

# SOAWR

## Journal

3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

SOLIDARITY FOR  
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS

A force for freedom



MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ  
POUR LES DROITS  
DES FEMMES AFRICAINES

Une force pour la liberté





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# SOAWR's 2022 Journal

March, 2023

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### Editor:

Grace Marwa-Pattison

*Make Every Woman Count*

*SOAWR Communications Secretariat*

# Foreword

I am absolutely overjoyed to share with you the third edition of the SOAWR Journal - a riveting piece of writing that not only captures what we have been up to as the SOAWR Coalition but also offers us an opportunity to forge forward by designing and testing new interventions for the benefit of all women and girls across Africa.

In keeping with the aspirations and the character of the SOAWR Journal, this third edition provides a haven upon which the voices of millions of girls and women in Africa are amplified and where the voices of those who tirelessly fight for the cause of gender equality are raised and intensified. It is a space where we celebrate achievements, recognise struggles, and engage in thought-provoking conversations that inspire change.

This edition is therefore as uplifting as the preceding editions, raising the bar on the inspiring work that our members accomplished in 2022 to take the women's rights cause to the next frontier. It highlights the impact that their work has on their communities and countries, illustrating why the tempo of the women's rights movement must be maintained and then advanced. Girls and women in Africa continue to face numerous challenges, injustices, and systemic barriers, but they have also exhibited extraordinary resilience, strength, and determination in the face of adversity.

It is for this reason that I extend my gratitude to all the SOAWR members, whose work plays

a pivotal role in shaping the narrative and inspiring change, and development partners for the support they have given the members.

I welcome you to read this Journal and join us on this journey. Empower yourself with knowledge, engage in conversations, support the women in your lives, and stand in solidarity with those fighting for their rights. Together, we can create a society where gender equality is not merely an aspiration but an unwavering reality. We recognise that achieving true equality demands addressing not only gender disparities but also the interconnected web of social, economic, and cultural inequalities that permeate our society. Let us collectively challenge the status quo, dismantle oppressive structures, and pave the way for a future where every individual can thrive without limitations. This Journal will renew your spirits and zeal with each read.



**Faiza Mohamed**  
Director Africa Office, Equality Now



# Acronyms/Abbreviations

<b>ACHPR</b>	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
<b>AEFL</b>	Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers
<b>AfA</b>	Alliance for Africa
<b>AGEMCC</b>	Africa Gender Equality Moot Court Competition
<b>AJS</b>	Association des Juristes Sénégalaises
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AUC</b>	African Union Commission
<b>AU-PAP</b>	African Union Pan-African Parliament
<b>AU-WGYD</b>	African Union Women, Gender and Youth Directorate
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>CODMAP</b>	Coalition for the Domestication of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria
<b>COP 27</b>	27th United Nations Climate Change Conference
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>ECOWAS</b>	Economic Community of West African States
<b>FEMNET</b>	The African Women's Development and Communications Network
<b>FGM/C</b>	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GLIHD</b>	Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>ICT</b>	Information Computer Technology

<b>IGED</b>	Initiative for Gender Equality and Development
<b>KICTANet</b>	Kenya ICT Action Network
<b>MEWC</b>	Make Every Woman Count
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>RECs</b>	Regional Economic Communities
<b>RFLD</b>	Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement
<b>R-TGoNU</b>	Revitalised-Transitional Government of National Unity
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SGBV</b>	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
<b>SIHA Network</b>	The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa Network
<b>SOAWR</b>	Solidarity for African Women's Rights
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
<b>SR RWA</b>	Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene



## About SOAWR

The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition is a regional membership-based network of organisations working to advance women's rights in Africa. SOAWR works to ensure that African States ratify, domesticate, and implement the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol).

SOAWR's goals include:

- To contribute to the accelerated ratification of the Protocol in the States that have not ratified it.
- To support the domestication and implementation of the Protocol in States that have ratified it.
- To implement tracking and documentation mechanisms on the Protocol at the national and sub-regional levels.
- To strengthen national community mobilisation efforts to popularise and use the Protocol.
- To enhance conceptual clarity of coalition members around advocating for the Protocol.

## SOAWR Vision, Mission and Core Values

### SOAWR Vision

African women fully enjoy their rights as provided for under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

### SOAWR Mission

Hold African Union Member States accountable and enhance partnership to fulfil their obligations under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; and encourage other stakeholders to actively apply the Protocol for the promotion and protection of the rights of women.

### SOAWR Core Values

#### 1. Equality and non-discrimination

We believe that the full implementation of the Maputo Protocol is key to addressing the patriarchal and sexist character of institutions,

norms and governing values in order to realise full equality and end discrimination against women and girls and realise full equality.

## 2. Solidarity and partnership

We believe in solidarity as a means of building an effective, transformative movement for change in Africa. We therefore envision SOAWR as a collective force for action for women's freedom and rights. We shall act together and support the struggles and initiatives of women Rights champions and organisations across the continent and with vertical and horizontal partners of women's rights across the world.

## 3. Freedom and dignity

We believe that freedom is central to social justice. We are a force for African women's freedom; we are driven by the principle of defending and upholding women's voice, agency, dignity and rights across the African continent. We therefore envision SOAWR as a collective force for action for women's freedom and rights.

## 4. Diversity and inclusivity

We believe in the diversity of women and their unique strengths and insights. We also recognise that women's intersectional identities may interact to intensify violations and we work towards eliminating such discrimination. We believe in holding each other accountable to the indivisibility of women's rights and we believe in the importance of courage to confront patriarchy. Therefore, we consciously work in the margins of society and work with and for women in the margins.

## 5. Commitment and accountability

We believe that progress towards a continent where women's rights and dignity are secured will only flow from action by networked, committed and inspired women and women rights champions who are guided by high standards of accountability. Without the passion and commitment and accountability internally and by Member States, transformation will be slow to achieve.

# The SOAWR Coalition is now made up of 81 organisations based in 33 African countries

Where are SOAWR Members based?



Where do SOAWR Members work?



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Maputo  
Protocol  
at 20



# 2022 SOAWR Highlights

## Welcoming eighteen new SOAWR Members

SOAWR welcomed eighteen new member organisations into the Coalition, namely:



1. Association de Promotion de la Culture Environnementale (APCE)



2. Communication Techniques for Development (ACT)



3. Haki Nawiri Afrika



4. HelpAge International



5. Her Voice Liberia



6. La Journal Féministe Algérien (JFA) (The Algerian Feminist Journal)



7. Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRC)



8. MPower!



9. Sources of Peace Organization (SPO)



10. The Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue (FDHRD)



11. The National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)



12. The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative (NIGAWD)



13. Well Being Africa (WBA)



14. Women and Law in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe Chapter (WLSA)



15. Women for Justice and Equality (WOJE)



16. Women Lead Movement, Madagascar Chapter



17. Women on the Watch (WOW) Society Initiative



18. Y-Peer Petri Morocco



# First Annual African Commission on the Status of Women



## AMPLIFYING VOICES | RECLAIMING POWER

Image source: FEMNET

In March of 2022, FEMNET hosted the first-ever African Commission on the Status of Women (Africa CSW) in Nairobi. The Africa CSW was created to “respond to the continued shrinking space for feminist and civil society engagement at CSW in New York”. The Africa CSW presented a first-of-its-kind opportunity for African women, girls, non-binary persons and persons with disabilities, in all their diversities to congregate, commune, strengthen

capacities and collectively construct their demands for CSW66 as informed by their lived realities, experiences, research, evidence and solutions – to directly inform and influence the 27th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 27), future CSW events and similar global spaces. With SOAWR Members FEMNET and Akina Mama wa Afrika in attendance, the key result of the Commission was the publication of the [Africa CSW Nairobi Declaration](#).

## CREAW Kenya receiving the 2022 African Gender Award alongside former Kenyan President

On the 14th of June 2022, SOAWR member CREAW Kenya was awarded the GIMAC (Gender is my Agenda Campaign) 2022 African Gender Award in the Civil Society category during a ceremony held at the Kenyan State House in Nairobi. The Award recognises their commitment to gender mainstreaming and commitment to achieve gender equality and equity.

They accepted the Award alongside Kenya's former President Uhuru Kenyatta who received the African Gender Award 2022 for championing gender equality

and development in the country. The award is anchored on three thematic indices namely HIV index, education index and gender parity index. According to the selection committee, Kenya achieved 11 out of 12 operative articles of the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa.





Image source: CREAW

## African Gender Equality Moot Court

**E**quality Now, the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR), the Kenya ICT Action Network (KICTANet) and the Strathmore University School of Law hosted the 2nd Edition of the Africa Gender Equality Moot Court Competition (AGEMCC) from August 2022 to January 2023. The AGEMCC is the first moot court to be dedicated solely to the rights of women and girls in Africa.

The Competition saw participation by 35 teams from 30 universities in 16 African countries. The English component of the Competition saw the participation of 26 teams, while the French component of the competition saw the participation of 9 student teams. The teams battled from the Preliminary and Quarterfinals Rounds of the Competition, which were held virtually in November 2022. The Semi-finals and Final Rounds, will be held from January 16 to 18, 2023, in person at Strathmore University in Nairobi, Kenya.



The Competition had a total of 55 judges who were drawn from renowned African academics, jurists, legal practitioners, and women's rights advocates.

The [awards](#) were presented to the winners by Hon. Justice Dr. Nancy Baraza (Rtd.). She is the former Deputy Chief Justice and Judge of the Supreme Court of Kenya and was the Chief Guest during the AGEMCC Award and Closing Ceremony. The Competition saw the participants present well-articulated memorials highlighting legal arguments raised by the hypothetical case. The team representing the University of Zimbabwe, comprising Nadia Mutisi and Claudio Faro, emerged as the overall best team for the English component of the competition. In the French component of the competition, the winning team were students from Université Catholique de Bukavu (Democratic Republic of Congo), composed of Ryan Anciza Migani and Murhula Pacifique Bahati.

## SOAWR Ratification Missions

In October, November and December 2022, the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition in partnership with various actors including the African Union Commission's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (AUC-WGYD) conducted [ratification missions](#) in Egypt, Morocco, Botswana and South Sudan with its respective member organisations to advocate for the adoption of the Protocol. Each mission is discussed in more detail on page 21.

## SOAWR's Statement to the ACHPR

In November 2022, on behalf of the SOAWR Coalition, member organisation Alliances for Africa (observer status number 235) submitted a [statement](#) to the 73rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

The statement calls upon the Commission to:

- address challenges and barriers relating to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR).
- continue to utilise its recently published guidelines on shadow reporting on the Maputo Protocol.
- address the disproportionate effect that the COVID-19 pandemic, the proliferation of armed conflict and an unprecedented rise in unconstitutional changes of government are having on women.
- urge the remaining 12 African Union Member States to ratify the Maputo Protocol.
- increase engagement on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol in the other 43 Member States.

## Resumption of in-person SOAWR Steering Committee Meetings

Following two years of virtual convenings, the SOAWR Steering Committee was pleased to meet twice in-person in June and November 2022. The joy and momentum of meeting face-to-face certainly revitalised the Steering Committee and its dedication to supporting the wider Coalition. In the November meeting which took place in Mombasa, Kenya, the members individually shared their [specific commitments](#) to SOAWR for 2023.



SOAWR Steering Committee in Mombasa, Kenya



# Africa Family Law Network launched



**O**n October 6, 2022, about 80 women's rights actors convened in Nairobi courtesy of Equality Now, FEMNET, Musahwah, and SIHA Network for the launch of the Africa Family Law Network, following three years of consistent efforts by women activists on the ground. The Network has been designed to galvanise energies around the need to adopt and implement Family Laws that promote gender equality and women's rights in Africa. Its vision is for an Africa where family laws and practices guarantee equality in line with regional and international human rights standards.

The Network called on African Governments to take the following actions in order to ensure the promotion of women's rights in Africa:

- ratify, domesticate and implement the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol) without any reservations
- enact and enforce family laws and practices that abide by international human rights standards including, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol, without reservations
- criminalise harmful practices such as child marriage and forced marriages, widow inheritance, and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which impede women and girls from accessing their rights
- recognise and ensure equality in religious, customary and civil marriages
- guarantee substantive equality between men and women pre, during a marriage and in the event of the dissolution or separation of a marriage
- protect and safeguard all women and girls, from inhuman, humiliating or degrading treatment and should be accorded the right to an equitable share in the inheritance and distribution of property
- enact and implement progressive legislative framework that protects women and girls from all forms of violence particularly, domestic and intimate partner violence
- that all state actors, religious and traditional leaders protect, promote and respect women's rights by acting in line with the principles of international and regional human rights law and ensuring accountability where there have been human rights violations
- implement General Comment No. 6 on the Maputo Protocol focused on substantive equality on property distribution between men and women upon dissolution or separation of marriage
- that all African governments provide a safe and conducive work environment for women human rights defenders, particularly those working on family laws.

The launch and its deliberations were covered by [multiple media organisations](#), including BBC Africa.

# African Women's Rights Issues: Overview of achievements and challenges throughout the past year

The following is a non-exhaustive overview of women's rights issues, events and instruments pertinent to the Continent throughout 2022.

## **Commitments to Intersectional Climate Action**

- i) Following consultations under the 66th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) in March, African countries adopted the [Common Africa Position to Integrate Gender Equality in the Climate Action Agenda](#) “with a call to action to national, regional and global stakeholders to:
- Fulfil existing commitments and obligations under the Rio conventions and the Sendai Framework;
  - Strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and government institutions to collect, analyse, disseminate and use disaggregated data to conduct gender analysis on climate change, environmental and disaster and risk reduction;
  - Provide capacity and technical support at regional and national levels to ensure that action plans on climate change and disaster risk reduction are gender-responsive and transformative;
  - Strengthen inter-governmental coordination mechanisms to foster joint strategies by gender machineries and environment ministries;
  - Invest in the protection of early childhood and take the appropriate practical measures, such as the building of community childcare, to free women and girls, most of whom are in the agricultural sector and highly exposed to the impacts of climate change.”

ii) In September, the [African Women Impact Fund](#) (AWIF) launched a USD\$60 million commitment to drive an “inclusive investment environment”. The Fund is an initiative of the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA) together with its partners: UN Women, the Office of the Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security of the African Union Commission and the African Women Leadership Network. The Fund has a “two-fold agenda of making a commercial impact for investors while empowering women financial leaders to drive growth in Africa. With a bold ambition to raise up to \$1 billion over 10 years for women fund managers, who will in turn invest in high-impact sectors and projects across Africa, this first-of-its-kind initiative is well positioned to enable economic stimulus through sustainable and gender-inclusive capital growth opportunities.”

**Relevant Article of the Protocol: 18**

## **Horn of Africa: increase in rates of GBV, FGM and Child Marriage**

In June 2022, UNICEF [reported](#) that GBV, FGM and Child Marriage were “on the rise” in the region, largely due to the ongoing drought crisis. UNICEF noted that these figures were related to the number of children at risk of dropping out of school across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia tripling within the previous three months. Particularly alarming was the government finding that child marriage had more than doubled in the space of one year in Ethiopia.

**Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 3, 4, 5, 6 & 12**

## East African Community Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill

The EAC SRH Bill has been delayed since its first tabling in 2017. In June 2022, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) conducted public hearings on the Bill in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. The Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill lays out five ambitious objectives. These are:

1. to protect and facilitate the fulfilment of all persons' sexual and reproductive health and rights across the life course;
2. to promote and provide age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health information and services for all persons, including adolescents and young people;
3. to facilitate and promote the prevention of newborn, child mortality, maternal mortality and morbidity from preventable causes;
4. to facilitate and promote the reduction and elimination of unsafe abortions, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, early and unintended pregnancies; and
5. to prohibit and facilitate the elimination of harmful practices.<sup>1</sup>



Image Source: Women's Global Network for Women's Reproductive Rights (WGNWRR) Africa

Whilst women's rights and health organisations are significant proponents for the Bill's adoption and implementation, it has faced resistance from religious and conservative groups, who maintain that some provisions of the Bill are against East African cultural values, such as the provisions relating to abortion and surrogacy.

### Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 5 & 14

## First Annual Small & Medium Enterprises Forum #AUSMEForum

The First Edition of African Union Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Annual Forum was held from June 27 - July 1 2022 in Cairo, Egypt under the theme "Economic Empowerment of SMEs, Women and Youth Entrepreneurs to Realise Africa's Industrialisation in the Context of the Integrated Market". During the Forum, the African SME Development Partnership Platform was launched, the Enterprise Africa Network (EAN) was unveiled and the African congress for SMEs, Women and Youth Entrepreneurs met. The final day celebrated the Women Awards Gala where ImpactHER was awarded the 'Best Women SME Support organisation in Africa', an organisation that was founded as a result of "the wide financing gender gap in Africa and has continued to provide women-led SMEs in Africa with the skills and support they need to grow their businesses".<sup>2</sup>

### Relevant Article of the Protocol: 13

<sup>1</sup> The Conversation (19 July, 2022) 'Why sexual and reproductive law for east African countries is being resisted', available at: <https://theconversation.com/why-sexual-and-reproductive-law-for-east-african-countries-is-being-resisted-186954>

<sup>2</sup> Nigerian Tribune (July 28, 2022) 'African Union Forum: ImpactHER named best Women SME support organisation in Africa', available at: <https://tribuneonline.ng.com/african-union-forum-impacther-named-best-women-sme-support-organisation-in-africa/>



## Launch of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) Gender Barometer

In collaboration with the International Centre for Peace, Human Rights and Development (IPHARD), the African Women Leaders' Forum (AWLF) successfully launched the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) Gender Barometer. The launch took place at the Annual Young Women's Political Leadership Summit held in July in Nairobi, Kenya under the theme, 'Centering ACDEG in African Young Women's Agency and Leadership'. The ACDEG Gender Barometer seeks to measure levels of implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, the premier continental instrument on issues pertaining to governance. The Barometer will "seek to track ratification, domestication and implementation of ACDEG's gender provisions. The barometer will additionally be used as an accountability and advocacy tool to push for greater engagement of women in governance".<sup>3</sup>

### Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2 & 9

#### ACHPR Resolutions

- i) ACHPR Resolution on the Protection of Women Against Digital Violence in Africa ([Res. 522 \(LXXII\)](#)) was adopted in August and calls on Member States to implement nine key actions.
- ii) Under [Res. 529 \(LXXIII\)](#), Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie's mandate as Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa was renewed for another two years as of November 9, 2022.

### Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 3, 4 & 9

#### #SudanWomenProtest

- i) Sudanese women have continued to protest for their rights which have become increasingly undermined since the military coup of October 2021. Despite facing obstacles including tear-gas, women marched to the presidential palace on International Women's Day 2022, calling for transitional justice and an end to the increase of systemic violence against women in the country.
- ii) SOAWR Member SIHA Network were amongst women lobbyists fighting against the Death Penalty by stoning, a remnant of the criminal law of 1991 under which 20 year-old Maryam Alsayed Tiyrab was sentenced on the grounds of 'adultery' in June 2022. In November, the Sudanese Court of Appeal overturned the conviction and ordered a retrial. SIHA Network and other Women's Rights Defenders are now calling for Tiyrab's immediate release.

### Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 3, 4(1), 6, 7 & 8



Image source: Sudan Tribune

<sup>3</sup> AWLF (2022) 'Gender Barometer to assess implementation of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) launched', available at: <https://awlforum.org/2022/10/26/gender-barometer-to-assess-implementation-of-the-african-charter-on-democracy-elections-and-governance-acdeg-launched/>

## Training on Rights of Women and Engagement with the ACHPR

The Coalition for an Effective African Court conducted a virtual training for CSOs, legal practitioners and Human Rights Institutions from the 28th-30th of November to encourage more engagement with the African Court specifically on the rights of women in order to influence law and policy reforms that uphold women rights in Africa and to also strengthen the African Court's jurisprudence on the rights of women in Africa. SOAWR member Equality Now was amongst the expert team of trainers. Resources from the training are available via the [African Court Coalition](#).

**Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2 & 8**

## Peaceful Protest for the Kenyan state to Protect Survivors of Sexual Violence

As part of their 16 Days of Activism December campaign, CREAM organised a march, involving numerous Women's Rights Organisations, to the office of Kenya's Chief Justice. This protest was in response to recent rulings by several judges declaring minimum mandatory sentencing for sexual offences as unconstitutional; these judgments not only failed to take a survivor-centred approach but also grant judicial officers unfettered discretion to issue sentences for sexual offences. The over 400 people strong protest brought traffic in the Central Business District to a standstill as women and men alike cried out for justice and protection all the way to the Supreme Court Building. A petition was read and presented to the Chief Registrar of the Judiciary Anne Amadi on behalf of the Chief Justice who assured the supporters that the Judiciary remains committed to dispense justice and is accountable to those it serves. It is hoped the [petition](#) will lead to the upholding of the minimum mandatory sentencing that will offer more protection to survivors and punish perpetrators.

**Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 4(2), 8 & 14**



Image source: CREAM

## Challenges to Democracy/Constitutional Governments

2022 saw a [continued trend](#) of coups, attempted coups and military transfers of power in the West African region. There were two takeovers in Burkina Faso in 2022 as well as failed coup attempts in Guinea Bissau, The Gambia and the island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe.

Whilst not only affecting democratic processes, political instability affects women in multiple respects. For example, in Guinea-Bissau, political instability has been found to “undermine the potential for high participation in HIV testing for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission”.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, previous work by gender or women’s ministries is often de-prioritised and sometimes abandoned entirely, undermining rights enshrined in the Maputo Protocol.

### Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 9, 10 & 11

### *African Women in Leadership Positions*

2022 saw a number of African women elected or appointed to senior leadership and decision-making positions, including but not limited to:

- For the first time in Somali history, a woman, [Sadia Yasin Haji Samatar](#), was elected Deputy Speaker of the lower house of Parliament with 137 votes.
- In [Lesotho](#):
  - Nthomeng Majara, previously the first female Chief Justice of Lesotho’s Court of Appeal, was sworn in as the first female Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
  - Tsepang Tsita-Mosena was appointed as the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly and Momonaheng Mokitimi, President of the Senate, was re-elected for a second term in the 11th Parliament.
- Angolan President João Lourenço’s running mate, [Professor Esperança Maria Eduardo Francisco da Costa](#), became Angola’s first woman Vice President following the 2022 presidential election.
- Kenya set a new [record](#) in the number of women elected into various seats and observed the highest level of women’s representation in Kenya’s National Assembly history.
- A number of Gambian women retained their positions and the Honourable Fatou Cham rose from Councillor to [National Assembly member for the Sanimentereng Constituency](#). She has [been vocal about women’s representation in parliament](#). During the first public session of the sixth legislature National Assembly, Cham [called for](#) gender equality in the nomination and selection of MPs. She also called for increased leadership opportunities for existing female parliamentarians within the National Assembly committees.
- After the Equatorial Guinean election, the President appointed the first woman Prime Minister, [Manuela Roka Botey](#).
- Liberia appointed [Justice Sie-A-Nyene Gyapay Yuoh](#) as its the third ever woman Chief Justice.

### Relevant Article of the Protocol: 9

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<sup>4</sup> Dlama Nggida Rasmussen, Holger Werner Unger, Morten Bjerregaard-Andersen, David da Silva Té, Noel Vieira, Inés Oliveira, Bo Langhoff Hønge, Sanne Jespersen, Margarida Alfredo Gomes, Peter Aaby, Christian Wejse, Morten Sodemann (2018) ‘Political instability and supply-side barriers undermine the potential for high participation in HIV testing for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission in Guinea-Bissau: A retrospective cross-sectional study’, Plos One <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0199819>



# Overview of the implementation of the Maputo Protocol (2022)

As of December 31, 2022, 43 countries had ratified/acceded to the Maputo Protocol, with the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic officially ratifying the treaty in April 2022. However, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Niger, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan have signed but are yet to accede to the Protocol. Botswana, Egypt and Morocco are yet to sign and accede to the Protocol.

In 2022, there were no new state reports submitted on the Maputo Protocol; however, the ACHPR published their [Shadow Reporting Guidelines](#) (co-developed by SOAWR members Centre for Human Rights – University of Pretoria, Equality Now and ICJ Kenya) as well as their [Concluding Observations and Recommendations](#) on Rwanda's Combined 11th, 12th and 13th Periodic Report including on the Maputo Protocol. As of December 31 2022, only eighteen countries (Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Eswatini, The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Togo and Zimbabwe) had submitted their initial state report and three of these (Malawi, Namibia and Nigeria) have submitted their first periodic report under the Maputo Protocol.

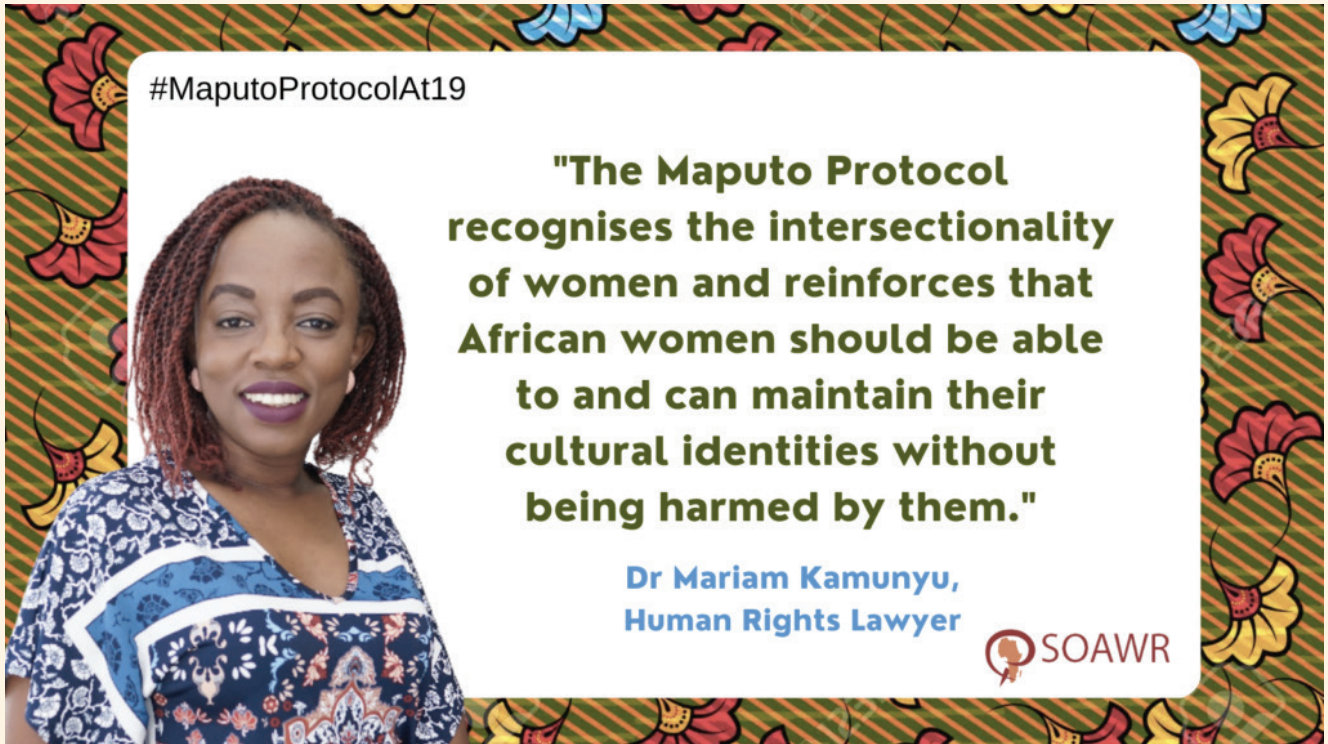
Regarding domestication and implementation, many countries have adopted laws, policies and/or strategies to advance women's rights, and made institutional reforms. Some highlights from 2022 include:

- In March 2022, **Lesotho's** Parliament approved the Counter Domestic Violence Bill, a move that “aims to address the scourge of violence against women and girls in the country”.<sup>1</sup>
- **Sierra Leone's** Government passed the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act in November of

2022, enshrining improvements to women's access to finance, employment opportunities, equal pay, maternity leave and—critically—political representation. The GEWE Act also established a 30 percent quota for women's participation in government for both appointed positions, including cabinet, ministry and ambassador roles and elected positions, such as parliamentary and local council seats. The President and his cabinet also approved the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Act seeking to decriminalise abortion. The latter Act is yet to be approved by the National Parliament.

- **The Gambia** launched its Strategy for Youth, Women Development and Empowerment (2021-2024) in October 2022. The Strategy outlines measures for the enhancement of youth and women development and empowerment through the use of ICTs.
- An anti-FGM draft bill was introduced to the **Liberian** legislature. Entitled “An Act Prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation 2022”, it would criminalise the cutting of girls under 18. Submitted by Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, Fonati Koffa, the bill has been before the House Committee for review and recommendations since June 2022. Additionally, the Liberian Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection launched a toll-free Anti-Sexual Gender-Based Violence (SGVB) Call Number in several communities in Montserrado County.
- In **Togo**, the first edition of the ‘African Women Entrepreneurship Academy’ program was launched on Thursday 2 June, under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Action and the Promotion of Women. The aim is to train and build the capacities

<sup>1</sup> SADC Genderlinks Barometer (2022), available at: [genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Chap6-Baro2022-GBV.pdf](http://genderlinks.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Chap6-Baro2022-GBV.pdf)



of 25 Togolese women entrepreneurs at the beginning of their careers, in order to improve their entrepreneurial performance, with a certain emphasis on social entrepreneurship.

- A joint GBV and SRHR awareness campaign was conducted between various government ministries of **Mauritania** with the Médecins du Monde organisation. The campaign launched under the slogan “Pourquoi cela?”/“Why this?” and aims to make young people aware at an early stage of the importance of respectful behaviour towards others, especially girls and women.
- **São Tomé and Príncipe** promulgated a law on parity that imposes a 40% minimum gender representation in party lists and collegiate bodies.

**Continentially**, it was exciting to observe the 3rd African Forum on Women, Peace and Security, convened by H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde, the President of Ethiopia, from the 14th-15th of December. The participants concluded the forum by calling on the African Union, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and AU Member States to “redouble their commitment to fully implement and advance the WPS Agenda” by undertaking a variety of [recommendations](#) which,

among other instruments, were guided by the Maputo Protocol. Similarly, the ACHPR Resolution on the Protection of Women Against Digital Violence in Africa recalled Article 1 of the Protocol.

Throughout July 2022, SOAWR commemorated the 19<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol with a joint advocacy campaign with Equality Now on [why the Protocol benefits everyone](#). The #MaputoProtocolAt19 was used across various social media platforms to highlight key achievements and how the Protocol has been used in court decisions around the continent. The campaign garnered over 65,200 impressions (an 18.5% increase from 2021) and was organically re-shared on Twitter by the WHO Director-General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima.

SOAWR is continuing its Call-For Action and Accountability Campaign to urgently appeal to the States who have not yet acceded to the Protocol to do so without delay. SOAWR members are being supported to submit a petition directly to their governments or to embassies/commissions and seek to meet with relevant state representatives. This appeal will continue into 2023, especially utilising momentum from the 20th Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol.



# Ratification Missions

In October, November and December 2022, the Solidarity for African Women Rights Coalition in partnership with various actors including the African Union Commission's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (AUC-WGYD) conducted [ratification missions](#) in Egypt, Morocco, Botswana and South Sudan with its respective member organisations to advocate for the adoption of the Protocol.

## ■ South Sudan, May 2022

SOAWR member STEWARD Women has been leading an ongoing advocacy campaign lobby for South Sudan to ratify the Maputo Protocol. They have been conducting meetings with high-level delegates and raising awareness in the country.

## ■ Egypt, October 2022

Key among the critical stakeholders that SOAWR, which was represented by the Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers, National Association for the Defence of Rights and Freedoms, Equality Now, Kadirat and Sources of Peace, met during the ratification mission in Egypt were six Members of Parliament and the President of the National Council of Women, Dr Maya Morsy. We were encouraged by their

commitment and are optimistic that Egypt will ratify the treaty.

The SOAWR delegation also had a consultation meeting with several Egyptian civil society actors and media personalities. The event was graced by the Chairperson of EVE Future and Secretary General of the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education. We took them through the provisions of the Protocol to enhance their understanding because they are pivotal to its uptake and to advance the realisation of women's rights. The CSOs actors committed to working together to advance ratification of the Protocol. The media has already highlighted the mission in various outlets.

## ■ Morocco, November 2022

In Morocco, the African Union's Women, Gender and Youth Directorate (AU-WGYD) partnered with SOAWR to conduct the ratification mission. It took place from 1 to 4 November 2022 in Rabat under the leadership of the 1st Vice Chairperson of the African Union Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Bureau, Honourable Peace Regis Mutuuuzo.





*The Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa, Honourable Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie and additional AU and SOAWR/CSO representatives meeting with the Botswana Ministry of Justice.*

The delegation paid courtesy calls to several high-level state and non-state actors including a courtesy call to Honourable Aawatif Hayar, Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family, Members of Parliament and the President of the National Human Rights Council, Amina Bouayach.

In her remarks, Honourable Hayar stated that the mission was timely as Morocco is in the process of revising its Family Code. She said that Morocco had made significant strides in enhancing women's rights and that acceding to the Maputo Protocol will present a lot of opportunities for the country to upscale these rights.

Hon. Hayar's sentiments were echoed by those made by the Members of Parliament met during the mission. They explained that they were in full support of women's rights and that they would play their part in safeguarding the gains that the country had made in the women's rights movement.

The President of the National Human Rights Council, Amina Bouayach, noted that the implementation of laws was paramount to the advancement of women's rights. She added that it was also important to include women in decision-making and to support them in attaining leadership positions.

Finally, the delegation held a workshop with civil society actors in Morocco. In the presence of the Chairperson of the Regional Human Rights Commission of Casablanca-Settat, Saadia Wadah. The CSOs pledged to work with the government in addition to popularising the Maputo Protocol to ensure that it was ratified. SOAWR was represented by Equality Now, Kadirat, FEMNET, JOSSOUR Forum des Femmes Marocaines and Y-Peer Petri, Morocco.

### ■ Botswana, December 2022

SOAWR, as represented by FEMNET, coordinated the delegation also made up of the AU-WGYD, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa at the ACHPR and the UN-OHCHR. They met with the Botswana Ministry of Justice - National Commission for Human Rights to appeal the Ministry to work with the Head of State to accede to the Maputo Protocol, especially in light of Botswana having already acceded to CEDAW. The delegation also met with national CSOs to strengthen their capacities through discussing their role and strategies in lobbying the state to accede to the treaty and explaining the state and shadow reporting processes. These efforts were particularly driven by the opportunity presented by the upcoming 20th Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol in July 2023.



# 2022 SOAWR/Sida Sub-Grant Awardees

Seven SOAWR member organisations carried out various activities throughout 2022 as sub-grant awardees of the All for the Maputo Protocol Initiative by SOAWR, Equality Now and Sida. Below is a summary of what each implemented and achieved.



## Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL)

The Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers met with NGOs to educate them on the Maputo Protocol. They had 28 participants (20 women and 8 men) which included human rights associations, executive officials, journalists, media professionals, women, lawyers and party leaders. They discussed the benefits of the Maputo Protocol for women and the challenges associated with Egypt's lack of accession to the treaty. AEFL held a second workshop in Cairo to review steps taken so far towards advocating for Egypt's accession to the Maputo Protocol. In attendance were 44 participants (23 women and 21 men) which comprised NGOs, representatives in the house of the senate, journalists, the National Council for Human Rights, party leaders, a strong disability council, researchers and female leaders. During the workshop, they were able to present a working paper on Egypt's position on ratifying the Maputo Protocol.



## Alliances for Africa (AfA)

AfA focused on addressing the challenges faced by women in claiming their legal rights. This was coupled with the inactive engagement of civil societies who are supposedly the watchdogs and voice for the voiceless owing to their lack of adequate knowledge, awareness and understanding of the Maputo Protocol as an encompassing framework that defends and advances the human rights of women and girls.

They strategically established and birthed a Coalition for the Domestication of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria (CODMAP), on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022. CODMAP was designed to reflect a multi-sectoral approach toward advocating for the domestication of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria. Their project within that period began addressing the gaps identified through building strategic engagement and capacity to ensure continuous healthy conversations around the domestication of the Protocol with boldness and without fears; increased CODMAP Members' activism, voices and meetings, popularisation of the Protocol and awareness through online meetings were deliberate action the project embarked on.

AfA also carried out training for all members of its staff on the provisions of the Maputo Protocol and the need for domestication in Nigeria beyond its ratification.



## Sister Namibia

Sister Namibia contracted professional writers to investigate the status of the specific themes of the Maputo Protocol on which their project was focused: Protection of women from violence and Health and Reproductive Rights. Specific topics covered included access to contraceptives, teenage pregnancy and community perceptions of sexual and gender-based violence. The content

produced focused on two of Namibia's northern regions that are often neglected in reporting (the Kavango East region and the Zambezi region).



## Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD)

RFLD engaged in awareness raising and advocacy for Niger's accession to the Maputo Protocol. RFLD held meetings to explain SOAWR's strategy and the importance of acceding to the Maputo Protocol. In attendance were religious leaders, deputies, mayors, communal councillors and village chiefs in 4 localities in Niger. They conducted capacity-building workshops on the rights of women and sexual and reproductive health through the use of the Maputo Protocol. They were able to reach 105 women directly and more than 3500 indirectly. They have translated audio materials on the Maputo Protocol into vernacular languages. Translation of the Maputo Protocol has been made available in Hausa and Zarma. They have 8 radio programs on the Maputo Protocol that have been broadcast in the regions of Niamey. A manual on sexual and reproductive health and rights has been developed and distributed physically and virtually.



## Initiative for Gender Equality and Development in Africa (IGED)

IGED planned a high-Level Seminar in Ghana on 14th October 2022 for CSOs on how to use the Maputo Protocol for Women's Rights Advocacy. The people invited included media practitioners, lawyers, development workers and human rights defenders which was scheduled for. They developed 3 short videos and trailers on how to use specific sections of the Maputo Protocol and its related mechanisms to promote women's rights in Africa and disseminate them electronically on social media to guide CSOs, the youth and other stakeholders on women's rights advocacy.



## Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria (CHR - UP)

CHR - UP held a judicial colloquium on the 29th and 30th of November 2022 in Abuja, Nigeria. They had 5 judges from the ECOWAS Community Court and 8 other stakeholders in attendance. The colloquium was to sensitise judicial and quasi-judicial officers to substantive equality principles required for a gender-sensitive approach to the application of the Maputo Protocol and facilitate cross-learning between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice as regional and sub-regional judicial and quasi-judicial bodies in Africa.



## Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS)

AJS conducted a project on improving the management of menstrual hygiene through advocacy, awareness and information activities in accordance with the Maputo Protocol. AJS in collaboration with SOAWR and Equality Now initiated the first phase of the project through courtesy visits of elementary school authorities namely to the Inspection d'Académie (IA) and the Inspection de l'Education et de la Formation (IEF) of Guédiawaye de Rufisque and Thiès as well as the handing over of dignity kits to the students on June 7 and 8 2022.

# Spotlight on Translating the Maputo Protocol with Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD)

## Interview with RFLD

*This interview was originally conducted in French and has been translated to English.*

### **Which languages and formats has RFLD translated the Maputo Protocol to?**

In order to guarantee all women the right to respect for the inherent dignity of the human being, to the recognition and protection of their human and legal rights in accordance with Article 3 of the Maputo Protocol on the rights to dignity, the Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD) has adopted an innovative approach by implementing appropriate measures to prohibit any exploitation of women (educated or not) or any degrading treatment of them. Thus, RFLD has translated the Maputo Protocol into several languages, namely [Hausa](#), [Zarma](#), [Yoruba](#) and [Goun](#) and into two formats: audio and written.

### **Why is it important to have the Protocol translated?**

It was necessary for us to have the Protocol translated because every woman has the right to the respect of the inherent dignity of the human being, to the recognition and protection of her human and legal rights. Education is the only way to lift women out of poverty with knowledge. But in some countries, many of them in Africa are relegated to the second rank which hinders the improvement of their condition because their rights are daily scorned. In

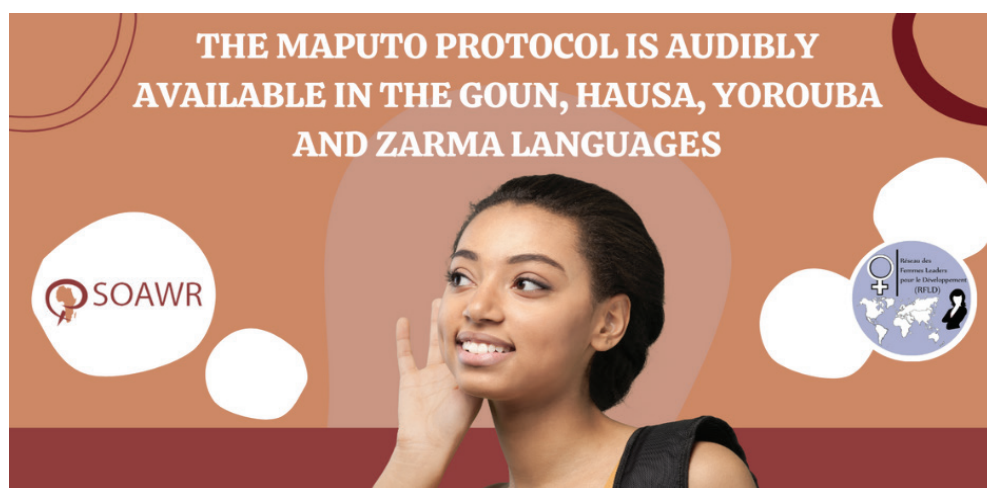
fact, according to the African realities still current in some countries, women are not made for school. This means that many of them have a relatively low level of education. This is why bringing the Maputo Protocol closer to this category of women by translating it into the languages they know best was for the RFLD the only option to facilitate the appropriation of this document by them. Beyond the language of Molière and English, which are the languages of which it is necessary to have a certain level of education before understanding, the Protocol is now available in local languages. This will allow women to easily understand what we are talking about and consequently to be able to claim their rights.

### **What was the process of translating the Protocol like? Did you experience any challenges and how did you overcome them?**

The process of translating the Maputo Protocol was carried out in several phases:

#### **Preparation of the translation team**

At this stage, aware that translation is a scientific and technical work that requires many skills and a certain expertise and therefore must respect the rules of the art, the Network of Women Leaders for Development has formed a team of young dynamic consultants. It is therefore a team of people adapted according to their skills and their field of expertise.



### **Proofreading and editing**

Once the document was translated, the Project Officer sent it to a pair of staff members for proofreading and revision. The proofreading stage was a crucial step because it allowed for the correction of spelling, grammatical and typographical errors. During proofreading, the language experts put their experience into play to perfect the document. Once the proofreading phase was complete, they moved on to editing. This process consists of checking the translation against the source document. This allowed them to correct any misunderstandings, nonsense, omissions and other errors made in the translation. This is a much more thorough process than simple proofreading.

### **Quality control**

Once the layout has been completed, the translation team performed a quality check. This involved members scrupulously checking whether the final document is in order with the Maputo Protocol in its initial state and whether the translation has taken into account certain jargons of the languages from which the document was translated.

Like any work, the work done by RFLD in translating the Maputo Protocol is not without difficulties and included:

- Terminological difficulties due to the omnipresence of English, the language of the markets.
- The conciseness of English puts French at a disadvantage (slides, screen, synthetic language for rapid communication).
- The difficulty of finding syntactic references to translate a language written by other nationalities and the need to improve the text translated into Yoruba, Goun, Zarma and Hausa to facilitate understanding.

### ***Once translated, how have these versions been disseminated and popularised?***

Once translated, the different versions of the Maputo Protocol were disseminated on the RFLD's platforms, in this case its website and on the online media as well as SOAWR's website and social media.

### ***How have the translations been used and what has the impact been? Have you heard any feedback from those who have now been able to access the Protocol?***

The translation of the Maputo Protocol into local languages has increased public awareness and social mobilisation to eliminate violence against women and girls and to enable women and girls who are victims of violence to break the silence and access justice and appropriate support.

Women in Niger and Benin, having grasped the quintessence of the Maputo Protocol because it has been translated into Yoruba, Goun, Zarma and Hausa, are already participating in unprecedented peaceful movements for women's rights, justice and equality. Uneducated women are raising their voices in unison denouncing sexual harassment and mobilising against the violation of their rights and for their inclusion. This is done through advocacy directed at opinion leaders and their spouses.

As soon as it was made available, thousands of people have already downloaded the translated versions. This shows that the demand was there.

### ***Which language and format do you hope the Protocol is translated to next?***

In 2022, for example, at a meeting organised by the RFLD in northern Benin and Mali, women asked that the Protocol be explained from time to time in local languages on community radio stations. This is why we think it would be advantageous for RFLD to multiply the versions translated into the local languages such as Bambara, Songhay, Dogon, Soninké, Mooré, Pana and Fon.



# 2023 Plans

A number of SOAWR initiatives, largely centred around the Maputo Protocol and its 20th Anniversary, are scheduled for 2023, including:

- The continuation of the Call-For Action and Accountability Campaign on the All for Maputo Protocol Initiative.
- The development of a publication on the status of implementation of the Maputo Protocol.
- The 20th Anniversary of the Maputo Protocol hybrid celebrations.
- Further in-country and embassy ratification missions.
- The recognition of 20 state and non-state actors who have made significant contributions towards the implementation of the Maputo Protocol.
- Consultative meetings with relevant AU organs: AUC-WGYD, AU-PAP, RECs, SR RWA.
- Development and submission of at least two shadow/ alternative reports to the ACHPR or other AU or UN Treaty Monitoring Body.
- SOAWR Annual General Meeting and Steering Committee Member elections.

## 2023 SUBGRANTEES



Baobab for Women's Human Rights



Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)



Great Lake Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)



Kadirat



Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRCC)



National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)



STEWARDSWOMEN



Well Being Africa (WBA)



Women Counselling and Information Centre (WCIC)

**SOLIDARITY FOR  
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

A force for freedom



**MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ  
POUR LES DROITS  
DES FEMMES AFRICAINES**

Une force pour la liberté

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