

CSW70 AFRICA YOUNG WOMEN AND GIRLS POSITION STATEMENT

Acknowledgments

This position statement embodies the collective voice and lived experiences of young African women and girls who participated in regional consultations across all five sub-regions of Africa. We acknowledge the leadership of FEMNET and partner organisations, technical support from UN Women, and contributions from feminist legal practitioners, youth activists, and civil society organisations who shaped this common position.

Preamble

We are 288 young African women and girls from 42 African member states, representing young women's rights organisations, feminist legal practitioners, youth activists, civil society organisations, and development practitioners across all five sub-regions of Africa. We have collectively shaped this Africa Youth Position on access to justice ahead of the 70th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW70).

Applauding African governments for their commitments to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, including obligations to guarantee gender equality, eliminate discrimination and violence, and ensure young women and girls' full and effective enjoyment of human rights.

Reaffirming that access to justice is a fundamental human right and an enabling condition for the exercise of all other rights, as underlined in CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33. The six interrelated pillars justiciability, availability, accessibility, quality, provision of remedies and accountability must be fully realised for young women and girls in Africa to claim rights, seek redress and hold State authorities and institutions accountable without discrimination.

Acknowledging the transformative gains made over the past three decades by African women's movements, grassroots organisations and feminist advocates, including through legal reforms, paralegal programmes, community-based legal support, mobile clinics, strategic litigation and sustained advocacy that has led to the institutionalisation of women's rights norms and mechanisms across the continent.

Celebrating progressive regional frameworks such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), ratified by 46 of 55 African Union Member States; the SADC Model Law on Ending Gender-Based Violence; and the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (2025), which reflects African leadership in advancing gender equality and access to justice, including in relation to contemporary forms of violence.

Declaring unequivocally these gains are non-negotiable. Existing commitments to gender equality, women's rights and access to justice must be upheld, implemented and strengthened. Any attempts to weaken, dilute or reverse established standards and obligations must be firmly rejected.

Affirming our intergenerational and intersectional feminist solidarity. Young women and girls face age-specific barriers within broader systems of patriarchy, inequality and discrimination. Addressing these barriers strengthens justice outcomes for all women and girls. Programmatic distinctions must never result in fragmented priorities or competition for resources that further marginalises youth.

Concerned that despite legislative progress across many African countries, large implementation gaps persist. Laws remain unenforced; discriminatory norms and harmful practices endure; and the root causes of violence and inequality are insufficiently addressed. Young women and girls continue to experience gender-based violence, economic marginalisation, exclusion from education and limited participation in public and political life.

Gravely concerned that conflict, political instability, climate change and displacement are compounding risks and undermining access to justice for young women and girls, particularly in conflict-affected, rural, displacement and humanitarian settings. In such contexts, accountability for violations, including conflict-related sexual violence, remains limited.

Emphasizing that evidence-based and data-driven policy is essential for effective justice reform. Without reliable sex-, age-, disability-, location- and income-disaggregated data, the specific barriers faced by young women and girls remain invisible. Data collection and use must generate tangible benefits for communities, including improved services, responsive policies and adequate resourcing. Young women and girls must be engaged as co-researchers and analysts, not only as data subjects.

Affirming that young women and girls are not merely beneficiaries of justice reforms, but innovators, leaders and architects of solutions. Their knowledge, organising and indigenous innovations must be recognised, resourced and scaled, and not appropriated or implemented without their meaningful participation and benefit.

Recognizing the diversity and multiplicity of identities among African youth. Young women and girls experience injustice through intersecting inequalities, including age, disability, location, migration and displacement status, ethnicity, indigeneity, economic status and sexual orientation. Justice systems and reforms must respond to this diversity and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches that obscure or erase differences.

Demanding that institutions mandated to advance women's rights and access to justice must be adequately resourced, staffed and empowered with strong mandates, monitoring and accountability functions. Young women must hold meaningful and decision-making roles within these institutions, reflecting the demographic reality that young people constitute the majority of Africa's population.

Asserting that economic empowerment is fundamental to accessing justice. Young women's lower earnings and unequal economic status limit their ability to afford legal representation, pursue lengthy proceedings or safely exit violent and exploitative relationships. Enforcement of young women's property and inheritance rights, investment in the care economy and gender-responsive budgeting are integral components of justice systems.

Recognizing that 2025 marks critical junctures: 30 years since Beijing, 10 years of SDG implementation, and the urgency of accelerating progress toward 2030 and 2063 aspirations. Yet young women's access to justice, fundamental to all development goals, remains an unfulfilled promise. Achieving 14 of 17 SDGs depends fundamentally on eliminating gender-based violence. There is no sustainable development without young women's access to justice, no "Africa We Want" without young women thriving in dignity, safety, and freedom, and no women's liberation without intergenerational solidarity ensuring justice for all women and girls.

Therefore, we present this Africa Youth common position articulating Africa's non-negotiable priorities for CSW70, grounded in young women's lived experiences, informed by comprehensive data and consultations, and demanding transformative action from African governments, regional bodies, and international partners to ensure that access to justice becomes reality for all African women and girls. This position stands alongside and reinforces the broader women's rights agenda, recognizing that justice for young women strengthens justice for all women, and justice for all women requires specific attention to the particular barriers facing youth.

Background and Context

Access to justice for Africa's women and girls constitutes a fundamental human right upon which all other rights depend. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33¹ establishes six essential pillars: justiciability, availability, accessibility, quality, provision of remedies, and accountability. For young African women, this means the right to invoke legal protections, seek redress, and hold State authorities accountable without discrimination.

The imperative for action is unequivocal. Across Africa, 36.6% of women experience physical or sexual violence² (WHO, 2019). In East and Southern Africa, one in three women aged 15-49 has experienced intimate partner violence³ (UN Women, 2024). Yet in South Africa, only one in 25 rape cases is reported⁴. These statistics represent a continental crisis undermining African Union Agenda 2063's⁵ vision of justice and human rights.

Global and Regional Frameworks

The international architecture provides robust standards for women's access to justice, evolving from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights⁶ (1948) through CEDAW⁷ (1979), now binding 197 States Parties⁸. CEDAW identifies structural barriers to access to justice including gender stereotyping, discriminatory laws, inadequate legal aid and imposes State obligations to eliminate these impediments. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) catalyzed the enactment of varying laws against gender-based violence globally. The 2030 Agenda integrates access to justice stipulating that it should be equal and based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions⁹. The UN Women Gender Snapshot 2025¹⁰ confirms there have been 99 positive legal reforms that have helped to remove discriminatory laws and establish gender equality legislative frameworks across the world over the last five years (UN Women; UNDESA 2025).

Africa has pioneered regional innovation through one of the world's most progressive frameworks for women's access to justice. The Maputo Protocol¹¹ (2003), ratified by 44 of 55 Member States, operationalises access to justice and equal protection before the law through Article VII. Article VIII requires States Parties to make justice systems work for women in practice by guaranteeing affordable legal services, supporting community and national legal-aid initiatives, educating the public on women's rights, training law enforcement to enforce gender equality, ensuring women's equal representation in justice institutions, and removing all laws and practices that discriminate against them. The African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (2025) represents a historic milestone—Africa's first dedicated instrument addressing contemporary manifestations including digital violence and femicide. The African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women (2025) requires States Parties to guarantee victim-centred and non-discriminatory access to justice by ensuring fair procedures, timely investigations and hearings, protective measures for victims and witnesses, privacy safeguards, effective referrals, specialised court mechanisms, and provisions for restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation¹² (African Union, 2025). The AU's 2025 Convention establishes a continental framework for preventing and responding to violence, advancing Agenda 2063's gender-equality goals. The Convention gains legitimacy when implemented alongside existing instruments including the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), despite noted gaps in language strength (Fos Feminista & Akina Mama wa Afrika, 2025).

Progress and Challenges

Across the continent, progress on access to justice for women and girls remains uneven. Harmful cultural practices persist despite legal reforms. Many states continue to fall short in preventing, investigating, and prosecuting gender-based violence. Regional bodies emphasize states' obligations to guarantee victim-centred justice, eliminate discriminatory laws, and ensure remedies and accountability mechanisms are effectively implemented (African Union, 2025; Equality Now, 2025; IHRDA, 2025).

Measurable progress across Africa includes 43 countries establishing 18 as minimum marriage age, and 22 of 29 countries practicing female genital mutilation instituting national bans. Rwanda achieved 61% women in parliament, while specialized gender-based violence courts and one-stop centers enhance service delivery. Across Africa, 36 countries have enacted domestic legislation prohibiting FGM, reflecting region-wide progress, across West, East, Central, Southern, and North Africa, toward strengthening access to justice for women and girls. However, implementation remains critically inconsistent. Despite this progress, enforcement gaps persist. Kenyan women access only 81% of legal rights available to men (World Bank, 2023). In South Africa, 93% of violence survivors report justice system failure, with over 12,800 femicides and attempted murders in 2023-2024 and prosecution rates in single digits. Sub-Saharan Africa records 32% child marriage prevalence, with 11 West African Member States maintaining provisions permitting marriage below 18—direct violations of the ACRWC. Recent UNFPA data estimates that for Africa, about 50 million girls will be at risk of FGM by 2030 if current intervention levels remain unchanged (Spotlight Initiative 2020).

Economic marginalization intensifies these obstacles. Women earn 37% less than men globally, limiting capacity for legal representation or economic independence (UN Women 2021). This economic disparity creates barriers to justice that legal reforms alone cannot address.

Despite pioneering frameworks and demonstrated progress, most African women and girls remain excluded from meaningful access to justice. Member States possess proven models for replication. What remains is marshaling political will, coordinating across sectors, and directing resources where high-level intervention generates maximum impact.

Africa Young Women's Definition of Access to Justice

Through regional consultations co-led by feminist and women's rights organisations, young women and girls described access to justice as:

- The right to know, claim, and exercise rights without discrimination, through legal literacy, removal of all discriminatory laws and practices, and elimination of age, economic, geographic, and disability-based barriers
- Accessible, affordable, and survivor-centred justice systems , encompassing decentralized courts, mobile legal aid, digital platforms, one-stop centres, and integration of formal and informal mechanisms within manageable reach
- Safe, confidential, and timely pathways for redress including protection mechanisms, evidence collection, complaint systems that respect dignity, and procedures that do not re-traumatize survivors
- Effective remedies and accountability guaranteeing restitution, rehabilitation, compensation, reparations, and non-repetition through robust enforcement that holds perpetrators and institutions accountable; and
- Meaningful participation as architects of justice ensuring young women co-design, implement, monitor, and evaluate justice reforms, with leadership positions reflecting Africa's demographic reality.

For young African women, access to justice is not limited to courtrooms. It is a holistic ecosystem that spans legal, social, economic, digital, climate and peace and security dimensions, and is grounded in dignity, bodily autonomy, non-discrimination and accountability.



Call to Action

African youth demand immediate transformation of justice systems that fail young women across our continent. Young women and girls represent 400 million of Africa's youth population yet face systemic barriers: 41% of girls in West and Central Africa are married before age 18 (UNICEF, 2018), women hold only 27% of parliamentary seats in some nations (IPU, 2025), and significant populations lack courts within 50 kilometres.

Young women and girls are clear: access to justice is not just courts. It is an inclusive, affordable, and survivor-centred ecosystem that protects rights in law and in practice. Despite fragmented gains in legal frameworks, young women still lack everyday security, voice, and economic independence.

We call on Member States to implement a unified reform agenda that strengthens enforcement of legal rights, decentralizes justice services, empowers our economic participation, ensures our full presence in decision-making, protects our bodily autonomy, and sustains credible data, institutions, and civil society support.

THEME 1: LEGAL AND POLICY ACTION

Fifty-two African states have ratified CEDAW, and the Maputo Protocol provides comprehensive young women's rights protections. Despite ratification of core human rights instruments by most African States, gaps in recognition of certain forms of gender-based violence, discriminatory provisions and weak enforcement mechanisms continue to limit young women and girls' access to justice. These frameworks establish minimum standards for young women's rights and demonstrate state commitment to reform.

The implementation gap remains substantial. Critical sites of violence against young women and girls, including harmful practices such as FGM and child, early and forced marriage, remain inadequately recognized and addressed in regional instruments. State reservations to some treaties continue limiting rights protection while weak enforcement mechanisms render criminalization ineffective. Many states maintain reservations to international treaties and have discriminatory family, inheritance, or customary laws. Legal pluralism—where customary and religious legal systems operate alongside constitutional law—enables customary and religious laws to override constitutional equality guarantees. Age-based restrictions prevent adolescents from accessing critical services independently.

To close the implementation gap and enhance access to justice, discriminatory provisions must be systematically identified and eliminated while strengthening enforcement through specialized institutions with dedicated resources and trained personnel.

AU Member States must:

- Address gaps in the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls by explicitly recognizing harmful practices, including FGM and child, early and forced marriage, as sites of violence, and ensure national constitutions and laws reflect this comprehensive understanding of gender-based violence.
- Harmonise legal pluralism by requiring all customary and religious justice systems to comply with constitutional equality guarantees and regional and international human rights obligations.
- Establish or strengthen specialised institutions and mechanisms, with dedicated resources and trained personnel, to enforce young women's and girls' rights and monitor implementation of legal reforms.

THEME 2: ACCESSIBILITY AND SURVIVOR-CENTRED JUSTICE SYSTEMS

Efforts to bring justice closer to communities are visible in the piloting of mobile courts, paralegal programs, one-stop centres, and youth-friendly justice desks. Some countries have adopted survivor-centred protocols and expanded legal aid networks. One-stop centres in several countries integrate legal, medical, and psychosocial services. Some jurisdictions have introduced video testimony and closed court proceedings to protect survivor dignity.

Justice services remain heavily centralised in capitals, with large rural populations unable to travel to courts. Women in rural areas, informal settlements, refugee camps, and IDP sites face prohibitive travel costs and hostile institutions. Physical accessibility for women with disabilities is often ignored. Justice systems frequently conduct proceedings only in colonial languages.

***"Only 3 functional courts serve El Fasher and surrounding rural areas, with limited child- and survivor-friendly facilities."
Young women, Sudan.***

Many young women are financially unable to bring legal cases, pay transport costs, sustain lengthy proceedings, or leave violent relationships. Justice costs remain beyond reach for young women in informal employment, while opportunity costs of court appearances perpetuate case withdrawals. Economic coercion by perpetrators and systematic property dispossession of widows and daughters trap women in violent situations.

***"Survivors often withdraw cases due to unsafe homes and economic vulnerabilities."
Young women, Malawi***

***"Participants cited cases in their individual work where ongoing sexual violence cases were halted at reporting stage due to family intervention; a practice that is fueled by viewing most cases of violence as domestic cases that should be handled internally. In such cases, the psychological state of a survivor is neglected and sometimes lives are endangered by placing the survivor in the same space as the perpetrator."
Young women, Nigeria***

Young women in consultations identified that one of the barriers women face in accessing justice relates to lack of resources. This includes the cost of litigation, housing for shelter, food and nutrition, and health services including therapy, counseling, and psychological support. Regarding cost of litigation, young women highlighted limited access to legal aid due to lack of structures in legal systems across countries represented.

AU Member States must:

- Establish district- and sub-district-level courts and justice service points so that travel distances for rural and marginalised women are under 20 km or otherwise within manageable reach.
- Deploy mobile legal aid clinics in remote, rural, displacement- and conflict-affected areas, and integrate community-based monitoring reporting mechanisms into schools, health centres and community facilities.
- Eliminate cost barriers by waiving fees for GBV survivors, expanding free legal aid for civil and criminal matters, offer transport subsidies or locally accessible service models, and provide justice materials in local languages and formats for persons with disabilities.
- Ensure justice personnel are trained in disability rights and accessibility, including ramps, sign language interpreters, and accessible assistive technology documents.
- Provide justice materials in local languages and formats for persons with disabilities.
- Guarantee full accessibility including sign language interpretation, ramps, and assistive technology.
- Create long-term national legal aid programmes that are free or affordable, survivor-centred and accessible to women and girls in all their diversities, including those in conflict-affected, displacement and cross-border contexts.
- Recognise and integrate trained paralegals formally into the justice system, offering certification, referral pathways, remuneration, and oversight.

THEME 3: PROTECTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Some countries have expanded adolescent-friendly services and integrated post-rape care in health facilities. Comprehensive sexual health and reproductive rights education has been adopted in progressive jurisdictions.

Criminal abortion laws cause preventable deaths while age restrictions deny adolescents contraception access. Provider refusal due to prosecution fears leaves young women without emergency care. Inconsistent age requirements create barriers to access.

For example, in Kenya, although the 2010 Constitution allows access to reproductive health services at age 18, the Reproductive Health Policy requires age 21. This results in diverse interpretations and young women being denied access to SRHR information and services. Mistreatment during childbirth and reproductive healthcare (obstetric violence) targets those seeking services.

AU Member States must:

- Decriminalise abortion and remove restrictive requirements that endanger young women's lives, ensuring safe abortion services where legal, accessible and quality-assured.
- Eliminate age restrictions for adolescents to access contraception, emergency contraception and sexual health information without parental consent
- Provide mandatory comprehensive sexual and reproductive rights education in all schools, rooted in human rights principles.
- Guarantee post-rape care including emergency contraception as standard protocol in all health facilities.
- Establish accountability mechanisms for respectful maternal and reproductive healthcare, eliminating obstetric violence.

THEME 4: ENDING HARMFUL AND DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AND TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS

Most African states have criminalized FGM and child marriage with some achieving significant prevalence reductions. Regional consultations show legislative progress in addressing harmful practices.

Despite criminalization, discriminatory constitutional clauses, family and inheritance laws, and customary practices continue to undermine women's and girls' rights. Africa hosts 18 of 20 countries with the highest child marriage rates, while FGM continues despite criminalization. Weak enforcement focuses on reactive responses rather than proactive investigation, while patriarchal norms justify violence and silence survivors.

“In several African contexts, domestic and sexual violence are often treated as “private matters,” discouraging formal reporting and accountability.”

Young women West Africa Consultations

“ In Chad, gender-based violence, child marriage, and restrictive customs hinder women’s rights; in Eswatini, the dual legal systems disadvantage women who are considered minors under customary law; in Mozambique, older generations normalize abusive practices, limiting the younger generation’s freedom to seek justice; in Kenya’s coastal region, economic vulnerability and patriarchal structures limit women’s ability to pursue justice.”

Girls and Young Women Consultations

“ Fundamental inequalities remain embedded in national legislation, especially in the Family Code (Moudawana) and civil procedures related to witnessing and evidence. These laws are grounded in religious jurisprudence (fiqh al-fara’id) that institutionalizes discrimination against women in inheritance and testimony.”

Young women in Morocco

Across the regions, participants stressed that legal reform must go hand in hand with mindset and behavior change programs that challenge patriarchal and colonial norms, and with sustained legal literacy so women and girls know and can claim their rights.

AU Member States must:

- Explicitly prohibit child marriage, GBV, FGM and forced marriage in all legal systems, formal, customary and religious, and ensure these prohibitions prevail over conflicting customary norms and practices.
- Move beyond criminalisation to proactive investigation and prosecution of all complicit parties, including families, community leaders and practitioners, while ensuring due process and survivor safety.
- Invest in long-term, community-based behaviour change and legal literacy programmes that dismantle patriarchal and discriminatory norms, including through partnerships with women’s rights organisations, youth movements and traditional and religious leaders.
- Support and resource grassroots women and youth-led initiatives challenging discriminatory practices and promote rights-affirming alternatives
- Engage communities including men and boys to challenge harmful practices, reduce stigmatization and accelerate efforts to dismantle harmful cultural norms through strategic community engagement.

THEME 5: PEACE, SECURITY AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN CRISIS CONTEXTS

Conflicts, political violence and insecurity across Africa severely limit women and girls’ access to justice. The AU has adopted the African Peace and Security Architecture¹³ to coordinate peace support. A number of African countries including Togo, Gambia, Burundi, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Mozambique, South Africa, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have implemented National Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, increasing women’s participation in peace processes.

Progress is slow and uneven. Conflict, political violence, economic barriers, patriarchal norms, and digital exclusion continue to inhibit women’s leadership. Ongoing conflicts make justice access impossible, with pervasive conflict-related sexual violence going unpunished.

“ El Fasher, North Darfur, faces severe barriers to justice for girls and young women, especially those affected by armed conflict. There is Sexual and gender-based violence, including ethnic-targeted attacks. Armed actors use sexual violence as a weapon, leaving long-term psychological, social, and legal consequence”
Young women Sudan

AU Member States must:

- Increase the implementation of UNSCR 1325 ensuring young women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations as agents of peace
- Establish and strengthen specialised mechanisms—civilian and military—to investigate and prosecute conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, including through survivor-centred procedures and reparation programmes.
- Guarantee young women's participation in transitional justice processes, peace negotiations, and post-conflict reconstruction.

THEME 6: CLIMATE JUSTICE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Climate-related displacement, resource competition, and extractive industry harms disproportionately impact young women, yet they are largely absent from decision-making. Climate displacement destroys livelihoods without compensation, while extractive industries perpetrate violence, excluding communities from governance.

“ In Uganda, girls and young women face climate-related impacts such as displacement, loss of land, and environmental harms disproportionately affecting Indigenous and rural communities.”
Young women in Uganda

AU Member states must

- Guarantee meaningful participation of young women, rural women, indigenous women and women with disabilities in climate governance and natural resource decision-making, including through youth advisory councils and reserved seats in relevant bodies.
- Integrate gender-responsive climate justice frameworks into national laws and policies, including requirements for free, prior and informed consent for development projects and clear procedures for access to remedies and reparations for environmental and climate harms.
- Establish protection frameworks for people displaced by climate change, with specific provisions for young women and girls' safety, access to services and legal status.
- Strengthen legal aid and advisory services related to environmental and climate justice at local levels, including through specialised desks within relevant ministries and local government structures.

THEME 7 : DIGITALIZATION OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

The digital transformation of Africa's justice systems is central to realizing and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls. Digitized court processes such as electronic case management, mobile-based legal services, e-filing, and virtual hearings remove long-standing structural barriers that disproportionately limit women and girls' ability to seek timely, affordable, and survivor-centred justice.

Echoing the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights¹⁴ call to mainstream technology across judicial institutions and digitize court records and judgements, there must be accelerated investments in transparent, efficient, and user-centred digital justice systems that strengthen women's participation in public life and expand pathways to challenge discrimination and violence.

Justice systems lack digital forensics capacity while cross-border data flow challenges prevent prosecution. The gender digital divide excludes many women from accessing digital justice services.

AU Member States must

- Adopt an implementation framework that mandates phased digitization of court processes supported by gender-responsive budgeting, survivor-centred safeguards, interoperable case management systems, and national capacity-building to ensure transparent, efficient, and accessible justice for all women and girls.
- Bridge the gender digital divide by ensuring affordable internet access, digital literacy programs for women and girls, and accessible digital justice platforms including those with disabilities and those in rural or marginalised communities.
- Build digital forensics capacity in law enforcement and judicial systems to investigate and prosecute technology-facilitated crimes while respecting human rights and due process.

THEME 8: TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED VIOLENCE AND DATA DRIVEN POLICYMAKING

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is an escalating violation of the rights of women and girls and requires urgent, coordinated action across the African Union and global multilateral systems. TFGBV reflects deep-seated structural and patriarchal inequalities, now intensified through digital tools that enable cyberstalking, online harassment, deepfakes, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images¹⁵.

The African Union has made progressive protection of women through the Resolution on the Protection of Women Against Digital Violence in Africa - ACHPR/Res. 522 (LXXII) 2022 which calls on member states to adopt gender-sensitive legal frameworks and national legislation to address online violence¹⁶. Young women across Africa stated that technology-facilitated violence and data misuse prevent women and girls from safely accessing online spaces and justice systems.

“With the aid of digital technology, violence reporting can significantly improve. The Ministries of Education and Communication Technology should integrate digital literacy and safety education into national curricula, with a focus on adolescent girls and youth.”
Young women in Nigeria

The advent of Artificial Intelligence, particularly generative AI tools, presents new risks for women's rights. AI systems can perpetuate bias, enable deepfakes and image-based abuse, and create new forms of surveillance and control. These technologies require urgent evaluation and regulation to prevent violations of women's and girls' rights.

AU Member States must:

- Enact and enforce comprehensive laws and regulations that criminalise technology-facilitated violence, provide for swift content takedown and protection orders, and ensure platform accountability and cooperation with law enforcement.
- Establish specialised units and build capacity in digital forensics, cybercrime investigation and prosecution of TFGBV, with survivor-centred protocols and strong privacy safeguards.
- Develop regional cooperation mechanisms for cross-border data flows to enhance cross-jurisdictional enforcement and reduction of technology-facilitated harms.
- Establish standards to evaluate and monitor the use of artificial intelligence and other digital tools in justice systems to prevent discrimination and human rights violations, particularly against women and girls.
- Hold technology platforms accountable for content moderation, takedown procedures, and preventing the spread of technology-facilitated violence.
- Ensure that technology and AI tools used in justice systems are transparent, explainable, rights-respecting and subject to independent oversight and accountability.

THEME 9: DATA, MONITORING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Robust, disaggregated and gender-responsive data systems are essential for diagnosing barriers, designing policies and monitoring progress on access to justice. AU normative frameworks including the Maputo Protocol, the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (2018–2028), and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030)—obligate Member States to guarantee equality before the law, protect women from all forms of violence, invest in gender-responsive data, and build inclusive justice systems.

The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) emphasizes the need for disaggregated statistics and improved statistical systems (UNECA, 2025). The Africa Gender Index shows that the continent remains only halfway to gender equality, and none of the SDG 5 targets are on track (UNECA, 2023).

Closing gender data gaps is essential for ensuring access to justice for young women and girls. The lack of sex-, age-, disability-, and location-disaggregated data undermines efforts to develop evidence-based policies and limits states' ability to prevent, respond to, and monitor gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated GBV.

This shortfall is not inevitable; it reflects the urgent need for evidence-informed, gender-responsive policymaking and justice systems that reflect the realities of all women and girls. Missing disaggregation conceals young women's specific barriers while data extraction occurs without tangible benefits to communities.

“Data collection and research for household and domestic staff for effective monitoring and ensuring that access to justice is strengthened. Participants raised concerns on undocumented domestic staff especially in the light of undocumented migrants. For example in Nigeria, 85% of domestic staff in Nigeria have no verifiable work record. Women and girls in this case, may experience violence without being able to adequately report. Governments and their officials should implement a single, mandatory government registry of all domestic workers nationwide.”

Young women in Nigeria

“In Sierra Leone, lack of disaggregated data continues to negatively impact on the enforcement of progressive laws like the Prohibition of Child Marriage Bill and the Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Act.”

Girls and Young Women Consultation

AU Member States must:

- Strengthen national gender data systems to generate, analyse and use sex-, age-, disability-, location-, income- and other relevant disaggregated data, in line with international statistical standards and the AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.
- Invest in integrated, interoperable gender data ecosystems that capture information on violence, legal outcomes, demographic patterns, technology-facilitated harms and access to justice, while ensuring data quality and completeness.
- Enhance cross-sector coordination between justice institutions, law enforcement, health, education, ICT regulators and civil society to ensure coherent, evidence-based responses to GBV and TFGBV.
- Invest in civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems to ensure universal registration of births, deaths and other life events, recognising these as foundational for rights protection and equitable access to services and justice.
- Strengthen data governance, privacy and safeguarding frameworks, ensuring that data collection, storage, sharing and use uphold principles of consent, security, non-discrimination and community benefit.
- Engage young women and youth-led organisations as co-researchers and partners in participatory data collection, analysis and monitoring of justice reforms, digital safety frameworks and gender data initiatives.
- Establish transparent and participatory monitoring and accountability mechanisms, including public reporting on justice and GBV indicators, civil society oversight and independent evaluations of justice reforms.

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