

SOA WWR Journal

2nd 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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Acronyms/Abbreviations

ACDHRS	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AEFL	Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers
AfA	Alliances for Africa
AfCFTA	The African Continental Free Trade Area
AJS	Association des Juristes Sénégalaises
AMwA	Akina Mama wa Afrika
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AU PAP	African Union Pan-African Parliament
AU WGYD	African Union Women, Gender and Youth Directorate
AWD	African Women's Decade
CCORPS	Coalition for Civil Society Organisations for the Ratification of Maputo Protocol in South Sudan
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COMFWB	COMESA Federation of Women in Business
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CESCR	Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CODMAP	Coalition for the Domestication of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DPO	Disabled Persons' Organisation
EAC SRH Bill	East African Community Sexual and Reproductive Health Bill, 2021
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FEMNET	The African Women's Development and Communications Network
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting





GBV	Gender Based Violence
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
GI-ESCR	The Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights
GLIHD	Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development
GPS	Gender Progress Study
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICBT	Integrated Computer Based Technology
ICT	Information Computer Technology
IGED	Initiative for Gender Equality and Development
IWRAP	International Women’s Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
MEWC	Make Every Woman Count
MSA	Multi-Sectoral Approach
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
Q&A	Question and Answer
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RFLD	Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement
R-TGoNU	Revitalised-Transitional Government of National Unity
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SIHA	The Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women’s Rights
SRHR	Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
UPHLS	Umbrella of Disability Organizations promoting Health and Fighting HIV & AIDS among Persons with disabilities in Rwanda
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
UN	United Nations
UNFD	Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti
WAVE	Women’s Association for Victims’ Empowerment
WRA	Women’s Rights Activists

Foreword

On behalf of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition I am pleased to share our 2nd Edition of the SOAWR Journal, showcasing some of our memorable moments from 2021.

The ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic, has continued to negatively affect the rights of women and girls in Africa resulting in the increased rates of domestic violence during lockdowns and curfews, women's disproportionately lower access to social protections and the strain on the wellbeing of the majority of women that make up the healthcare sectors, with alarming figures with regards to violations of the rights of women and girls being reported throughout 2021. The year (2021) also saw a significant number of coups, attempted coups and military transfers of power in Chad, Guinea, Mali, Sudan and Tunisia, which disproportionately affected the women and girls in these countries. These challenges among others, not only aggravated women's and girls' rights violations but also hindered advocacy and imposed grave constraints on interventions to the violations as highlighted in this Journal. Yet, in the face of these and other challenges, the SOAWR Coalition member organisations have continued to redefine, repurpose and restructure their operations to adapt to the situations, with unwavering resilience to the pursuit of gender equality and the full realisation and enjoyment of the Maputo Protocol rights by all women and girls on the Continent. It is this unwavering resilience that has enabled the Coalition to stay the course and be able to achieve some admirable results, which we share with you in this Journal.

Thanks to the support from Sida through Equality Now, nine SOAWR members were awarded sub-grants bringing the total beneficiaries to 15. The 2021 sub-grantees successfully implemented interventions to advance the SOAWR strategic goals as articulated in its Strategic Plan. These organisations are: African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL), Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA), Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD), Initiative for Gender Equality and Development (IGED) Africa, Kadirat, Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD), STEWARDWOMEN and Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti (UNFD).

Throughout the month of July 2021, SOAWR commemorated the 18th Anniversary of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol. The #MaputoAt18 was used across various social media platforms to highlight key achievements, challenges and ways forward for the realisation of the Protocol's aims and rights. Additionally, during the 16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women, SOAWR launched a campaign calling for the remaining 13 African Union Members States to urgently ratify the Maputo Protocol. The lack of ratification, comprehensive domestication and full implementation of the





Maputo Protocol continues to be a major challenge on the Continent, making the work of SOAWR all the more relevant.

In 2021, Equality Now under the SOAWR banner has developed various knowledge products that will aid the advocacy work of SOAWR members. These include: a Compendium of Strategies and Approaches on Defending the Rights of Women and Girls in Africa and a CSO Guide and Training Manual on Engagement with AU Member States on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. The Compendium is richly informative on litigation to hold states accountable for their commitments under the Maputo Protocol, as well as other regional, continental and international human rights treaties with provisions aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in Africa.

It is evident that the Coalition has continued to galvanise the strengths and expertise of its members to champion the rights of women and girls in Africa and to hold African governments accountable for the human rights commitments they have made at the national, regional and international levels. This Journal showcases why SOAWR is truly a force for freedom for the women and girls in Africa.

Faiza Jama Mohamed

Director, Africa Office, Equality Now

SOAWR Coalition Founding Member and Secretariat



About SOAWR

The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition is a continental membership-based network of organisations working to advance women's rights in Africa. SOAWR works to ensure that African states sign, 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

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, commitment and accountability internally and by Member States, transformation will be slow to achieve.

2021 SOAWR Highlights

Addressing Cross-border FGM in West Africa Webinar

On the 18th of February, SOAWR, Equality Now and Make Every Woman Count held a webinar on 'Addressing Cross-border FGM in West Africa'. Informative presentations and Q&A were conducted with a panel consisting of Ibrahima Kane (African Union Advocacy Program Director, Open Society Institute), Mariam Lamizana (President, Voix de Femmes, Burkina Faso), Priscilla Yagu Ciesay (Senior Technical Advisor, WAVE Gambia) and Nessma Senhadri (Political Officer for Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Reconstruction, African Union Peace & Security Department). Overall, the webinar emphasised the need to centre and integrate women's rights and gender equality within broader conversations on advancing accountability in West African states.

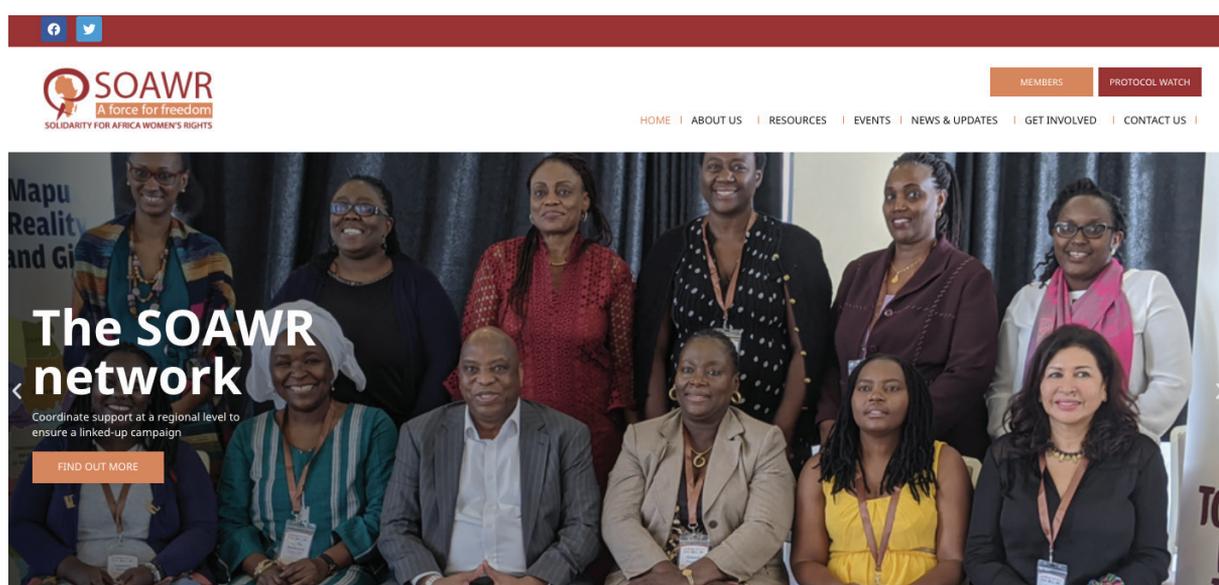
Relevant Article/s of the Protocol: 5 (b)

SOAWR Website Launch

The new [SOAWR website](#) was officially launched on the 16th of June 2021. The virtual launch with simultaneous French and English interpretation saw 76 people in attendance, a mix of SOAWR members, supporters and those interested in becoming a member.

The website maintains many features including: About SOAWR (inclusive of funders, impact and information about and full version of the Maputo Protocol); A profile of each of the 63 members; Protocol Watch, monitoring progress of Member States' on signing and ratification; Resources; Get Involved (including careers, opportunities and training); News & Updates; Events and a Contact page.

Since its launch, the website has been visited by more than 1,600 people and the resources available on the website have been downloaded 242 times, with the most popular downloads being the Maputo Protocol, our 2020 Journal and 'Get Involved' application forms. The Protocol Watch page is one of the website's most unique features and is among the most popular pages of the site.



Virtual Workshop on Family Law Reforms

In collaboration with SIHA Network, Musawah, Equality Now and FEMNET, SOAWR convened a three-day Africa regional virtual workshop on family law reforms. The participants represented more than 24 African countries from every region. In one of the sessions, Equality Now's Africa Office Director, Faiza Mohamed, spoke on the many articles of the Maputo Protocol relating to the rights of women in family law and the need for African Member States to strengthen their implementation of these articles to better all aspects of African women's wellbeing and agency.

Relevant Article/s of the Protocol: 2, 6, 7, 17, 20 and 21

African Women's Decade Report Launch

2020 marked the end of the African Women's Decade 2010–2020, adopted on 15 October 2010 in Nairobi, Kenya, under the theme "Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment". The launch of the Decade represented a testimony to the African Union's commitment to the advancement of the gender equality agenda and women's rights across the continent. Its end has coincided with the celebration of the 20th anniversary of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action. Make Every Woman Count (MEWC), one of SOAWR's Guinean members, used this opportunity to take stock of progress made in the past ten years on advancing women's rights in Africa.



To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the African Women's Decade and to officially launch the final AWD report, Make Every Woman Count held a virtual celebration on the 18th of November, 2021. The event brought together a diverse panel of speakers and women's rights organisations, civil society organisations, governments and regional and international institutions. Rainatou Sow, the Founder and Executive Director of MEWC, presented the report and its key findings, illuminating it as an advocacy and accountability tool for women's rights going forward. Dr Morissanda Kouyaté, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, African Integration, and Guineans Abroad (Guinea) officially launched the report, declaring "African women will win!". An interview with Ms Sow is featured within this journal.



Appointment of SOAWR Members to Senior Leadership Positions

Ms. Rabha Fathy, chairwoman of Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL), was appointed to the National Council of Human Rights in Egypt, which is considered a very good opportunity and a step forward in fostering relations with Egyptian governmental bodies. This is expected to facilitate communications and implementation of activities on advocating for the ratification of the Maputo Protocol.

Hon. Dr Morissanda Kouyaté, one of SOAWR's founding members, was appointed *Ministre des Affaires Étrangères, de la Coopération Internationale, de l'Intégration Africaine et des Guinéens de l'Étranger* (Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, African Integration and Guineans Abroad - Republic of Guinea). The SOAWR Coalition is proud to have such a strong advocate for African women's rights and for the implementation of the Maputo Protocol not only in the national government of Guinea but also in the West African region.

African Women's Rights Issues: Overview of Achievements and Challenges

The following is a non-exhaustive overview of women's rights issues, events and instruments pertinent to the continent throughout 2021.

African Union Launch of the Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2018-2028

Following revisions to the original draft strategy, the GEWE strategy was officially launched on 26th February 2021 in a meeting which was attended by Ministers in Charge of Gender and Womens' Affairs in Africa, Regional Economic Communities, International Partners and Civil Society organisations. While officially launching the Strategy, the Chairperson of the AU Specialised Technical Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and the Minister of Social Affairs and Microfinance, Republic of Benin, Dr. Mèdessè Véronique Tognifodé Mewanou, called upon "all Member States and other stakeholders to own the strategy so that they are able to align it with their national strategies so that it contributes to alleviating poverty and enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment".¹

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 9, 12, 13 and 19

GBV as a Weapon of War in the Ethiopia-Tigray Conflict

On the one year anniversary of the start of the Tigray War, Alliances for Africa on behalf of the SOAWR Coalition submitted a [Statement](#) at the 69th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It highlighted and condemned the "continued use of rape, sexual slavery, sexual humiliation and other forms of

¹ African Union (2021) 'The African Union Strategy for Gender Equality & Women's Empowerment (GEWE) : Laying the Foundation for Promotion of Gender Equality in Africa', available at: <https://au.int/en/articles/african-union-strategy-gender-equality-womens-empowerment>

sexual abuse as a weapon in this conflict” and called upon the African Commission to “continue using its good offices to press for the immediate end to all violations and abuses of international human rights law and humanitarian law, with a special emphasis on the need to end all forms of violence against women and girls”.

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 3, 4, 8 and 10

AfCFTA and its Advantages for African Women Traders

Trading across the continent officially began under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) agreement on 1st of January, 2021. Twelve months later, the African Union has released a peer-reviewed [study](#) on ‘the opportunities in the AfCFTA for women in the Informal and Cross-Border Trade’. The study “identifies several opportunities in the AfCFTA and its accompanying Protocol on Trade in Goods and Protocol on Trade in Services that can be used to enhance the trading and financial capacities for women informal cross border traders. These opportunities are the free movement of people and goods; a unitary tax regime that will ease the movement of goods and reduce the costs of trade as pertains to customs and import duties, and finally that the AfCFTA presents a continent-wide opportunity to engage Integrated Computer Based Technology (ICBT) in a manner that promotes the empowerment of women traders in ICBT”.²

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 13 and 19

Southern African Development Community (SADC) 2021 Gender Progress Study (GPS)

Publishing their results in August 2021, the joint Genderlinks-SADC GPS was administered to 34,323 women and men of all age groups in 15 SADC countries between January 2019 and May 2021. The research grouped GPS questions into six clusters: Gender-Based Violence, Harmful Practices, Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), Sexual Diversity, Media and General questions. Overall, the study demonstrated that “gender attitudes in the Southern African Development Community are gradually changing for the better but evidence of deep-seated patriarchal attitudes is still strong. The gender attitudes research shows that, while 58% of women and men in the SADC region agree or strongly agree that women and men should be treated the same, 52% agree or strongly agree that a woman should obey her husband.”³

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 3, 4, 5, 14

#JusticeForMemory Campaign - Zimbabwe

In September 2021, a 14-year old girl named Memory Machaya was reported to have died giving birth at a church shrine in the eastern region of Marange, Zimbabwe.⁴ The circulation of her story via social media and communication forums such as WhatsApp

2 African Union (AU) A study on the opportunities in the AfCFTA for women in the Informal and Cross-Border Trade (2022), available at: <https://au.int/en/documents/20220311/study-opportunities-afcfta-women-informal-and-cross-border-trade>

3 Genderlinks (2021) SADC Gender Attitudes in the Region Still Leave a lot to be Desired’, available at: <https://genderlinks.org.za/news/sadc-gender-attitudes-in-the-region-still-leave-a-lot-to-be-desired/>

4 Girls Not Brides (2021) ‘Zimbabwe urged to deliver justice for Memory Machaya’, available at: <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/articles/zimbabwe-urged-to-deliver-justice-for-memory-machaya/>

sparked a public outcry and a petition of more than 9,000 signatures, calling for justice for her and her family, as well as for an end to the harmful practices of child-marriage and statutory rape. The United Nations also urged the government of Zimbabwe to recognise child marriage as a crime and bring an end to the practice.⁵

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 3, 4 and 14

Challenges to Democracy/Constitutional Governments

2021 saw a significant number of coups, attempted coups and military transfers of power in Chad, Guinea, Mali, Sudan and (arguably) Tunisia. Whilst not only affecting democratic processes, political instability affects women in multiple respects. For example, within North Africa, “political instability positively correlates with lower degrees of Financial Inclusion”,⁶ in general, political instability leads to greater opportunity for human trafficking;⁷ and 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”.⁸ Furthermore, previous work by gender or women’s ministries is often de-prioritised and sometimes abandoned entirely.

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 10, 11 and 14

Ongoing Covid-19 Challenges

In our [2020 Journal](#), we discussed the effect of Covid-19 on women’s rights in Africa, such as the increased rates of domestic violence during lockdowns and curfews, women’s disproportionately lower access to social protections and the strain on the wellbeing of the majority of women that make up the healthcare sectors. Alarming figures were reported throughout 2021, such as a 60% increase in teenage pregnancies in Gauteng, South Africa since the beginning of the pandemic⁹ and a 92% increase in 2020 reported GBV cases in Kenya compared to the same period in 2019.¹⁰ In March of 2021, Make Every Woman Count published a [Policy Brief](#) on the Impact of Covid-19 and the Importance of Gender-sensitive Policy Measures, demonstrating a clear need for more women leaders and senior decision makers if we are truly to build more inclusive and gender-transformative societies.

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 13, 14, 19 and 24

5 Global Citizen (2021) ‘UN Urges Zimbabwe to End Child Marriage After 14-Year-Old Bride Dies in Childbirth’, available at: <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/zimbabwe-child-marriage-memory-machaya-un/>

6 Abidin Alhassan, Leon Li, Krishna Reddy, Geeta Duppatti (2019) ‘The relationship between political instability and financial inclusion: Evidence from Middle East and North Africa’, Wiley Online Library <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijfe.1793>

7 Bello, P. O. , & Olutola, A. A. (2020). The Conundrum of Human Trafficking in Africa. In (Ed.), Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. IntechOpen. <https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.83820>

8 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>

9 Deutsche Welle (DW) (2021) ‘Africa: COVID lockdowns blamed for increase in teenage pregnancies’, available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/africa-covid-lockdowns-teenage-pregnancy-increase/a-59166242>

10 Ombaka, R. (2021) ‘GBV Cases In Kenya Up By 92pc Between January And June 2020’, Citizen Digital, available at: <https://www.citizen.digital/news/gbv-cases-in-kenya-up-by-92pc-between-january-and-june-2020-10414460>



African Women in Leadership Positions

2021 saw African women elected or appointed to senior leadership and decision-making positions, many of them being the first women to fill the roles. These include but are not limited to:

- African Union Commission: Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa (Rwanda) elected as the AUC's Deputy Chairperson.
- Kenya: Appointment of Hon. Martha Koome as Chief Justice.
- Tanzania: Assumption of office by Hon. Samia Suluhu as President (both Head of State and Government).
- Tunisia: Najla Bouden Romdhane appointed as Prime Minister.
- Uganda: Jessica Alupo elected as Vice-President and Robinah Nabbanja appointed as Prime Minister.
- World Trade Organisation: Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (Nigeria) selected as the first woman and first African to be Director-General.
- Zambia: election of Mutale Nalumango as Vice-President.

Relevant Article of the Protocol: 9



The infographic features a dark red background with a white header bar at the top. The header bar contains the logo for 'SOLIDARITY FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS' and 'MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITE POUR LES DROITS DES FEMMES AFRICAINES', with the tagline 'A force for freedom' and 'Une force pour la liberté'. Below the header, the main title 'BENIN'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ADOPTS TWO LAWS ON THE PROTECTION AND EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN.' is written in white. In the center is the flag of Benin. Two black boxes with white text describe the laws:

Law N°2021-11
on special measures for the repression of offences committed on the basis of sex and for the protection of women.

Law N°2021-12
on sexual health and reproduction, including abortion of pregnancy within the first three months if the distress caused is incompatible with the woman or the unborn child's interest.

Overview of the Implementation of the Maputo Protocol (2021)

As of December 2021, 42 countries have ratified/acceded to the Maputo Protocol. However, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Niger, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, 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. Only nine countries have submitted their state report under the Maputo Protocol. These numbers have unfortunately not changed since 2020.

Regarding implementation, many countries have adopted laws, policies and/or strategies to advance women's rights, as well as making institutional reforms. Some highlights from 2021 include:

- Benin's National Assembly adopted two fundamental laws for the protection and emancipation of women in Benin.
- Eritrea's development of the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child Health, Adolescent and Ageing 2022-2026 strategic plan.
- Eswatini's development of a training hub for women in informal trade and launching of digital platforms for women entrepreneurs.
- Ghana's Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Bill.
- Kenya's GBV police policy and the High Court Case Tatu Kamau v Attorney General & 14 others which upheld the FGM/C ban instituted by the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act, 2011.
- Mauritius' launch of a business hub and ICT laboratory at the National Women Development Centre.
- Namibia's parliamentary commitment to eliminating the tampon tax.
- Seychelles' adoption of the COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) National Chapter and opening its office desk & new monitoring and evaluation unit responsible for CEDAW.
- Somalia's Prime Minister committed to a 30% quota of parliamentary seats for women and Sierra Leone's draft Gender Empowerment Bill, also stipulating a 30% quota.
- South Africa's Recognition of Customary Marriages Amendment Act.
- The Puntland authorities' (Somalia) introduction of its first anti-FGM bill.
- Zimbabwe's Public Service Commission approval of the establishment of a Director Post in every Ministry, who is responsible for Gender Inclusivity and Wellness.



Throughout July 2021, SOAWR commemorated the 18th Anniversary of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol with a joint advocacy campaign with Equality Now. The #MaputoAt18 was used across various social media platforms to highlight key achievements, challenges and ways forward for the realisation of the Protocol's aims and rights. The campaign garnered over 55,500 impressions and reached thousands of new followers. In the same month, Equality Now and SOAWR launched the African Youth for Maputo Protocol [Essay Competition](#) to promote scholarship and innovative approaches to solving the greatest challenges in the ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol in Africa.

Equality Now's thorough [resource](#) – Litigating the Maputo Protocol: A Compendium of Strategies and Approaches on Defending the Rights of Women and Girls in Africa – was also made available on SOAWR's website. The papers contained in this Compendium highlight the rightful place of litigation in holding states accountable for the commitments they made under the Maputo Protocol, as well as other regional, continental and international human rights treaties with provisions aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in Africa.

On the occasion of the Maputo Protocol's 18th Anniversary, the Sixteen Days of Activism to End Violence against Women (25 November to 10th December 2021) and the ongoing African Union's Human Rights Decade (a period whereby AU member states are required to advance citizen's human rights), SOAWR launched a [petition](#) and resources to urgently appeal to the 13 states who have not yet acceded to the Protocol to do so without delay. SOAWR members were supported to submit this petition directly to their governments or to embassies/commissions located in their respective countries and seek to meet with relevant state representatives. This appeal will continue into 2022.

CSO Training on Engaging AU Member States on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.



Dr Mariam Kamunyu

"The Maputo Protocol is an incredible, progressive human rights instrument by African women for African women. It recognises the intersectionality of women and reinforces that African women should be able to and can maintain their cultural identities without being harmed by them."



2021 SOAWR/Sida Sub-Grant Awardees

Nine SOAWR member organisations carried out various activities throughout 2021 as sub-grant awardees of the All for the Maputo Protocol initiative funded by Sida (Swedish Development Cooperation). Below is a summary of what each implemented.

African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)



**The African Centre for
Democracy and Human
Rights Studies**

ACDHRS held a virtual shadow report training for 36 participants including SOAWR members, facilitators, speakers, interpreters etc. on 26th August, 2021 in English, French and Portuguese. Participants from the five geographical sub-regions participated in

the training. Two facilitators (incidentally SOAWR members) led the training and the topics dealt with included an overview of the rights of women in Africa, overview of the shadow reporting guidelines, status of reporting, role of CSOs in the reporting process, challenges and strategies to enhance the reporting process. The most important achievement included the engagement with the Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights in Africa, the sharing of information on the shadow reporting guidelines, information on the preparation of the report (by Kenya as a motivation for other countries like Benin) and the reiteration of the commitment of the African Union Commission's Directorate of Women, Gender and Youth to the promotion and protection of women's rights in African through the implementation of the Maputo Protocol and other rights related document. The training stirred interest in the shadow reporting process with enquiries of possible support for the preparation and submission of a shadow report.

In addition, the ACDHRS also took part in baseline data survey training, in which the three key informant interviews (State and non-State Actors), online survey and two focus group discussions (one physical and other virtual) were conducted. The main objective of the baseline data survey was to document information which will assist in determining the current level of awareness and agreement by national opinion leaders and women members of the general public in target countries (Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco) with key provisions of the Maputo Protocol. As an outcome, the level of awareness and agreement was indicated through the response to the baseline data exercise for The Gambia specifically and generally in Africa with suggestions for continued and strengthened advocacy efforts to increase levels of awareness of the Maputo Protocol and ensure effective implementation at the national level. In addition, the ACDHRS also carried out two baseline studies in Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic and the Kingdom of Morocco whose objectives were to review the existing legal and policy frameworks on the rights of women in the said countries.

Lastly, ACDHRS held an advocacy workshop to accelerate ratification, domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. Thirty-nine participants from 16 African countries (Benin, Ethiopia, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania,

Morocco, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sudan, Tunisia, The Gambia, Zimbabwe, including SOAWR Coalition members, other participants, resource persons, interpreters, participated in the workshop held virtually (via Zoom) on 16th December, 2021 with simultaneous English and French interpretation facility. A key outcome of the workshop was the commitment by Hon. Dr. Morissanda Kouyaté (Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, African Integration, and Guineans Abroad - Republic of Guinea) to rally his counterparts in the Continent to accelerate the ratification and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. SOAWR members and other CSOs also reiterated their commitment to advancing the Maputo Protocol rights.

Association for Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL)



AEFL developed two documentary videos about the Maputo Protocol to shed light on its inception, the number of Member States that have ratified it so far and the rights secured for women in it. The videos were an effective tool for circulation to raise NGOs awareness about the Protocol, so they will broaden the Protocol audience and facilitate awareness raising activities. Moreover, the newly established [SOAWR Egypt Facebook page](#) keeps raising awareness on the Protocol and activities implemented.

These videos were screened in the eight AEFL co-ordinated meetings with NGOs to give a thorough background on the Maputo Protocol and its importance for the advancement of women's rights and combating violence against women. In addition, the instructor showed the importance of the Protocol highlighting its distinctions

from CEDAW. Further, AEFL discussed the role entrusted to these NGOs to raise public awareness on the Protocol at local level, within their communities. Further, the NGOs will be entrusted to hold signatures collection campaigns within local NGOs in their areas to form a lobby group for encouraging the Egyptian government to ratify the Protocol.

Lastly, AEFL conducted a training for media professionals, which was held in Luxor on 14th and 15th of January 2022, about women's rights in international conventions. The training was attended by 20 journalists representing the following governorates: Minya, Assuit, Qina, Sohag, Aswan and Luxor. The two-day training tackled many important topics such as women's rights in international conventions, concept of women protection, national systems and legislation for protecting women's rights, the CEDAW Convention and the added value of the Maputo Protocol. The training highlighted the role of the media in supporting women's rights and addressing women related issues. The media professionals also emphasised the necessity of adopting women friendly media which focused on raising awareness on women's role and gender equality in different life fields in addition to monitoring dramatic works which try to dedicate to the stereotyping image about women.

Akina Mama wa Afrika



During the year, Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) made progress towards supporting a progressive movement and influencing policies at the East Africa regional level. AMWA supported ten young feminist alumni

to participate in the policymaking processes and influencing the East Africa Sexual Reproductive Health Bill 2021 (EAC SRH Bill 2021). Together with the EAC PAMOJA 4 SRHR coalition, they convened the Uganda national consultation on the proposed EAC SRH Bill 2021.

AMWA also conducted a feminist analysis of the EAC SRH Bill 2021 and convened CSOs in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda which helped in shaping the conversations around the language and provisions in the Bill. CSOs and AMWA staff used the analysis during the national consultations that were held in the six East African countries. For countries like Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda the analysis was used to proffer progressive language and recommendations of what CSOs, women and girls want in the Bill.

By highlighting the relevant provisions of the Maputo Protocol on sexual and reproductive health and rights and relating them to the Maputo Plan of Action, AMWA popularised the Maputo Protocol, in line with the Maputo Plan of Action to ensure universal access to reproductive health, among Ugandan healthcare providers on SRHR.

Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)



GLIHD implemented their 'Breaking SRHR silence among women with disabilities in Rwanda' project with the objective of strengthening the sexual and reproductive health of persons with disabilities, as well as their ability to claim their sexual and reproductive rights. GLIHD conducted training for women with disabilities on SRHR legal and policy framework including the Maputo Protocol with the purpose of raising awareness and empower them to voice their health rights and challenges that affect them. GLIHD also conducted roundtables with Disabled Persons' Organisations (DPOs) and key stakeholders on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and international treaty bodies' recommendations on SRHR for women with disabilities in Rwanda. This provided an opportunity for in-depth discussions and experience sharing among DPOs and key stakeholders working on SRHR and disability as well as to link the DPOs with key stakeholders in order to support and break SRHR silence among the disability community in Rwanda.

In partnership with UPHLS, GLIHD also conducted two workshops. The first was the strategic engagement meeting with DPOs, law enforcement agencies and health practitioners on the GBV and SRHR legal environments, especially for women with disability. Secondly, GLIHD conducted a meeting with members of the Rwanda Bar Association to discuss the use of Maputo Protocol in their pleadings and submissions while defending women with disabilities. As a result, women with disabilities, DPOs as well as other key stakeholders have increased their knowledge around SRHR and Disability, challenges and their role in the promotion and protection agenda for women and girls with disabilities.

Initiative for Gender Equality and Development (IGED) Africa



Firstly, IGED-Africa held an awareness raising virtual global (Africa and Asia inter-regional) webinar in collaboration with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP, Asia Pacific), Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - Network and the Global Initiative for Economic Social and Cultural Rights (GI-ESCR). The webinar was held under the theme *Marriage and Property Rights Pathways for Gender Equality in Africa and Asia* and it drew on a comparative analysis of the human rights framework protecting women's rights in Africa and Asia. It brought together 61 participants from Africa and Asia and Pacific and high-level speakers from the ACHPR (the current and former Special Rapporteurs on the Rights of Women in Africa), the Former President of the Commission on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), all of the United Nations. Participants engaged in an extensive discussion on the theme, providing an opportunity to increase knowledge and understanding on the ACHPR General Comment No. 6 on

the right to Property During Separation, Divorce or Annulment of Marriage (Article 7(d)). This also afforded participants the opportunity to learn from different regions about the various strategies used towards the protection of property rights between men and women in marriage. It also enhanced cooperation between CSOs and human rights institutions to utilise lessons drawn from a comparative analysis on the human rights framework protecting women in Africa and Asia for further advocacy.

Secondly, IGED-Africa developed 6 different e-flyers of a simplified version of the General Comment No. 6 of the Maputo Protocol as well as one main fact sheet on the subject for relevant stakeholders and partners. This was disseminated electronically to stakeholders and partners on various social media platforms for further advocacy. These materials, posted on social media, targeted women, lawyers, human rights defenders, women's rights organisations, women's groups etc. to enhance advocacy and issues related to equal rights between men and women on the grounds of separation, divorce or annulment of marriage in Africa.

Kadirat



The project Kadirat implemented within SOAWR's engagement in the All for Maputo Protocol Initiative aimed to reinforce SOAWR's Northern Africa sub region's cluster of NGOs who received training to build their capacity in lobbying and advocacy techniques as well as in communication in social media. The members of the NGOs were also trained in international conventions and treaties including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) with an emphasis on the Maputo Protocol. The NGOs, with the help and support of Kadirat, are now organising their national lobbying and advocacy ratification or domestication campaigns.

Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD)



RFLD identified and selected targets and established a technical team responsible for the development of a training manual and advocacy with the President of the Republic and the President of the Assembly. The Maputo Protocol was also translated into two local languages (Youruba and Goun) and was disseminated online and offline. RFLD conducted capacity building initiatives with women via radio programs. Four regions of Benin – Plateau, Zou, Ouémé, and Collines hosted activities within the framework of the project’s implementation.



STEWARDWOMEN



On 27th April 2021, STEWARDWOMEN held a workshop for members of the Coalition for Civil Society Organisations for the Ratification of Maputo Protocol in South Sudan (CCORPS) to review the Terms of Reference for the advocacy working groups of the Coalition. Seventeen CCORPS members attended the workshop and the respective advocacy working groups (namely; media advocacy working group, legislative advocacy working group, executive advocacy working group) reviewed their terms of reference in line with the current political developments in South Sudan.

STEWARDWOMEN also held two quarterly advocacy strategy review meetings. In the first meeting, CCORPS members focused on reviewing the previous advocacy strategy, which was last reviewed in 2019 and derived an advocacy strategy for 2021 to draw a road map for the coalition’s actions towards completing the ratification of Maputo Protocol in South Sudan. The second meeting continued with discussions on the 2021 advocacy strategy taking into account the reconstitution of the national government

and institutions especially where key stakeholders were put into consideration when deriving the 2021 advocacy strategy. New allies were identified as key stakeholders to strengthen relationships with previous strong supporters who are still in office and continue popularising the Maputo Protocol even as coalition members lobby and advocate for ratification of the Protocol by the government of South Sudan.

Furthermore, two continuous engagement meetings were held and involved members of the Revitalised-Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU), opinion leaders and CSOs as new allies. The Ministry of Gender, as a strong supporter, noted that they have sent letters to key institutions like the legislative assembly to ask for the whereabouts of the Protocol since it was tabled and passed in 2017 but have not got feedback yet; and considering the legislative assembly was recently reconstituted, they called on coalition members to be patient with the current context.

Additional one-on-one meetings were held with 15 new key allies to solicit their support and plan for group meetings between April and July, 2021. Key allies engaged included representatives from: Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, Legislators and the Ministry of Justice. The new allies agreed to hold group meetings with coalition members and conveyed their support towards the ratification of the Maputo Protocol.

Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti (UNFD)



The planned activities were divided into two phases. For the first quarter, UNFD targeted civil society actors, including community leaders, youth, elected officials and the general public for sensitisation and dissemination of information related to women's rights and the Maputo Protocol. This was followed by activities aimed at state actors and parliamentarians for the use of the Maputo Protocol in the second quarter (October to December).

Multiple awareness creation sessions took place in Balbala and Boulaos and fruitful discussions materialised. UNFD discussed the Maputo Protocol in general as well as located it within the Djiboutian context. All of the articles and rights covered by the Maputo Protocol were discussed during these sessions. The topics of Violence Against Women and access to education remained issues on which there was much to discuss because as the statistics of the Cellule d'Ecoute d'Information et d'Orientation demonstrate, economic and psychological violence are very prominent, as well as female genital mutilation, which still affects 70% of women of all ages. The UNFD shared with the participants the existing system for the management of Gender-based Violence. UNFD informed the participants of its listening, information and orientation unit that welcomes victims of gender-based violence by offering psychosocial support, accompaniment and facilitation of access to justice. Lastly, UNFD organised information and training sessions on the Maputo Protocol and its use for state actors and the various human rights promotion platforms, in particular the gender focal points of the various ministries.

Spotlight on Make Every Woman Count & the African Women's Decade 2010-2020



Make Every Woman Count (MEWC) was born out of monitoring the African Women's Decade (AWD) on Grassroots Approach to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2010-2020 and published annual reports on the progress made for all 55 African Union member states. In 2021, [MEWC published their final, comprehensive report](#) with the main goal of ensuring the continuation and evolution of Africa's discourse on women's rights beyond AWD 2010-2020. To that aim, the AWD report provides an analysis of the progress made in the African continent in terms of securing, realising and extending the rights of African women and girls during the AWD decade. The virtual launch of the report in November of 2021 was an occasion of much celebration and insight from a diverse panel including Dr Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Ms Faiza Mohamed, Ms Memory Kachambwa, Ms Marie-Claire Faray, Ms Esther Aoko and Dr Morissanda Kouyaté.

Interview with Ms. Rainatou Sow, Executive Director



In November 2021, MEWC launched the 10-year report of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020. Could you please tell us what this decade is about?

The African Women's Decade was officially launched in October 2010 in Nairobi – Kenya, under the theme “grassroots approach to gender equality and women's empowerment”. The launch of the decade marked a significant milestone in advancing the women's rights agenda. The main objective of the African Women's Decade was to promote gender equality by stepping up the implementation of Dakar, Beijing and African Union Assembly Decisions on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) through dual top-down and bottom-up approaches, which is inclusive of grassroots participation. The African Women's Decade aimed to renew AU Members States' commitments to accelerating the implementation of global and regional commitments on gender equality and women empowerment (GEWE).

It must have been a huge undertaking to commit yourself to for the next ten years. What motivated you to monitor the AWD?

Indeed, monitoring 55 countries every year is a mammoth job, no matter the organisation's size. When the decade was launched, we wanted to ensure that there was a system of monitoring in place to ensure that our governments were held



◀◀

"There were so many moments that I wanted to close it all down. But the reason I didn't is because- what message would it send to young people? "

Rainatou Sow, ◀◀
Make Every Woman Count

accountable to back up the commitments made on gender empowerment and women's rights with concrete actions.

What were the biggest hurdles you and MEWC overcame in monitoring the Decade?

There have been many challenges from the day we took the commitment to monitor the decade to the launch of the ten-year report. We encountered difficulties securing financial resources to carry out the work; this was a significant impediment to the monitoring process. MEWC relied heavily on volunteers to do the yearly reports. We were blessed to have a wonderful group of people who were very passionate about the work MEWC was doing and were more than happy to roll up their sleeves to get the job done. We are ever grateful to the hundreds of volunteers who gave their time to help MEWC fulfil its mission over the ten years of the decade.

Additionally, during the monitoring of the decade, we encountered lack of information, reliable data, gender-disaggregated data and limited resources.



We encountered difficulties securing financial resources to carry out the work; this was a significant impediment to the monitoring process. MEWC relied heavily on volunteers to do the yearly report.



Conversely, what were your biggest achievements throughout monitoring the Decade?

In one sentence, the most significant achievement was monitoring 55 countries every year despite all the challenges.

The report is very comprehensive and has produced important key findings. Was there anything that surprised you from the quantitative and/or qualitative data?

I don't think there was a surprise *per se* since we have been monitoring over the ten years, so we have been lucky enough to witness the changes. However, I am amazed by the progress and success stories the report has captured.

The advocacy and lobbying work of women's groups, activists and CSOs have resulted in noteworthy changes such as new legislation, policy adoption, shadow reporting, holding governments to account, institutional reform, improved implementation of policies and laws. There is still a lot of work that needs to be done; however, we also need to appreciate the great work we have done individually or collectively.

Looking forward, what lessons from 2010-2020 can be taken into the new Decade of African Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion?

We must learn from our past mistakes and ensure that they are not repeated. Many were unaware of the decade, hindered by the lack of sufficient information about it. Particularly those living in rural areas have never heard of it. Many were not aware of the great opportunities they could take advantage of due to the decade or even how they could contribute to it. For the new decade, it is paramount to ensure that women and young women's groups in all their diversity, activists and CSOs are fully aware of the new decade. Secondly, we need to have adequate financial and technical resources; these are necessary to have a successful decade of African Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion. This will help to ensure that gains made in women's political and economic inclusion and gender equality reflect a substantial change in the lives of African women and girls, which is still far from reality.

Finally, what will MEWC's role look like over the next decade?

MEWC will continue its work on documenting and monitoring the progress, challenges and gaps in gender equality and women's rights in Africa during the new decade; through focused research and dissemination of published works to support evidence-based advocacy on advancing the gender equality agenda.



There is still a lot of work that needs to be done; however, we also need to appreciate the great work we have done individually or collectively.

2022 Plans

A number of SOAWR initiatives centred around the Maputo Protocol are scheduled for 2022, including:

- The launch 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.
- Using media personalities and creatives to inform citizens about the Maputo Protocol.
- In-country ratification missions.
- Consultative meetings with relevant AU organs- AU WGYD, PAP, RECs, SR WRA.
- Tracking domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol using the Multi-Sectoral Approach (MSA).
- Development and submission of at least 2 shadow/ alternative reports to the ACHPR or other AU or UN Treaty Monitoring Body.

2022 Beneficiaries of The All for Maputo Protocol Initiative

1. Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL) - Egypt
2. Alliances for Africa (AFA) - Nigeria
3. Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS) - Senegal
4. The Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria - South Africa
5. Initiative for Gender Equality and Development (IGED) Africa - Ghana
6. Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD) - Bénin / Niger
7. Sister Namibia - Namibia



Photo credit: Freestak

**Guess What!!!
History has been
created for African
women on their
land and property
rights in marriage.**

General Comment No. 6 on
Article 7 (d) of the Maputo Protocol

f t @ i igedafrika

This activity has been financially supported by the
Swedish Development Cooperation and Equality Now.

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**The Maputo Protocol
protects women's
rights by explicitly
providing for women's
equal rights to land
and property, as well
as their equal rights
in marriage.**

Photo credit: Freestak

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**Do you know that the African
Commission on Human and
People's Rights has adopted a
General Comment on Article
7(d) of the Maputo Protocol,
which focuses on equal property
distribution of marital property
upon divorce, separation or
annulment of marriage?**

Photo credit: Freestak

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**Did you know that on the
14th of November 2020, the
General Comment on Article 7(d)
of the MAPUTO PROTOCOL
was adopted and launched?
This is a landmark soft law
providing equal distribution of
marital property upon divorce
between men and women in Africa.**

Photo credit: Equality Now

This activity has been financially supported by the
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**The Maputo Protocol,
adopted in 2003 and
entered into force in
2005, complements the
African Charter on
Human and Peoples'
Rights by expanding
the substantive
protection of women's
rights in Africa.**

Photo credit: Freestak

This activity has been financially supported by the
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**Are you aware that
per the "Right to Property"
General Comment of the
Maputo Protocol, women
are in a position to exercise
decision-making over the
use, disposal of,
mortgage or transfer
of their property.**

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The Association for Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL) recently conducted training on the Maputo Protocol for 20 NGOs from upper and lower Egypt.



aeflwomen.com/en/



ACCEDE

TO

THE

**MAPUTO
PROTOCOL**

Egypt has not yet signed the Maputo Protocol.

So, the training aimed to explain the Protocol's articles, their significance within the Egyptian context and increase public pressure in different Egyptian governorates.



aeflwomen.com/en/

**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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