

THE INAUGURAL AFRICA CHILDREN SUMMIT

10TH APRIL- 12TH APRIL 2023

OUTCOME STATEMENT



**The Africa
Children
Summit**

'Seen, Heard and Engaged'



OUTCOME STATEMENT

Over 300 children from across Africa met between 10th to 12th of April, 2023 for the 1st Africa Children Summit physical and virtual. The African Children Summit is a child-led platform that brings together children from different backgrounds, ages and abilities. The Summit was designed to deliver unscripted and authentic dialogue between policy makers and children. The aim of the event was to share and address challenges that children are facing in an era of newly emerging risks, such as pandemics and climate change. A particular focus was given on the ways in which children can be agents of change in the face of the key challenges.

We got to express our wishes through performances, art, spoken word, essays, poetry, dance, discussion and presentations. It is our hope that they will be taken into consideration to make Africa a better place for all the children. We especially appreciate the participation of the Hon. Aboubekrine El Jera and Hon. Aissatou Sidikou from the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, Prof. Philip Jaffe - the Vice Chair of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and Dr. Najat M'jid Maalla - UN Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children in the Summit as well as representatives from the Government of Kenya, Government of South Africa and Government of Malawi and In more than 50 Civil Society Organizations.



During the 3 days, we were able to discuss and come up with solutions on 8 thematic areas and aspirations in Agenda 2040 namely Child Participation, Health, Education, Media and Technology, Access to Justice, Violence Against Children and Children Environmental Rights (Climate Action).

We appreciate what our governments are doing to improve our lives such as having laws that protect us, making sure more of us are in school and are able to access health services. However, we note with concern that there exists gaps in the implementation of various legal frameworks on child protection. The gaps in the implementation of the children's rights arise from lack of proper monitoring mechanisms leading to challenges such as poor parenting in some cases, poor education systems since we have come across some cases where corporal punishment has been administered as a way of punishment despite being abolished. In a detailed report, we were able to front these issues as follows;



ON OUR RIGHT TO BE HEARD (CHILD PARTICIPATION)



Child Participation is our right and not a privilege; nothing For us without us. We would like to be partners in decision making. However, we are concerned that we are not included in decision making on matters that concern us, especially children in hard to reach places, in vulnerable situations and children who are out of school. We are concerned that adults are not aware of the importance of children participation so they are not able to involve us. The laws are not made for children, the terms are hard and we can't understand them. We therefore recommend the following;



- Children do not want to be seen as passive recipients in decision making and every aspect of life that affects them, instead they should be partners.
- Children should be given time and opportunity to meet various leaders who influence policies that concern children. This way children can give them their views and they will be put into action
- Facilitate the availability of platforms for children, such as children's parliaments that are state resourced, for them to deliberate on matters affecting them, and input the outcome of their deliberation in Governmental decisions and actions.
- Strengthen the capacity of children as rights holders to engage with policy makers in their respective countries;
- Children should encourage each other, be each other's keeper, in schools and communities.



- Children should know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to participation.
- Children should be holding meetings frequently in their homes, communities and summits like the ACS which involves direct decision making.
- Include children beyond the meetings even when they are in schools
- Include a child participation watchdog from the AU level to oversee child participation laws
- All African Countries should have the best interest of the child quote on all laws.
- Working frameworks for children engagement
- Come up with frameworks to sensitize the general public on child participation



ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



Violence Against Children is still happening in many African countries, with our friends being harmed in the name of cultural practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, Corporal punishment is still taking place in many schools in Africa, early child marriages and dropping out of school which results in the violation of our rights. There are many children who are being affected by mental health. We therefore recommend the following:



- Counselors should be made available in schools to support children with protection concerns.
- Enhancement of security for children, especially during political elections and wars in countries, to ensure that the children are safe. The police should be trained on how to properly handle children.
- Governments should ensure strict enforcement of laws and policies on violence against children including harmful cultural practices.
- Children should be provided with reasonable punishment in schools and corporal punishment should be completely outlawed as it amounts to violence against children.
- The community should be educated on the importance of children's rights.
- Government should take action against people who propagate violence against children.
- The government should provide children with basic needs because it is their right.

- The government should come up with a proper framework for all the children to get the basic needs equally.
- The government should include children in decision making, not only in policies but also meetings in the society and in any other meeting that involves them.
- The government should put restrictions on discipline methods that are given to children especially when they are in schools with proper monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure adherence.
- Children should be made aware of their rights so that they can know when they are being violated.
- Child helplines should be made available by the government so that children can report cases of violence.
- Children should be supported by parents, the society and their schools so that they can have a better future.
- Children should stop being discriminated against based on their gender.
- Children should not be discriminated based on their class.





ON OUR RIGHT TO EDUCATION



We acknowledge that education is key in our growth and development as well as securing our future. We go to school;

- To Build a foundation for our future
- To gain knowledge and learn new tactics on how to improve the society we live in.
- To learn new concepts and skills and how to apply them.
- To develop our mental capabilities including learning how to be creative.
- To Interact with others and gain social skills.

We appreciate the effort that our governments have put in so that many of us are in school, but we still have our friends who are not in school and in most cases, public schools are not well funded. Poverty is a hindrance to education, many children are forced to drop out of school to work because their parents can not afford education. We are concerned that when girls get pregnant they are not able to go back to school. On ensuring Available, Accessible, Adoptable and Acceptable education we recommend the following;

- Education should be made free, compulsory and accessible to all children.
- The government should implement ILA (Indegenous Language Activity) to make schools more adaptable.



- Education should be 100% free, fair, inclusive and equitable and have proper facilities.
- Schools should be equipped with necessary equipment and resources to facilitate quality learning.
- Provision of clean water, sanitation facilities and food at school.
- To sensitize the teachers and the students on using grades to demoralise other students.
- Sensitisation for children on how to be more inclusive to children who are differently abled.
- Information on sexual and reproductive health should be incorporated in the school curriculum to empower children and help fight early pregnancies.
- Comprehensive Sexual Education should be taught separately in schools and teachers in partnership with experts eg psychologists should be realistic in teaching this.
- Teenage mothers should be encouraged and supported to continue their education.
- Invest in use of technology in school by equipping schools with technology and training teachers to be able to adopt to the fast changing technology.
- The government should ensure that there are enough facilities to cater for all the children
- Education should impart knowledge and skills relevant to the fast-changing world.



- Train Teachers to improve classroom practice (Focus on learning not teaching).
- Improve safety and security in schools by having security at school gates. In South Africa they are many gangs and children face molestation and kidnappings.
- Education Should nurture life skills and values.
- Sensitisation of students on how to properly handle other children with disability.
- Sports and other co-curricular activities should be part of the syllabus.
- Children with health conditions should not be discriminated by being given harsh work.
- Education to provide specialization pathways for children who want to pursue talent including music and other arts.
- Provide Facilities for children with disabilities such as ramps and create awareness to curb stereotyping of the differently abled children.
- Have counselors in school to provide psychosocial support for children.
- Corruption is an issue-this should be addressed in terms of individual values.
- Abolish corporal punishment. We have experienced alternative methods of punishment and they are more effective than being beating.
- Make provision of children who access school late (older students).
- Teachers should accomodate the different levels of learning for children who are slow learners.





WE BELIEVE THAT OUR PARENTS HAVE A ROLE IN SUPPORTING OUR LEARNING JOURNEY THROUGH:



- Supporting children who are not good Academically to pursue their talents by allowing participation in school activities.
- Providing a good environment for children to learn and study at home.
- Provide the needed support for learning e.g Pay school fees.
- Stopping comparison between their children in terms of academic performance and understanding that children are abled differently.



WE CAN NOT FOCUS ON EDUCATION IF WE ARE HUNGRY WE THEREFORE RECOMMEND;



- Government to provide nutritious food in schools throughout the year.
- Ensure safety in preparation of food in schools to avoid cases of food poisoning.
- Ensure the food provided in schools is of a balanced diet.



ON OUR RIGHT TO HEALTH



Health is a right and it is in Agenda 2040 and the sustainable development goals. Health is not an absence of disease but a state of wellbeing. We are concerned that not all of us are accessing this because of poverty, some parents are not able to take their children to health facilities, and some cultural practices stop children from accessing health. Mental health issues, peer pressure and drug abuse also were identified as challenges which tend to compromise the sanity and well being of the children. A Lot of us are stressed and anxious and yet mental health is not being focused on in many of our countries. We therefore recommend the following;

- Health care should be free, accessible and comprehensive to all children.



- Have youth-friendly healthcare facilities and professionals.
Free healthcare services for children, including adolescents.
- Allocation of more resources for the construction of healthcare facilities in remote areas.
- Psychosocial support for children. Children need counselors that can relate to their issues and are available in all public medical facilities.
- Create awareness of certain diseases and mental health.
- Create awareness of the disadvantages of some cultural practices that harm children such as FGM and early marriages that affect children's health.

- Construct health facilities in rural areas for easier access to healthcare services.
- Set policies for medical personnel who practice discrimination in health centres.
- Ensure onsite medical staff and equipment in boarding schools.
- Schools should cater for children with medical conditions and should provide for their needs.





ON MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND ONLINE SAFETY



Technology is our new reality and we can not stay away from it. The online space provides an opportunity for us to learn, research and collaborate with others, but unfortunately a lot of us don't have access to technology and media, and where it is available it is not child friendly. Adoption of technological advancement has made life easier however, the internet as well exposes the children to various harm. Online sexual exploitation and child trafficking are the major challenges that affect the children. We are being bullied online and it is affecting our mental and psychological health. We are as well being exposed to harmful content including pornographic material and violent content, we are being sexually abused and exploited online through being forced to share our explicit photos. We don't want to be afraid when we are using this technology, we therefore recommend the following;

- Government should enact laws and regulations on online child protection. The same should be strictly implemented.
- Media should have different segments of content consumed by adults and children.
- Media should create platforms for children to contribute content to their media products.
- Create websites that are child friendly for children and that are safe spaces for children.



- Create awareness on the dangers of media and technology to children
- All online adverts should be Child Friendly
- Train children on mindfulness on their digital activities and digital literacy.
- Media and technology consumed by children should be regulated. Parents must ensure that their children are following the important media which can shape their future
- Media should bring more educative content for children so that they can learn more from the internet
- We should eradicate all obscene content displayed and exposed to children
- Children need more safe spaces like google chrome for children
- Monitor app makers by putting restrictions on them. This can be done by restricting the kind of content they upload on the apps
- Authorities should not hold back the punishment they give to offenders. Whenever children report cases of bullying, actions should be taken.
- Adults should caution children on the apps they can access when using the Phones belonging to the adults
- Counseling should be made affordable for children who get abused online to seek counseling services without straining financially
- Children who have not undergone online abuse should be advised on what to do and what to avoid so that they don't undergo what other children have gone through.
- Social media companies should make social media rules easy to read.





ON ACCESS TO JUSTICE



Access to justice is a right for everyone including children whether in conflict or contact with the law. Children are supposed to have access to a child-friendly justice system with special safeguards because of their vulnerable nature. However, we note with concern that children continue to be detained and in some cases in the same facility with adults. Death sentences are pronounced against children and prohibited terms like



‘conviction’, ‘sentenced’ are used by courts while determining children matters. The whole system is unfriendly to the children making it unfair and unjust. The judicial staff lack basic child handling skills. The children are intimidated and may end up pleading guilty to crimes they did not commit. The system is faced with a myriad of challenges that have led to its failure. A lot needs to be done to reverse the situation and make the system child friendly, effective, efficient, just and fair. We therefore recommend that;

- The police should be trained on child handling skills
- Ensure that cases involving children are heard quickly and with confidentiality;
- Establish well resourced child friendly courts manned by trained personnel on access to child friendly justice for children.
- Provide free legal advice and representation to all children in conflict with the law

- Ensure that justice systems are gender sensitive, responding to the specific protection needs of girls, boys and Intersex Children.
- Provide for the availability of diversion programs oriented towards education and rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law.
- Children should be given time to meet policy makers to present their concerns regularly/provide means for feedback.
- Action should be strongly taken against the police who ask for bribes to help children/deal with corruption.
- Child friendly language should be used in courts where children can engage and interact.
- There should be a continued need for better data and evidence to inform violence prevention and response strategies that can be effective.
- Children should be given a chance to make a follow up on cases and guarantee trust in the justice system by working on the backlog of cases with the sense of speed and efficiency.
- Give opportunities to Children for education on child's rights and freedom so that they are able to know when their rights are violated and be able to speak up.





ON RIGHT TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT (CLIMATE CHANGE)



We the children are concerned with the state of our environment and how it is affecting us.

- **How the Government's Negligence is Destroying Our Environment:**

Ineffective central and local government departments tasked with protecting the environment, and negligent and corrupt institutions were cited several times as key contributory factors to continued environmental degradation as they look away due to underfunding or corruption.

- **Mining and Construction: Dangerous Environmental Neglect**

Gold/Diamond rush or construction boom, leaving gullies and open shafts and holes with no environmental rehabilitation taking place. Children and young people have lost limbs and died in some of these physical environmental damages and they have also become breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other pests, becoming a public health concern.

- **Dangers of Child Labour in Mining and Agriculture**

In some cases, some children participate in gold panning and are exposed to toxic chemicals used to clean gold. There are also children working on farms and exposed to dangerous chemicals such as pesticides used without proper protective clothing.



- **Poor Planning: Wetland Destruction and Water Scarcity**

In poor town planning, some urban planners parcel out residential stands on wetlands and as a result, the water table continues to decrease culminating in water shortages.

- **Ineffective policies and poor implementation of legislation. Corruption, Hinders Environmental Protection in Urban Development**

Corruption is a key hindrance in addressing the environmental challenges facing most towns and cities as these key concerns are ignored over the need for profit, for example, local councils and authorities allocating wetlands for residential and commercial purposes.



We however have optimism and believe that these could be stopped, but there is little knowledge and information available. We are therefore recommending the following

- Industries that dispose of their wastes wrongly should be penalized and educated on the right ways of waste disposal.
- People and Industries should use renewable energy and progress to burning all the use of fossil fuels.
- The government should spread awareness vastly to people, schools, communities and countries about the harm of using fossil fuels and plastics and any other thing that Pollutes our environment.
- A ban on logging should be enacted into permanent law throughout all countries as it risks reducing the forest cover of our countries.

- Money allocated to waste management should not be diverted to other use.
- Government to curb and put strong restrictions against corruption.
- Policies to be put that control carbon emissions and pollution, and all polluting companies to pay for their effects.
- There should be a climate change and environmental budget and policies to manage such funds.
- Government to come up with disaster risk reduction strategies in case of floods, and other natural disasters due to climate change.
- Use of machinery to be governed and monitored to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- The population is to be controlled in some places and also settlements in wetlands and along riverbanks are to be prohibited.
- Mining companies need to carry out environmental impact assessments and stick to environmental laws and protect the environment.
- Communities to practice reforestation and preserve natural resources and not practice poaching and cutting down trees.
- Government should ensure there is no disregard or loss of the right to a safe and clean environment for children.
- Mining companies to provide remediation for the Increase of skin infections and respiratory infections due to toxins from their mining activities.



- Both communities and city councils to act in order to avoid children drowning in gullies created in extractions and infrastructural developments.
- Environmental challenges have led to the loss of means of livelihood for parents and guardians and this affects children therefore the government should act on climate change issues and create policies to curb emissions and reduce natural disasters in order to protect children from hunger.
- There is a need to come up with climate-smart agricultural and other livelihood activities to avoid food insecurity.



Why We Need to Care for Nature: Communities and the Environment

- As children and young people, we noted that the lack of environmental awareness, information and knowledge in communities is a contributing factor. Communities are also responsible for environmental pollution and are part of the problem through littering, deforestation and environment destructive practices. Dumping waste, riverbank cultivation, veld fires and the use of dangerous pesticides were cited by children both online and during workshops as some of the major human activities harming the environment.

Adopted on the 12th of April 2023, in Nairobi - Kenya

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS FOR PROVIDING A PLATFORM FOR US



