Digital Initiative For Innovation & Development



A MAPPING OF CHILD ONLINE SAFETY POLICY LANDSCAPE ACROSS AFRICAN COUNTRIES

A Comprehensive Research Briefing Covering Legislation, Regulatory Frameworks, National Policies, and Gaps

May, 2026

Introduction

This brief maps the legislative, regulatory, and policy landscape governing children's safety in the digital environment across 54 of Africa's 55 African Union member states, examining how cybercrime statutes, data protection laws, dedicated child online safety instruments, and continental frameworks converge, or fail to converge, into coherent protection.

The goal is to address the lack of a consolidated, comprehensive map illustrating how African countries are implementing the African Union's continental Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy following its adoption in February 2024. To this end, this resource reviewed more than 130 national laws and policy instruments, alongside six continental and sub-regional frameworks, from the 1990s through to mid 2026 to create a first-of-its-kind tool. We envision this will serve lawmakers, regulators, child rights and digital rights coalitions, donor agencies and development partners, researchers, journalists, and platform companies in taking action at the continental, subregional, and national levels

With these, it classifies each country into one of four legal postures: Enacted, Partial or Framework state, Draft or In Progress, and None or Minimal. The overall picture reveals that at the moment, the continent's child online safety law and regulatory landscape is asymmetrical. There is a small cluster comprising Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, and Tanzania that has enacted dedicated frameworks, whereas the majority operate through general cybercrime or data protection statutes that address online harms to children only indirectly and without treating them as a distinct regulatory category. There is an emergent group comprising Nigeria, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon that is visibly in motion, with bills and draft policies under active development, while a residual set comprising Libya, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Burundi, Eritrea, and Namibia presents little or no identifiable framework at all.

Continental and Regional Framework

Africa is home to the world's youngest and fastest-growing population of internet users, yet the legal infrastructure meant to protect children online remains fragmented, under-leveraged, and, in most countries, incomplete. This document maps the legislative and policy landscape for child online safety across all 54 African Union member states. It reviews over 100 legislative instruments, regulatory frameworks, national strategies, and policy guidelines enacted or under development as of May 2026. It has been designed for civil society advocates, government policymakers, regional bodies, development partners, and researchers who need a reliable,

country-by-country evidence base for legislative reform, funding decisions, or comparative analysis. The picture that emerges is one of rapid but uneven progress: five countries have enacted dedicated child online safety legislation, roughly thirty rely on general cybercrime or data protection laws with partial relevance, and a small number have no applicable framework at all.

Before examining individual countries, it is essential to note the continental architecture. The African Union (AU) adopted the Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention) on 27 June 2014. The Convention entered into force on 8 June 2023 after achieving the required 15 ratifications. As of mid-2024, ratifying states include Angola, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, São Tomé & Príncipe, and others. Notably, major digital economies such as Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, South Africa, and Ethiopia have not yet ratified the Convention.

In February 2024, the AU Executive Council endorsed the African Union Child Online Safety and Empowerment Policy, making Africa the first region in the world to adopt a continental policy specifically addressing children's safety in the digital environment. The policy establishes principles, including children's right to safety, privacy, and online participation, and is designed to support member states in developing national strategies.

At the sub-regional level, the East African Community (EAC)has a Child Policy and a Framework for Strengthening Child Protection Systems; ECOWAS adopted a child protection framework in 2019; and SADC has a Model Law on Eradicating Child Marriage. The ITU's Child Online Protection (COP) initiative has also published guidelines, which were adapted in 2020.

Methodology and Classification Note

This mapping classifies each of Africa's 54 AU member states into one of four categories based on their child online safety legislative and policy posture:

Enacted (Green): Country has specific legislation or enforceable regulations that directly address child online safety, including provisions criminalising online child sexual exploitation, mandating platform responsibilities, or establishing dedicated child online protection frameworks with legal force.

Partial/Framework (Yellow): Country has general cybercrime laws, data protection laws, or child protection legislation that contain relevant provisions touching on online harms to children, but lacks a dedicated, comprehensive child online safety law or binding regulation.

Draft/In Progress (Orange): Country has a bill, draft regulation, or national strategy under active development but not yet enacted into law.

None/Minimal (Red): No identifiable legislation, regulation, or policy framework specifically addressing child online safety. The country may lack even general cybercrime legislation or a national ICT policy that references child protection.

Important caveat: The absence of a dedicated child online safety law does not necessarily mean zero protection for children online. Many countries' penal codes criminalise child pornography and sexual exploitation generally, which may apply in digital contexts and may be used by lawyers and advocates to seek redress for affected children. This mapping focuses specifically on instruments that address the online space.

Country	Status	Key Instrument (s)	Source Link	Notes
Algeria	Partial	Penal Code amendments; Law 09-04 on cybercrime (2009); Law No. 18-07 of 10 June 2018 on Data Protection, supplemented by Law No. 25-11 of 24 July 2025	Link Link	Cybercrime provisions; data protection law 2018; no dedicated child online safety law
Egypt	Partial	Anti-Cybercrimes Law 175/2018; Child Law No. 12/1996 (amended 2008)	Link	NCCM coordinates child online protection; EG-CERT active; no standalone child online safety statute
Libya	None	No comprehensive cybercrime or child online safety law	N/A	Conflict has disrupted governance and legislative processes

Country	Status	Key Instrument (s)	Source Link	Notes
Morocco	Partial	Penal Code; Law 07-03 on IT offences; Data Protection Law 09-08 (2009)	Link	Budapest Convention party since 2018; no dedicated child online safety law
Tunisia	Partial	Penal Code; Organic Law 2004-5 on personal data; Cybercrime provisions	Link	Invited to accede to Budapest Convention; no specific child online safety legislation
Benin	Partial	Digital Code (2017); Child Code	Link Link	Digital Code has cybercrime provisions; no dedicated child online safety law
Burkina Faso	Partial	Criminal Code - Law No. 025-2018; Law No. 011-2014 / AN of 17 April 2014 on Child Pornography, Data Protection Law (2004, revised 2021)	Link Link	General cybercrime provisions; no specific child online safety framework
Cabo Verde	Partial	Cybercrime Law Law n°8/IX/2017; Data Protection Law (2001, amended 2013)	Link Link	Budapest Convention party; no dedicated child online safety law
Côte d'Ivoire	Partial	Cybercrime Law (2013); Data Protection Law (2013)	Link Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2023; no specific child online safety law
Gambia	None	No cybercrime or child online safety legislation in force	N/A	ICT policy references online safety in general terms only

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Ghana	Enacted	Cybersecurity Act 2020 (Act 1038) – Sections on child online protection; Child Online Protection Framework (2024)	Link	Act 1038 criminalises online sexual conduct with children; CSA developing L.I. with UNICEF
Guinea	Partial	Child Code (2008); cybercrime provisions	Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2018
Guinea-Bissau	None	No cybercrime or child online protection legislation	N/A	Limited ICT infrastructure and governance capacity
Liberia	Partial	Cybercrime Act 2025	Link	No specific child's rights online regulation. Not a signatory to the Malabo convention
Mali	Partial	Data Protection Law (2013)	Link	Not a signatory to the Malabo convention
Niger	Partial	Law No. 2019-33 on the repression of cybercrime in Niger; Data Protection Law (2017) including its amendments	Link Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2022; no specific child online safety provisions
Nigeria	Draft	Cybercrimes Act 2015 (Sec 23); Child Rights Act 2003; Child Online Access Protection Bill (HB.244) passed by House Dec 2025	Link Link	HB.244 passed House of Reps Dec 2025; awaiting Senate and presidential assent; NCC draft COP framework

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Senegal	Partial	Data Protection Law (2008); f Law 2008-11 on cybercrime	Link Link	Budapest Convention party; DPA issued children's data directive 2024; participated in Paris AI child safety coalition
Sierra Leone	Partial	Cybercrime Act 2020; Childs Rights Act; Sexual Offenses Act of Sierra Leone 2012	Link Link	Cybercrime Act addresses online child sexual abuse including child pornography. Signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the the Optional Protocol to The Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.
Togo	Partial	Cybersecurity Law 2018; Data Protection Law (2019); Child Code	Link	DPA established; no dedicated child online safety provisions, Malabo convention signed, ratified and deposited.
Burundi	None	No cybercrime or child online safety legislation	N/A	Limited ICT infrastructure
Comoros	None	Data Protection Law 2021, Cybersecurity Law	Link Link	Signed Malabo Convention 2018, not ratified

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Djibouti	Partial	Digital Code 2025	Link	Signed Malabo Convention 2023
Eritrea	None	No cybercrime, data protection, or child online safety law	N/A	Highly restricted internet access; minimal legal framework
Ethiopia	Partial	Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016; Data Protection Proclamation (2024)	Link Link	Cybercrime law covers some digital offences; UN CRC Committee urged adoption of child online protection policy in Feb 2026
Kenya	Enacted	Industry Guidelines for Child Online Protection and Safety (CA, effective Oct 2025); NPA on OCSEA 2022–2026; Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act 2018;	Link	CA's COP Guidelines are binding on licensed ICT providers; KFCB and DPC also active
Madaga-scar	Partial	Cybercrime Law; Data Protection Law (2014)	Link Link Link	No specific child online safety provisions
Maurita-nia	Partial	Malabo Convention Ratified;	Link	No dedicated child online safety law or provisions identified.
Mauritius	Enacted	Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) COP Directive.	Link	The ICTA issued a binding directive implementing concrete Child Online Protection

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				(COP) standards across local networks and digital spaces to build a safe, age-appropriate digital ecosystem.
Rwanda	Draft	Government reportedly considering related legislation (draft unavailable), Law on Protection of Child (2018); Ministerial Order on Child Online Protection (Jan 2024); COP Policy; 5-Year Action Plan	Link Link	Budapest Convention accession Jan 2025; ministerial order binds service providers
Seychelles	Partial	Data Protection Act (2023)	Link	No dedicated child online safety law
Somalia	Partial	Data Protection Act (2023)	Link	No child online safety specific provisions; governance challenges
South Sudan	Partial	Cybercrimes and Computer Misuse Act, 2026	Link	Limited ICT governance
Sudan	Partial	Cybercrimes Act (2007, amended 2018); Child Act 2010	Link	Conflict has disrupted governance; signed Malabo Convention 2023
Tanzania	Enacted	Cybercrimes Act 2015; Child Protection Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act, 2024 (No. 10 of 2024)	Link	2024 amendments specifically strengthen child online protection provisions in the Cybercrimes Act

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Uganda	Partial	Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022 – Sec on children's data sharing; Children Act	Link	Key provisions struck down by Constitutional Court Mar 2026; children's data provision status unclear
Angola	Partial	Law to Combat Crime in the Field of ICT AND Information Society	Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2020; no specific child online safety law
Botswana	Partial	Data Protection Act (2024, amended 2024); Cybercrime provisions	Link	Child online protection guidelines expected to be published soon
Eswatini	Partial	A set of 5 Child Online Protection Guidelines aimed at different stakeholders; Computer Crime and Cybercrime Act (2022); Data Protection Act (2022)	Link	Separate guidelines for school administrators, teachers and librarians, parents and caregivers, children and general guidelines.
Lesotho	Partial	Child Online Protection Guidelines 2024; Data Protection Act (2011); Penal Code	Link	LCA published guidelines as a transposition of the ITU Guidelines on Child Online Protection 2020
Malawi	Partial	Electronic Transactions and Cybersecurity Act 2016; Data Protection Act (in force 2024); Draft National Child Online Protection Strategy	Link	MACRA launched COP initiative Feb 2025; strategy finalised in draft; regulations under development

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Mozambique	Partial	Penal Code	Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2019; no specific child online safety law
Namibia	None	No cybercrime or child online safety law. Although the Child Care and Protection Act 2015 has provisions against child pornography	Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2019; no specific child online safety law; ITU COP profile notes absence
South Africa	Partial	Films and Publications Act 1996 (amended 2019, operational 2022); Cybercrimes Act 2021; Children's Act 38 of 2005; POPIA 2013	Link Link Link Link	FPB is statutory online content regulator with child protection unit; CSAM filtering; IR guidance on children's data
Zambia	Partial	National Child Online Protection Strategy (2025–2029), Cyber Security and Cyber Crimes Act 2021; Children's Code Act 2022	Link Link Link	Existing Child Online Protection Strategy and Children's Code provides broad protection framework
Zimbabwe	Draft	Cyber and Data Protection Act 2021; Draft Child Online Protection Policy	Link Link	News about the government considering a Child Online Protection Policy
Cameroon	Enacted	Charter on Child Online Protection in Cameroon - Law No. 2023/009 of July 25, 2023 Cybercrime Law (2010); Data Protection Law (2024)	Link Link Link Link	Law No. 2023/009 is a standalone, 49-article statute governing children's safety in the digital environment in Cameroon.

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Zimbabwe	Draft	Cyber and Data Protection Act 2021; Draft Child Online Protection Policy	Link Link	News about the government considering a Child Online Protection Policy
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Central African Republic	Partial	Penal Code (Articles 85, 86, 110, 111)	Link	No cybercrime or child online safety law; Malabo Convention ratified 2023
Chad	None	No cybercrime or child online safety law. Although the Child Care and Protection Act 2015 has provisions against child pornography	Link Link	ANSICE participated in ITU COP Working Group 2024; developing national COP strategy
Congo (Brazzaville)	Partial	Data Protection Law (2019); Cybercrime provisions	Link Link	ITU profile notes no dedicated child online protection agency; Malabo Convention ratified 2020
DR Congo	Partial	Digital Code 2023	Link	Digital Code establishes the protection of minorities
Equatorial Guinea	Partial	Data Protection Law (2016)	Link	No cybercrime or child online safety legislation
Gabon	Partial	Data Protection Law (2011); Cybercrime provisions; Social Media Age Verification Ordinance 2026	Link Link Link	No specific child online safety law
São Tomé & Principe	Partial	Data Protection Law (2016)	Link	Malabo Convention ratified 2023; no child online safety specific provisions



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