unicef | for every child

TERMS OF REFERENCE

A baseline study on the investment and budgeting for children in Africa: towards a continental benchmark for child protection

Commented [SB1]: Please specify the title

Commented [RL1R2]: The title is as is: **A baseline study on investment and budgeting for children in Africa: towards a continental benchmark for child protection**

CONTRACT MODALITY	Individual Consultancy
DUTY STATION	UNICEF Office to the AU & ECA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia & remote with travel
DURATION OF CONTRACT	9.5 months

Purpose of Assignment

The overall objective is to establish an evidence-based understanding of the level and composition of public investment in children in Africa and to develop a proposed continental benchmark on planning and budgeting for children to support the assessment of the adequacy, equity, efficiency and effectiveness of public investment in the realisation of children's rights. The study will draw lessons from existing financing benchmarks, including health and education, while identifying areas where investment remains inadequate, with particular attention to child protection.

The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) has long prioritised investment and budgeting for children, including through the 2010 and 2025 Day of the African Child themes and its General Comment No. 5. Recognising that inadequate, inequitable and poorly monitored public financing remains a major obstacle to the realisation of children's rights, the Committee established the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Investment and Budgeting for Children in 2025. Despite growing attention to the issue, significant challenges persist across Africa, including insufficient allocations, weak budget execution, limited accountability, lack of child-sensitive budgeting practices, and minimal child participation in budget processes. Building on discussions during its 45th and 46th Ordinary Sessions, the Committee decided to undertake a study on a continental benchmark for investment and budgeting for children. The study responds to calls from States and partners for clear financing benchmarks, particularly for child protection, which currently receives very limited funding and lacks dedicated budget visibility. While sectors such as health and education benefit from established continental and global financing benchmarks, child protection has no comparable standard, making it difficult to track expenditure, assess adequacy of funding, and advocate for increased investment.

The proposed study, which will be developed by the Committee in collaboration with UNICEF, will therefore examine investment and financing gaps affecting children across relevant sectors, while drawing lessons from existing sectoral financing benchmarks to inform the proposal of a continental benchmark for minimum investment in child protection.

Scope of Work

The study will undertake a comparative assessment of public investment in children across sectors, with a particular focus on child protection, through desk-based research, analysis of budget and expenditure data, review of State Party reports and Concluding Observations, and consultations with relevant stakeholders. It will establish a baseline of child-focused financing, assess the adequacy of child protection investment against Charter obligations, and examine existing financing benchmarks in sectors such as health and education to identify lessons for developing a continental benchmark for minimum investment in child protection. The study will also develop a practical framework for tracking child protection investments and service capacity in selected States Parties, assess the quality and consistency of State Party reporting on budgetary measures, identify good practices in planning, budgeting, accountability and child participation, and provide recommendations to

strengthen investment in children and reporting under the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Specifically,

a. Establish an evidence-based continental baseline on public investment in children, including an assessment of existing investment patterns, financing gaps across relevant sectors, with particular attention to child protection, drawing on State Party reports submitted under the ACRWC reporting procedure, available national budget and expenditure data, and existing child-focused public expenditure analysis.
b. Review existing continental financing benchmarks relevant to children, including benchmarks in education and health, to assess their rationale, methodology, application, effectiveness and limitations, and draw lessons for the development of a continental benchmark on planning and budgeting for children.
c. Propose a continental benchmark for minimum investment in child protection, which may be expressed through budgetary allocation, budget execution, minimum service capacity, or a combination thereof, and which is capable of adaptation to national contexts and fiscal realities, informed by the experience of existing sectoral financing benchmarks and the factors that have supported or limited their effectiveness;
d. Develop a practical framework for identifying, classifying and tracking public investment in child protection, encompassing both budgetary allocation and expenditure and the service capacity such investment sustains, drawing on established approaches to child-focused public expenditure measurement and providing a common set of indicators against which States Parties can report;
e. Examine the extent, quality and consistency of reporting by States Parties on budgetary measures, including the extent to which investment in child protection is identifiable within such reporting, and identify the institutional and identify the institutional, technical and procedural factors that constrain such reporting and develop a child protection scorecard and accompanying guidance, based on the classification and indicators established under the tracking framework, to simplify reporting by States Parties and strengthen the information available to the Committee on investment in child protection.
f. Identify good practices in planning and budgeting for children, including in the planning, costing, allocation and execution of child protection budgets, as well as measures enabling child participation in budgetary processes, and formulate recommendations to strengthen budget preparation, enactment, execution, monitoring and accountability for the realisation of children's rights in Africa.

Work Assignments Overview	Deliverables/Outputs	**Delivery deadline (in weeks/months) and input days to complete the deliverable**
1. Inception. Review background documentation and agree the approach with the Committee and UNICEF. Define the methodology, the data sources and their limitations, the criteria and proposed selection of States Parties for framework testing and for good practice case studies, and the workplan. Participate in an inception meeting.	Inception report (10–15 pages) setting out the methodology, data sources, proposed selection of States Parties for framework testing and case studies, risks and mitigation, and workplan. To be agreed with the Committee and UNICEF before further work proceeds.	15 December 2026 5 days
2. Evidence assembly. Execute the sourcing strategy agreed at inception. Assemble national budget and expenditure documentation and existing child-focused public expenditure analyses into a	Structured evidence based on public investment in children, with a short methodological note documenting coverage, data limitations and the gaps that could not be closed. To be reviewed	15 February 2027 18 days

structured, fully sourced evidence base, recording the year and source for every figure. Review State Party reports and Concluding Observations under the ACERWC reporting procedure for policy context and for whatever budgetary information they contain.	with the Committee and UNICEF before the analysis proceeds.	
3. Baseline analysis and benchmark review. Analyse the evidence base to establish patterns of public investment in children across relevant sectors and identify financing gaps, with particular attention to child protection. Review existing sectoral financing benchmarks relevant to children, including the Abuja Declaration and education financing benchmarks, and assess their rationale, methodology, application, effectiveness and limitations.	Baseline report (50–60 pages plus annexes) on public investment in children in Africa, including a dedicated review of existing sectoral financing benchmarks and the lessons arising for the design of the continental benchmark for child protection.	5 April 2027 15 days
4. Continental benchmark for child protection. Develop the proposed continental benchmark for minimum investment in child protection, drawing on the baseline findings and the lessons from existing sectoral benchmarks. Set out the options considered, the basis for the proposed formulation, the data required to apply it, and how it can be adapted to different national contexts and fiscal realities.	Proposed continental benchmark for minimum investment in child protection (20–25 pages), expressed through budgetary allocation, budget execution, minimum service capacity or a combination thereof, with guidance on adaptation to national contexts.	17 May 2027 10 days
5. Tracking framework. Develop a practical framework enabling States Parties to identify, classify and track investment in child protection, covering both budgetary allocation and expenditure and the service capacity that investment sustains.	Tracking framework (20–25 pages) with classification guidance and indicator set, which provides the basis for the scorecard.	17 May 2027 12 days

6. Reporting assessment and scorecard. Examine the extent, quality and consistency of State Party reporting on budgetary measures under the Charter and identify the institutional, technical and procedural factors that constrain it. Develop a scorecard and accompanying guidance, built on the indicator set of the tracking framework, so that States Parties have a clear and consistent basis on which to report their investment in child protection.	Assessment of reporting on budgetary measures (15–20 pages), with a child protection scorecard drawn from the tracking framework and accompanying guidance enabling States Parties to report against it under the Charter.	14 June 2027 10 days
7. Good practices. Identify good practices in planning and budgeting for children, including in the planning, costing, allocation and execution of child protection budgets and in child participation in budgetary processes. Document selected practices as case studies, drawing where necessary on consultation with national authorities and partners, and formulate recommendations to States Parties.	Compendium of good practices (20–25 pages) with recommendations to States Parties, together with the selection criteria and template used. The compendium is an initial, illustrative set designed to be added to over time, not a comprehensive repository.	14 June 2027 10 days
8. Validation and final study. Prepare materials for and facilitate the consultation and validation workshop. Revise all drafts in light of comments received. Consolidate the outputs into a single study, with the tracking framework, scorecard and compendium of good practices annexed. Present the continental benchmark for child protection to the Committee. *The fee for this deliverable is inclusive of all costs of the international mission for the validation workshop*	Validation workshop report; final consolidated study with annexes, incorporating comments from the validation workshop and the Committee; presentation of the continental benchmark for child protection to the Committee.	31 August 2027 10 days
Travel - International (if applicable)	Number of trips = 1 (consultation and validation workshop; venue to be confirmed)	

unicef | for every child

Payment Schedule:
Payment will be made on submission and acceptance of deliverables. UNICEF reserves the right to withhold payment in case the deliverables submitted are not up to the required standard or in case of delays in submitting the deliverables on the part of the consultant.

Important Notes

- Individuals engaged under a consultancy or individual contract will not be considered "staff members" under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF's policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Conditions of Contracts for the Services of Consultants and Individual Contractors. Consultants and individual contractors are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.
- The selected candidate is solely responsible for ensuring that the health insurance (and visa if applicable) required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract. Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully-vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.
- UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

QUALIFICATIONS / SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE / EXPERIENCE/ COMPETENCIES (CORE/TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL) / LANGUAGE SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE ASSIGNMENT

Minimum requirements:

- **Education:** An advanced university degree (Master's or higher) in economics, public finance, development studies, public policy, law, human rights, children's rights, political science or another related social science field

- **Work Experience:** A minimum of 10 years of relevant professional experience in children's rights, public finance, development planning, budgeting, public policy or related areas, preferably within the African context

- **Skills:** Demonstrated professional experience in planning and budgeting for children, including areas such as child-responsive budgeting, public expenditure analysis, budget tracking, resource allocation for children, and/or assessment of national planning and budgeting frameworks.
  – Demonstrated experience in conducting research, assessments, comparative studies, or development of benchmarks, indicators or similar analytical frameworks, preferably covering multiple African countries.
  – Knowledge and understanding of national planning and budgeting processes, including the link between government policies, development plans, budget allocations, expenditure and the realisation of children's rights.

– Demonstrable knowledge and understanding of the Charter, the mandate and functions of the ACERWC, and relevant African Union frameworks relating to children's rights.

– Excellent research, analytical and writing skills, with demonstrated ability to translate complex financial, budgetary and policy information into clear findings, benchmarks and practical recommendations.

– Experience working with UN agencies, AU institutions, governments, international organisations, civil society organisations, research institutions and/or other stakeholders involved in children's rights, public finance or development planning.

– Experience facilitating multi-stakeholder consultation or validation processes at regional or continental level is an asset.

- **Language Requirements:** Fluency in English is required. Working knowledge of French is a distinct advantage given the range of States Parties and source documentation covered