



Reviewing the Child Rights Act:

What the Proposed Reforms Could Mean for Children and Families

Introduction

From 22 to 24 September 2026, stakeholders from across Nigeria met to consider possible reforms to the Child Rights Act 2003, more than two decades after its enactment.

The National Stakeholders' Engagement on the Review of the Child Rights Act, themed "From Law to Action for the Nigerian Child," brought together government institutions, the justice sector, civil society, law enforcement and development organisations to identify gaps in the existing framework and consider how it can better respond to challenges affecting children today.

For families, the review is significant because any eventual reforms could affect how children are protected at home, in schools, online and in other environments in which they live and interact.

Key Highlights

- **The child's welfare remains central:**

Decisions concerning children should prioritize their best interests, including in judicial, administrative and other processes affecting their care and protection.

- **Family and child-protection institutions require strengthening:**

The discussions highlighted the need for better coordination among responsible agencies and adequately resourced family courts with trained personnel and child-sensitive procedures.

- **Children face growing risks online:**

Social media and digital platforms have created risks such as online exploitation, grooming and misuse of children's personal information and images that were less prominent when the Act was enacted in 2003.

- **Support after harm is also important:**

Effective child protection requires access to shelters, counselling, rehabilitation and other support services, alongside reliable reporting and record-keeping systems.



What This Means for Stakeholders

- **For parents and guardians:**

Any eventual reforms may provide clearer guidance on responsibilities relating to a child's care, education, welfare and protection, including protection from risks arising in digital environments.

- **For children:**

Stronger reporting, investigation and support systems could improve access to protection and appropriate remedies where a child is at risk or has suffered harm.

- **For schools and organisations working with children:**

Safeguarding policies, staff recruitment and vetting, reporting procedures and the handling of children's personal information and images may require greater attention as the reform process develops.

- **For businesses and digital platforms:**

Organisations whose products or services are used by children should pay particular attention to developments concerning children's privacy, online safety and protection from harmful or exploitative content.

Importantly, the stakeholder engagement has not changed the Child Rights Act or created new legal obligations. Any proposed amendments will need to proceed through the applicable legislative process before becoming law.

The Road Forward

The review provides an opportunity to consider whether Nigeria's child-protection framework adequately reflects the realities facing children and families today, particularly as technology changes how children communicate, learn and interact.

Parents, guardians, schools and organisations working with children should follow the reform process as it develops and consider whether existing arrangements for safeguarding, reporting and protecting children's information remain appropriate.

For guidance on family advisory matters, children's rights, family governance and related legal and regulatory matters, contact info@scp-law.com or visit www.scp-law.com.