

African ministers endorse landmark African Union model law on child online safety

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, August 1, 2026 – Ministers responsible for children affairs, social development, labour and employment from African Union (AU) Member States have endorsed the African Union Model Law on Child Online Safety and the Common Africa Position on Ending Violence Against Children (CAP-EVAC), marking a major milestone toward establishing a continent-wide framework to protect children from online abuse and exploitation.

The endorsement follows the validation of both documents by AU Member States during the ARISE Africa II convening in Addis Ababa and their subsequent consideration by the AU Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Social Development, Labour and Employment during its sitting on 30–31 July 2026. The Model Law will now advance through the African Union's remaining policy processes toward consideration by the Executive Council and eventual adoption by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

As internet access continues to expand across Africa, children are increasingly exposed to online risks, including grooming, cyberbullying, online sexual extortion, cyberstalking, trafficking, and the creation and distribution of child sexual abuse material. The Model Law provides Member States with a shared legislative framework to address these threats, strengthen national responses and improve cooperation across borders.

"The true measure of our success will be determined by how effectively these commitments are translated into national policies, legislation, institutional reforms and coordinated actions that deliver tangible improvements in the lives of children across the continent," said Dr. Olubusayo Akinola, Head of the Social Welfare, Drug Control and Crime Prevention Division at the AU Commission.

The model law paves the way for:

- More consistent legal approaches to preventing and responding to online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA) and other forms of online violence against children.
- Stronger cross-border cooperation among law enforcement, judicial and child protection authorities to address crimes that frequently span multiple jurisdictions.
- Greater accountability for technology companies and digital platforms to strengthen child online safety.

- Increased investment in prevention, digital literacy, reporting mechanisms and survivor-centred response services for children and families.
- Coordinated action among governments, civil society, communities, the private sector and development partners to protect children in the digital environment.
- Safer and more inclusive digital participation for millions of African children as online access continues to grow.

ChildFund's Advocacy, Campaign and Programme Leadership on Child Online Safety

ChildFund has served as a technical partner to the African Union Commission throughout the development of the Model Law, working alongside the African Child Policy Forum and other continental partners over the past two years. Drawing on evidence and lessons from its online child protection programs across Africa and globally, ChildFund contributed practical insights to help shape a framework that Member States can adapt to strengthen child online safety legislation, systems and responses.

"Over the past two years, ChildFund has worked alongside the African Union Commission, the African Child Policy Forum and other partners to support the development of this Model Law. The endorsement by African ministers marks a significant milestone in creating a common continental approach to making the digital world safer for children. We remain committed to supporting Member States and partners as this framework progresses toward adoption and implementation," said Chege Ngugi, Africa Regional Director, ChildFund International.

Once adopted, the Model Law will provide Member States with a shared foundation for strengthening national child online safety legislation, policies and protection systems.

With this milestone, ChildFund calls for:

1. **Timely progression of the Model Law** through the remaining African Union decision-making processes toward formal adoption by Heads of State and Government;
2. **Adequate and predictable financing** by Member States to translate the framework into effective national legislation and implementation;
3. **Coordinated action** among child protection, justice, education and telecommunications authorities, together with technology companies and development partners; and
4. **Investment in prevention, digital literacy, and community-level reporting and referral systems** so children, caregivers and educators can benefit from stronger protections.

Key Initiatives

Since 2019, ChildFund has advanced child online safety through advocacy, research and programming addressing online sexual exploitation and abuse of children (OSEAC). Across Africa and globally, the organization has partnered with governments, civil society, communities, young

people and technology stakeholders to strengthen prevention, response and evidence-based policy action.

Key initiatives include:

- **Tuchanuke ("Let's Wise Up") Online Child Protection Project:** Launched in Kenya in 2021 with support from Google's Africa Online Safety Fund, the project strengthened digital literacy, child protection systems and community awareness to prevent and respond to online sexual exploitation and abuse of children.
- **Safe Community Linkages for Internet Child Safety (Safe CLICS):** A three-year US\$1 million initiative funded through Safe Online and implemented with Childline Kenya and LifeSkills Promoters to strengthen government capacity, build children's self-protection skills and expand reporting and referral systems in Nairobi and Mombasa.
- **#TakeltDown Campaign:** In the United States, ChildFund launched the #TakeltDown campaign in 2023 to raise awareness of online child sexual exploitation and abuse and mobilize action to strengthen protections for children online. The campaign has helped elevate survivor voices, contributed to policy momentum on online child safety legislation, supported the passage of the REPORT Act in 2024, the TAKE IT DOWN Act in 2025, and increased attention on the need for greater accountability and transparency from technology platforms.
- **Regional policy leadership:** Through regional convenings and multi-stakeholder dialogues, ChildFund continues to bring together governments, civil society, academia and the private sector to advance child online safety across Africa.

These investments in programming, research and policy advocacy have directly informed ChildFund's contribution to the AU Model Law. As the framework progresses toward continental adoption, ChildFund remains committed to supporting Member States to translate this milestone into practical protections that ensure every child can participate safely in Africa's digital future.