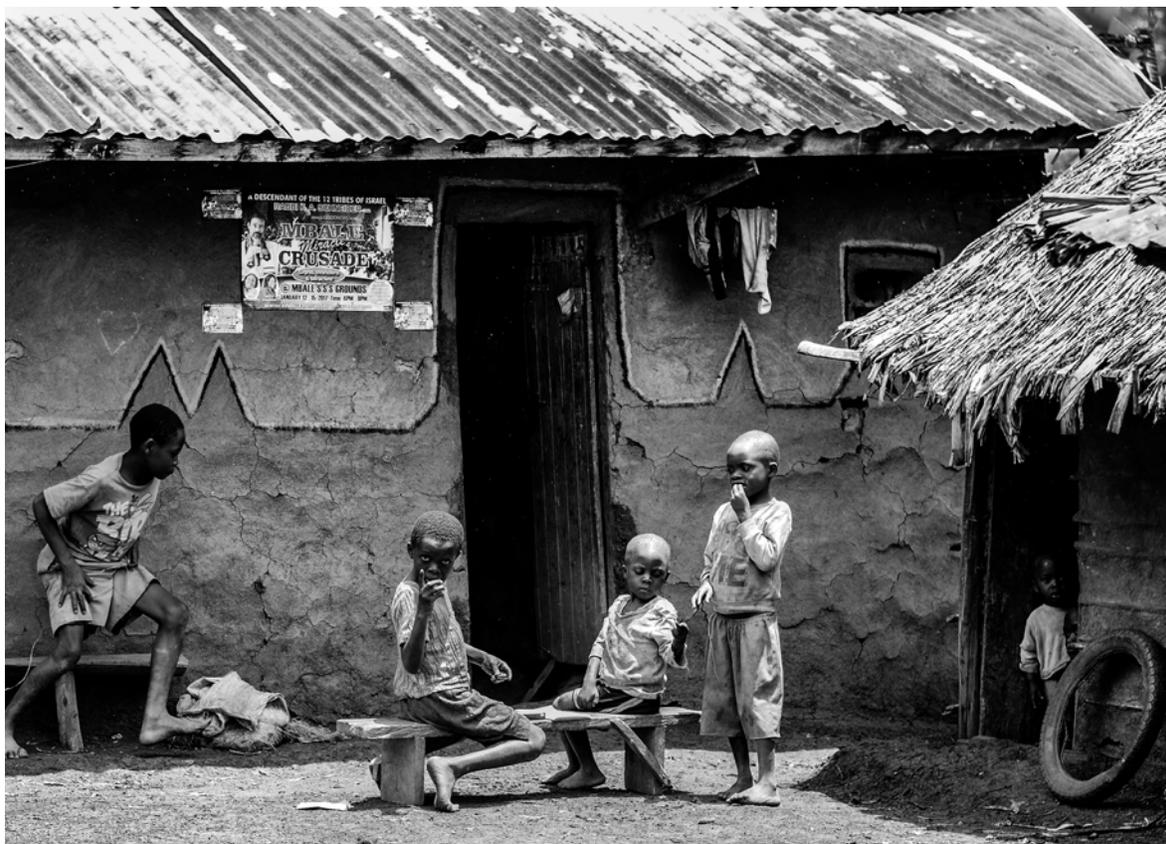
of expressing their views on matters affecting them, and in accordance with the child's evolving capacity.

The authors of the Charter believed in the child's ability to take responsibility. Thus, the Charter in its article 31 states that children have responsibilities towards the family, society, state, other legally recognised communities and the international community at large.[9] This provision makes a child an active participant in the realisation of rights and not a passive beneficiary. The Charter thus opens the space for children to participate in decision making and life processes of their respective families, communities, and other spaces.[10]

Child participation is understood as an ongoing process – both in principle and practice – of children's expression and their active involvement in decision-making at different levels in matters which concern them.[11] It is to be systematic, effective, and meaningful as opposed to individual, once-off events.[12] Meaningful participation means that children are provided with information and the opportunity to express their views, influence decision-making and achieve change at different levels in matters that

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9   ACERWC (n 7).

10   As above.

11   ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (n 4).

12   ACERWC, General Comment 5 (n 5) at 14; ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (n 4) para 6. See also Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 12 (n 6) para 133..

concern them. It presupposes information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults, based on mutual respect and full consideration of children's views in light of their age and maturity, and in accordance with their evolving capacities.[13] Information should be provided in accessible and simple language that children can understand.[14]

Child participation takes place across vertical and horizontal participation settings.[15] The vertical channel constitutes participation in public spheres and relates to the relationship between the state (public officials and state agents) and children. Horizontal settings, on the other hand, involve the participation of children in private settings at community and family level.[16] Participation of children in public and private spheres within both channels is essential to ensure the full realisation of their rights. This study, however, focuses on horizontal participation channels by analysing the extent of children's participation in governance processes, particularly in the implementation of global and regional development frameworks.

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) reiterates that

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child participation efforts should comply with the nine basic principles of child participation. A child participation process should be transparent and informative; voluntary; respectful; relevant; child friendly; inclusive; be supported by training for adults; be safe and sensitive to risk; and be accountable.[17]

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13   ACERWC 'Agenda 2040: Assessment of the first phase of implementation (2016-2020)' (March 2021).

14   G Lansdowne 'Every child's right to be heard: A resource guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No 12' UNICEF (2011) https://www.unicef.org/files/Every_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard.pdf (accessed 5 August 2021).

15   E Fokala 'Calibrating children's rights to participate in a family setting 30 years after the adoption of the Convention on the rights of the child and the African Children's Charter' (2021) 34 *Speculum Juris.* 116.

16   U Kilkelly & M Donnelly 'The child's right to be heard in the health care setting: Perspectives of children, parents and health professionals' (2006) http://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/research/The_Childs_Right_to_be_Heard_in_the_Health care_Setting.pdf (accessed 29 September 2022).

17   ACERWC General Comment 5 (n 5). See also UN CRC, General Comment 12 (n 6).

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Child participation also places responsibilities on the child to listen and respect the opinion of parents, legal guardians, state authorities, and all other authorities (including traditional leaders at the community level) involved in the decision-making process.

States have the primary responsibility to ensure a child's right to participate takes place in a safe manner, and adopts a child-friendly approach, in a range of settings and involves a wide range of actors with interest in children's wellbeing.[18] While civil society has an important role to play, the Committee reiterated that '[i]t is important that Governments develop a direct relationship with children, not simply one mediated through non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or national human rights institutions'.[19]

This should be translated into the laws, policies, regulations, standards, services and structures that should be made available for children. In determining whether children in Africa have been involved in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring

18   ACERWC General Comment 5 (n 5).

19   UNCRC General Comment 12 (n 6) para 88. See also General Comment 5 (n 5) para 12.

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"Child participation is both a rights and development issue. The indivisible, inalienable and universal nature of children's rights as set forth in the African Children's Charter is closely aligned with Africa's Development Agenda."

processes, the practice standards for child participation have been used to assess the prevailing processes in Africa.

In 2021, the ACERWC adopted the continental Child Participation Guidelines. The focus of these Guidelines is to guide child participation processes at Member States' level, and in the exercise of the ACERWC's protection and promotional mandate.[20] The Guidelines reflect the necessary institutional mechanisms and structures that State Parties to the African Children's Charter need to put in place for the effective and meaningful participation of children.[21] These concepts guide the process of empowering children to know and claim their rights and they also guide a process for establishing accountability of individuals and institutions who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling children's rights.

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20 These include: State Party reporting processes including the follow up on Concluding Observations and Recommendations; Individual Complaints/Communication Mechanisms, in the Committee's Investigation mandate; Ordinary and Extraordinary Sessions; continental studies; and other activities.

21 ACERWC 'Child Participation Guidelines' (n 4).

1.1 Child participation and the development framework

Child participation is increasingly recognised as integral to the full realisation of children's rights globally and regionally. It has gained gradual support and acceptance among child rights advocates and practitioners, as they recognise its pivotal role in fostering the optimum development and exercise of rights by children. Through opportunities to develop decision-making capacities, participation empowers children to shape their own lives, families, communities, and society.[22]

Child participation recognises that children have the capacity to understand their own environment and world.[23] It highlights the role of the child as an active participant in the promotion, protection and monitoring of his or her rights.[24] It also demands that children from vulnerable or marginalised groups participate, including children with disabilities, children of incarcerated mothers, street children, children affected by poverty, children of minority groups, and other vulnerable groups of children.[25]

Child participation is both a rights and development issue. The indivisible, inalienable and universal nature of children's rights as set forth in the African Children's Charter is closely aligned with Africa's Development Agenda. In the context of this study, the Development Agenda for Africa is set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030 or SDGs), Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want (Agenda 2063), and Africa's Agenda for Children 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children (Agenda 2040). These frameworks, as will be discussed below, represent the shared vision for securing future progress, peaceful co-existence and well-being, and the zeal towards the realisation of the potential that exists in the African continent.

As children account for nearly half of Africa's population, the voices of children and youth are key to shaping the course of the development agenda and Africa's future. When duly undertaken, and in accordance with the evolving capacity of the child, child participation can advance the rights and welfare of the child,[26] as well as the Development Agenda. It also enables children to develop capacities, boosts contributions to community and civic engagement, and enhances accountability.

"As children account for nearly half of Africa's population, the voices of children and youth are key to shaping the course of the development agenda and Africa's future. "

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22   ACERWC, General Comment on Article 31 (n 7).

23   As above.

24   ACERWC, General Comment 5 (n 5).

25   ACERWC (n 3) para 25.

26   See ACERWC (n 1).

2 THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA FOR CHILDREN

Africa's Development Agenda is set out in the SDGs, Agenda 2063, and Agenda 2040. While the SDGs and Agenda 2063 contain goals/aspirations and targets that are integral to the growth and development of everyone, including children, Agenda 2040 is specific to children.

2.1 The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – underpinned by 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets and 232 indicators – is a global call to action to end poverty, reduce inequality and build more peaceful, cleaner and prosperous societies by 2030.[27] The SDGs were unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly[28] after the expiry of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in recognition that the MDGs were yet to be achieved and more action was needed to reach the most vulnerable and marginalised.[29] The 17 time bound goals are generally categorised into what is known as the five Ps – Partnership, Peace, People, Planet and Prosperity.[30] Child participation is a critical element of the SDG 17 on partnerships.

The Agenda's call to leave no one behind seeks to ensure that everyone can benefit from development and the full realisation of human rights, placing the world's most vulnerable and marginalised people – including children and young people – at the top of the development agenda and meaningfully included as 'agents of change' with the capacities to actively bring about the realisation of the SDGs.

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27 UN General Assembly, Resolution 70/1: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 21 October 2015, UN Doc A/RES/70/1 (2015).

28 As above.

29 Agenda 2063, Preamble, paras 16-17. See also African Union & African Peer Review Monitoring Mechanism 'Agenda 2063 and SDG Implementation In Africa: Assessing Governance Mechanisms for Implementation of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Africa' (2020).

30 As above.

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The Committee plays an important role in reviewing progress made and challenges encountered by States in realising the SDGs as part of the Charter reporting cycle. While eight SDGs have clear links to the African Charter,[31] and 35 child-related indicators across the 17 SDGs are linked to articles under the CRC,[32] the Committee nevertheless reiterates that all 17 SDGs are relevant for children, and not just those containing specific references to chil-dren; all goals reinforce each other.[33]

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises the participation of rights-holders as partners in SDGs implementation.[34] It recognises children's role as active citizens in society and social transformation and ensures their right to participate in actions and decision-making processes affecting them. A critical element of the Agenda 2030 is the commitment by States to 'leave

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31   See SDG 1 (end poverty), SDG 2 (eradicate hunger), SDG 3 (promote health), SDG 4 (secure education), SDG 5 (effect gender equality), SDG 6 (access to water and sanitation), SDG 16 (peace/justice/strong institutions) and SDG 17 (partnerships/participation) (ACERWC 'Concept Note for the Commemoration of the Day of the African Child (DAC) 2017: Theme – The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for Children in Africa: Accelerating Protection, Empowerment and Equal Opportunity' (2017) para 13).

32   UNICEF 'Fulfilling All Rights of Every Child – Linking Child Rights & the SDGs' (2022).

33   ACERWC (n 3) para 13.

34   OHCHR 'Input from a child rights perspective to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development review of "eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world"' (July 2017) https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16641OHCHR.pdf; OHCHR 'Input from a child rights perspective to the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development "Empowering people, ensuring inclusiveness and equality"' (July 2019) https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/24291OHCHR_ChildRightsReport_HLPF_July19.pdf (accessed 29 September 2022).

"Child participation is therefore considered critical for the successful implementation of the SDGs and children should be systematically involved in SDG processes, including in policy and programme design, implementation, and monitoring of the targets at national level."

no one behind', and this includes children. In line with resolution 37/20,[35] the OHCHR emphasises on the importance of children's rights to participate in the annual progress reviews on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). Child participation is therefore considered critical for the successful implementation of the SDGs and children should be systematically involved in SDG processes, including in policy and programme design, implementation, and monitoring of the targets at national level.[36]

Monitoring of the implementation of the SDGs is carried out by the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the SDGs. All African governments ascribe to the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs, through submission of Voluntary National

Reviews (VNRs) at the HLPF. In 2017, pursuant to Human Rights Council Resolution 31/7, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) presented a report on the protection of the rights of the child in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.[37] It established the interlinked nature of the rights of the child and the 2030 Agenda, highlighting that all SDGs and targets, while not all explicitly naming children, are linked to protecting and promoting children's rights, and should therefore be interpreted and implemented in line with the obligations set out in the CRC and its Optional Protocols.[38]

An analysis of voluntary national review (VNR) submissions by African States reveals efforts by African States to realise children's rights in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For example, Mozambique's initiatives to improve children's well-being and reinforce SDGs' implementation include the 2018 Social Action and Gender Policies, legislation to prevent child, early and forced marriage, the national education system law, and the National Action Plan for Children, with actions on education, health, nutrition, participation and, protection.[39] The government of Mozambique has convened child parliamentary sessions at the national, provincial and district levels in which children reflect on their rights and provide recommendations to the government and partners. Côte d'Ivoire's ini-

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35   As above.

36   OHCHR 'Child Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Accelerated action and transformative pathways: Realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development' (2020).

37   H Clark et al 'A future for the world's children? A WHO-UNICEF-*Lancet* Commission' (2020) 395 *Lancet* 605 at 611.

38   United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner Child Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development 'Accelerated action and transformative pathways: Realising the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development' (2020) at 1-2.

39   Mozambique Voluntary National Review (2020) https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/mozambique (accessed 30 September 2022).

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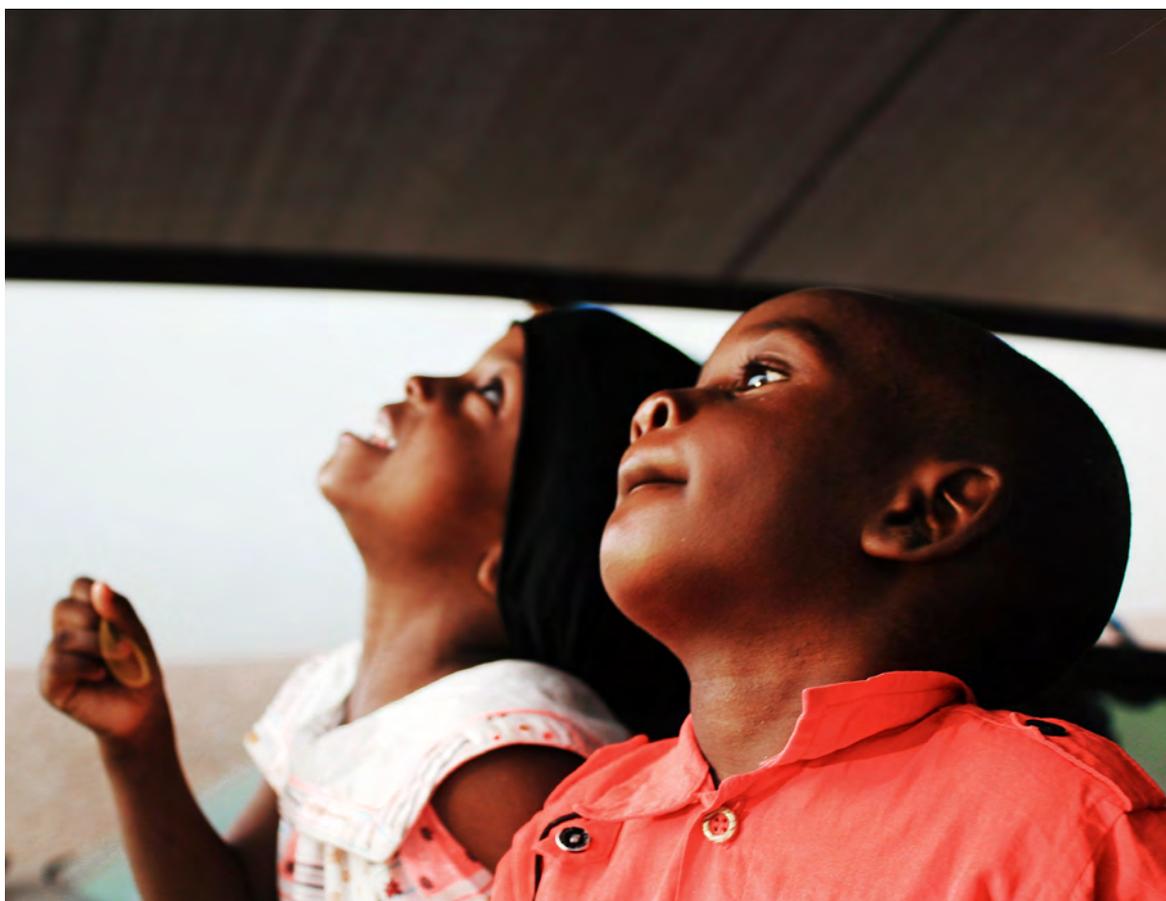
tiatives to implement the SDGs from a child-rights perspective include policies to reduce poverty and inequality, efforts to increase school enrolment, and increased access to healthcare.[40] The Ivorian Children's Parliament supports public authorities in implementing the national child protection policy and awareness-raising on child rights issues.

In Ghana, policies and strategies addressing child and family welfare, justice for children, and ending child marriage and child labour have been promulgated, while in Mauritius, national and district level conferences for children to participate and express their views on SDG implementation were convened.[41]

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40 Cote d' Ivoire Voluntary National Review (2019) https://sdgs.un.org/documents/cote-divoire-2019-vnr-report-french-24384 (accessed 30 September 2022).

41 Ghana Voluntary National Review https://ghana.un.org/en/19155-ghana-voluntary-national-review-report-implementation-2030-agenda-sustainable-development & Mauritius Voluntary National Review (2019) https://foreign.govmu.org/Pages/Reports%20&%20Publications/Reports-Other%20Publications/VNR-Report.aspx (accessed 30 September 2022).

2.2 Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want

Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want is a 50-year shared strategic framework adopted in 2015, with the aim of fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development across the African continent. Agenda 2063 sets out seven aspirations and 20 associated goals, which are founded on the AU vision of 'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena'.

Agenda 2063 recognises the importance of active participation of all the citizens of Africa – including children – in all relevant aspects of decision making.[42] Although it is not a framework specific to children, Goal 18 seeks to ensure that the youth and children are engaged and empowered.[43] Achieving the goals set out in Agenda 2063 requires the inclusion of children and young people for the full implementation of the Charter. The vision set forth in Agenda 2063 in respect for children is further elaborated in Agenda 2040.

AU Agenda 2063 is also relevant to children, as it provides for an inclusive continent where no child, woman or man will be left behind or excluded, on the basis of gender, political affiliation, religion, ethnic affiliation, locality, age or other factors. The development framework views the citizens of Africa as key to the implementation of the goals and aspirations set out, where all African citizens including children and young people should be actively involved in decision making in all aspects of development, including social, economic, political and environmental. In particular, Aspiration 6 of the AU Agenda 2063 sets out priorities for

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42   Agenda 2063, para 47.

43   African Union, Goals & Priority Areas of Agenda 2063.

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the meaningful and inclusive engagement and empowerment of women and youth to play their rightful role in all spheres of life.

There is a convergence between the SDGs and AU Agenda 2063's First Ten-Year Implementation Plan. African Union Member States are making deliberate efforts to ensure that the two development agendas are effectively domesticated and coordinated at the national level. To ensure systematic monitoring and reporting on the progress and performance of domesticating and implementing Agenda 2063 at national, regional, and continental levels,

AUC and AUDA- NEPAD were tasked by the AU Heads of State to coordinate the preparation and submission of Agenda 2063 biennial continental progress reports to AU policy organs.[44] As an integral component of the Agenda 2063 monitoring efforts, active participation of multi-stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, sub-regional intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary bodies, civil society organisations and other state actors has proved to be critical in ensuring ownership and subsequently enhancing sustainability of the development process in AU Member States.[45]

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44 African Union Commission and African Union Development Agency – NEPAD 'Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063' (2022) https://au.int/en/documents/20220210/second-continental-report-implementation-agenda-2063 (accessed 30 September 2022).

45 Second Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 (n 44) 18.

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2.3 Agenda 2040: Africa's Agenda for Children - Fostering an Africa Fit for Children

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) adopted Agenda 2040: Fostering an Africa Fit for Children to elaborate on the aspects of Agenda 2063 relating to children and seeks to accelerate the full implementation of the Charter.[46] Building upon existing AU legal and policy frameworks, Agenda 2040 establishes Africa's agenda for children in line with Aspiration 6 of Agenda 2063. It sets out ten aspirations, to be achieved by 2040, and action steps to be taken across five phases with the goal of achieving the full implementation of the Charter.

Guided by the principle of 'nothing about us without us' and the recognition that children should be involved in decision making affecting their interests in Agenda 2063,[47] child participation is therefore identified as a cross-cutting issue and among one of the ten aspirations set out in Agenda 2040.

In an effort to foster awareness on the Agenda 2040, the Committee's theme for the Day of the African Child 2021 was on Agenda 2040. Further, the Committee undertook an assessment to monitor the progress made during the first five years of implementation of Agenda 2040.[48] While recognising impor-

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46   See Agenda 2064, para 53.

47   See Agenda 2063, para 47.

48   ACERWC 'Agenda 2040: Assessment of the first phase of implementation (2016-2020)' (March 2021).

tant progress made by a number of State Parties to include children and make child participation more accountable, the assessment revealed that greater efforts are still required to ensure that children's views are meaningfully channeled and taken into account. The Committee concluded that:

> Aspiration 10 is still far from being achieved on the African continent. Both the Committee and State Parties must work hard to ensure that children's voices are heard in matters that concern them.

**Aspiration 10 – African children's views matter**

- Child participation, based on the principles of representation, inclusion and accountability, is cultivated at all levels.
- Children participate meaningfully in law making and policy adoption in matters affecting their interests and are involved in the oversight of their implementation.
- Dedicated processes for children's participation are in place in Africa's Agenda for Children 2040, such as a permanent and dedicated forum in the form of a child parliament, or ad hoc forum in the form of a child caucus aimed at bringing forward the voices of children in these processes.
- At school level, child participation and leadership are cultivated by involving children in school management, for example in advisory student/learner councils.
- Legal protection is in place affirming children's rights to assemble, organise and access information and to express themselves freely.
- Children have the right to be consulted and heard in proceedings involving or affecting them.
- Children are involved in the monitoring and accountability process for this Agenda, the SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2040 recognises the need to involve children in the monitoring and accountability process for the Agenda 2040 itself, the SDGs and the AU's Agenda 2063.[49] The implementation for Agenda 2040 has been set in five phases in five-year intervals and State Parties are required to develop an Action Plan for each implementation phase.

The end dates of each of the five implementation phases for Agenda 2040 for children are 2020, 2025, 2030, 2035 and 2040. The 2020 Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for Aspiration 10 of Agenda 2040 only listed two main indicators each for State Parties and the ACERWC. For State Parties, by 2020 they should have adopted national legislation to institutionalise involving children in parliamentary processes and in the operation of child-specific institutions; and evidence showing consideration of the views of children and young people in the monitoring and accountability of all laws, policies and programmes affecting children. For the ACERWC, its implementation of Aspiration 10 was to be assessed by 2020 based on its consideration of the views of children and young people in the monitoring and accountability of implementation of the ACRWC; and the development of platforms for children to participate in the monitoring of the Agenda 2040.

"Aspiration 10 is still far from being achieved on the African continent. Both the Committee and State Parties must work hard to ensure that children's voices are heard in matters that concern them."

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49   Agenda 2040, at 19-20.
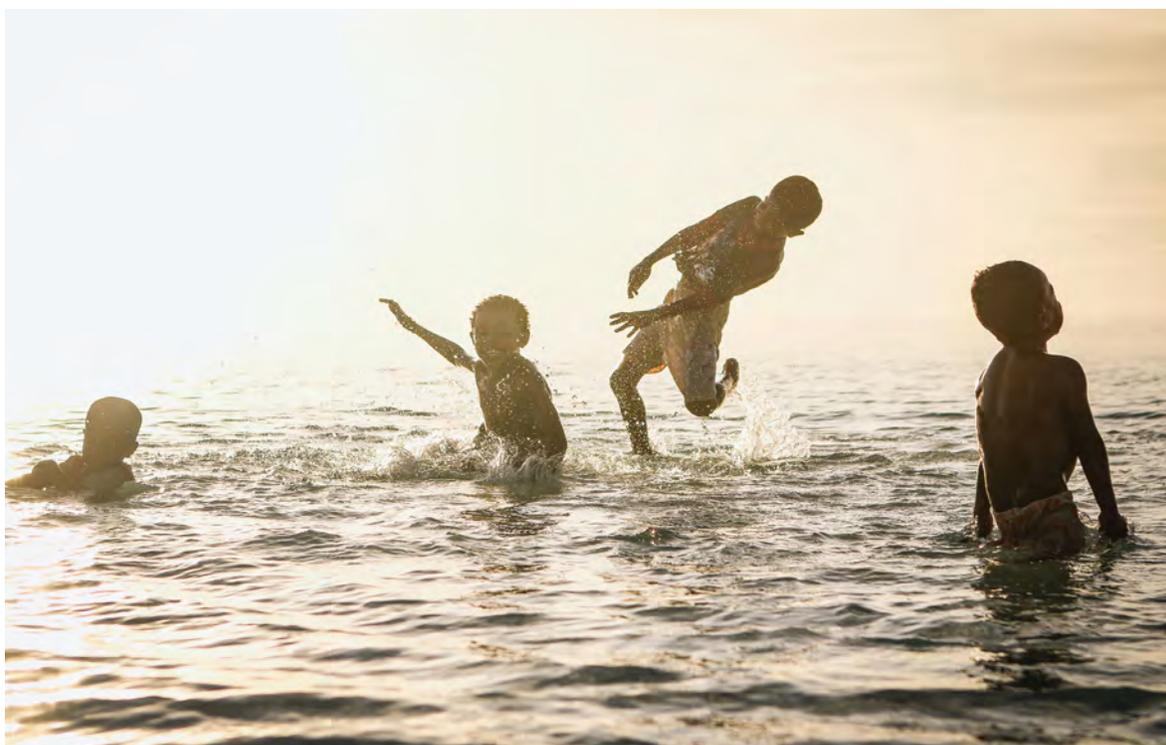
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2.4 Provisions for child participation in the development agendas

The SDGs, Agenda 2063, and Agenda 2040 recognise the importance of involving children in the development agenda as key actors with the capacity to drive this change. The development agenda also recognises that children-rights principles, including child participation, are to guide the monitoring and implementation of the development agenda. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Charter), the African Youth Charter, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provide the legal basis for the participation of children and youth in the development agenda. Together with Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, and Agenda 2040, this enabling framework sets the basis for ensuring that children and young people are present and meaningfully participate in the development agenda.

Recognising the need for the participation of children to not only be limited to national level decision-making processes, but also extend to regional and global processes, the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (the Centre), commissioned this study to examine the extent of child participation in development frameworks.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The right to participate is the only principle of child rights that has been comprehensively analysed through an array of child participation theoretical approaches.[50] These include Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation,[51] Lundy's Model of child participation,[52] Shier's pathway to participation,[53] Treseder's Circles of Child Participation,[54] and Fokala's Balanced Model that contextually situates child participation centrally within the family particularly in line with articles 4(2) of the ACRWC, and article 12 of CRC with an African perspective.[55] Lansdown and other theorists have also proposed the measurement and monitoring of child participation.[56]

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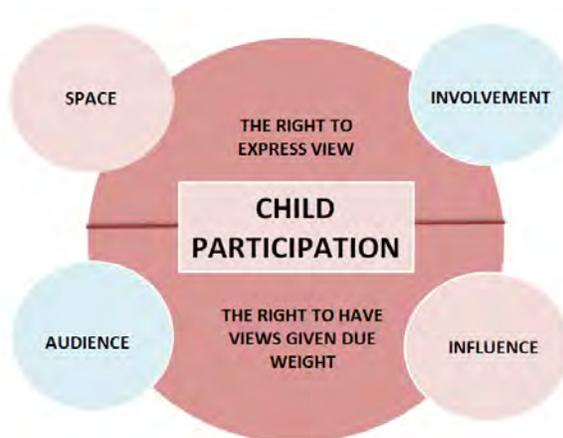
50   Fokala (n 15) 195-196.

51   R Hart 'Children's participation: From tokenism to citizenship' UNICEF Innocenti Essay 4 (1992).

52   L Lundy '"Voice" is not enough: Conceptualising article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child' (2007) 33 *British Educational Research Journal* 927 http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01411920701657033 (accessed 30 September 2022).

53   H Shier 'Pathways to participation: Openings, opportunities and obligations' (2001) 15 *Children and Society* 107 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233551300 (accessed 30 September 2022).

54   P Treseder *Empowering children & young people: Training manual: Promoting involvement in decision making* (1997).

55   Fokala (n 15).

56   G Lansdown & C O'Kane *Toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children's participation: A Ten Step guide to monitoring and evaluating children's participation* Booklet 4 (2014).

The Lundy model of child participation provides a way of conceptualising a child's right to participation, as laid down in article 12 of the CRC and it is intended to focus decision-making on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision.[57] It situates the child in four elements of audience, influence, space and voice. These four stages are not homogeneous. They apply to any participatory activity and depend on the specific situation and environment for each child.[58]

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57   Lundy (n 52).

58   As above.

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Audience: For meaningful child participation to take place, there need to be adults who are ready to listen to children, and to give them a response.

Space: To effectively participate, children must be given the opportunity and time to express their views and those opportunities must be actively created, they must be safe, and inclusive. Space does not necessarily mean physical place, but rather access to an environment that allows for child participation.

Involvement: Child participation goes beyond talking, it entails having children as active participants in the decision making, implementation and accountability processes. It also means that children are given the correct information to enable them to participate from a point of knowledge, including being supported to form and express their opinions.

Influence: Child participation can only be meaningful when the voices of children are given due weight and acted upon in accordance with their age and maturity.

Feedback: Meaningful child participation ensures that children are able to hold the adults accountable through a feedback mechanism that ensures they are formally responded to and given feedback about the extent of influence they have had. Other contextual issues impact child participation across the continent. Those issues will be raised below when exploring the voices of children.

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METHODOLOGY

The study took place between August 2021 and March 2022. The study adopts a qualitative research methodology. Using the Lundy and the Balance model as a scale of analysis, the study identified the meaningful involvement of children in the development, implementation and monitoring of the UN and AU development agenda. The study utilised both primary and secondary data in responding to the objectives of this study.

1 Primary data sources

The primary data was collected from children and adult stakeholders. The respondents were sampled from continental organisations that promote child participation and those responsible for implementation of development frameworks. Six countries were selected to represent each of the five sub-regions of Africa, with the exception of Southern Africa in which two countries were selected. Countries selected were Burundi (Central Africa), Egypt (North Africa), Kenya (East Africa), Senegal (West Africa), and Lesotho and Zambia (Southern Africa). The selection of the countries was on the basis of having active national child participation forums, including national children's assemblies and sub-regional child participation networks.

The extent of awareness of and involvement in the development frameworks amongst children and other key stakeholders was obtained through the following methods:

- Focus group discussions with children in the selected countries to understand the level of awareness of the development agenda and participation in terms of audience, influence, involvement and space. A total of ten focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 98 (40 girls and 58 boys) between the ages of ten and 17 children across six countries. Children were selected to participate from existing child participation forums in the given countries. They were selected on the basis of having had prior involvement in child participation processes, with some of them having participated in national periodic review report writing. Children engaged in community development projects were also included. Children were prepared to participate in FGDs, through a one-day training which employed participatory tools such as community mapping and the ideation design thinking tool.

- Key informant interviews (KIIs) were also carried out with ten adults identified from Government and civil society organisations (CSOs). Individuals from CSOs included those who play a role in promoting child participation or involved in the implementation of the development framework. Some key informants were additionally selected because they support regional mechanisms for implementation of the development frameworks and/or child participation. A list of the child participation forums can be found in Annexure 3 to this study.

The mapping of the forums and initiatives for child participation across the continent facilitating child participation in the development framework was done using information generated from a desk review, key informant interviews, and an online self-administered survey tool shared through the ACERWC CSO Forum.

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Our study had its limitations as briefly described below:

- The sampling of the existing child participation forums limited adequate representation of the various categories of children, and especially those from marginalised groups. This is despite the fact that the assessment done for level of participation in the development frameworks referred only to those children who are informed and exposed to child participation processes. The study may therefore not be adequately representative of all children within a particular country, region or the continent. While recognising that children are not a homogenous group, limited resources did not allow for further sampling.
- Although we were able to consult, we were not able to access children formal child participation forums such as children's parliaments due to COVID-19 restrictions in place during the data collection period. Most consultations were done virtually and hence we were not able to use child-friendly methodologies to collect the data from children.
- Owing to COVID-19, there were some disparities in the manner in which FGDs were conducted and how children were engaged (some virtual, some in person), leading to some discrepancies in the manner in which the data was collected.

"The study also shares promising practices and a roadmap of actions for different stakeholders to advance children's right to participate in UN and AU processes in line with international and regional standards."

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Tatiana Syrikova

The child participation forums identified may not accurately reflect the wide range and scope of forums (both formal and informal) which exist across the continent. The list provided in this report is therefore not exhaustive of the forums in which children participate.

The study does not intend to give an exhaustive overview of all child participation initiatives, nor all the entry points of engagement of children in the selected global and regional development processes that it considers. Instead, it aims to provide an insight into how child participation in these processes has evolved, identify the main trends and the remaining gaps that need to be addressed. The study also shares promising practices and a roadmap of actions for different stakeholders to advance children's right to participate in UN and AU processes in line with international and regional standards.

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UN, AU, African governments, CSOs and academia, as well as, research on child participation commissioned by international non-governmental organisations, such as UNICEF,[59] Save the Children (SCI), Plan International, World Vision International (WVI), [60] and the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) (a full list of documents reviewed is in the bibliography).[61] The analysis also includes specific country case studies analysed using a regional approach, along with the following key issues:

- The nature of opportunities in the regional and global development frameworks for children to participate in shaping the decisions that impact on their rights.

- The national legal and policy frameworks (laws, policies, strategies and plans of action) for children's participation in Africa. The analysis reviews to what extent these laws and policies have been implemented.

- The policy implications of the study findings and mapping out practical recommendations for the participation of children in the implementation of these development frameworks by governments, civil society, academia, media, private sector, children and other relevant stakeholders.

2 Secondary data sources

The secondary data was collected by reviewing through an exploratory research design. A total number of 88 documents were reviewed. Thirty-five (35) from the UN, 15 from AU, 25 from INGOs, 13 from local organisations and ten academic papers. The literature reviewed was sourced from online databases from the

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59   UNICEF 'Child and youth participation guide' (2006); Z Bruckauf & S Cook 'Child-centred approach to the sustainable development goals in high-income countries: Conceptual issues and monitoring approaches' *Innocenti Working Papers* 2017-06, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence (2017); UNICEF 'Children's participation in the work of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)' (2018).

60   World Vision 'Ensuring children are not left behind guidance note: Supporting countries preparing Voluntary National Reviews at the High-Level Political Forums on Sustainable Development' (2020).

61   ACPF 'African report on child wellbeing: Bi-annual report series that includes analysis of States progress in implementing children's rights including the right to participate'; ACPF 'Child participation strategy for Eastern African countries' (2015).

3 Ethics and safeguarding

The study took the following ethics and safeguarding measures:

1) **Establishing guidelines for ethics and safeguarding for the study**

   The study team leaders comprised of senior researchers from the Institute of Family Studies and Ethics at Strathmore University and the African Institute for Children Studies. The research team considered various measures to ensure that ethical principles and safeguarding is assured for all study participants. This included seeking a review of the study protocol and interview guides by accredited Institutional Ethics Review Committee (IERC). It was however realised early in this process that it would have required IERC review and approval in each of the six targeted study countries. Considering the complexity of getting IERC approval in some of these countries, an Africa regional ethics review board was an option that was however not available. It was therefore agreed that the safeguarding measures provided by the participating institutions be applied rigorously in the study. Requisite guidance was also sought from the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria.

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2) Review of participating organisation's internal child protection and safeguarding policies

As part of ensuring safeguarding for all the study participants, it was decided that the process of recruitment of respondents and data collection would be guided by organisations that have a history of child participation. The child protection and safeguarding policies of the partner organisations – Strathmore University (represented by the Institute for Family Studies & Ethics), the African Institute for Children Studies, and the affiliate organisations that supported data collection – were applied in the study. These covered the existing procedures of responding to possible abuse, exploitation, or trauma directly resulting from participating in the study.

3) Purposive selection and training of all research assistants

The research assistants and chaperons who were involved in the study were those who have previously been vetted and engaged in studies involving children and other vulnerable populations. This approach was particularly important, considering that due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, the opportunity for in person support supervision by the lead research team was not available. In addition, the research assistants were taken through training to orient them on the purpose of the study, the interview guides, ethics and safeguarding procedures.

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4) Consent and assent seeking process

An informed consent seeking process was undertaken for all the study participants. This entailed signing of an informed consent form by all adults and caregivers of the children. In line with the guidelines for participation of minors, children aged between 14-18 signed informed assent forms.

5) Principle of confidentiality

As provided in the informed consent and assent forms, data protection and anonymity were adhered to, consistent with the principle of confidentiality. No primary identifier data was collected and, in the report writing processes, there was no direct identification or link between a verbatim statement or finding presented and the respondent.

Dazzle Jam

6) Principle of beneficence

While there was no direct benefit to individuals who voluntarily participated in the study, measures were taken to ensure costs incurred (such as for purchase of internet connectivity bundles or bus fare to the location for the interview) were compensated. Participants were assured that information generated from the study will be disseminated to them through the organisations that aided their mobilisation. The study findings would inform future interventions to promote child participation in Africa's development agenda.

7) COVID-19 prevention measures

Considering that this study was undertaken at a time when the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus was still high, various measures were taken to protect both the research team and the respondents. The measures included no international travel for the research team leaders and instead engaged local teams of researchers; prioritised virtual interviews via online platforms instead of in person meetings; where in person meetings were held, they were in well aerated open spaces, social distancing observed and use of face masks and hand sanitizers observed.

FINDINGS

1 STATUS OF CHILD PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS IN AFRICA

1.1 Evidence of child participation based on desk review

Child participation in design phases of the development agendas

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marked an important milestone in advancing children's right to be heard by acknowledging children as agents of change and reiterating the importance of child participation in sustainable development. Similarly, the AU

Agenda 2063 process included the views of children and young people as part of the African citizenry, who should not be left behind in creating the Africa We Want. The AU Agenda 2040 for children sets out a specific Aspiration – Aspiration 10, which acknowledges children's participation in implementation and monitoring of the development frameworks.

In the lead up to adoption of Agenda 2030, national consultations with children to inform regional and global post-2015 development

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negotiations were convened in 27 African countries.[62] The purpose of the children's consultations was to explore their priorities in the new development framework post 2015. The national consultations with children were designed to facilitate the participation of vulnerable children who would not in normal circumstances be heard in global decision-making processes at the UN level. Among the vulnerable children included in the consultations were orphans, children living in rural and urban settings, children with disabilities, children who are heads of households, child survivors of violence, children deprived of their liberty, and children living in humanitarian settings. The national consultation dialogues included a variety of consultative methods, such as online surveys (My World),[63] one on one interviews, focus group discussions, regional and local consultations, and thematic consultations with expert groups including Ministries of Planning and Development, inter-agency SDG technical task teams or national level HLPF coordination structures, and UN agencies.[64]

Many of the priority areas identified by children in the 27 African States were prioritised in the approved SDG targets and indicators. Among them, ending poverty, reducing hunger, inclusive and equitable education, addressing violence and fostering gender equality stood out as important areas for policy and government intervention post-2015 for African children. For instance, in Zambia, school children identified school drop out as a major impediment to development. Child marriage and teenage pregnancies were identified to be the most common reasons for school drop outs in the country.[65] In Egypt, girls revealed that they are reluctant to report incidences of sexual harassment and rape because they are perceived as being partially or totally responsible for having been attacked, due to being 'inappropriately' dressed or having been out on the streets at 'inappropriate' hours.[66] Child survivors of sexual abuse in Malawi spoke of the cultural beliefs that prevent them from speaking out when a male member of the family sexually abuses them, as it is deemed disrespectful.[67] Basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, water and sanitation and decent, affordable and accessible healthcare were also priorities raised in Ghana, Nigeria,

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62 Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Benin, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Cote d Ivoire, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome Principe, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

63 Plan International, Save the Children & Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against children 'Why children's protection from violence should be at the heart of the post-2015 Development Agenda: A review of consultations with children on the post-2015 Development Agenda' (2014) 3 https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2587Why_childrens_protection_post_2015_ development.pdf (accessed 30 September 2022).

64 Plan International and others (n 63). See Also United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) & UNITAR 'Stakeholder Engagement and the 2030 Agenda: A practical guide' (2020) 89 https:// sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2703For_distribution_Stakeholder_Engagement_ Practical_Guide_spreads_2.pdf (accessed 30 September 2022).

65 Zambia National Consultation on the post-2015 Development Agenda.

66 United Nations Egypt, Egypt Post-2015 National Consultations, May 2013.

67 Government of the Republic of Malawi and the UN, Malawi Post 2015 Development Agenda, National Consultations.

the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Gabon.[68]

In addition, across the African continent, children identified harmful practices as an impediment to achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in Africa.[69] The reflections and suggestions from children in Africa revealed important insights on how the post-2015 development framework should be implemented and monitored. For instance, children expressed a strong desire for greater equality and to be treated with dignity and respect, and for indicators to measure progress towards the achievement of Agenda 2030.

The national consultations provided a unique opportunity to capitalise on the sig-

nificant recommendations put forward by children on their expectations for the future on challenges that African governments and other stakeholders should focus on addressing in order to safeguard the wellbeing of children post-2015. Children's participation through the national consultations, fed into the sub-regional consultation processes, and informed many recommendations from child-focused organisations to the UN High Level Panel on the inclusion of child-specific development goals, targets and indicators. Although African children did not actively engage in the global political and advocacy processes in the development of the SDGs, AU negotiations as informed by CAP, NGO and AU Member State written submissions

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68   Plan International and others (n 63).

69   Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Gambia, Gabon, Uganda, Liberia, Senegal, Mozambique, Nigeria, Egypt and Morocco child consultations highlighted the need to address harmful practices in the post-2015 development framework.

Ron Lach

included children's priorities based on their perspectives. The post-2015 development negotiation process culminated in the adoption of 17 goals, which are all relevant to children. Of the 169 SDG targets, 62 targets specifically relate to children,[70] and 44 out of the 232 global SDG indicators directly concern children.[71]

The findings from the post-2015 development consultation process with children, clearly demonstrated that children have meaningful insights and experiences to contribute to the design of developmental agendas. AU Member States and NGOs were able to support children's understanding of the relevant processes through sharing or distributing or designing age-appropriate information and child-friendly consultation activities which enabled them to freely engage the post-2015 development process in a safe and inclusive manner. The consultation processes culminating in the SDGs revealed that children have a clear sense of what they need and want, and they have an important role in shaping the present and future world in which they live.

However, despite the commendable engagement of children, the post-2015 development consultation processes have often been criticised for failing to provide a systematic platform for children's feedback following their participation. There was no clear accountability or feedback mechanism to inform children on the outcome of their participation in the negotiation process towards the adoption of the 17 SDGs. Concerted efforts by AU Member States and supporting organisations should have been made to provide feedback to children from all the 27 countries on the results of the global negotiation process. The development process of the SDGs also did not provide sufficient opportunities for systematic inter-generational dialogues between children and duty-bearers within the UN and AU political processes. Children's insights were largely collated, and packaged for key messaging relayed to the high-level panel by either governments or interested organisations on their behalf. In this regard, accountability and feedback mechanisms for children's participation and feedback remain uncoordinated, poorly resourced and unknown by children six years into implementation of the SDGs.

It is therefore important that creating an enabling environment for children's participation should be underpinned by well-structured and effective accountability mechanisms at all levels – from local through to global levels. Pathways of engagement are important to enable children to know the extent and impact of their participation, despite resource capacity gaps or other barriers to participation which they experience.

During the development of the Aspirations set out in Agenda 2063, views of young people between the ages of 15-25 years were solicited, but younger children (7-15 years) who may have been capable of forming their opinions according to their evolving capacities, on an Africa They Want were not afforded an opportunity to have their voices heard. This was a missed opportunity, in light of Africa's priority to harness the de-

70 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 'Child well-being and the Sustainable Development Goals: How far are OECD countries from reaching the targets for children and young people?' Working Paper 92 (2018) 15https://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/publicdisplaydocumentpdf/?cote=SDD/DOC(2018)5&docLanguage=E (accessed 26 August 2021).

71 UNICEF 'Fulfilling all rights of every child: Linking child rights and the SDGs' (2020) https://www.unicef.org/media/64196/file/HLPF_2020_2PAGER_FINAL_child_rights.pdf (accessed 25 August 2021).

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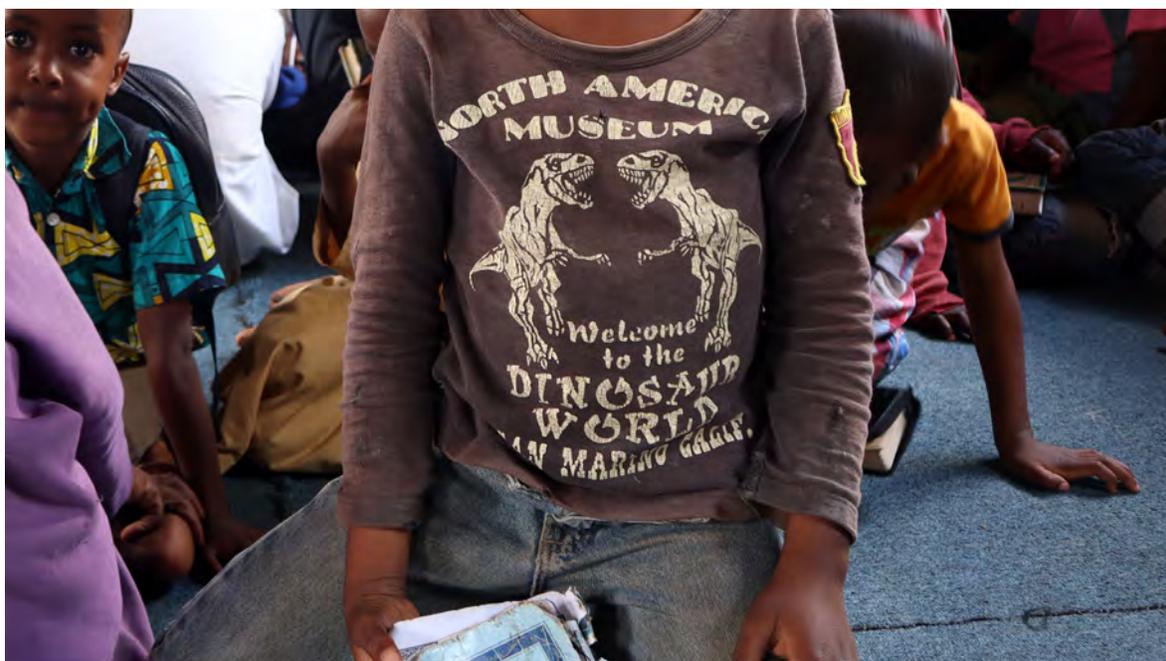
mographic dividend. AU's Agenda 2040 for Children, was developed in consideration of the need for Africa to nurture and empower its children through the full implementation of the ACRWC. It includes an Action Plan for the first phase of implementation (2016-2020). As an elaboration to Agenda 2063, children did not participate in the development process of the ten Agenda 2040 Aspirations. However, the development framework provides specific attention to the participation of children in decision-making processes in Aspiration 10, in line with article 4(2) of the Children's Charter. Aspiration 10 of Agenda 2040 requires that State Parties put in place permanent and dedicated forums such as child parliaments or forums for children to participate in law and policy making, as well as in monitoring and accountability processes of the SDGs, AU Agenda 2063 and AU Agenda 2040. The specific inclusion of an aspiration on children's participation, is progressive, since it provides States with a clear obligation to fulfill this right, and indicators to measure its implementation status at the national level.

"During the development of the Aspirations set out in Agenda 2063, views of young people between the ages of 15-25 years were solicited, but younger children (7-15 years) who may have been capable of forming their opinions according to their evolving capacities, on an Africa They Want were not afforded an opportunity to have their voices heard. This was a missed opportunity, in light of Africa's priority to harness the demographic dividend."

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Child participation in the implementation of the development agendas

The 2020 ACERWC assessment report of the first phase of implementation of AU Agenda 2040 for Children (2016-2020) highlights that a number of State Parties have taken measures to engage and consult children, and to make child participation processes more accountable. In countries like the United Republic of Tanzania, guidelines for establishing Junior Councils (2010) from national to village level were developed and these guidelines have been used to establish Junior Councils in 17 Regions and in 122 District Councils, which are represented

in the National Junior Council. A National Plan for Child Participation and a Child Participation Toolkit also provides normative guidance for children's participation in Tanzania.

In Rwanda, the National Council for Children (NCC) organises an annual Children's Summit that serves as a national consultative forum for convening child delegates from all the administrative sectors across the country. Uganda has developed a National Child Participation Strategy 2017/18-2021/22, which is costed, and an implementation guide to

support the establishment of decentralised child participation structures in the country and coordination with relevant government Ministries to support the children's structures. Although many national laws and policies in Africa lack a specific focus on children's participation, they do provide a framework for implementing and establishing child participation structures. For example, nearly all African countries have established National Children's Parliaments or Councils, but countries like Burundi, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe have established them by law or policy. Guinea Bissau's National Children's Parliament is institutionally assumed by the State, with its operating costs covered through the national budget of the National Assembly.

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Agenda 2063 is classified under seven Aspirations. In order to implement the priorities, AU Member States are guided by the First Ten Year Implementation Plan (FTYIP) of Agenda 2063 (2013-2023) which is the first in a series of five ten-year implementation plans over the 50-year period of Agenda 2063.[72] Young people in Africa were particularly identified by the AU as important stakeholders since they will be responsible

"Although many national laws and policies in Africa lack a specific focus on children's participation, they do provide a framework for implementing and establishing child participation structures."

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72   UNICEF (n 71). See also Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want https://au.int/agenda2063/overview (accessed 09 August 2021).
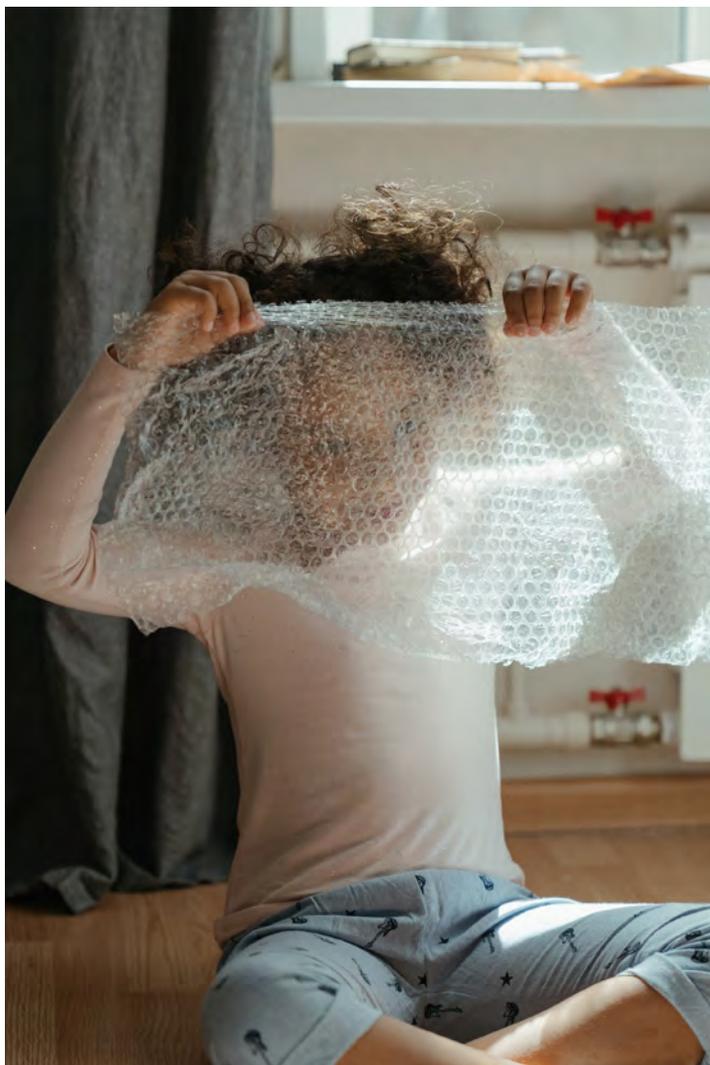
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"The analysis shows that although the goals and aspirations set out in the broader development frameworks give less attention to children and their views, the targets and indicators set to achieve the set goals and aspirations have a direct impact on children's lives."

for implementing the vision 2063.

In terms of implementation, the inaugural continental report on the implementation of Agenda 2063 shows that the continent had registered good progress in attaining several goals and targets defined in the First Ten-Year Implementation Plan.[73] For instance, following AU Member States' implementation efforts of the ACRWC, progress has been re-

corded on the implementation of Aspiration 6 (An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of the African people, especially its women and youth and caring for children) and Goal 18 (Engaged and Empowered Youth and Children) of Agenda 2063. Progress has also been recorded on Aspiration 2,[74] registering good performance on the continent on basic education, with enrolment rates increasing from 76.8 per cent in 2013 to 80.8 per cent in 2019, although falling below the 2019 target of 90.7 per cent. Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Seychelles, South Africa and Togo, reported overall increase in the net enrolment rates,[75] with progress attributed to national education interventions. For example, the Burkinabe government initiated a national programme for classroom construction and in-

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73 African Union 'First Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063' (2020) https://www.nepad.org/publication/first-continental-report-implementation-of-agenda-2063 (accessed 01 March 2022).

74 AU Agenda 2063 Aspiration 2: Well-educated Citizens and Skills Revolution underpinned by Science, Technology and Innovation.

75 First Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 (n 73).
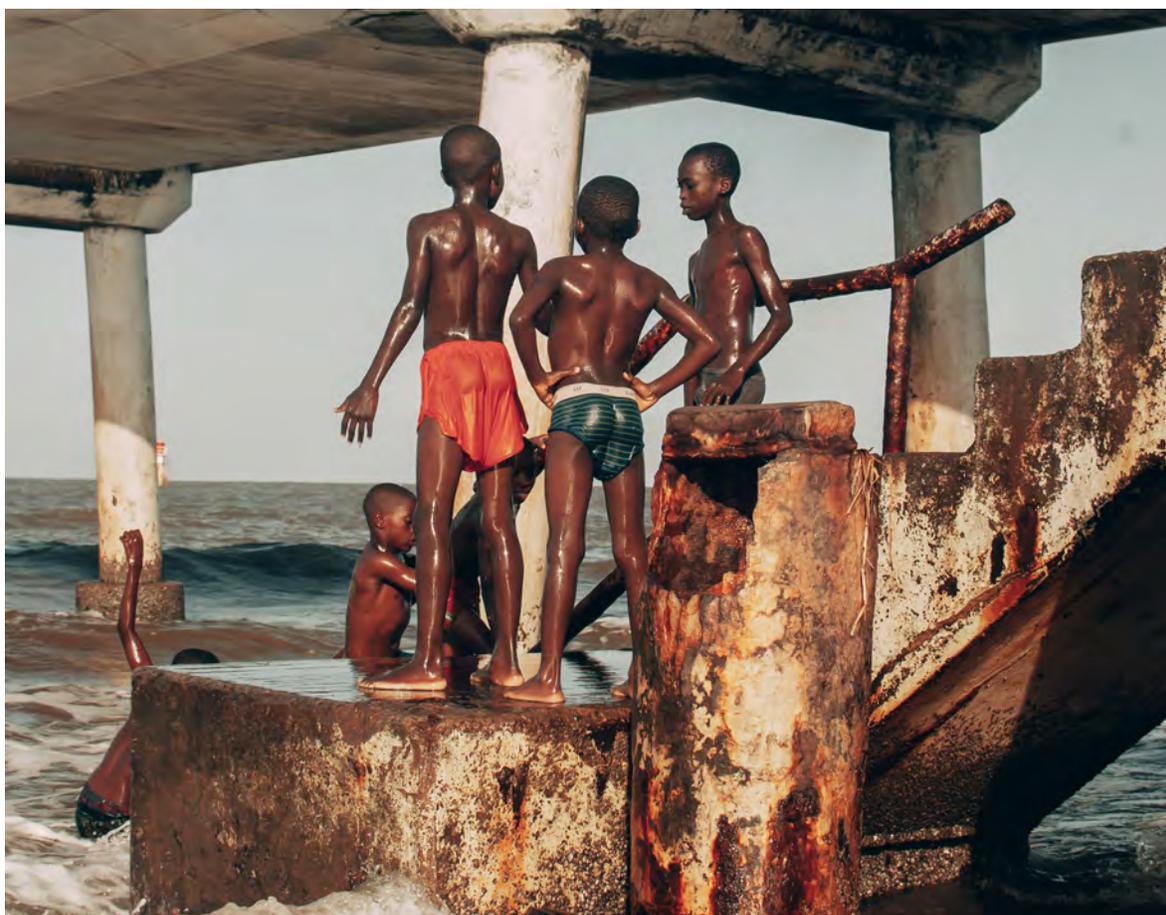
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creased budget allocation for school feeding programmes. However, limited progress of some of the goals in Agenda 2063 related to children was also recorded during the reporting period. For example, weak performance was recorded in achieving Goal 17 on full gender equality in all spheres of life, with the performance on reducing female genital mutilation (FGM) at 20 per cent.[76] AU Member States recorded challenges in reducing child trafficking, child labour, and FGM and child marriage, with aggregate scores of 12 per cent, -6 per cent and 23 per cent respectively against the 2019 Agenda 2063 targets.[77] A number of Member States reported increased rates in these child protection domains, with a few exceptions like the Central African Republic where the percentage of child trafficking dropped from 7 per cent to 4 per cent. Although the Agenda 2063 report highlights that the continent recorded strong performance on the implementation of the provisions of the ACRWC by Member States, pitched at 77 per cent against the 2019 targets,[78] the analysis is limited on active and meaningful engagement of children in the implementation of the 20 Goals of AU Agenda 2063.

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76   First Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 (n 73) 19.

77   First Continental Report on the Implementation of Agenda 2063 (n 73) 20.
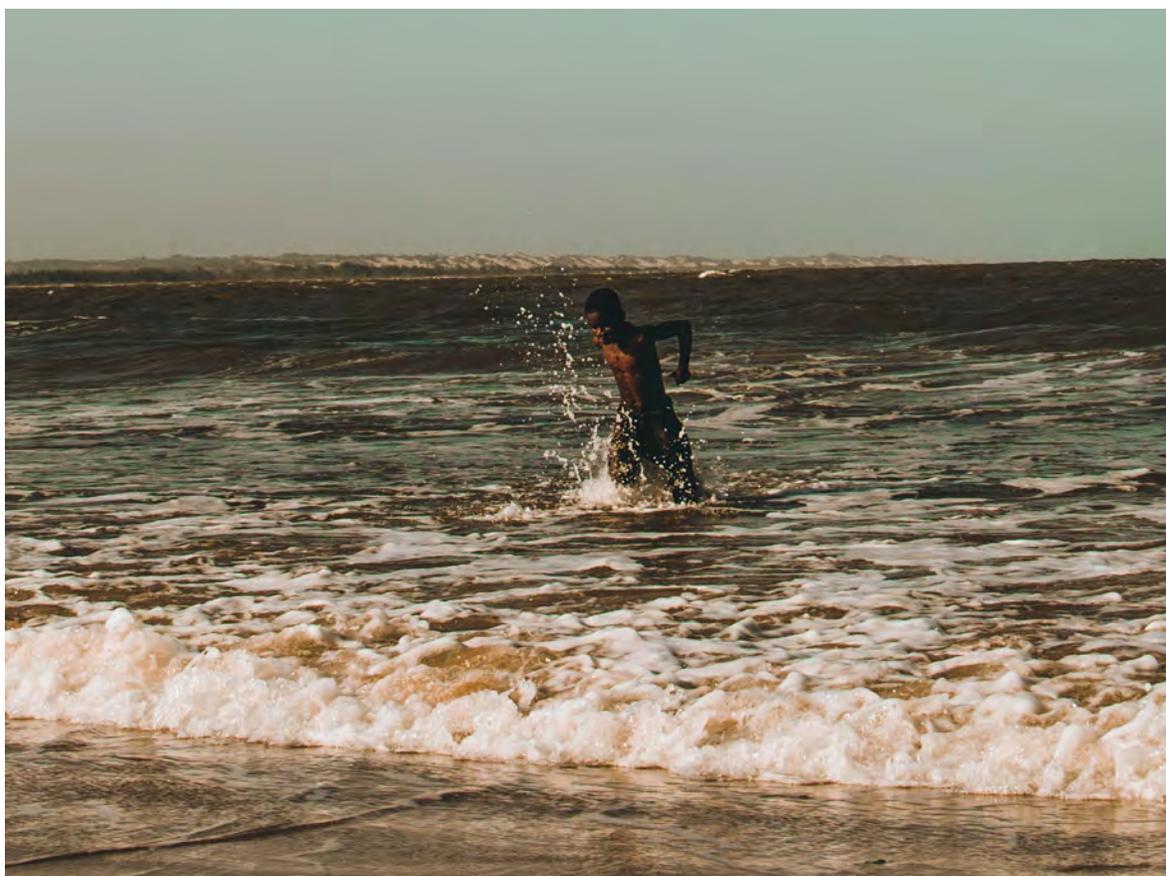
78   As above.

The empirical methodology used to develop the Agenda 2063 implementation report, did not include consultations with children and other stakeholders.[79] The continental report is a culmination of national and sub-regional progress reports on the implementation of Agenda 2063. AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) can play an integral role in widening data collection through consultations with children at country-level to get their views on the extent to which African governments are implementing the Agenda 2063 Aspirations and commitments. A bi-annual implementation reporting process is envisaged by the AUC; therefore, AU Member States must embed national level consultations with children as a build-up process to develop the national progress reports on the implementation of Agenda 2063.

The analysis shows that although the goals and aspirations set out in the broader development frameworks give less attention to children and their views, the targets and indicators set to achieve the set goals and aspirations have a direct impact on children's lives. All relevant UN and AU monitoring and accountability mechanisms and processes need strengthening with specific and consistent references to the status of implementation of set targets in relation to realisation of children's rights, and the specific role children play as key stakeholders in the monitoring process.

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79   AU 'Agenda 2063 implementation report' (2020) 45.

Child participation in monitoring of the development agendas

Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs),[80] and Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs),[81] are an essential part of the formal follow-up and review architecture of 2030 Agenda. They are a mode of accountability where Member States on their own accord conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the sub-national and national levels with regard to the process of achievement of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Assessed VNRs address children in the context of leaving no one behind albeit in a rhetorical manner. The analysis of African VNRs from 2019-2021 found that children were mentioned in several reports, often through the use of specific terms or groups, including girls, new-born, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC), children living on the streets, infants and children in armed conflict, and actions implemented by the States (multi-sectoral plans, dedicated budges, legal and policy reforms, and systems strengthening) to ensure they are not behind due to prevailing violence, poverty, malnutrition or lack of access to quality education.[82] While more needs to be done to integrate the rights of the child systematically into state policies, the VNR process has increasingly allowed for the identification and sharing of concrete examples of applying a child-rights perspective to implementation strategies of the SDGs at the national level.

Several VNRs reported children's role as stakeholders in SDG implementation processes at national level. VNR reports of Ghana, Mozambique, The Gambia, and Uganda made explicit reference to how children's views were collated during the stakeholder consultations at national level.

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80 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs SDGs 'Voluntary local reviews' https://sdgs.un.org/topics/voluntary-local-reviews (accessed 28 August 2021).

81 OHCHR 'Voluntary National Reviews: OHCHR and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' https://www.ohchr.org/en/sdgs/voluntary-national-reviews (accessed 28 August 2022).

82 2019 Voluntary National Reviews.

TABLE: Analysis of child participation in 2019-2021
VNR reports of select African countries

COUNTRY VNR (YEAR)	STATUS OF SDG IMPLEMENTATION FROM CHILD-RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE	CHILD PARTICIPATION DURING VNR REPORTING PROCESS AT NATIONAL LEVEL
Côte d'Ivoire (2019)[83]	Overall increase in school enrolment. Increased access to primary healthcare. The Children's Parliament supports public authorities in implementing the national child protection policy and awareness-raising.	Yes – children's consultations held at school, local and national level to gather children's views on SDGs 4 and 16.
Eswatini (2019)[84]	Reduction of mother to child HIV transmission due to national ART roll out. Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) education programme established a safety net for children attending secondary school. Enactment of the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act (2018).	No – no specific reference is made to participation of children, but youth.
Ghana (2019)[85]	Improvement in total government spending on education and health improved between 2016 and 2017. Number of children dying within 28 days of birth has declined from 43 per 1 000 live births in 2003 to 27 deaths per 1 000 live births in 2017. Adopted a comprehensive national framework for ending child marriage.	Yes – Thematic consultations with children and youth were held at local levels. Children with disabilities were also consulted. Validation of the VNR report was conducted with primary and secondary school children and youth groups.

83   Sierra Leone Voluntary National Review Key Messages (2019) https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23012Sierra_Leone_Key_SDGs_Messages.pdf (accessed 30 September 2022).

84   Eswatini Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2019).

85   Ghana Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2019).

COUNTRY VNR (YEAR)	STATUS OF SDG IMPLEMENTATION FROM CHILD-RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE	CHILD PARTICIPATION DURING VNR REPORTING PROCESS AT NATIONAL LEVEL
Mauritius (2019)[86]	Zones dedication Priorities (ZEP) project which exists since 2003 aims at combating poverty through education. Provision of free prenatal, maternal and child health care services in all public primary healthcare facilities Digital Youth Engagement Programme was established which provides 15-hour of coding training and targets primary school students in Grade 4	Yes – Youth Conference on Sustainable Development was convened with participation of secondary schools Local and National initiatives raise awareness of the SDGs and/or gain young people's perspectives on sustainable development through various workshops, competitions, debates and/or projects in schools.
Mozambique (2020)[87]	Approval of the 2018 Social Action and Gender Policy New approved law outlawing child marriages the National Action Plan for Children with actions on health, nutrition, education, protection and participation.	Yes – Mozambique held child parliamentary sessions at the national, provincial and district levels in which children reflected on their rights and raised their concerns with the government and partners.
Rwanda (2019)[88]	The National Early Childhood Development Programme (NECDP) (2016-2021) is aimed at addressing child malnutrition. Boys and girls show gender parity in both pre-primary and primary education (respectively, gender parity index (GPI) of 1.02 and GPI of 0.98)	No – no reference to participation of children in VNR processes.
The Gambia (2020)[89]	Slight decline of FGM/C recorded from 76.3 per cent in 2010 to 75.7 per cent in 2018. Government priority to invest in early childhood development (ECD) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).	Yes –children and youth groups at local levels were consulted through national child parliament, and district level council clubs.

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86   Mauritius Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2019).

87   Mozambique Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2020).

88   Rwanda Voluntary National Review (2019).

89   Gambia Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2020).

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COUNTRY VNR (YEAR)	STATUS OF SDG IMPLEMENTATION FROM CHILD-RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE	CHILD PARTICIPATION DURING VNR REPORTING PROCESS AT NATIONAL LEVEL
Egypt (2021)[90]	School dropout rates for 18-year-olds or younger also declined from 6 per cent to 2 per cent between 2015-2020.	No reference made to children's participation in the broad national consultation process towards development of the report.
Sierra Leone (2021)[91]	Decreased under-five mortality rate from 156 deaths in 2013 to 122 deaths in 2019/20 per 1 000 births. Hands-Off Our Girls Initiative championed by the First Lady has reduced inequities and inequalities for girls living in rural areas, and has contributed to an increase in girls' enrolment in schools and overall reducation of FGM/C.	Yes – primary and secondary schoolchildren, including those with disabilities participated in VNR consultations.
Zimbabwe (2021)[92]	Implementation of the Zimbabwe competence-based school curriculum The adoption by President of the Education Amendment Act allowing re-entry of pregnant girls in schools Zimbabwe School Health Policy was approved extending health services in schools	No – COVID-19 challenges cited as limitations to wide consultations with stakeholders including children.

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90   Egypt Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2021).

91   Sierra Leone Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2021).

92   Zimbabwe Voluntary National Review and Key Messages (2021)

Globally, the engagement of children and youth as partners in the process of multi-stakeholder implementation of the SDGs was mentioned in 21 VNR reports (45 per cent) in 2020. Comparatively, there has been increased analysis of children and young peoples' engagement, as only nine countries (19 per cent) had reported in 2019, while ten countries in 2018 had reported efforts to involve children. The African VNR reports analysed from 2019-2021, mentioned the engagement of children and youth in specific initiatives organised for them. The participation in SDG review took the form of oral consultations, capacity development, awareness raising campaigns to address violence and initiatives, volunteerism, and the design of case studies, best practices, and priorities around the SDGs. The second most mentioned type of engagement was through youth/child organisations, councils, or networks. African Countries that referred to the existence of children's structures were Ghana, Mauritius, Malawi, and Kenya. Finally, the third form of children's engagement in SDG implementation was through children's participation in specific projects and/or initiatives designed and carried out by children and youth, which was highlighted by Ghana, Mozambique, Seychelles, and Sierra Leone. The desk review shows that efforts are being made by African States to include a child-rights lens in SDGs reporting, and more importantly engaging children in the implementation of SDGs. Children have been consulted in the VNR reporting process to some extent. However, States could further apply a systemic, integrated child-rights approach to the 2030 Agenda that recognises the

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universal and indivisible nature of children's rights and the Agenda 2063.

On the regional front, some strides have been made by ACERWC to engage children as the AU treaty body with the mandate to promote, protect and interpret both the ACRWC and Agenda 2040. At its 34th Ordinary Session in Cairo Egypt, the Committee made a decision that African children will have a standing slot at the Opening ACERWC Sessions to update the Committee on emerging child rights issues in Africa that require urgent attention and action of the Committee.[93] Since 2019, children from Togo, Cameroon, Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have made state-

ments on behalf of African children. During its 38th Ordinary Session held in November 2021, the children's statement at the opening of the ACERWC reflected on the increased attention placed on children's participation in regional processes.[94] The child delegate, representing over 100 children from Africa, expressed concerns over the disregard of children's experiences by adults, and the exclusion of marginalised children including those living in rural areas in child participation processes. In his remarks the child also explained the efforts made by AU Member States to provide early childhood education in Africa, but highlighted persistent gaps in the limited

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93   ACERWC 34th Session, Report of the 34th Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) 25 November-05 December 2019 Cairo, Egypt, para 159.

94   19th Session of the ACRWC CSO Forum – Children's Outcome Statement to 38th ACERWC Ordinary Session https://childrencsoforum.africa/ & ACERWC Communiqué on the 38th Ordinary Sessionhttps://www.acerwc.africa/Latest%20News/communique-on-the-38th-ordinary-session/(accessed 30 September 2022).

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resourcing of ECD centres including child-accessible infrastructure, learning materials and skilled human resources.[95] The child delegate presenting before Members of the African Committee, State Parties, NGOs, and other stakeholders urged African governments to allocate resources to extend and sustain child participation initiatives and to improve accessibility and quality of ECD services in Africa by establishing special ECD centres for children with disabilities. While the process is commendable and the CSO Forum on ACRWC, through its regional members, is supporting children to attend the ACERWC Sessions to give these statements, it still remains unclear how the child delegates engage with children from other sub-regions, to gather their views in order to present a collective and representative message from African children before the Committee.

For Agenda 2040, the ACERWC is yet to develop a platform for children to participate in monitoring of Agenda 2040. The East African Community (EAC), noted a lack of involvement of children in the monitoring of Agenda 2040, and made a recommendation for Agenda 2040 indicator reporting tools to be framed in a way that ensures wide consultation amongst the different groups of children, such as children living on the street, working children, survivors of harmful practices and children in conflict with the law amongst others. It was recommended that children should be involved in regional meetings, conferences and workshops concerning the status of implementation of

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95   19th ACRWC CSO Forum – Children's Communique.

Agenda 2040 going forward.[96] Between 2018-2019, the ACERWC organised regional consultations with African RECs,[97] on the implementation of Agenda 2040, and the role of RECs and their respective partner States in implementing the aspirations of the agenda. While these meetings galvanised support for Agenda 2040 implementation by REC Secretariats, Partner/Member States, and CSO partners, children's inputs on the key priorities that RECs and governments should focus on were not considered. Children were also not involved in the development of the first AU Agenda 2040 implementation report (2016-2020), either through consultations as key informants or as child-researchers at the national level. Despite this gap, in 2021, the ACERWC and the CSO Forum supported children with a parallel process of developing a child-led report to assess the implementation of AU Agenda 2040.[98] This is considered good practice, as children provide personal, critical and practical assessments on how AU Agenda 2040 is implemented at national level based on their views and experiences.[99]

It is progressive to see Member States' commitment to child participation in development processes as reported in the Voluntary National Review reports, where development processes undertaken by governments have retained or even strengthened agreed standards and broadened the consen-

"The guidelines should be utilised by African governments to inform the establishment of child participation structures at all levels and to ensure that children's participatory mechanisms are inclusive and accessible to all groups of children from local, district, and national level."

sus on child participation. Specific guidance on the operationalisation of child participation standards in UN processes, including the CRC Committee's Nine Basic Requirements, is needed to ensure that these standards are fully integrated in the work of all UN bodies. Similarly, the recently approved ACERWC Child Participation Guidelines should be widely disseminated to inform the participation of children in continental, regional, national and local development processes. The experience of the CRC Committee and the ACERWC in developing its working methods and the ACERWC child participation guidelines could serve as guiding models for other UN and AU entities. These resources should be further promoted and disseminated across the UN and AU systems as guiding documents to support children's participa-

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96   ACERWC & EAC 'Report of the workshop on the popularisation of Agenda 2040 and cross border issues affecting children in the East African Community' (2018) para 4.2 (c).

97   SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, UMA, and ECCAS.

98   ACRWC CSO Forum 'Children's voices on implementation of AU Agenda 2040' (2021) – Forthcoming

99   The child-informed survey targeted children between 12 and 17 years from Eastern, Southern, Western, Central and North Africa. A link to the survey was circulated to child-led structures through National CSO Coalitions. Regional CSO Coalitions from the four regions further support the identification of children living in remote areas and those living with disabilities to take part in the children's forums. The survey asked children to rate their governments' performance on the ten aspirations based on the indicators provided by the ACERWC. In addition to the survey, the report collected views from children collected with a total of 10 children's forums held by the CSO Forum and some of its members between 1 June 2020 and 16 June 2021.

tion in development processes.

The recently approved ACERWC Child Participation Guidelines,[100] offer technical guidance on how the ACERWC should engage with children during the pre-sessions, consideration of State Party reports, issuance of Concluding Observations and during the follow-up with State Parties on the implementation of the Concluding Observations. The guidelines should be utilised by African governments to inform the establishment of child participation structures at all levels and to ensure that children's participatory mechanisms are inclusive and accessible to all groups of children from local, district, and national level. The establishment of special mechanisms by the ACERWC are also a welcome development in support of the discharge of the African Children's Committee's mandate. In particular, the ACERWC Special Rapporteur on Child Participation, should be supported by the ACERWC Secretariat to popularise standard setting, promoting and monitoring of child participation in Africa. The Special Rapporteur on Child Participation must facilitate discussions with children at ACERWC sessions where relevant, and encourage cooperation and dialogue with Member States, National Human Rights Institutions, African Union Organs, relevant intergovernmental organisations, and other stakeholders on issues relating to the promotion and realisation of child participation in Africa.[101] In recognition of the particular risks that children face in engaging in policy making spaces at regional level, the ACERWC is called upon to consider the development of a contextually relevant child safeguarding policy as a supplementary document to the ACERWC Child Participation Guidelines.

The analysis shows that regardless of the environment in which child participation is taking place, or the subject matter being considered, it is essential to constantly monitor and analyse the forms and structures of child participation being utilised to ensure they are appropriate, safe and relevant for children's needs. The findings of the desk review reinforce the necessity of ensuring that children's right to participate in decision-making bodies is guaranteed not only in normative frameworks but also in practice. An enabling environment for children to participate in AU processes requires overcoming cultural, political, and practical barriers that are usually at play at the national level and are amplified at the regional level given the complexity of the processes and multiplicity of stakeholders involved in governance systems.

1.2 Barriers to child participation

According to literature, barriers to child participation persist across the continent and result in either exclusion of their voices or tokenistic participation, which is not meaningful. Among the key barriers are cultural attitudes to a child's agency in decision-making, lack of systematisation of child participation as an obligatory state-funded democratic process, lack of adequate platforms for participation as forums and events are held on an ad hoc basis, as well as budgetary constraints. These obstacles should be addressed and children placed at the centre of the agenda thus ensuring that they meaningfully exercise their right to express their views, participate and be heard in accordance with the African Charter.[102]

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100 ACERWC 'Child participation guidelines' (2021) 10-15.

101 ACERWC 'Resolution on the Appointment of a Special Rapporteur on Child Participation' (2017) https://www.acerwc.africa/special-rapporteurs/ (accessed 30 September 2022).

102 See ACERWC (n 3) 13.

2 CHILDREN'S VOICES: FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The voices of 98 boys and girls in Burundi, Egypt, Kenya, Senegal, Lesotho and Zambia were captured across ten FGDs. The FGDs sought to better understand the extent of awareness of, and involvement in, the development frameworks amongst children.

2.1 What does child participation mean to the children?

Children interviewed in this study through focus group discussions were first asked to explain what child participation meant to them. Child respondents from the five regions had a good understanding of child participation. Many understood participation to include a space or platform to engage in issues affecting them. Some children were able to identify that child participation includes their right to 'freely express themselves in matters that affect them' and that children 'need to be listened to and their views have to be equally respected, the same way that we respect other views'. Children in Zambia felt strongly that child participation is their right and should be respected.

While explaining the importance of child participation, one child said, 'our views and opinions must be considered as we are the future, and we will be influential in the community.'

Lesotho

'[Child participation] is a model or opening up platforms and making available a scope where children can share their views on issues of development, according [to the] UNCRC and CPWA.'

'Affording children those opportunities is child participation.'

Senegal

'For me, what I can add is that we invite the children in the activities, we give them the floor, we turn our interest towards the children so that they can participate in the debate.'

Zambia

'I think child participation is like a platform where children have the right to express themselves and to affiliate things that affect them basically involving them so that they can participate in areas that look at whether they are affected and if their rights respected and given to them, for example education, family, food are those things being given to them.'

Kenya

'Child participation is when a child is involved in making decisions that concern them.'

'It is participating in any activity that is meaningful and has objectives.'

Egypt

'The child is to be consulted on everything in the society, especially matters relate to the child.'

'Our views and opinions must be considered as we are the future, and we will be influential in the community.'

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2.2 Awareness of the development agenda
Children were asked the extent to which they are aware of the development agenda. The SDGs were the most familiar framework among child respondents. There was, however, a general lack of awareness of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040 among children who participated in the study in the six countries, with most children learning about these frameworks for the first time through participation in this study.

SDGs
The source of knowledge of SDGs was mainly awareness and sensitisation meetings convened for targeted groups of children. Other children also learnt from self-initiative to research as exemplified in this statement:

> [T]his is not the first time I have heard about the Sustainable Development Goals, I had done some research and I had seen how we should reduce the rate of street children and children in the countryside

"Children who were aware of the SDGs reported that they were developed by the United Nations. Most of them were aware that these goals are global in nature. The level of knowledge of the SDGs varied from being very general to specific."

and that we should increase the schooling rate – FGD Burundi.

While the SDGs were more widely known, there were disparities in the general understanding of the SDGs across and within countries and regions. Although some children from Zambia, Kenya, Senegal, and Lesotho had heard of SDGs and could expound on them, some children had never

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heard of the SDGs. For instance, in Lesotho, most of the children did not know about the SDGs and could not speak to any child participation structures put in place for the implementation of the SDGs. None of the children who participated in the FGDs in Egypt knew of the SDGs.

Children who were aware of the SDGs reported that they were developed by the United Nations. Most of them were aware that these goals are global in nature. The level of knowledge of the SDGs varied from being very general to specific. For example, one child in Zambia was able to articulate the genesis of the SDGs from the MDGs and the number of goals, as well as identify inter-generational equity in development.

> SDGs are a follow-up to MDGs millennium development goals, while the MDGs were eight, the SDGs were seventeen and the impact of the achievement of these goals is supposed to go on for a long time but then should also not hinder future generations from addressing their own issues and achieving their own goals that they set as the sustainability part of it. – Child, Zambia.

Most children who were aware of the SDGs could identify the number of goals. However, none could name all of the goals. Children who identified goals mostly identified education (SDG 4), other key issues identified by children were climate change, gender equality and health. 'I can just mention one, number 4 is that all boys and girls should attain education.' – Child, Kenya.

Only one child in Senegal identified child participation in the context of development: 'SDGs is a kind of agenda where there is plan, items, activities to allow for development and to facilitate the participation of children in development.'

Agenda 2063

Only one child across the FGDs was aware of Agenda 2063 and demonstrated good knowledge of it. No other child had heard of it. One child from Zambia said 'personally I have never heard about the 2063 agenda', and another stated that: 'If we do not know agenda 2040, how will we know agenda 2063?'.

> Yes, I have heard about Agenda 2063. It's basically the SDGs but by the African Union, so the SDGs are by the UN and Agenda 2063 is something similar but specific to the African continent and set up by the African Union. – Child, Zambia.

Agenda 2040

The few child respondents who had heard about Agenda 2040 reported that they learnt about Agenda 2040 through short videos and print materials distributed in school. One child in Kenya reported: 'We saw them [Agenda 2040], there was a short video about it.'

While others concurred, some participants were unsure and indicated that they did not know the details of the framework or its aspirations. Others in the same FGD were categorical and stated that: 'Personally, I have never heard anything about that'; and 'I have also never heard about the 2040 Agenda'.

The lack of awareness amongst children made it impractical to assess the various parameters under study for Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040. As such, issues of audience, influence, involvement, and space are reviewed below only in relation to the SDGs. It however signals the need to address critical gaps in the dissemination of Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040 to children and the participation of children in Africa's development agenda. In light of this, an opportunity was provided by the researchers to share infor-

mation about the agenda during the FGDs, serving as an important capacity building exercise to provide children with the information required to participate in the agenda.

Audience

The results largely revealed that the children had not directly interacted with relevant stakeholders in relation to the SDGs, save for children from the UNODC club in Kenya who have a periodic session with the UN officials.

Space

To effectively participate, children must be provided with an enabling environment to express their views, which must be actively created, and must be safe, accessible and inclusive. FGDs with children from the five regions indicated that only a few had participated in giving their opinions about

the SDGs. Their involvement was found in children participation structures such as children parliaments, and school clubs.

For children in Kenya, awareness and participation in the SDGs was based on engagement in child participation structures such as the United National Office of Drug and Crime (UNODC) club, youth conferences, or through engaging with CSOs implementing projects in their respective communities, as the main sources of information on SDGs. The context of knowledge transmission was mainly workshops on SDGs, and awareness and sensitisation meetings that children participated in.

> The United Nations came to our school and then they formed a club called the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime and then like almost every term, we usually go to the United Nations and then we discuss on how to improve them. – FGD in Kenya.

Kenex Media SA

The children did not know of any spaces for child participation on the 2030 Development Agenda in Zambia, Lesotho, Egypt and Burundi. In Senegal, only one child respondent had participated in such a forum. In that instance, the child had been invited by an unnamed organisation to participate in a forum that sought to assess the extent to which children were involved in the implementation of the SDGs. Also, some children considered the FGDs for this study as a capacity building forum for learning about the various development frameworks and sharing their views on the same.

Involvement

The study shows some level of involvement of children in the implementation of the SDGs.

> I have seen is that there is an intentional involvement for children to sort of retell their stories when there is implementation like on SDG five, on issues of gender equality, issues of health, education the instances where like the civil search organizations or the partners have directly involved the children to be able to authentically just highlight what is going on and to ensure that they are sort of persuading policy makers or just the masses in terms of some of the challenges that are going on. – Child, Kenya.

Also, a student from Zambia had been involved in the implementation of SDG 1 by participating in drafting a report on mitigating poverty in Zambia. A student from Kenya had also been involved in the implementation of SDG 13 on climate action through tree planting.

Influence

The results show that children have not adequately influenced the implementation of the SDGs with most children across the

countries rating it at 1 out of 3. This is because they are unable to tell if their opinions are ever taken into consideration because there are no accountability structures that allow them to know if their voices are influencing decision-making processes.

> [H]ow much influence do we have on certain issues regarding to the SDGs at most we have one on the topic of health, education and climate. I am still going to say one because most of our laws are still not being implemented and the budget allocations have been reducing. – Child, Zambia.

2.3 Barriers to participation

Children throughout the study and across all countries identified challenges to meaningful participation. Many indicated that their opinions are not valued by adults, simply because they are children. This was expressed in the following terms:

> "'There shouldn't be something called "young and his opinion is not important".'
>
> Child participants cited culture as a hindrance to their meaningful participation – with children considered to be 'seen' but not be 'heard'."

Children attributed this to their role within the family and their ability to actively participate in family life and decisions on matters which affect them.

> [I]n the family if you want to say what you want, the parents are going to tell you you don't have the right to say what you want, you are a child, you don't have many ideas. – Child, Burundi.

The lack of information was also identified as a barrier to effective participation. Children identified the need to provide them with information so they can realise their rights. However, in Egypt concern was

expressed that children face challenges to participation in that they rely on adults to receive information, noting that adults don't care about children's rights.

> We receive all the information from adults, and me as a child I can't recognize my rights unless it was told by an adult,

and all adults don't care much about this issue. I would never know my rights and accordingly won't make a change or solve problems, if I wasn't given enough information. – Child, Egypt.

Key findings on child participation in the development agendas

- The SDGs were the most familiar framework among child respondents. Children were unfamiliar with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040.

- There is a lack of space for children to participate meaningfully in the development agendas.

- Child participants have largely not had access to Information, Education and Communication materials (IEC) on Agenda 2063, with some having accessed materials on the SDGs, and only few in Kenya having received information on Agenda 2040.

- The dissemination of inclusive, child-sensitive, and age-appropriate IEC materials translated into their local languages is needed to facilitate participation. Awareness raising on the development agenda among children should not be a one-off event, but rather a continuous exercise, taking into consideration the maturity of children, context, background, and level of education of the target groups. Ad hoc awareness creating events yield poor results in terms of improving the level of awareness among children.

- Children are excluded from key processes to influence the development agenda and need to be better involved in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation. As active citizens with the capacity to drive change and contribute to shaping an Africa We Want.

- For child participation to be effective and meaningful, cultural and other barriers to meaningful child participation need to be addressed at the family and community levels. Children involved in the study argue that without adult enablers, child participation remains an empty promise to children.

3 FORUMS AND INITIATIVES FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION

Child participation forums and initiatives are critical in facilitating child participation in different processes right from needs assessment, designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and finally documenting lessons learnt. Across the African continent there are various child participation forums which the study discovered. Some forums operate at regional level, some at sub-regional level, national and subnational level and at community level. The forums and initiatives identified can be categorised into three groups:

1. initiatives/forums which are child and youth led;
2. initiatives/forums which are supported by child-focused CSOs including community-based organisations; and
3. initiatives/forums which are systematised by the State (for example, children's parliaments and/or Junior Council, school clubs).

The forums and initiatives identified use different approaches to involve children in the implementation of the development agendas. Some forums and initiatives help children participate in advocacy processes to influence the implementation of the development agendas. This includes support to influence changes to policies and programmes at the country level with the view of realising the goals set in the development agendas. Others focus on implementation of the development agendas and involve children in programmes and projects targeted at achieving outcomes of the development agendas. Annexure 2 gives a clear overview of the focus of forums and initiatives identified for child participation in the development agenda across Africa.

Although the State has the primary responsibility to ensure a child's right to participation – and in government structures and forums at the local, national, regional and continental levels – participation takes place in a range of settings and involves a wide range of actors.

Community level forums and initiatives
Forums and initiatives to promote the development agenda take place at the community level. Community-level forums and initiatives for child participation are found in schools, and in communities where they are sometimes led by local authorities. These range from well-established and newly emerging child led groups focusing mostly on awareness on child rights and advocacy to influence duty bearers to respect and fulfill the rights of the child. The study noted that structures established by children are keen to participate and influence implementation of the development agenda, if afforded the opportunity.

Global level forums and initiatives

The desk review analysis revealed existing global child participation initiatives and forums at global level for the monitoring of Agenda 2030 and SDGs.

Human Rights Council Annual Day on the Rights of the Child and the SDGs	Children can participate in the annual day on the rights of the child convened by the Human Rights Council. The OHCHR drafts an annual thematic report, where UN agencies and NGOs are able to influence child-specific outcomes in the final resolution. During the 2021 Annual Day on the Rights of the Child under the theme, 'The Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals', a child representative from Africa (Uganda) attended the event together with six child delegates from around the world.
The Group of Friends for Children and the SDGs	The Group of Friends for Children and the SDGs is the highest political commitment made by 61 Member States on prioritising the rights of children in SDG review, implementation and monitoring. Thirteen African States are part of the Group of Friends of Children and SDGs.[103] Since 2015, the Group's work on behalf of children has focused on advocating for the promotion of child rights, child well-being and child participation in the planning, operationalisation and monitoring of the SDGs.[104]
The UN-Major Group for Children and Youth (UN-MGCY)	The UN-MGCY is mandated to act as a bridge between children, youth and the UN in the sustainable development policy and advocacy space. The MGCY submits position papers to the HLPF outlining children and youth's perspectives on their priorities towards achievement of the SDGs.[105]

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103 Benin, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uganda.

104 D Mikavica 'Ensuring children's inclusion in the high-level political forum participation and agency to achieve the SDGs – Leave no one behind' Dag Hammarskjold Foundation: Making the HLPF more inclusive Issue 3 (2021) 4-5. See also UN Group of Friends for Children and the SDGs 'Statement at the 2020 High-level Political Forum on behalf of 61 countries and observers in their national capacity and as members of the Group of Friends of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)' https://www.unicef.org/media/73176/file/GoF-of-children-and-SDGs-HLPF-2020-Joint-Statement.pdf (accessed 23 August 2021).

105 United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth 'Principles and barriers for meaningful youth engagement' (2017). The primary purpose of the UN-MGCY is to engage communities of young people, in the form of formal and informal child-led, youth-led, and child-and-youth-serving public interest federations, unions, organisations, platforms, associations, councils, networks, movements, mechanisms, structures and other entities, as well as their members and individuals, in the design, implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of sustainable development policies at all levels.

National level forums and initiatives

In all the six countries sampled, there was an existing national platform for child participation that could be engaged in the development framework. These included State sanctioned national children parliaments (sometimes backed by legislation) and child participation platforms supported by non-state actors. The study found that national level forums and initiatives play a critical role of advocacy towards realisation of the set targets in development agendas. This includes participation of children in development agenda meetings and dialogues expressing their views on what policy makers and policy implementers can do better to improve implementation and realisation of development agendas. While such platforms are critical, the study found that there are limited cases where children's

voices are captured when decisions are made after a dialogue. Stakeholders note that those decisions usually lack consideration of views of children from different contexts and backgrounds.

Regional and continental level forums and initiatives

Data was collected from 28 organisations (see Annexure 3) through an online self-administered survey as well as desk review. The list was reviewed, and four regional level child and youth-led forums that promote child participation in the implementation of the development agenda were identified. The child and youth-led forums engaged during this study, while not exhaustive, were selected due to their scope of work, coverage and level of engagement in child participation.

Erique Eerufu Onojoserio

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African Movement of Working Children and Youth (AMWCY)	Formed in Ivory Coast in 1994 by four children and youth, AMWCY has close to one million members spread across 4 300 grassroots groups in 28 countries across Africa. AMWCY supports sub-regional, and regional developmental processes, and as an observer to the Committee and has previously engaged children in the reporting processes.
CSO Forum	The children forum of the CSO Forum was established in 2019 on the sidelines of the 15th CSO Forum and the 32nd ACERWC session that took place in Egypt. The Forum is made up of children from all the five regions in Africa and under the umbrella of the ACRWC CSO Forum. The Children Forum meets three times a year to deliberate on issues affecting children in Africa and submit their recommendation to the ACERWC. The Forum has a standing slot during the ordinary session of the ACERWC
Media Network on Child Rights and Development	Established in 2008, the network is one of the pioneers of advancing children rights using media. The organisations through its Children News Agency has provided children in Zambia with global platform to address world leaders the organisation focuses on SDG 3, 4, 13, 16 and 17.
Mtoto News	Mtoto News uses technology as medium for child participation, Mtoto News trains children on using digital platforms to advocate for themselves as well uses technology to engage children through holding virtual forums, developing child friendly content in digital formats such videos, animations, magazines and games.
Regional Network of Children and Young People Trust (RNCYPT)	Based in Zimbabwe, RNCYPT works with various child participation structures in Southern, Central, and Eastern Africa. The structures include junior councils, child-led groups/organisations, children's clubs, and junior parliamentarians.
Terre des Hommes (TDH) Southern Africa Child and Youth Participation Youth	The network is made up of child and youth participation representatives from five countries in Southern Africa who participate in leading child participation in development processes. The TDH youth network is focused on creating awareness around the SDGs and has been working mainly on creating platforms for child participation in advancing SDG 15.

Audience

The research found that most forums give children an opportunity for children to engage with leaders and decision makers. For instance, in 2021 the CSO Forum invited members of the committee secretariat during the children forum to respond to questions about Agenda 2040. The Forum also had experts who helped children understand the 2040 Agenda better. The children were able to present a communique to the committee and CSOs during the continental commemoration of the Day of the African child 2021 which focused on the urgency of implementing Agenda 2040.

Since 2018, RNCYPT has been conducting national and regional workshops, which brought together children from different child-led groups. The platforms were an opportunity to create awareness among children on the three development agendas and mapping ways for children to participate and influence decisions around implementation of the agendas.

> We have not only focused on influencing child participation in implementation of the agendas, but as an organisation we believe that children with knowledge and understanding are able to engage effectively and demand accountability from policymakers. Hence, we focused as well on creating awareness and capacity building children on SDGs, Agenda 2040 and Agenda 2063. We however faced challenges of child friendly material on the agendas, but we made use of facilitators who work with children and are able to engage children at different levels.
> – KII, RNCYPT.

The Media Network of Child Rights and Development through their Children News Agency has been providing children with opportunities to address regional and global leaders on different SDGs, for instance, Yande, a 16-year-old, addressed COP 13 on SDG 13 on climate change where she challenged global leaders to do something about climate change which is affecting African children who have done little in contributing to global warming

> Our members of the Children's News Agency (CNA) have been active in the shadow reporting processes of SDGs. The children from diverse backgrounds (including rural and urban areas) were key in providing feedback about Zambia's enforcement of SDGs – KII MNCRD.

Cottonbro

Space

Child participation in the implementation of development agendas is limited. Though there were efforts from the youth network to influence dialogue on Agenda 2040 and Agenda 2063, there was limited space for such dialogues to happen. Space was not readily available for children to participate across all contexts despite significant efforts by the organisations to create awareness of the development agenda.

> We have supported different child led groups/organisations and we have made efforts to create awareness on all development agendas which are SDGs, Agenda 2063 and 2040. – KII 8.

> We have supported awareness creation of SGDs, Agenda 2063 and agenda 2040 among members' associations across all the 28 countries we work in. In most cases we would support national events or regional technical support missions where capacity building will be done for facilitators who would in turn cascade training in their respective countries. – KII, AMWCY.

Expanding spaces for children seems to be on the radar of organisations involved in promoting child participation in the development agenda. The TDH network, for example, has mapped the spaces they could occupy to advance their priority goals.

> SDGs are of interest to the Youth Network, but we made a deliberate effort to focus on SDG 15. We have for the past two years been creating awareness on the goal and making efforts to engage with policymakers to ensure children's right to a safe and clean environment are realised. We have contributed to the Global campaign #myplanetmyrights, which resulted in the adoption of a resolution by the UN on the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. – KII 9.

Arthur Krijgsman

Involvement

The organisations identified involved children in the development agenda to varying degrees and using different methods. RNCY-PT engaged and facilitated participation of children in the implementation of SDGs in Zimbabwe. Though they did not focus on all SDGs, and special emphasis was on those that link to the strategic focus of the organisation.

> We have made efforts to ensure children engage in the implementation of SDGs through different cluster meetings. Our interest is on SDG 1 to SDG 6, which are closely linked to the work of our organisation. It has not always been easy to ensure children participate in different platforms given the unavailability of child friendly information and ensuring platforms to dialogue on SDGs considers age and maturing of children, context and background of children. – KII, RNCYPT.

The CSO Forum, as part of the 2021 Day of the African Child, conducted a survey to collect children's views on the implementation of Agenda 2040. The study 'An Africa Fit for Me' aimed to seek children's views and increase their awareness on the important frameworks on children. To ensure children understood the Agenda 2040, the CSO forum developed the Agenda 2040 in child friendly formats in an Animation and booklet.

> More often human rights instruments are not child friendly, making comprehension and appreciation for the provisions within these instruments difficult for children, and a barrier to meaningful child participation. So it was important for us as the CSO Forum to ensure that there is a document that children can relate to, can understand and can use daily in their lives so that when we have dialogues with children about whether the African Charter on RWC is a lived reality in their lives and countries, they could

confidently and authoritatively reflect on that as they have an age appropriate information, thereby influencing priorities for the African child, hence, the CSO Forum doing this. – KII ACRWC CSO Forum.

Contrary to the experience with Agenda 2030, there is generally limited dialogue and involvement of children around Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040. However, some important interlinking participation in the reporting process to treaty bodies was identified. AMW-CY, for instance, has involved children in the implementation of the development agendas, including by involving children to participate in state party reporting to the ACERWC and the CRC. Children, for example, were supported to prepare their own complementary reports to the child rights treaty bodies. These reports by children capture some concerns of children on implementation of SDGs, Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040. Further engagement has revealed that though they were efforts by AMWCY, awareness levels remained limited since the organisation had no specific resources earmarked to support awareness raising of the development agendas.

> We have mobilised children to participate in regional platforms such as the CSO Forum, which somehow brings the two key agendas, 2040 and 2063. We have as well mobilised children to compile and submit child-led complementary reports to both child rights treaty bodies and the report by children captures issues in SDGs, agenda 2063 and 2040. – KII 8.

In Southern Africa, the TDH youth group is involved in associated processes. This includes participation in development of SADC model laws, the recent one being participation in consultations towards the development of the SADC Protocol on Children and Young People Rights.

Influence

In an effort to ensure children influence decision making, the organisations that participated in the study have created platforms from the community level to the national level. For instance the Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Rights of Children (KAARC) has established Child Rights Clubs in schools, the clubs enable children to influence decision making at school level. The MNCRD have been involved in supporting children develop child led complimentary VNR reports[106] and influence the planning and implementation of the SDGs at the National level.

> We created platforms for members of the CNA, Junior Mayors and journalists to hold leaders accountable at district and national levels. This was supported by capacity development programmes for duty bearers for them to work with children and has resulted in influencing decisions and actions in the target areas.' – MNCRD.

However, there was limited space for such dialogues to happen.

> There is generally limited awareness on agenda 2040 and 2063, and across countries we are present, dialogue on the two agendas is very limited to non-existence. This is worrisome as we note that the ACERWC has not done much to ensure states prioritise the two agendas and we get to only hear of some ad hoc discussions around that. – KII 9.

Challenges were noted by key informants in establishing spaces for children, and especially in North Africa. For instance, while AMWCY has been successful in establishing the grassroots groups in most parts of Africa, the organisation has had little success in North Africa. This was attributed to 'strong cultural influence, State-related control, and the fear of contradicting religious leaders'.

> 'There is need to speak the language of the communities in North Africa to be able to establish child led movements.' – KII, AMWCY.

This is further collaborated by the CSO Forum which notes that it has been challenging accessing children from North Africa, the biggest reason being language barrier, the time difference, and lack of dedicated organisations focusing on child participation. While efforts have been made by some CSOs to increase participation in regional forums, participation of children in such platforms is often tokenistic and doesn't provide the avenue through which children can influence processes and outcomes.

> 'We noted limited appreciation of the need to involve children in the implementation of development agendas rights from national platforms, sub-regional and regional platforms.' – KII, AMWCY.

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106 UN SDGs 'Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in Zambia: A children's perspective shadow report' https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tOkoPjF4lEKI_F7kC7vlqIlu7uivK6cR/view?usp=sharing (accessed 01 October 2022).

Key findings from the mapping of child participation initiatives and forums

- Child participation takes place across a number of settings at the local, national, regional and continental levels.
- While participation takes place in a range of settings and involves a wide range of state and non-state actors, initiatives/forums can generally be categorised as those which are: (1) youth led; (2) supported by child-focused CSOs; and (3) systematised by the State (for example, children's parliaments and/or Junior Council, school clubs).
- The forums and initiatives identified use different approaches to involve children in the implementation of development agenda or the realisation of their rights.
- Out of the 28 forums or initiatives identified in this study, only four promote child participation in the implementation of the development agenda.

- Child participation in the implementation of development agendas is limited. Though there were efforts from the youth network to influence dialogue on Agenda 2040 and Agenda 2063, there was limited space for such dialogues to happen. Space was not readily available for children to participate across all contexts despite significant efforts by the organisations to create awareness of the development agenda. Challenges were noted by key informants in establishing spaces for children, and especially in North Africa.
- The study showed that though there were efforts from the youth network to influence dialogue on Agendas 2063 and 2040, there was limited space for such dialogues to happen.

Danilyuk

4 GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN CHILD PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Progress has been made to increase the participation of children in the development agendas. Despite this, a number of gaps exist in the participation of children in the advocating, implementation, and monitoring of the development agendas.

Accountability gaps. Assumptions that learning takes place in the classroom and that children therefore learn about the development agenda in school or from civil society actors results in gaps in accountability and responsibility leaving meaningful child participation wanting. While schools can serve as an important forum to disseminate information on the development agenda and meaningfully engage children in it, increased systemisation of child participation in implementing and monitoring the development agenda is needed at all levels. Increased regional collaboration between governments and civil society organisations could address the concerns through the development of uniform initiatives that promote awareness and ensure effective child participation in the development agenda.

Cultural and societal barriers hindering child participation in the development agenda. The family unit is usually the first point of learning for every child. When the culture in which a child develops forbids them from expressing themselves, it makes it more difficult for them to express themselves in other social settings and pose a threat to their wellbeing.

In an FGD in Senegal, a child expressed that:

Families respect the culture and thus the problem on the family level and the cultural level can be viewed through the same lens. This is because families - the parents, the adults in a family - adhere to cultural values. Therefore, they'd say 'when I speak you should not be speaking', for example, a child cannot decide where they want to go. For example, when a child says 'Papa , I want to ..., "No you will not go"'. Even if the child tells them, he/she will not go. Thus, families are the cultures and traditions that our elder brothers, our fathers, our mothers adhere to.

This is especially worse when it comes to participation of girls in communities which are patriarchal, when the roles of girls are defined to be hidden and not loud. 'Some people still believe that girls should get married at a young age and many end up committing suicide because their opinions were not heard.' – FGD in Lesotho.

Further some actions are termed as taboo or uncultural which hinders boys from participating. '[M]en being heads of families were deprived of a need to express their emotions and many boys end up being raised unable to express their emotions and voice their dissatisfactions'. – FGD in Lesotho.

Providing a child with a safe space to air their views, and be heard at the household level, enables them to develop in healthy ways that allow them to participate more actively at the community level. Putting up child participation structures would be of no use if the children cannot participate after all. Parents should embrace this reality, although it may sound foreign to most of them.

Richard Badejo

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Inadequate information, education and communication (IEC) to support awareness raising among children. As indicated in the findings above, there is greater awareness of Agenda 2030 as compared to Agenda 2063 or Agenda 2040. Meaningful child participation can only take place when children have information which is accessible and inclusive. In order to promote the knowledge of the development frameworks, they ought to be written in language that can be easily understood by the children. This may involve use of local languages. For instance, one initiative in Kenya developed a child-friendly Swahili version of the SDGs that were used alongside developed curricula for children in Murang'a County.[107] The CSO Forum and Mtoto News co-created a child friendly version of Agenda 2040 in printable and digital formats. The materials were further translated in Swahili and are available online on the CSO Forum website. These materials can be printed and distributed to children across Africa to enable them learn more about the Agenda 2040. Such initiatives could be undertaken at the national level, and adopted by all African countries.

Involving children in voluntary national reporting (VNR) on the development framework was identified as a gap, considering that only a few children interviewed had engaged in such processes. The children who had participated in such processes demonstrated greater knowledge and confidence in participating in accountability processes for the development framework. Involving children in the VNR process was therefore identified as an opportunity in building capacity for knowledge and accountability of the development frameworks among young people.

> [T]his is where we build passion for children, this is where we build their thinking processes they have all these systems in schools, so can we utilize these systems effectively so that we say that when we are doing the VNR process. – KII in Kenya.

Child led initiatives provide opportunity for sustainable participation in the development agenda. This can be achieved through empowering more young people with the knowledge, skills, and competence to facilitate effective child participation in the development frameworks. The trained young people would provide a pool of trainers who can provide knowledge and mentorship to the next younger generation. A few youth-led groups have spear-headed the participation of children through guiding children in decision-making, for instance the Youth Advisory Board.

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107 Stahili Foundation website www.stahili.org (accessed 03 October 2022).

Lack of child leadership. Capacity-building and child leadership in the development agenda is lacking but would help better and meaningfully engage children at all levels of governance. This would give the children the power to hold the various leaders and stakeholders accountable.

Lack of capacity-building for adults. Adults have an important role to play to help children realise their rights to participation. There is a noted lack of capacity among adults to ensure effective and meaningful child participation. There is a need to develop training guidelines and policies that enable continental and regional as well as Governments and CSOs to understand what is expected of them in relation to involving children in decision-making processes in a manner which is meaningful.

Limited spaces promoting child participation in the development agenda. Whereas child participation has been defined as a process, children are involved sparingly. Many initiatives take the form of a one-time event, which are not effective for efficient child participation. In order to overcome this barrier, the strategies and guidelines for the involvement of children should take the form of a continuous process.

Richard Badejo

Tokenistic participation. Child participation is a process, and not an event. Forums for participation are often events, held on an ad hoc basis without linking such participation to any meaningful continuous processes.

Unequal investment in raising awareness and opportunities for engaging in implementation of the development frameworks. Key informants acknowledged that there was unequal investment of resources to enable them raise awareness on Agenda 2063 and 2040. This could be linked to limited funding from agencies or donors with mandate/interests in Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040. Considering that civil society organisations play a critical role in raising awareness on various human rights and policy documents, lack of funding targeted at raising awareness on these development frameworks would limit the level of awareness in the populace, and especially among children.

> [I]f you want children to participate in issues of the budget, you have to train them so that they understand or rather you have to break down the technical language that is used on adults so that it is going to be easy for them to understand, when that is done children will be able to bring out the real issues and effectively participate. – KII, Zambia.

Danya Gutan

CONCLUSION

Achieving the goals set out in Africa's development Agenda requires active participation from everyone, including children and youth. We cannot see the vision of an Africa We Want unless children – who make up half of the population on the continent – are informed, meaningfully engaged and involved in charting this course.

This study sought to better understand the extent to which children participate and are involved in the implementation and monitoring of the development agenda. It aimed to: identify the extent of awareness of and involvement in the development frameworks amongst children; map the forums and initiatives for child participation across the continent, and analyse the extent to which these forums and platforms facilitate engagement on development matters; identify the gaps and opportunities in the implementation of child participation in the development agenda.

1 AWARENESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS

Generally, the level of awareness of the development frameworks was low. While the SDGs were the most familiar framework among child respondents, most children were unfamiliar with Agenda 2063 and Agenda 2040. While the adult key informants had a better grasp of SDGs, they were not equally informed on Agenda 2040 and 2063. For children, the limited awareness was associated with inadequate child-friendly information and communication materials; limited capacity building and limited involvement in accountability/reporting mechanisms. School curriculum and activities appear to be a good pathway for raising awareness for children. The activities should be child-led and also provide space for direct engagement between the children and the adults responsible for implementation of these development agenda. Children who have participated in accountability processes such as the Volunteer National Reporting process for SDGs were more likely to have a good understanding of the development framework. There were concerns that even when children participated, their ability to access the appropriate audience and influence decisions was limited. Negative influence of culture and the limited role played by state agencies in promoting child participation were cited as barriers.

2 MAPPING THE EXISTING FORUMS AND INITIATIVES ON CHILD PARTICIPATION

There are about five regional level forums and initiatives across the continent. Most of these are initiatives of non-state organisations in Southern Africa, Eastern Africa, and Western Africa. Overall, there has been little success in setting up such regional child participation forums in North Africa. The majority of the existing regional forums have not had initiatives specifically promoting child participation in the three development agendas. Where these agendas have been discussed, it has been part of a generalised review of the role of children in development. Similar limitations in facilitating child participation in development agenda were observed in national level forums and initiatives. Resource limitation was cited as a persistent hindrance to building capacity of children and duty-bearers on child participation in the development frameworks. It was observed that the culture and role of the state were important in facilitating child participation. Family setup was identified as a critical space for building interest for sustainable child participation.

3 GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The most important gaps were limited awareness of the development framework among both children and adults; lack of appropriate child-friendly materials that would help children to understand the development frameworks; and, limited spaces for meaningful and child-led involvement in design and implementation of the development framework.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report shows that child participation in governance processes remains significantly low, especially in Africa, in part due to the resistance in mainstream society. The report reveals that there is a need to raise more awareness on the participation of children in the development agenda to both the right holders (children) and the duty bearers (state parties). The recommendations from the study to various stakeholders are presented in the table below:

For community organisations; regional and national state and non-state stakeholders in child participation and the development frameworks	
• Development of materials in child friendly formats including short videos, art, and games in simple language to facilitate understanding by children.	• Sensitisation of the communities on the need for child participation through local campaigns, round-table discussions, and public forums.

For State Parties and child-led organisations

- Involve children in discussions on national budget allocations in order to ensure there is funding for child participation initiatives.
- Promote awareness of the development agenda amongst children, by including the agenda in the academic curriculum and school clubs.
- Legitimise the involvement of children in informal settings at home and at school, as a prerequisite for their involvement in more formal settings such as discussions on the development agenda.[108]
- Conduct training and capacity building for the relevant stakeholders at the national and community level on how to facilitate engagement of children, including those in marginalised groups.
- Enforce government actors to utilise the existent structures of child participation in the implementation of the development agenda.
- Mandate relevant government strategies to include action plans and indicators on participation of children in the development agenda without discrimination.[109]
- Mandate the relevant ministries and state departments to report on their strategic initiatives regarding child participation as an accountability initiative.

- Establishment of child-led forums at national level to gather children's opinions on the implementation of the development agendas. Ensure that children's views are given due weight in the final draft of the national implementation plans.
- Establish decentralised feedback mechanisms that consistently provide children feedback and follow-up on the outcomes of children's participation.
- As part of the Decade of Action on SDG implementation, consider children as an important cohort of the population that should not be left behind. Children must be prioritised by accelerating implementation of SDG Goals and targets related to children. More specifically, when drafting and submitting VNR reports, governments must establish a consultative process that safely and meaningfully involves children to solicit their views on the State's progress in achieving the set targets.
- Make efforts to involve marginalised and vulnerable children including children with disabilities, survivors of harmful practices, children in armed conflict, children living on the streets amongst others.

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For the African Union/ACERWC

- Provide adequate resources to run and support the existing structures of child participation.
- The AUC should ensure there is mandatory implementation and reporting on a regular basis on progress of implementation of development agendas. This may include state periodic reports and also CSO reports to get a balanced analysis of progress of implementation.
- To address the challenge experienced in this study of having one regional center for approval of multi-country studies by creating regional mechanisms or institutions responsible for reviewing and approving ethics and safeguarding measures in research protocols that apply to multiple countries in Africa. This will also allow for establishing guidelines that are responsive to the research and safeguarding in the continent.
- ACERWC is urged to widely popularise the ACERWC Child Participation Guidelines, as part of efforts to raise awareness on how children can engage with its work, including through the submission of child-led reports.
- ACERWC must continue to convene popularisation workshops on Agenda 2040, but providing a standing slot for children from all geographical regions to present their assessment of the status of implementation of Agenda 2040.
- ACERWC is urged to consider developing a General Comment on article 4(2) to elucidate the meaning and ambit of the article and State Parties' obligations to fulfil the right to participation and links to development frameworks.

Non-state actors

- Conduct parallel periodic reports on the status of child participation in the development agenda in order to challenge countries to prioritise it.
- Develop child-friendly versions of development frameworks and widely popularise the different global, regional and national level spaces where children can influence government action and accountability.
- CSO Forum should continue its efforts to support children's participation in regional forums linking such efforts with the ACERWC processes. The Children's Voices on Agenda 2040 report should be developed as a parallel process to the ACERWC continental assessment on AU Agenda 2040.

Academia and media

- Ongoing research and education on the existence and implementation of the development frameworks.
- Media is called upon to identify child participation structures and involve children in media monitoring on implementation of development frameworks. The media should responsibly report challenges facing children, and while promoting media education, ICT literacy, and use of social media to advance social change.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1: INTERVIEW GUIDES

1 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHILDREN

Introduction:

My name is _____. I am supporting a team of researchers from Centre for Human Rights in the University of Pretoria, African Institute for Children Studies and the Institute for Family Studies and Ethics at Strathmore University, Kenya. The goal of this study is to identify gaps and opportunities for child participation in development agenda in Africa, with a focus on SDGs, Agenda 2040 and Agenda 2063. You have been selected to share your opinion due to your historical role and mandate in promoting child participation and/or in design and implementation of the development agenda. I therefore kindly request your consent in participating in the interview. I also kindly request to record the interview.

The interview is in three parts:

Part 1 We will jointly define what is considered child participation, and the three development agendas based on your opinion and other literature

Part 2 You will rank the extent to which you or children in your community/country have participated in the development agenda, giving the reasons for the level of participation (include influence of family, culture/religion/the State)

Part 3 You will help identify gaps, opportunities and make recommendations.

The interview will last about 1 hour.
Do you have any questions?
Do I have consent to proceed with the interview?

SECTION 1: Awareness of Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs)

1. Have you ever heard of SDGs?
2. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) had a space and time to provide your opinion on SGDs? Please explain.
3. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) been involved in implementation of SDGs? Please explain.
4. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) had audience with persons/institutions responsible for implementation of SDGs? Please explain.
5. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) been able to influence the implementation of SDGs? Please explain.

SECTION 2: Awareness of Agenda 2063

1. Have you ever heard of Agenda 2063?
2. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) had a space and time to provide your opinion on Agenda 2063? Please explain.
3. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) been involved in implementation of Agenda 2063? Please explain.
4. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) had audience with persons/institutions responsible for implementation of Agenda 2063? Please explain.
5. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) been able to influence the implementation of Agenda 2063? Please explain.

SECTION 3: Awareness of Agenda 2040

1. Have you ever heard of Agenda 2040?
2. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) had a space and time to provide your opinion on Agenda 2040? Please explain.
3. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) been involved in implementation of Agenda 2040? Please explain.
4. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) had audience with persons/institutions responsible for implementation of Agenda 2040? Please explain.
5. Over the last year, have you (or children in your community/country) been able to influence the implementation of Agenda 2040? Please explain.

SECTION 4: Self-ranking table on extent of child participation for each of the Development Agendas (2030, 2063 and 2040)

Instructions:

We will now proceed to gather your opinion on the extent which children have participated in implementation of the various development frameworks.

In the first step, we will define what makes participation effective. These include (1) Audience – that children have access to the people that make decisions and platforms for gathering their opinion; (2) Influence – that there is demonstrated evidence that the opinion of children gathered is actually used in informing divisions and actions to promote the realisation of their rights; (3) Involvement – that there is deliberate provision of opportunity to be involved in decision making and implementation of actions that impact on children's lives; (4) Space provided for children to engage in decision making process, such as through child rights clubs or children parliament.

Secondly, we will together highlight the opportunities in development agendas. These include a leadership that acknowledges and provides space for child participation; that the implementation of the development agenda should be deliberate in promoting child participation; that accountability mechanisms such as periodic review provide opportunity to children to provide their opinion; that child-friendly information and communication materials are made available to children; and that capacity building for children is provided to understand and engage in development agenda.

We will now use the table below to rank the extent to which each of the above is realised.

Development Agenda (Complete separate tables for each of the dev agenda 2030/ 2063/2040)	Child participation Assessment Criteria (Respondent to rank as 1,2,3) Ranking 1 = Poor; 2 = Fair; 3 = Good			
	Audience	Influence	Involvement	Space
Accountability (reviews)				
Capacity building				
IEC Materials				
Implementation				

2 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Introduction

The Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria is conducting a continental project on the implementation of child participation in the implementation of the global and regional development agenda in Africa, as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, and the AU Agenda 2040 for Children. The overall goal of the project is to build awareness on the importance of child participation in national, regional, and global development processes in Africa.

The contracted parties for this project (African Institute for Child Studies and the Strathmore Institute for Family Studies and Ethics) are conducting the study across the region and are working with six countries to get an understanding amongst adults on their views of child participation, and how they have facilitated the implementation of child participation in the said development agendas.

2. Questions:

1. Are you aware of the development agendas?
   If yes, what is your understanding of the agendas in brief?

2. What is your understanding of child participation?

3. How would you rate the importance of child participation in the implementation of the development agenda?
   Not important/Slightly important/Very important

4. What is the basis of the answer given in (3) above?

5. To what extent have children in your country been involved in the implementation of the development agenda?
   Not involved/Slightly involved/Very involved

6. What opportunities have been availed for child participation in the implementation of the development agendas in your country?
   i. Agenda 2063 | ii. Agenda 2040 | iii. SDGs

7. In your opinion, what support or capacity development do children require in order to participate in the implementation of the development agenda?

8. Have there been opportunities that gave children the space and time to give their opinions on the implementation of the various development agendas?
   If yes, please explain.
   i. Agenda 2063 | ii. Agenda 2040 | iii. SDGs

9. (i) On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate the willingness of adults to engage children in the implementation of the development agenda?
   (1 being very poor and 5 being very good)
   (ii) What is the basis of the response given in 8(i) above?

10. (i) Have you been in a position to influence the participation of children in the implementation of the development agendas?

    (ii) What steps have you taken to ensure a rich engagement of children in the implementation of the development agendas?

11. What are some of the challenges that have limited child participation in the implementation of the development agendas?

12. How could the said challenges in (9) above be addressed?

ANNEXURE 2: LIST OF COMPLETED INTERVIEWS

Sub-Region	Country	Target groups	Name of group or person interviewed	Number of participants by sex		
				Males	Females	Total
Eastern Africa	Kenya	FGDs				
		FGD 1 with children	Jamuhuri High Schools SDG Clubs	20	0	20
		FGD 2 with children	Mtoto News Children Journalists	18	12	30
		Key informant Interviews				
		NGO/CSO Forum	Ms Florence Syevua Country Coordinator. SDGs Kenya Forum	0	1	1
		Government agency	Ms Imelda Achieng, Chief Executive Officer Kenya Parliamentary Caucus on SDGs and Business	0	1	1
North Africa	Egypt	FGDs				0
		FGD 1 with children	Egypt Child Rights Coalition	4	6	10
		FGD 2 with children				0

Sub-Region	Country	Target groups	Name of group or person interviewed	Number of participants by sex		
				Males	Females	Total
West Africa	Senegal	FGDs				0
		FGD 1 with children	AMYCA club	5	16	21
		FGD 2 with children	School club	4	18	22
		Key informant Interviews				0
		NGO/CSO Forum	CONAFE, Coalition Nationale des Associations et ONG en Faveur de l'Enfance	1		1
		NGO/CSO Forum	Coalition des organisations Nationales pour l'abandon du mariage des enfants (CONAME)	1		1
		Government agency				0

Sub-Region	Country	Target groups	Name of group or person interviewed	Number of participants by sex		
				Males	Females	Total
Central Africa	Burundi	FGDs				0
		FGD with children	Burundi Child Rights Forum	11	14	25
		Key informant Interviews				0
		NGO/CSO Forum	Luhango Mastajabu Alpha	1		1
		NGO/CSO Forum	KATEREKWA Brigitte		1	
		NGO/CSO Forum	KIDENDE Emmanuel	1		
		NGO/CSO Forum	MUGISHA Fleury	1		
		NGO/CSO Forum	MUGISHA Arthur	1		
		Government agency	BARUTWANAYO Juvenal	1		1

Sub-Region	Country	Target groups	Name of group or person interviewed	Number of participants by sex		
				Males	Females	Total
Southern Africa	Zambia	FGDs				0
		FGD 1 with children	Children News Network	1	4	5
		FGD 1 with children	MNCRD: Zambia			0
		Key informant Interviews				0
		NGO/CSO Forum	Mr Dennis Nyati, Executive Director, Zambia Civil Society Coalition on SDGs	1	0	1
		NGO/CSO Forum	SDGs Center for Southern Africa	1		1
		Government agency	Mr Sashi Bwalya, Principal Economist, from Ministry of National Development Planning	1	0	1
	Lesotho	FGDs				0
		FGD 1 with children	High school club	8		8
		Total		81	73	150

ANNEXURE 3: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS THAT PROVIDED INFORMATION IN THE MAPPING EXERCISE

Name of child participation structure	Levels of operation	Targeted age group
• ACJ child ambassadors Host: Advocacy for child Justice(ACJ)	Regional	12-17 years
• Mtoto News International	Regional	All children
• Elimu Mwangaza Tanzania	Sub-regional	12-17 years
• FDPD & ECCR Egypt	Sub-regional	12-17 years
• BORN TO KNOW FOUNDATION	Sub- regional	All children
• Teenagers Foundation	Sub-regional	All children
• Umoja wa wawezeshaji KIOO	National	12-17 years
• Educational and vocational training center for street children Host: Teenagers Foundation	National	12-17 years
• National child participation Task Force Teenagers Foundation	National	12-17 years
• 1. Centre for Youth and Children's Affairs (CEYCA), and 2. NGO Coalition on Child Rights (NGO CCR)	National	12-17 years
• Africa wide Movement for Children	National	All children
• Tanzania Women Journalists Advocate for Children Rights (TAWOJAC)	National	All children
• Burundi Child Rights Forum	National	All children
• Children's Voice Today (CVT)	National	All children
• Children Agenda Forum (CAF) Host: African Institute For Children Studies (AICS)	National	All children
• Kenya Alliance for Advancement of Children Rights (KAACR)	School	12-17 years
• Zambia Civic Education Association	School	12-17 years
• Elimu Mwangaza(EM)	School	12-17 years
• Kijana mpya initiative Tanzania	School	All children
• Teenagers Foundation	Community	0-5 years
• Junior Child Council (URTJC) Host: Teenagers Foundation	Community	12-17 years
• Teenagers Foundation	Community	6-11 years
• Tuelimike	Community	All children
• Letsema Child Rights Network Host: Letsema Child Rights Ambassadors	Community	All children

Child participation is a fundamental right guaranteed in international law, specifically under articles 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and 4(2) of the African Children's Charter. It is a facilitative right that is significant in the intellectual development of the child and vital for a child's autonomy and social responsibility later in a child's life course. States Parties to the CRC and African Children's Charter have an obligation under international law to adopt legislative and other measures to protect and advance a child's right to participate in all matters that affect them.

Child participation is not a common theme in African development discourse and this study has demonstrated the challenges faced by states parties to the CRC and the African Children Charter in meaningfully involving children in the implementation of development frameworks. Further, the study also spotlights children's agency and capacity to respond to the challenges that society collectively faces, and to input into development initiatives aimed at securing their well-being.