



SOAWR Journal

6th 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

Acknowledgments

Compiled by Grace Marwa-Pattison of Make Every Woman Count, and Elizabeth Alukudo and Gicuku Karugu of Equality Now.



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Foreword

As the SOAWR Coalition advanced the implementation of the Maputo Protocol across the Continent, this sixth edition of the Journal arrives at a time of both significant progress and deep appreciation for the leadership that has shaped this movement over the years.

This edition is especially dedicated to celebrating the remarkable journey of Faiza Jama Mohamed. After more than 20 years of visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and groundbreaking innovation, we bid farewell to Faiza, the immediate former Director of Equality Now's Africa Office, which serves as the SOAWR Secretariat. As one of the founding members of the SOAWR Coalition, Faiza has been instrumental in shaping its growth, guiding countless projects, and inspiring all of us with her commitment to collaboration and progress. Her dedication and devotion to advancing the rights of women and girls in Africa has seen her demonstrate an indefatigable spirit and an admirable love for the Maputo Protocol. Over the years, her leadership has transformed the Maputo Protocol, as one of its key proponents, from a legal instrument into a living framework for advocacy, accountability, and change, leaving an indelible mark on the African women's rights movement.



This Journal also captures the dynamic work of SOAWR members' individual and collaborative achievements. These collective efforts continued to advance the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. From the *Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to End Violence Against Women* project, to *Advancing Bodily Autonomy and Integrity: Making the Maputo Protocol a Reality in Africa*, to *Movement Building for Collaborative Advocacy on the Maputo Protocol*, and consultations guiding the SOAWR Strategic Plan 2026 - 2035, these milestones reflected the Coalition's sustained commitment to progress.

At the same time, the Coalition remained cognizant of challenges. Persistent gaps in implementation, a growing backlash against women's rights, and a shifting funding landscape underscored the need for renewed urgency and solidarity. As the movement navigated this evolving terrain, it drew inspiration from the leadership and legacy of those who have guided it.

Looking ahead, SOAWR remains committed to strengthening collective advocacy, empowering young changemakers, and ensuring that the promise of the Maputo Protocol is fully realized for all African women and girls. I extend my deepest gratitude to Faiza Jama Mohamed, whose impact continues to resonate across SOAWR's work, and to all members and partners who carried this work forward.

Esther Waweru

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Acronyms

Acronym	Full Term
ACDHRS	African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACT	Advocacy, Coalition Building, and Transformative Feminist Action
AEFL	Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers
AJS	Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers)
AMA	African Medicines Agency
AMPI	All for Maputo Protocol Initiative
AMwA	Akina Mama wa Afrika
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AUCEVAWG	African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
AWLN	African Women Leaders Network
CAR	Central African Republic
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHR	Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
COVAW	Coalition on Violence Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EAC	East African Community
EALA	East African Legislative Assembly
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communications Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GLIHD	Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development
HVL	Her Voice Liberia
ICJ	International Commission of Jurists
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IGED-Africa	Initiative for Gender Equality and Development in Africa

Acronym	Full Term
KII	Key Informant Interview
MEKI	Monitoring, Evaluation, Knowledge, and Information
MEWC	Make Every Woman Count
MYDO	Malusi Youth Development Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NIGAWD	New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative
PWD	Person With Disabilities
RFLD	Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement
SAAF	Safe Abortion Action Fund
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC PF	SADC Parliamentary Forum
SCBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
Sida	Swedish Development Cooperation
SIHA Network	Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa Network
SOAWR	Solidarity for African Women's Rights
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
SRRWA	Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAPP	Violence Against Persons Prohibition
VAW	Violence Against Women
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
WCIC	Women's Counselling and Information Centre
WiLDAF	Women in Law and Development in Africa
WLM	Women Lead Movement
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa
WOJE	Women Organisation for Justice and Equality
WONGOSOL	Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia
WPI	Women's Peace Initiative
WRAPA	Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative
YALI	Young African Leaders Initiative
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

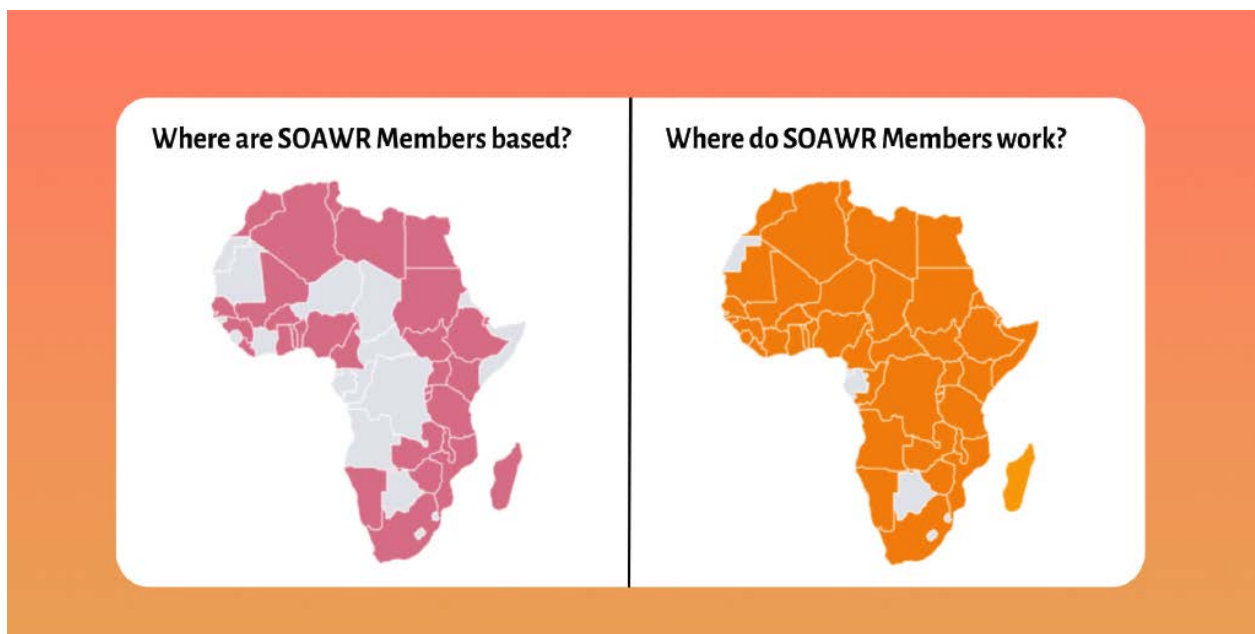
About SOAWR

The Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Coalition is a regional membership based network of more than 70 organisations based in over 30 countries 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 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's Presence & Reach



SOAWR member organisations offices are based in 33 AU Member States and operate on the ground in 45. In the future, we hope to broaden our reach to the remaining 10: Botswana, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Gabon, Lesotho, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, São Tomé and Príncipe and Seychelles. See our [members directory](#) for more information.

The SOAWR Coalition

Steering Committee

Secretariat

Secretariat: Equality Now

Communications Secretariat: Make Every Woman Count

SOAWR
Advisors

FEMNET (Memory Kachambwa)

Help Age International (Carole Agengo)

WRAPA (Saudatu Mahdi)

Clusters

Central
Africa

Eastern
Africa

Northern
Africa

Southern
Africa

Anglophone
West Africa

Francophone
West Africa

Regional

Cluster
Leads

WCIC

GLIHD & SIHA
Network

Kadirat

Wildaf Zambia

Baobab

AJS

ACDHRS, AMwa
& CHR-UP

Cluster
Members

CAFOB

Women Peace
Initiatives
Association

Women's
Advocacy and
Communication
Network

ACFODE

CEHURD

CJSI

CREAW

COVAW

FIDA Kenya

Haki Nawiri
Afrika

ICJ Kenya

LHRC Tanzania

NAFGEM

STEWARD
Women

TCI

UWONET

UNFD

WOJE

APCE

Jossour FFM

Atwar

ACT

Fondation du
Journal
Féministe
Algérien

CIDDEF

FDHRD

NADRF

SPO

Y-PEER Petri
Morocco

Forum Mulher

MHRRRC

MPower!

NGOGCN

POWA

Sister Namibia

TLAC

Well Being Africa

WLSA Zambia

WLM
Madagascar

WOW Society
Initiative

AfA

Her Voice Liberia

HURILAWS

IGED-Africa

NIGAWD

WOLPNET

WONGOSOL

WRAPA

WOFIM

AJM

CPTAFE

Question des
Femmes

RFLD

FAMEDEV

Voix de Femmes

CRR

CSVR

EASSI

Equality Now

FEMNET

HelpAge
International

IAC

Ipas Africa

MEWC

Oxfam GB/
Oxfam in Africa

WLSA Zimbabwe

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Term
2024-2027

SOAWR's 2025 Highlights

Movement Building for Collaborative Advocacy on the Maputo Protocol: Partnership with AWDF

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a Pan-African, feminist grant-maker that channels flexible funding directly to women's organisations across the continent, on the premise that lasting change needs both strong institutions and bold policy reform. It was within this spirit that SOAWR's Movement Building for Collaborative Advocacy on the Maputo Protocol project took shape: an initiative designed to strengthen the Coalition's movements while pushing for the laws and policies that protect women and girls.

Running from January 2024 to August 2025, the 20-month project combined regional action with country-level work led by SOAWR members, organised through seven clusters: Anglophone West Africa, Central Africa, Eastern Africa, Francophone West Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, and a continental cluster. Equality Now coordinated the work, while cluster leads and member organisations carried it out on the ground, a structure that kept the Coalition's advocacy coherent across the continent while leaving room to adapt to local realities.

Three strategies ran through the project. The first built the internal capacity of Coalition members, through legal tools, advocacy training, and knowledge-sharing. The second pushed advocacy and awareness outward, through campaigns, dialogue with policymakers, community mobilisation, and translations of the Protocol into local languages. The third strengthened accountability, through shadow reports, legal analysis, and monitoring that tracked progress on ratification and domestication.

What follows is a look at how each of SOAWR's seven clusters brought this work to life in 2025.

Central African Cluster

Lead: Women's Counselling and Information Centre (WCIC)

The Central Africa Cluster recorded a major breakthrough with the successful ratification of the Maputo Protocol by the Central African Republic (CAR) on July 29th 2025. This achievement was a result of a strategic ratification mission to CAR on June 25th, 2025, spearheaded by two SOAWR Coalition members: Jacques Bandji of Women's Counselling and Information Centre (WCIC), based in Cameroon, and Dr. Tom Mulisa of the Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD), based in Rwanda. During this high-level convening, the CAR government made a welcome commitment to ratify the Protocol.

Attended by over 40 participants, including civil society actors, development partners, and government officials such as Dr. Marthe Augustine Kirimat, CAR's Minister for Gender Promotion, Women's Protection, Family and Children, the convening played a pivotal role in laying the foundations for a successful follow-up trip in July with an AU Commission-led mission and SOAWR representatives. In a commendable move, on July 29th 2025, the Central African Republic, represented by Minister-Counselor Gilbert TOUANGAI, deposited the instrument of ratification for the Maputo Protocol, making CAR the 46th African Union Member State to ratify the Protocol, and formalizing the country's commitment to the treaty.

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This achievement was a result of a strategic ratification mission to CAR on June 25th, 2025, spearheaded by two SOAWR Coalition members



SOAWR representatives during the ratification mission

Eastern African Cluster

Co-Leads: Strategic Initiative for the Horn of Africa (SIHA Network) & Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)

Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD) conducted a knowledge session aiming at engaging judiciary personnel and their research assistants on the integration of the Maputo Protocol into their daily justice service delivery. This session took place in Kigali, Rwanda, on 14th February 2025. The session emphasized on the importance of prioritising the Maputo Protocol in judicial processes to enhance the protection of women's rights and to ensure justice for women in accordance with the Protocol's standards.

In South Sudan (SIHA Network), translated the Maputo Protocol into Zande and Nuer languages to overcome literacy and language barriers in Western Equatoria and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. They also conducted radio talk shows to discuss pertinent articles of the Protocol and dissemination events in Juba, Yambio, and Wau. 100 copies of the translated Protocol were then printed in each language and distributed.

The 100 copies reached IDP leaders and community members at Mangateen Camp, while in Wau, a multi-stakeholder dissemination event was held, distributing 200 copies in Arabic and English to legislators, civil society, and the media. While in Somalia, SIHA Network also managed to print and disseminate 100 copies of the Maputo Protocol and conducted radio talk shows to educate the public on the Protocol.



Dissemination of the Maputo Protocol at Women Union in Wau

Northern African Cluster

Lead: KADIRAT

Members of the Northern Africa cluster held a strategic meeting with the Arab Organization for Human Rights based in Egypt on the 16th of April 2025. During this engagement, they underscored the significance of the SOAWR Coalition and provided clarity on the importance of ratifying the Maputo Protocol as a critical step toward improving the lives of women in Egypt. On 19th April 2025, they convened a meeting in Cairo aimed at strengthening media engagement and encouraging broader coverage of the Maputo Protocol. The meeting also served as a platform to advocate for its ratification and raise public awareness on its relevance. During the Joint Cluster Meeting held in Cairo from 16th to 19th April 2025, cluster members reviewed progress on ongoing activities, identified key challenges, and developed a strategic action plan for the 2026–2028 period.

In April 2025, Sources of Peace from Libya held a workshop to promote and raise awareness on the Maputo Protocol and its provisions and discuss Libya's reservations on certain articles. Led by civil society and SOAWR national cluster members, the activity aimed to align national laws with the Protocol and strengthen women's rights.



Northern Africa cluster meeting with the Arab Organization for Human Rights in Egypt

Southern Africa Cluster

Lead: Women in Law and Development in Africa, WiLDAF (Zambia)

In April and May 2025, Women in Law and Development in Africa, WiLDAF organised the airing of a series of radio programmes on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC), which took the format of live phone-in programmes of 45 minutes bringing in experts to speak on different aspects of the provisions of the Maputo Protocol, and the progress in its implementation, in a bid to raise awareness amongst the general public.



Radio talk shows on the Maputo Protocol in Zambia

From the 2nd–6th June, 2025 in Zimbabwe, SOAWR Southern African Cluster participated in the 57th Plenary Assembly Session for the SADC Parliamentary Forum as Observers and met with the SADC PF General Secretary to discuss the rights of women and girls in Southern Africa . The Mission was led by the Cluster Lead, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) and joined by Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), Zambia.



SADC PF meeting attended by SOAWR members

Anglophone West African Cluster

Lead: Baobab for Women's Human Rights

In February and March 2025, Her Voice Liberia (HVL) held two in-person awareness raising workshops for representatives from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; Ministry of Justice, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs); and select lawmakers. During the workshops, they distributed copies of the Protocol as well as brochures on the SOAWR Coalition, to raise awareness on the Maputo Protocol and achieve the domestication of the Protocol.

Alliances for Africa convened a one-day media training on 30th June 2025 that brought together over 25 journalists and media practitioners from across Imo State in Nigeria. The session created a space for practical learning, critical dialogue and a renewed sense of purpose for the domestication of the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria. Participants explored the pivotal role of the media in shaping public discourse, amplifying women's voices and influencing policy through gender-sensitive, rights-based journalism.



Training of Media Stakeholders in Owerri, Imo State

Francophone West African Cluster

Lead: Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS) (Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers)

From the 5th to 9th of May, 2025, SOAWR's Francophone West Africa Cluster undertook a strategic mission to Niger, demonstrating the true power of regional teamwork. The mission to Niger aimed to establish relationships with organizations working to protect the rights of women and girls in Niger to assess the situation of women and girls in the country as they work on pushing for the ratification of the Maputo Protocol. Because campaigning in unstable political environments requires immense flexibility, the team had to adapt this approach. Originally, the mission was designed to push the government to ratify the Maputo Protocol. However, following the setup of a transitional government in July 2024, the team chose to redirect its focus toward assessing the actual situation of women's rights. Working side-by-side with local sister organizations to gather clear information, SOAWR successfully maintained its presence and solidarity on the ground. This visit provided crucial insights that will shape our future advocacy work once democratic spaces reopen.



Mission to Niger aimed at assessing the situation of women and girls

Continental African Cluster

Lead: Akina Mama wa Afrika

A key milestone of the Continental Cluster was the development of [Maputo Protocol Unpacked: A Toolkit for Young Changemakers](#). The toolkit, produced in Arabic, English and French, is designed to popularize the Protocol among young people and empower them as advocates for women's rights. It unpacks 10 key areas of the Protocol according to issues most pressing for Africa's younger populations.

On 28th March 2025, the Cluster virtually launched and disseminated the Youth Toolkit through a webinar attended by 355 people. The launch brought together young changemakers aged 35 and under to engage with the Protocol and explore its impacts on young women and girls.





Beyond learning from experts, the launch created a space to connect with fellow activists and gain practical tools to advance young women's and girls rights across the continent. The toolkit was physically launched on May 1st 2025 at a side event during the 83rd Ordinary Session of the ACHPR in Banjul, The Gambia with youth panelists and spoken-word artists.

Photos: Launch of the Youth Toolkit in Banjul, The Gambia

Conclusion and key findings from the end-of-project evaluation

By the time the AWDF-funded project closed in August 2025, it had left a clear mark, raising awareness, building coalition capacity, and opening new advocacy spaces across the continent. But it also ran into familiar obstacles: political resistance, cultural pushback, and funding insecurity continued to slow progress on systemic legal reform. The endline evaluation, drawing on document review, interviews, focus group discussions, and a validation workshop, paints a fuller picture of what worked, what didn't, and why.

The project proved highly relevant, addressing real gaps in public understanding of the Maputo Protocol through locally adapted strategies: translations, community engagement, media outreach, and institutional partnerships that were sensitive to political and cultural contexts. Regional coalition-building helped members learn from one another and coordinate more effectively, even across very different national settings.

On effectiveness, the project strengthened the Coalition's capacity and grassroots awareness, and made early inroads with institutions, even as broader policy reform remained out of reach in the face of political resistance. Trainings, sensitisation campaigns, town halls, and coalition meetings sharpened knowledge and collaboration among women's rights organisations; grassroots mobilisation and local ownership delivered far more than high-level lobbying did in contexts where political will was weak.

Efficiency was strongest where members built on existing networks and trusted relationships, cutting costs and speeding up delivery, though political instability in some contexts shifted timelines, and resources spent on lobbying with little traction reduced overall efficiency. In terms of impact, the project's strongest gains were felt at the community and coalition level: a foundation for structural change over time, even if national-level reform is still some way off.

Sustainability looks cautiously promising. National coalitions, communication platforms, and the integration of the Maputo Protocol into organisational strategies give the work a real foundation to build on, though that foundation remains fragile, vulnerable to funding gaps, political resistance, and cultural pushback. The clearest lesson from the evaluation is that feminist advocacy works best when it is grounded in strong coalitions, grassroots ownership, and culturally relevant, flexible approaches, and when learning and capacity are built into institutions rather than resting on individuals. Members were clear about what comes next: deepen coalition capacity, widen regional collaboration, build partnerships beyond the Coalition, and secure stable, multi-year funding.

ACT to End Violence Against Women: Partnership with UN Women

The Advocacy, Coalition Building and Transformative Feminist Action (ACT) to End Violence against Women project titled *“Ending Violence Against Women through Collaborative and Impact-Oriented Initiatives in Eastern and Southern Africa”* launched in January 2024, and is led by the SOAWR Secretariat, Equality Now, in partnership with UN Women and funded by the European Union. The project is implemented through the collaboration with the SOAWR Communications Secretariat, Make Every Woman Count (MEWC), and the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) clusters of the SOAWR Coalition. It aims to end violence against women and girls (EVAWG) in ESA by advancing advocacy, coalition building, and feminist action. Its primary goal is to ensure that African women and girls fully realize their rights under the Maputo Protocol, particularly in relation to VAWG.



The project also seeks to strengthen the advocacy capacities of women's rights organizations, build multi-stakeholder partnerships, and hold governments accountable to end VAWG. Spanning across 15 countries in the ESA region (Botswana, Djibouti, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Somaliland, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe), it leverages regional bodies such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to ensure broad and impactful engagement. Through this project, Equality Now and the SOAWR ESA clusters have engaged a wide range of stakeholders including 'non-traditional' stakeholders which we do not typically collaborate with, such as social media influencers.

From the 16th to 17th of April 2025, Equality Now and SOAWR ESA Cluster members (WiLDAF Zambia, GHLID, FEMNET, SIHA Network, UWONET, and CHR-UP) held an in-person consultative meeting in Nairobi with regional networks and feminist bodies in Eastern Africa to deliberate the current state of women's rights in the region and the realities of the backlash being faced by the women's rights movements and the shrinking civic space. This meeting provided the participants with an opportunity to share their stories and experiences with backlash and the shrinking civic space in their contexts, and offer best practices and strategies to counter this backlash and the shrinking civic space.

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Through this project, Equality Now and the SOAWR ESA clusters have engaged a wide range of stakeholders including 'non-traditional' stakeholders which we do not typically collaborate with, such as social media influencers.



Feminist networks, SOAWR Members and UN Women in Nairobi, Kenya for the meeting on backlash and the shrinking civic space.

On 16th and 17 July 2025, a consultative meeting was held in Capetown, South Africa with 17 traditional and religious leaders from the Eastern and Southern Africa, alongside gender justice advocates, civil society representatives, and SOAWR members to deepen the leaders' understanding on women's rights and VAWG, strengthen alliances between the leaders and CSOs, and inspire commitment and collaborative action towards ending violence against women and girls at the community level. The consultations explored how these leaders address gender-based violence within their communities, highlighting key challenges, existing approaches, and opportunities to strengthen collaboration with civil society organizations. Findings from this consultation meeting will be used to develop guidelines for civil society and women's rights organisations to use to improve and sustain their engagement and collaborations with religious and traditional leaders. These guidelines will be developed in 2026.



Traditional and religious leaders, CSOs and SOAWR members in Capetown, South Africa

In May 2025, Equality Now commissioned two researchers to conduct in-depth research and analysis of EVAWG laws in 10 ESA countries (Botswana, Djibouti, Lesotho, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda), for purposes of developing Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials to support and enhance our communications advocacy towards ending VAWG in the regions. The IEC materials include infographics, and factsheets, based on the context relevant to the country and region, to be used throughout the project life. The materials aim to enhance the capacity of civil society actors to interpret, communicate, and apply EVAWG laws and policies in context-specific ways, supporting harmonised advocacy efforts, improved legal literacy, and more effective engagement with duty bearers at national and regional levels. SOAWR cluster members (Forum Mulher, WilDAF, MPower!, WLSA Zimbabwe, Sister Namibia, and CHR-UP) supported with fact checking the research to ensure all information is accurate and up to date. Following this extensive fact-checking process, in September 2025, Equality Now commenced the editing, design and layout of the materials, which will be disseminated in 2026.

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SOAWR cluster members (Forum Mulher, WilDAF, MPower!, WLSA Zimbabwe, Sister Namibia, and CHR-UP) supported with fact checking the research to ensure all information is accurate and up to date.

Equality Now attended the 83rd and 85th Ordinary Sessions of the ACHPR in May and October 2025 respectively. At the 85th Ordinary Session, Equality Now partnered with SIHA on 22nd October 2025, to co-convene a side event titled, ***“Taking the Lead: Advancing Women's Rights and enhancing State accountability to End Violence Against Women and Girls in Eastern and Southern Africa at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,”*** which explored the role of the ACHPR in holding States accountable for women's rights and in particular in line with the state reporting and shadow reporting processes, with a focus on Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. The side event featured Commissioner Mudford Zachariah Mwandenga, the Chairperson for the Working Group on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Country Rapporteur for Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi and Rwanda, Hannah Forster the Executive Director of ACDHRS, Yemserach Legesse the Executive Director of Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, Ramatoulie Jallow from SIHA, and Gicuku Karugu from Equality Now.



Panelists (Honorable Commissioner Mudford Zachariah Mwandenga, Hannah Forster, Yemserach Legesse, Ramatoulie Jallow, Gicuku Karugu), Moderator Alia Amimi, and colleagues from SIHA at the side event held at the ACHPR 85th Ordinary Session.

In March 2025, MEWC published the first episode of the second series of the [All Things Maputo Protocol](#) Podcast entitled '*Beyond Paper Promises: Ending Violence against Women in Kenya*', featuring Faith Khalayi from the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW). The episode unpacked the different forms of violence against women, including technology-facilitated GBV, reproductive coercion, economic violence, and highlighted the critical gaps in addressing VAWG as well as the challenges to domestication and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. Following episodes included '*A New Strategy to End Violence Against Women: Influencing with Impact?*', featuring one of the influencers involved in the ACT project, and Equality Now's own Michelle Tuva and Gicuku Karugu. The role of traditional leaders in ending Violence Against Women was explored across two episodes, '*Traditional Leaders Confronting Violence*', featuring His Royal Highness Chief Jere Madzimawe from Zambia and Her Royal Highness Chief Zanele Mabhikwa from Zimbabwe.

To round out 2025, MEWC released a podcast episode on '*Making Governments Answerable for Ending Violence Against Women & Girls*'. This was the first episode of the podcast to be published in both audio and video formats, featured on [Youtube](#) as well as on the usual platforms of [Spotify](#) and the [SOAWR Website](#). The episode features Hannah Forster, the Executive Director of ACDHRS, and unpacks how the ACHPR and the use of the Maputo Protocol work to hold States accountable for their obligations in preventing, protecting and responding to violence against women and girls. Ms Forster shared insights on the use of state reporting and shadow reporting as tools in holding states accountable on women rights violations at the ACHPR. She also delved into the role of states in the implementation of the Maputo Protocol and its challenges including the role of the civil society and feminist movements in monitoring implementation.



SOAWR Podcast recording in Banjul, The Gambia with Hannah Forster

Equality Now, and the SOAWR ESA clusters, identified and worked with regional influencers and celebrities to champion EVAWG through the 'STOP THE COUNT' Campaign from June to September 2025. The campaign engaged 6 influencers from Malawi, South Africa, South Sudan, and Uganda to raise public awareness on EVAWG and mobilize calls to action, urging governments to deliver on their commitments.

Other activities

- Equality Now and SOAWR conducted a virtual training of journalists on current trends and statistics on VAWG and the Maputo Protocol on 31st March 2025. This was a follow-up from an in-person training which was held in December 2024 in Kigali, Rwanda.
- Amplified media coverage on EVAWG was undertaken by the trained journalists through articles written and released.
- MEWC published the 5th Edition of the SOAWR Journal highlighting the achievements made by different SOAWR members and the Coalition as whole in the last year, and featuring some of the early activities under the project funded under the ACT programme.

National level implementation of the Maputo Protocol in relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights and ending Violence Against Women: Partnership with Packard

With support from the Packard Foundation, this project sets out to turn the Maputo Protocol's promises on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) into government accountability on the ground. At its core is a commitment to amplifying survivors' voices, ensuring that the people most affected by these laws, and most often left out of shaping them, help define what real solutions look like. Working across Benin, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda, the project has strengthened the capacity of women's rights advocates and organisations to engage decision-makers and push for comprehensive reproductive healthcare and bodily autonomy, anchored in the implementation of Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol.

In Nairobi on the 29th and 30th of July 2025, Equality Now and SOAWR brought together women's rights defenders, civil society actors, and legal experts from 15 African countries to sharpen advocacy strategies around Article 14. The timing carried weight: 22 years after the Protocol's adoption, 46 countries have now ratified it, yet many still hold reservations on Article 14 that continue to limit progress on SRHR. The gathering aimed to equip advocates with the tools to demand accountability, push for legal reform, and help ensure that every woman and girl can exercise her rights freely, safely, and with dignity.



Training for SOAWR members on advocacy strategies for implementation of SRHR laws and obligations including a session on anti-SRHR backlash in Nairobi

That same push for implementation took shape differently in each country. In Kampala, SIHA Network, Equality Now, and the SOAWR Coalition convened a two-day forum on the 26th and 27th of May 2025, bringing together healthcare workers, police, legal professionals, people with disabilities, religious and traditional leaders, and media practitioners to build a shared understanding of Article 14 and its place in national law. Participants left with sharper tools for a rights-based, survivor-centred approach, stronger channels for dialogue between state and non-state actors, and renewed commitment to championing SRHR in their own sectors and communities.



Capacity building training for state and non-state actors in Uganda

From August 5th-6th, 2025, Baobab for Women's Human Rights, in partnership with the SOAWR Coalition and Equality Now, convened a Capacity-Strengthening Forum on Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol in Abuja, Nigeria. The Forum brought together 25 key actors across state and non-state institutions, including representatives of civil society organisations, media professionals, persons with disabilities, medical practitioners, religious and traditional leaders, and government representatives. The objective was clear: to deepen shared understanding and practical engagement around the protection and promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), especially as outlined under Article 14 of Maputo Protocol.



Capacity building training for state and non-state actors in Nigeria

On the 29th and 30th September 2025, Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD), in collaboration with Equality Now and the SOAWR Coalition, convened a strategic regional forum in Cotonou, Benin. Bringing together a multi-sectoral cohort of twenty stakeholders comprising state officials, civil society representatives, traditional and religious authorities, legal experts, healthcare practitioners, and members of the press the forum served as an inclusive platform to address critical challenges surrounding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the region. Centered on advancing legal literacy and domestic accountability, the primary objective of the intervention was to deepen conceptual knowledge and operational understanding of the Maputo Protocol, with a dedicated focus on the implementation of Article 14 among key state and non-state actors.



Capacity building training for state and non state actors in Benin

In Dakar, the Association of Senegalese Jurists (AJS), working with Equality Now and SOAWR, held its own forum from 29 to 30 October 2025, this time turning a spotlight on Senegal's own legal gaps. Senegal ratified the Protocol back in 2004, yet Article 14's promise remains far from realised. Its 2005 reproductive health law recognises some rights for women and girls but stops short of permitting abortion, while the Penal Code continues to criminalise it outright, directly at odds with a Protocol that allows abortion in cases of rape, incest, or fetal abnormality. Layered on top of these legal contradictions are deep-rooted sociocultural and religious barriers, high maternal mortality, and low contraceptive use, particularly in rural communities, underscoring just how much work remains.



Capacity building of state and non state actors in Senegal

Advancing bodily autonomy and integrity: Making the Maputo Protocol a reality in Africa: Amplify Change Partnership

Launched in October 2025 and set to run until September 2027, this project places a strategic spotlight on Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol, focusing on the fundamental health and reproductive rights of women and girls across the continent.

The project targets six focus countries—Cameroon, Egypt, Madagascar, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda—to address critical legal and geographical loopholes that still hinder gender equality. The initiative employs a dual-track strategy:

- **Influencing Ratification:** In countries such as Egypt and Madagascar, which have yet to ratify the treaty, the project will engage in high-level diplomacy and technical support with the aims of securing formal state commitment.
- **Lifting Reservations:** In ratified states that maintain substantive reservations, such as Uganda, whose reservation against medical abortion continues to drive maternal mortality, the project will advocate for the full withdrawal of these legal barriers to ensure the Protocol is applied without modification.

A central pillar of this work is research and documentation, led by Make Every Woman Count in collaboration with regional partners. This evidence-driven approach will fuel targeted advocacy and policy-influencing efforts to move states from paper commitments to tangible practice.

Led by Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMWA) in coordination with the SOAWR Secretariat, the project is currently in its inception stage, finalising contracting with a dedicated cohort of Coalition members, including AJS, BAOBAB, Equality Now, MEWC, NADRF, SIHA Network, and WCIC.

Refreshing SOAWR's Strategic Direction: Building for the Next Decade

From August to December 2025, SOAWR Communications Secretariat Make Every Woman Count (MEWC) led a comprehensive refresh of the SOAWR Coalition's Strategic Plan, a process designed from the outset to be genuinely co-created by the membership, not simply consulted upon.

The refresh was driven by a clear-eyed recognition that the context in which SOAWR operates has fundamentally shifted. Twenty-two years since the Maputo Protocol entered into force, 46 of 55 AU member states have ratified it, a significant achievement. Yet ratification has not translated into lived change for the majority of African women and girls. Domestication remains slow, implementation is uneven, and well-coordinated, transnational anti-rights movements are actively targeting the Protocol's most progressive provisions, particularly on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Alongside this, shrinking civic space, growing political instability in some contexts, and mounting pressure on traditional funding models have created an urgent need for SOAWR to adapt, deepen its work, and build greater resilience.

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These steps were designed to ensure that the updated strategy reflects the priorities, experiences, and aspirations of the full SOAWR membership, fostering genuine ownership across the Coalition.

The strategic refresh process was structured to be as participatory as possible. It included a virtual members' survey, multi-day in-person Steering Committee consultations in Nairobi, virtual regional cluster consultations, and a coalition-wide virtual consultation. A dedicated sub-committee was also established to guide the process, ensuring focused oversight and continuity throughout. Together, these steps were designed to ensure that the updated strategy reflects the priorities, experiences, and aspirations of the full SOAWR membership, fostering genuine ownership across the Coalition.



The SOAWR Steering Committee meeting in Nairobi, Kenya - August 2025

The resulting Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2035 marks a deliberate transition in SOAWR's work: from building the normative architecture of women's rights to defending, deepening, and enforcing it. This is reflected in three core strategic shifts: from broad awareness-raising to targeted, evidence-based action; from assumption-led to research-grounded advocacy; and from a focus on legal commitment to a committed prioritisation of lived implementation.

Externally, the Plan centres on translating the Maputo Protocol into practice, including securing the remaining ratifications, lifting reservations, advancing domestication, removing discriminatory legislation, and using evidence-based litigation as a key accountability tool, particularly in contested civic and political spaces. Deepening SOAWR's relationship with the African Union and its bodies remains central to this external strategy.

Internally, the Plan prioritises strengthening the Coalition's own foundations: fostering intergenerational leadership, promoting meaningful youth engagement, and ensuring that grassroots organisations are integrated into the Coalition's core structure and decision-making processes. The goal is a movement that is not only strategically focused, but resilient, diverse, and built to last.

The updated Strategic Plan is expected to be validated in the first quarter of 2026.

African Women's Rights Movement: An Overview of Key Achievements and Challenges Throughout 2025

The year 2025, marking the 22nd anniversary of the Maputo Protocol, was defined by a stark contrast between historic milestones in women's leadership and a deepening, well-coordinated backlash against gender equality. While the Coalition celebrated the 46th ratification of the Protocol by the Central African Republic, the operating environment became increasingly contested as anti-rights movements targeted legislative protections across the continent. The following is a summary of the key achievements and challenges as submitted by SOAWR to the ACHPR at the [83rd](#) and [85th](#) Ordinary Sessions in 2025.

Landmarks and Gaps in Political Representation

The African women's rights movement reached a pivotal moment in 2025 with groundbreaking victories in high-level leadership that demonstrate the transformative potential of women in power. Her Excellency Dr Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah made history as Namibia's first woman President, subsequently appointing a woman-majority cabinet and a female Vice President, Her Excellency Lucia Witbooi. Continuing this trend in Namibia, Saara Kuugongelwa-Amadhila was elected the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly and Emma Muteka became the Deputy Speaker of the National Council.

Other significant appointments across the continent in 2025 included:

- **Ghana:** Following the 2024 elections, Her Excellency Naana Jane Opoku-Agyemang was sworn in as the first female Vice President of Ghana on 7 January 2025.
- **Mauritius & Rwanda:** The financial sector saw the appointment of first-ever women Governors for the Bank of Mauritius (Priscilla Muthoor Thakoor) and the National Bank of Rwanda (Soraya Hakuziyaremye).
- **Seychelles:** Honourable Azarel Ernesta was elected the first woman Speaker of the National Assembly, leading a legislative body where the roles of Clerk and Deputy Clerk were also filled by women.
- **African Union:** Dr Delese Mimi Darko was nominated as the inaugural Director General of the African Medicines Agency (AMA) during its session in Kigali.

SOAWR also celebrates distinguished leadership within its own ranks. Iheoma Obibi, Executive Director of Alliances for Africa, was honoured with the Leadership Legacy Award at Akina Mama wa Afrika's 40th anniversary for her dedication to mentoring young feminists. Additionally, SOAWR Advisor Carole Ageng'o was elected as the new Chairperson of the FEMNET Board, bringing fierce feminist advocacy to the network's leadership.

Despite these triumphs, progress remains uneven and contested. The Coalition noted with disappointment that only one woman candidate, Fawzia Yusuf Adam, stood for the role of Chairperson of the African Commission before withdrawing, and no women were elected as Chairperson or Vice Chairperson of the ACHPR in October 2025. Furthermore, in Nigeria, women's representation remains dramatically low; women occupy only 2.7% of Senate seats and 4.7% of the House of Representatives, ranking 143rd out of 144 countries in the [2025 Global Gender Gap Report](#). This persistent exclusion continues to weaken policy responsiveness to gendered realities.

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 2, 9

Heightened Crises of Violence in Conflict and Institutions

The scourge of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) reached horrific levels in conflict zones and institutional spaces. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a macabre ordeal occurred in February 2025 at Munzenze Prison, where approximately 153 women were raped and burned to death while escaping from male inmates. This atrocity underscored the systemic risks faced by female detainees and the continued use of rape as a weapon of war to sow fear and break communities.

Simultaneously, the movement raised alarms regarding sexual harassment within institutions of power. In Nigeria, Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan was suspended after petitioning against harassment by the Senate President, a move that reinforces a hostile environment where reporting misconduct leads to punishment rather than protection. These incidents mirror ongoing concerns regarding the lack of progress in enforcing anti-harassment policies within African Union (AU) bodies, where survivors continue to face impunity.

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 4, 11, 13(c)

Resisting Systematic Backlash and Legislative Retrogression

A well-coordinated backlash threatens to reverse hard-won gains for women and girls. In 2025, this retrogression was both explicit and symbolic. Explicit rollbacks included proposals to repeal anti-FGM laws in The Gambia and Sierra Leone, as well as attempts to repeal the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act in Nigeria. Symbolically, the decision to remove the term “women” from the Somali Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development diminished the political focus on women's issues.

Furthermore, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) remain a primary target for anti-rights movements. In Uganda, persistent reservations on Article 14(2)(c) of the Protocol continue to drive elevated maternal mortality by restricting access to safe abortion services, even for survivors of rape and incest. This subtle erosion of commitments through underfunding and political sidelining violates the fundamental principle of non-retrogression in human rights.

Relevant Articles of the Protocol: 4, 5, 14

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In Uganda, persistent reservations on Article 14(2)(c) of the Protocol continue to drive elevated maternal mortality by restricting access to safe abortion services, even for survivors of rape and incest.

Overview of the Implementation of the Maputo Protocol in 2025

#MaputoAt22: Our Rights Are Non-Negotiable

In July 2025, MEWC coordinated SOAWR's [#MaputoAt22 campaign](#) to mark the 22nd anniversary of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol, Africa's most comprehensive legal framework for women's rights. Under the theme 'Our Rights are Non-Negotiable', the campaign was a direct and deliberate response to the growing tide of anti-rights movements and legislative regressions threatening women's gains across the continent.

The campaign was rooted in an honest assessment of the current moment. Anti-rights actors are increasingly well-funded and coordinated, using digital platforms to spread disinformation and mobilise backlash against the Protocol's most progressive provisions. Across Africa, women's rights defenders are being defunded, civic space is shrinking, and political instability in several contexts has reversed hard-won progress. The #MaputoAt22 campaign pushed back against this trend, sending a clear message: the rights enshrined in the Maputo Protocol are not subject to negotiation, regression, or repeal.

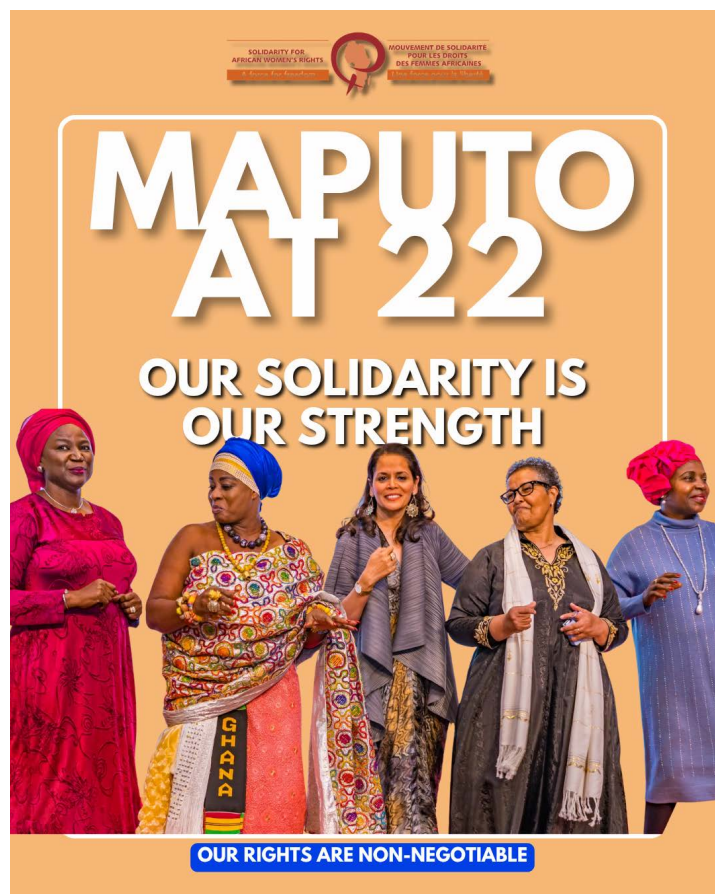
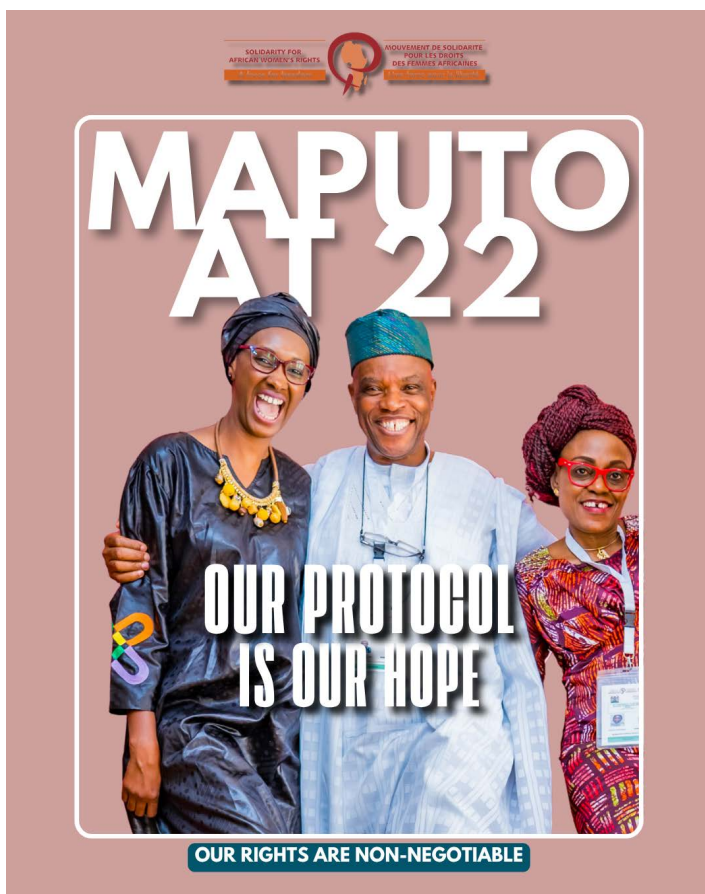
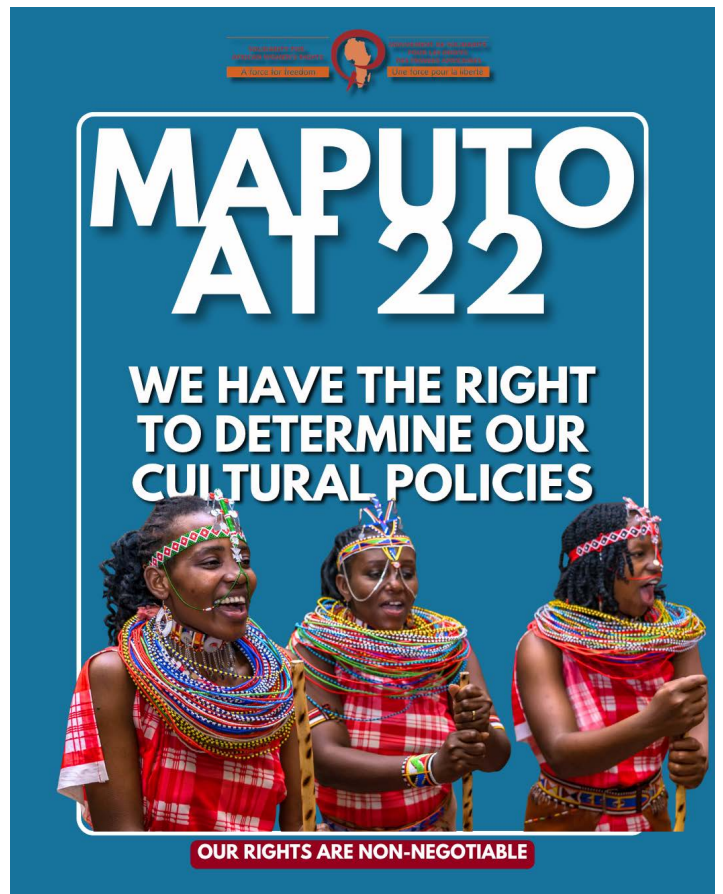
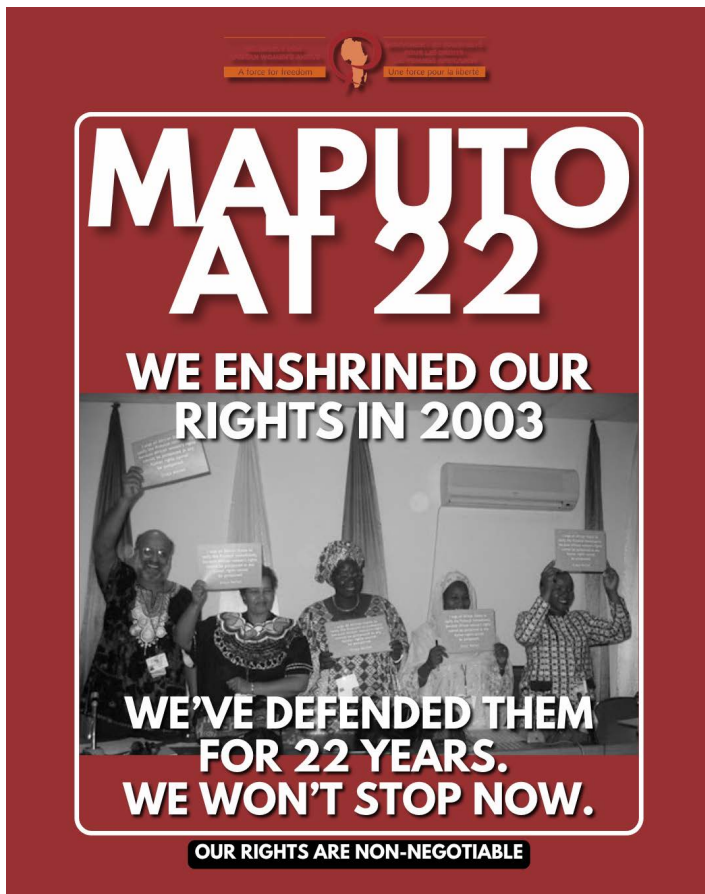
Campaign materials, developed in English, French, and Arabic to ensure broad continental reach, were shared and adapted by more than 20 organisations and activists, including the African Union Women, Gender and Youth Directorate.

The campaign also highlighted concrete examples of the Protocol in action: from the successful defence of The Gambia's anti-FCM law, to SOAWR members' mobilisation against the proposed repeal of Nigeria's Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act, to GLIHD's landmark reproductive rights litigation in Rwanda. These stories underscored the central message: the Maputo Protocol is not just a legal document but a living framework of resistance, built and defended by African women's movements.

At the same time, the campaign drew attention to the work still ahead. As of July 2025, 10 AU member states had yet to ratify the Protocol, many states retained limiting reservations, and the chronic underfunding of women's rights organisations continued to constrain the movement's capacity to hold governments to account. SOAWR used the anniversary as an opportunity to call on member states to ratify, lift reservations, domesticate the Protocol into national law, and back their commitments with dedicated budgets, while also urging funders to increase long-term, flexible support for African feminist movements.

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These stories underscored the central message: the Maputo Protocol is not just a legal document but a living framework of resistance, built and defended by African women's movements.



A sample of our #MaputoAt22 campaign messages

The following sections explore the status update on the key processes of the full realisation of the Maputo Protocol: ratification/accession, domestication and implementation, and reporting.

Ratification/Accession

CAR Ratification: A milestone for the Maputo Protocol

One of SOAWR's most significant advocacy achievements of 2025 was the Central African Republic's (CAR) formal ratification of the Maputo Protocol. On 29 July 2025, the CAR Government deposited its instrument of ratification with the African Union Commission, becoming the 46th AU member state to do so.

The CAR's journey to full ratification was a long one. The country had originally signed the Protocol in June 2008 and prepared its instrument of ratification in May 2012, but this was never deposited with the African Union Commission, meaning CAR remained outside the Protocol's legal framework. The instrument of ratification had never reached the African Union due to the various military and political crises the country experienced.

SOAWR's role in finally closing this gap was direct and decisive. In June 2025, SOAWR member organisations from the Central African regional cluster, including WANET, WPI, CAFOB, and WCIC, in partnership with Rwandan member organisation GLIHD, conducted a strategic ratification mission with CAR's Ministry of Gender Promotion, Protection of Women, Family and Children in Bangui. The high-level workshop brought together more than 40 participants from government institutions, relevant technical ministries, women's NGOs, human rights organisations, and development partners including UNDP, UNFPA, and UNICEF. The session addressed both the legal pathway to certifying the existing instrument and the broader case for full domestication and implementation of the Protocol's provisions.

Just one month after the workshop, the Government acted on the participants' recommendation to sign a letter certifying the ratification, and the instrument was duly deposited. This outcome reflects the Coalition's



Participants at the SOAWR Ratification Workshop, Central African Republic

sustained, relationship-based approach to ratification advocacy and the power of coordinated civil society action. SOAWR looks forward to supporting CAR in the next phase: the domestication, translation into Sango, and full implementation of the Maputo Protocol.

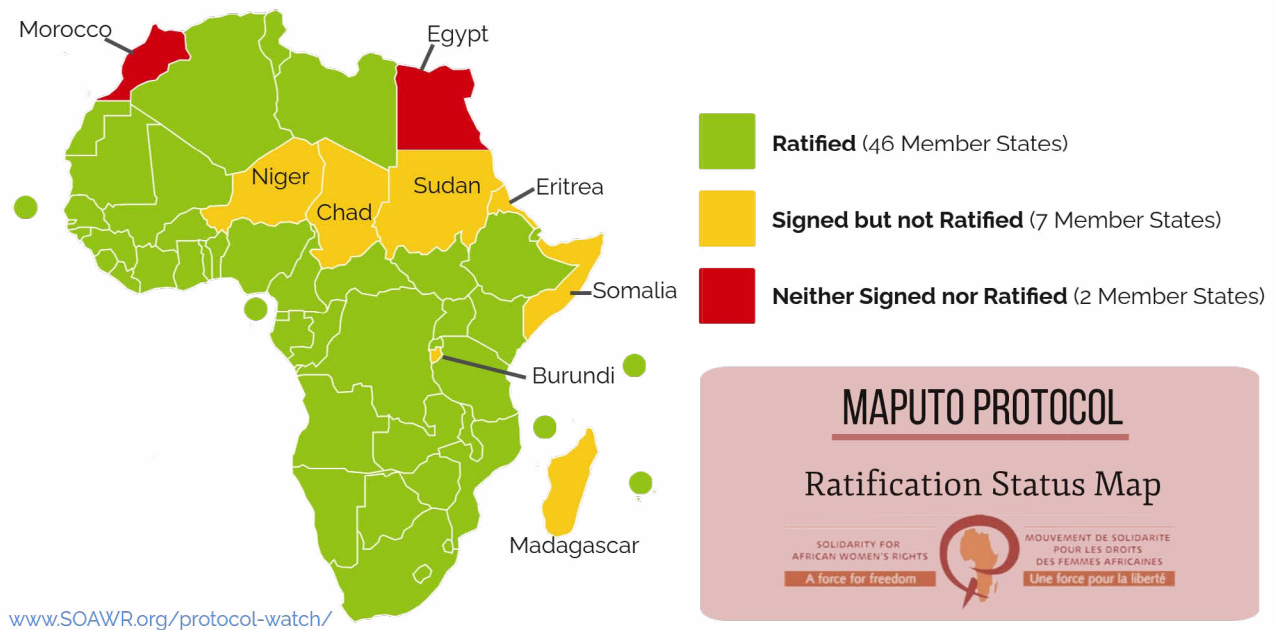
Additional Ratification & Advocacy Missions

One of SOAWR's Strategic Plan's key result areas is to ensure ratification of the remaining AU member states that have not ratified the Maputo Protocol. Subsequently, throughout 2025, SOAWR members met with key stakeholders from:

- **Morocco (28 February 2025)** Representatives from SOAWR members Equality Now and ICED-Africa met with Morocco's Deputy Head of Mission and Counsellor in Accra, Ghana. The delegation acknowledged Morocco's existing commitments to women's rights, including constitutional equality provisions, a National Gender Equality Strategy, and regular CEDAW reporting, and encouraged Morocco to take the next step toward ratification. The Deputy Ambassador expressed optimism, noting no major obstacles, though he raised questions around alignment with Islamic law. The SOAWR team addressed these concerns by highlighting that the Protocol was developed by Africans for Africans, and is sensitive to cultural and religious contexts where these do not limit women's rights. Following the embassy's request, a copy of the Maputo Protocol was forwarded to the Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family.
- **Eritrea (30 May 2025)** A SOAWR delegation from AMwA, EASSI, Equality Now, and UWONET met with Eritrea's Ambassador to Uganda (and also the Dean of Ambassadors in Uganda), H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Ahmed, in Kampala. The Ambassador presented as a champion of women's rights and noted that women hold prominent positions in Eritrea's Parliament. The SOAWR team congratulated Eritrea for signing the Protocol and urged completion of the ratification process. The Ambassador committed to connecting SOAWR with the President of the National Union of Eritrean Women upon her next visit to Uganda.



SOAWR Delegation with Eritrea's Ambassador to Uganda, H.E. Mohammed Suleiman Ahmed



Ratification Status of 31 December 2025

SOAWR continues to map the status of ratification via [Protocol Watch](http://www.SOAWR.org/protocol-watch/).

Domestication & Implementation

Regarding tangible domestication and implementation of the Protocol, there were only a handful of documented developments by AU Member States throughout 2025:

- **Kenya's Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025:** This legislation came into force in May 2025. It mandates accessible education, employment, and healthcare for persons with disabilities, and [Part III clause 10](#) is specifically dedicated to women with disabilities: “Every woman with disability has the right to enjoyment of her human rights and fundamental freedoms without discrimination on an equal basis with others, including the right to— (a) participate in social, economic and political decision-making and other related activities; (b) protection from sexual and gender-based violence; (c) be provided with habilitation, rehabilitation and psychosocial support against sexual and gender-based violence; (d) sexual and reproductive health services; (e) retain and control her fertility; (f) keep her child and not be deprived of her child on grounds of disability; and (g) full development, advancement and empowerment.”
- **SRHR Court Ruling in Malawi:** In October 2025, the High Court of Malawi delivered a landmark judgment in *AC (a minor) v The Attorney General and Others*, affirming that a child survivor of sexual violence has the right to access a safe abortion under the Gender Equality Act. The court emphasised that forcing a child who has been defiled to continue a pregnancy she wishes to terminate is “harsh and inhumane.” The court further ordered the Ministry of Health and the Malawi Human Rights Commission to update health guidelines within 180 days, train healthcare workers, and strengthen accountability across the health system. The ruling is a significant precedent in a country where abortion remains largely criminalised, and directly advances the realisation of Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol.

Although states are the actors responsible for domesticating and implementing the Maputo Protocol, there were also some notable supporting developments by regional bodies:

- In May 2025, the East African Community Elimination of FGM Bill was reintroduced at the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), representing a long-overdue step toward eradicating FGM across

the region. The Bill creates a unified legal framework across all EAC Partner States, with consistent definitions, penalties, and protections, and criminalises cross-border FGM, closing dangerous loopholes that allow perpetrators to evade justice.

- In November 2025, the Pan-African Parliament adopted the Model Law on Gender Equality and Equity in Africa, a template for lawmakers to promote gender equality in areas including education, nutrition, and political participation, aligning with continental goals under Agenda 2063. The law also targets gender-based violence and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation, and addresses equality in marriage, and the protection of women, children, and persons with disabilities. The instrument underwent regional consultations and technical review before its first reading in July 2025, and its adoption provides member states' parliaments with a concrete legislative framework aligned with the Maputo Protocol.

Lifting of Reservations

SOAWR continues to advocate for the lifting of reservations on the Maputo Protocol for the full implementation of the treaty.

Advocacy Framework for Withdrawing Reservations to some Provisions of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Right of Women in Africa

On 14th March 2025 the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights adopted [Resolution 632 \(LXXX-II\) 2025](#) on the need to Raise Awareness for States to withdraw Reservations to some Provisions of the Maputo Protocol. In the Resolution, the Commission directed the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA) to develop the 'Advocacy Framework for Withdrawing Reservations to some Provisions of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa' in collaboration with relevant partners and other stakeholders. Guided by this Resolution, the SRRWA collaborated with Equality Now and the SOAWR Coalition to act as subject matter experts on the Maputo Protocol. An expert consultant was contracted by Equality Now and SOAWR to support the development of the Framework.

In collaboration with Equality Now and SOAWR, the SRRWA convened civil society organisations, women's rights organisations and experts from around the continent in a virtual consultation in order to introduce the initiative, explain its aims, and to gather recommendations on the best practices on advocating for member states to lift reservations on the Maputo Protocol. During this convening the participants underscored the need for a unified strategic effort in advocating for the withdrawal of reservations to the Maputo Protocol. They shared both the challenges and opportunities in advocating for the withdrawal of the reservations to inform the development of the Advocacy Framework including the insights gained from the experiences of The Gambia and Rwanda in withdrawing their reservations on the Maputo Protocol. The feedback and recommendations kicked off the process of the drafting of the Advocacy Framework. An in-person technical workshop was later held with select experts to further build on the conversations and guidance provided during the virtual convening. The experts provided guidance on the content to be included in the Advocacy Framework, and the good practices and other considerations to keep in mind during preparation of the Advocacy Framework.

From March to July 2025 the SRRWA, Equality Now and SOAWR worked closely with the consultant to prepare the Advocacy Framework which was guided by Resolution 632 and accurately reflected the inputs and suggestions of the experts shared during the two consultation meetings. Each draft of the Advocacy Framework was subjected to a thorough review by the SRRWA, Equality Now and the experts. Through a [call for inputs](#) dated 22nd August 2025, the draft Advocacy Framework was publicised on the ACHPR website in English, French and Portuguese for public participation and inputs from 22nd August 2025 to 22nd October 2025.

On 24th November 2025, the SRRWA in collaboration with Equality Now and SOAWR convened a virtual regional consultation in order to formally present the draft Advocacy Framework for further stakeholder input and insights to support its finalisation. The consultation was held in English with simultaneous French, Arabic and Portuguese interpretation to ensure geographic representation and inclusion of a wide range of stakeholders. The consultation brought together a diverse group of stakeholders from different countries from Central, Eastern, Northern, Southern, and Western Africa, including government officials, African Union organs, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations, women's rights organizations, legal experts, academia, and human rights advocates to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive assessment of the Advocacy Framework. Participants shared their perspectives on the adequacy of the Framework's guidance to Member States on withdrawing reservations to the Maputo Protocol; to African Union decision-making and human rights bodies on facilitating the withdrawal of reservations; and to civil society and other non-state actors in advocating for their removal.

لعنوان: الندوة الإقليمية التشاورية حول إطار المناصرة لسحب التحفظات على بعض مواد بروتوكول مابوتو

التاريخ: 25 تشرين الثاني/نوفمبر 2025

الوقت: من الساعة 12:00 إلى 16:00 بتوقيت شرق أفريقيا (GMT+3)

اللغات: الإنجليزية، الفرنسية، العربية، البرتغالية

اللغات: bit.ly/Reservations-Event

Consultation régionale sur le cadre de plaidoyer pour le retrait des réserves à certaines dispositions du Protocole de Maputo

Mardi 25 novembre 2025

Heure: de 12h00 à 16h00 EAT (GMT+3)

Langues: anglais, français, arabe, portugais

Lien d'inscription : bit.ly/Reservations-Event

Regional Consultation Webinar on the Advocacy Framework for the Withdrawal of Reservations to some provisions of the Maputo Protocol

Tuesday 25th November, 2025

From 12:00 - 4:00pm EAT (GMT+3)

Languages English, French, Arabic & Portuguese

Register via Zoom bit.ly/Reservations-Event

Flyers for the Virtual Regional Consultation

The Advocacy Framework was updated and finalized, in English, French and Portuguese, incorporating the feedback and insights shared by responses from the open call as well as the consultative meeting held in November 2025. In 2026, the Advocacy Framework will be presented to the African Commission for adoption, and will be launched in the public ordinary session following its adoption.

Reporting

State Reports

In 2025, there were five new state reports submitted to the ACHPR ahead of the 83rd and 85th Ordinary Sessions: Botswana, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe. Of these, Ethiopia and Tunisia submitted their initial state reports on the Maputo Protocol and Zimbabwe submitted their first periodic report on the Maputo Protocol.

According to SOAWR's analysis, using the [ACHPR State Reporting Guidelines](#) to assess AU Member States' reporting compliance, this brings the total of submitted initial reports on the Maputo Protocol to 21¹, five of which² have also submitted subsequent periodic reports, since the Maputo Protocol entered into force in 2005 (as of 31 December 2025). The average number of years between AU states' ratification of the Maputo Protocol and submission of their initial report is 11.14.

Shadow Reports

Following Egypt's and Tunisia's submission of its 18th and 19th periodic reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (Egypt) and Kadirat (Tunisia), in collaboration with its partners and Equality Now, submitted a shadow report to the Commission in November 2025. The Egyptian report advanced clear and targeted recommendations, including calls on the Government of Egypt to ratify the Maputo Protocol, adopt comprehensive legislation to address violence against women, reform legal and policy frameworks governing SRHR, and repeal discriminatory provisions within family laws. It further urged the Commission to reinforce its accountability mandate by ensuring that Egypt upholds its regional and international commitments, thereby advancing the realization of gender equality in both law and practice.

Under the project funded through the ACT Programme, Equality Now collaborated with Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association, Women and Law in Southern Africa-Zimbabwe, the Center for Human Rights and African Women Development Fund to develop a shadow report to the ACHPR on the implementation of the Maputo Protocol by Zimbabwe. The report outlined progress and remaining gaps, highlighting issues such as online sexual harassment, underrepresentation in decision-making, and female genital mutilation. It urged the government to adopt stronger legislative and administrative measures to protect women's rights. Following the reports submission, and during the 83rd Ordinary Session of the African Commission, the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa (SRRWA) highlighted issues raised in the shadow report such as online harassment of women political aspirants when putting forward questions to the Government of Zimbabwe.

1 Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DR Congo, Eswatini, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

2 Angola, Burkina Faso, Malawi, Namibia and Nigeria

Spotlight: When Influencers Become Advocates

In Malawi, South Africa, South Sudan, and Uganda, a new kind of advocate is stepping forward, one with a smartphone instead of a podium, and an Instagram following instead of a diplomatic title.

In June 2025, Equality Now and SOAWR set out to find them. After mapping 35 potential partners across the region, the Coalition selected six content creators whose voices already carried weight with the audiences advocacy campaigns often struggle to reach. On 16 June, the STOP THE COUNT campaign launched, and for the next three months, Tshepiso Tsogang, Nthanda Manduwi, Manuela P. Mulondo, Adit Suzan, Gaopalelwe Phalaetsile, and Ruth Kulaisi turned their platforms over to a single cause: ending violence against women and girls, and pushing governments to finally deliver on the promise of the Maputo Protocol.

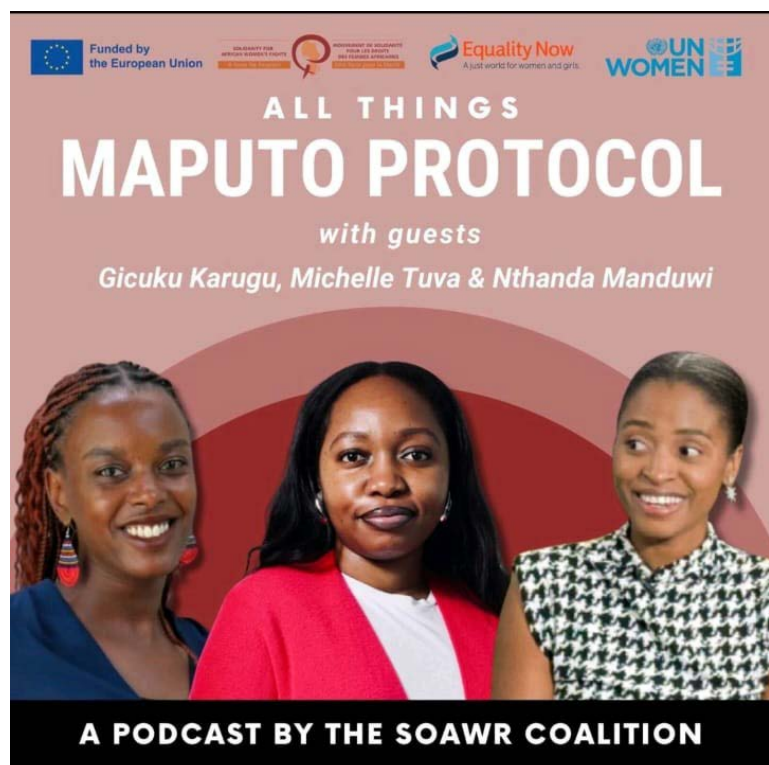
What happened next showed just how far a single post can travel.

In Uganda, Manuela P. Mulondo posted an Instagram reel at the height of the nation's election campaign season, weaving the campaign's message directly into the national conversation. The post struck a nerve, drawing nearly 2,700 likes and sparking a wave of comments and shares. It also caught the attention of the Uganda Broadcasting Corporation, which invited Manuela onto air to discuss the campaign with a national audience.

In Malawi, Nthanda Manduwi told a different kind of story. Her reel spotlighted Chief Theresa Kachindamoto, long known for her tireless fight against child marriage, and tied her legacy to the campaign's call to set 18 as the minimum age of marriage, no exceptions. The story resonated far beyond Instagram and Facebook, where it racked up 191,000 views, and carried on to TikTok for another 19,000. It was proof that the right story, told well, doesn't stay confined to one platform.

And in South Africa, Gaopalelwe Phalaetsile's advocacy didn't just reach an audience, it opened a door. Her work with the campaign led to an invitation to join a national effort against violence against women and girls, marking her as a trusted voice in conversations that matter at a national level.

The momentum didn't stop there. Equality Now brought the story full circle by featuring Nthanda alongside its own experts on the SOAWR Podcast, in an episode titled '*A New Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls: Influencing with Impact?*'. The conversation explored something the campaign had already proven in practice: that content creators aren't just messengers, they're collaborators in the fight, capable of opening up entirely new conversations with audiences traditional advocacy has long struggled to reach.





Celebrating
FAIZA
JAMA MOHAMED



Celebrating Faiza Jama Mohamed and Her Remarkable Journey

During this edition, we take the time to honor and celebrate the remarkable journey of one of our visionary founding members of the SOAWR Coalition: Faiza Jama Mohamed. Her tireless advocacy was instrumental in the push to ensure the Maputo Protocol was adopted in 2003, making it the fastest international treaty to be adopted. Faiza has worked tirelessly for the past 26 years to push for the adoption, ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Maputo Protocol. From advocating for strong gender equality provisions and protections in the Treaty, conducting ratification missions to embassies and countries that were yet to ratify the Maputo Protocol, to holding Member States accountable to their obligations through supporting the development of shadow reports and strategic litigation. Through her effort and that of the members of the Coalition, we have 46 African countries that ratified the Maputo Protocol with the latest one being in July 2025 by CAR.

Her journey of resilience in advocating for the rights of women and girls remains a masterclass. She has taught us how to navigate through power dynamics without fear, how to hold states accountable and how to nurture the future generation of women human rights defenders. The Coalition stands in deep gratitude for the foundational leadership that has helped steer the SOAWR Coalition. We continue to honor her by keeping the vision and ensuring that the Coalition remains steadfast even in the times of backlash against women's rights.

We salute Faiza for the work she has done and continues to do for the women and girls in Africa!



SOAWR members shared their messages of gratitude and love to Faiza as she transitioned from Equality Now. The messages below are a testament of the lives she touched in the women's rights movement.

“ We have failed to find the right words to express our gratitude to Faiza for her accomplishments. We remain indebted to her for shaping STEWARDWOMEN for what it stands now. Indeed, her visionary leadership ensured that we remained on track. Our best wishes to her after Equality Now.

Best,

- STEWARDWOMEN Team

“ With profound gratitude and admiration, Women for Justice and Equality (WOJE) celebrate Faiza for her years of visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to advancing the rights of women and girls across Africa. Wishing her all the best of luck and God's blessings in everything she hopes to do. With heartfelt appreciation,

Zabib Musa Loro

Women for Justice and Equality (WOJE)

Dear Faiza,

“ I am writing to you today with deep gratitude and heartfelt affection—feelings that are truly difficult to put into words. Our relationship was never just professional or limited to work; it has been a meaningful human journey from which I have learned so much. You have always combined the highest level of professionalism and commitment with a generous heart and a supportive spirit that uplifts everyone around you. You have been an inspiration—not only through your vision and expertise, but through your humanity, warmth, and your ability to truly listen and care. Your presence was never ordinary; it

was a true value that left a profound impact on all of us. Losing your daily presence is undoubtedly a great loss, both professionally and personally. Yet we take comfort in knowing that your influence will remain in everything you helped build. Thank you for every moment of support, every sincere piece of advice, and every time you showed up with your heart before your expertise. I wish you continued success, peace, and all the happiness you truly deserve in this next chapter.

*With love and appreciation,
Rabha Fathy*





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“ You led conversations on rather hard subjects, faced resistance with humility and emerged victorious all for the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality.

“ We deeply appreciate her visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and the transformative role she has played in advancing the rights of women and girls across Africa. Her passion for the Maputo Protocol and her commitment to collaboration have left an indelible mark on the SOAWR Coalition and beyond. While we will miss her presence in the Secretariat, we celebrate her legacy and look forward to continuing the work she so passionately championed. We also wish her every success in her future endeavors and are glad to know she will remain engaged in the women’s human rights and African women’s movement spaces. In Solidarity!

*Wangechi Wachira
Executive Director
Centre for Rights Education and Awareness – CREAW*

Dear Faiza,

“ Congratulations on your immeasurable impact over the past 26 years. Your outstanding leadership and visionary dedication to the rights of women and girls across Africa have been truly inspiring. On behalf of The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative, we wish you the very best in all your future endeavors. We are deeply grateful for your contributions and look forward to your continued engagement in the movement.

With best wishes,
*Abimbola Aladejare Salako
The New Generation Girls and Women
Development Initiative*

Dear Faiza,

“ I will never forget your kindness in Mombasa when we first met and I have always appreciated your kindness and gentleness while still doing your work. I wish you a peaceful retirement and hope you will still keep busy advancing the rights of women and girls in the world. Keep on inspiring others.

Thanks and regards,
Mokshda Pertaub

Dear Faiza,

“ Salutations for the great leader you are. You have led conversations on rather hard subjects, faced resistance with humility and emerged victorious all for the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality. And this has always made us proud and stand tall. You have steered us for a collective voice on the African continent through SOWAR and beyond. Through your courage

you have mentored a generation of active feminists, whom you have enabled them to carry on the mantle with passion and commitment. As you step away, I wish you the best of luck and to promise to continue with the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality. Hope to meet you in other spaces.

Yours in Solidarity
*Regina Bafaki, Executive Director
Action for Development*





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“ You have steered us for a collective voice on the African continent through SOWAR and beyond. Through your courage you have mentored a generation of active feminists

“ While we will miss Faiza, she has done an exceptional job and we are truly grateful for her contributions. We wish her success in her next chapter.

Rita.H. Aciro - Lakor
Executive Director
Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)

“ On behalf of Well Being Africa (WBA), we express heartfelt appreciation to Ms Faiza Jama Mohamed for her visionary leadership at Equality Now and the SOAWR Coalition, from which WBA has greatly benefited.

Her dedication to advancing women's rights and championing the Maputo Protocol has strengthened our feminine initiatives. WBA looks forward to staying connected and continuing the shared mission of promoting dignity and equality for women and girls. We wish Ms Faiza continued success and impact in this next chapter.

Debbie Kupolati, PhD. RN (SA)
CEO, Well Being Africa

Dear Faiza Jama Mohamed,

“ We are honored to share these important moments in your life. It is a privilege for us to have benefited from your support and guidance in the fight against violence against women and girls, not to mention capacity-building. To us, you are “the Maputo Protocol Mama” because you have made this vital instrument for the promotion and protection of women's rights in Africa your cause. To us, you are an icon, a visionary to whom we owe the transformation in how women's rights are implemented in Africa. This is a well-deserved rest, but we know we can count on your unwavering support whenever needed for the continuation of your mission within SOAWR.

Warm regards.

VALENTINE NGOUETCHE KONLAK
SECRÉTAIRE EXÉCUTIVE DE WANET.

“ FAMEDEV expresses its sincere gratitude to our Sister Faiza for her outstanding leadership and unwavering support toward the advancement of women and girls in Africa. We wish her continued success and Allah's abundant blessings in all her future endeavors. May God continue to protect, guide, and bless her abundantly.

Amie Joof-Cole
Executive Director
FAMEDEV- Le Réseau Inter Africain Des Femmes, Médias, Genre et Développement/Inter Africa Network for Women, Media, Gender and Development. Dakar- SENEGAL





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“ You led conversations on rather hard subjects, faced resistance with humility and emerged victorious all for the promotion of women’s rights and gender equality.

“ The National Union of Djiboutian Women expresses its sincere gratitude to our sister Faiza Jama for her tireless efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls in Africa. As Director of the Africa Office of the Equality Now/SOAWR Secretariat and as a founding member of the SOAWR Coalition, your achievements will remain etched in the history of this coalition. We also cherish the memories of your time with our organization, as well as your support and guidance. It is with great pleasure that we wish you every success in your future endeavors.

Best regards!

*Ms. Roukya Ali Djama
Project Coordinator, UNFD*

Dear Faiza,

“ Congratulations on your immeasurable impact over the past 26 years. Your outstanding leadership and visionary dedication to the rights of women and girls across Africa have been truly inspiring. On behalf of The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative, we wish you the very best in all your future endeavors. We are deeply grateful for your contributions and look forward to your continued engagement in the movement. With best wishes,

*Abimbola Aladejare Salako
The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative*

Dear Ms. Faiza,

“ The RFLD celebrates your leadership and impact on the African ecosystem in the promotion and protection of the rights of women and girls. Thank you for your courage and your impact.

Sincerely,
RFLD

Dear Faiza,

“ CAFOB is delighted to have benefited from your experience, support, and guidance in women's leadership and the promotion of the rights of women and girls. Your professionalism and dedication have inspired us greatly, and we hope you will continue to stay close to us. Thank you for everything

Agathe, CAFOB Director

Dear Faiza,

“ On behalf of Madagascar's team, we would like to thank you for the battles you've conducted on our side, on all African women's sides during your service time. We appreciate you and we'll miss you. But we are also thankful

*RASAMIMANANA Riambelo Onjaniana -
Country Director WLM-MDG*

We continue to honour the work that Faiza has done, as well as her legacy, by ensuring we keep the Coalition vibrant and active. The Steering Committee unanimously elected Faiza as a lifetime SOAWR advisor during a meeting held on the 12th of February 2026. We will continue to celebrate Faiza's legacy throughout 2026 and beyond.



2026 Plans

In addition to the activities mentioned under the UN Women ACT, Packard and Amplify Change grants, a number of SOAWR activities are planned for 2026, including:

- Validation and adoption of SOAWR's refreshed Strategic Plan 2026 -2035
- Participation in the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women as well as the parallel Africa Disrupt CSW
- Final two episodes of Series 2 of the SOAWR Podcast will be published (March & June)
- Capacity Building of Member States in Eastern and Southern Africa on State Reporting on the Maputo Protocol, specifically on VAWG (June)
- Second meeting with feminist networks and bodies focused on backlash and the shrinking civic space in Southern Africa (June)
- Development of country briefs and fact sheets on VAWG laws in Eastern and Southern Africa (May-July)
- Quarterly virtual Steering Committee and Coalition members meetings
- Development and submission of a shadow report to the ACHPR (February-May)
- Participation in the ACHPR Ordinary Session in May
- Commemorating the 23rd Anniversary of the adoption of the Maputo Protocol (July)
- Adoption, launch and Popularisation of Reservations Advocacy Framework
- Launch of an audit on Harmonization of Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol and Regional Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Frameworks with National Health and SRHR Laws
- 4th edition of the Africa Gender Equality Moot Court Competition
- Commemoration of International Safe Abortion Day
- End-project evaluation and closure of the project under UN Women ACT.

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A force for freedom



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POUR LES DROITS
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