

THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN & GIRLS (VAWG)

What does the Maputo Protocol say about VAWG?

The Maputo Protocol defines VAWG as physical, sexual, psychological and economic harm, including the threat to take such acts. This extends to private and public spaces in peace and during times of conflict or war. Under **Articles 3 & 4**, states have a duty to implement measures to protect a woman's right to dignity, integrity and security. Among others, they have a duty to adopt "legislative, administrative, social and economic measures as may be necessary to ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women." This includes a duty to prevent and condemn trafficking. Additionally, states have a duty to identify the causes of violence and allocate budget and resources to monitor implementation of actions as well as provide accessible services and education for rehabilitation and reparation for victims of violence.



Article 4 - The Rights to Life, Integrity and Security of the Person

1. Every woman shall be entitled to respect for her life and the integrity and security of her person. All forms of exploitation, cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment and treatment shall be prohibited.
2. States Parties shall take appropriate and effective measures to:
 - a) enact and enforce laws to prohibit all forms of violence against women including unwanted or forced sex whether the violence takes place in private or public;
 - b) adopt such other legislative, administrative, social and economic measures as may be necessary to ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women;
 - c) identify the causes and consequences of violence against women and take appropriate measures to prevent and eliminate such violence;
 - d) actively promote peace education through curricula and social communication in order to eradicate elements in traditional and cultural beliefs, practices and stereotypes which legitimise and exacerbate the persistence and tolerance of violence against women;
 - e) punish the perpetrators of violence against women and implement programmes for the rehabilitation of women victims;
 - f) establish mechanisms and accessible services for effective information, rehabilitation and reparation for victims of violence against women;
 - g) prevent and condemn trafficking in women, prosecute the perpetrators of such trafficking and protect those women most at risk;
 - h) prohibit all medical or scientific experiments on women without their informed consent;
 - i) provide adequate budgetary and other resources for the implementation and monitoring of actions aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women;
 - j) ensure that, in those countries where the death penalty still exists, not to carry out death sentences on pregnant or nursing women;
 - k) ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights in terms of access to refugee status determination procedures and that women refugees are accorded the full protection and benefits guaranteed under international refugee law, including their own identity and other documents.

“Under Articles 3 & 4, states have a duty to implement measures to protect a woman's right to dignity, integrity and security.”

HOW HAVE GOVERNMENTS IMPLEMENTED THIS SO FAR?



Several countries, such as the Central African Republic, DR Congo and Niger, have **enacted constitutional reforms providing protection against or seeking to eradicate violence against women (VAW)**. In Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Somalia, the respective constitutions explicitly prohibit FGM. Others, such as Uganda, enshrine protection against harmful customs and traditions.



Across the continent, **governments have enacted laws** addressing multiple forms of VAW. There are legislative reforms that address gender-based violence (GBV) (Burundi) or domestic violence (Seychelles). Other legal reforms have increased the severity of punishment for VAW, for example in Senegal and Sierra Leone.



Over half of the **African countries have adopted standalone strategies** or national action plans to eradicate VAW. Countries such as Cameroon, Malawi, Namibia and Zimbabwe have strategies addressing GBV, while the South African Strategy addresses GBV and femicide.

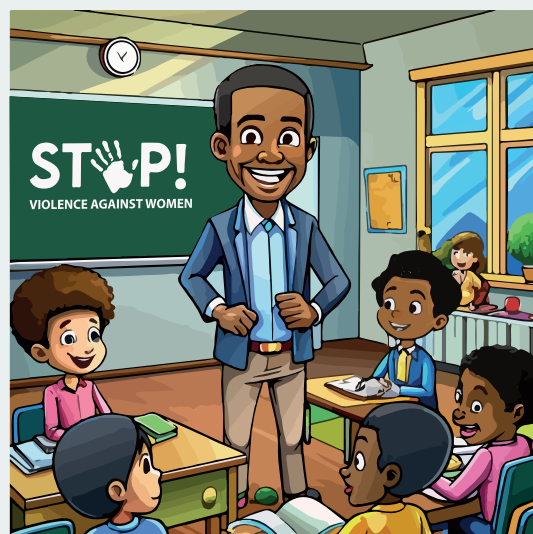


Several countries have implemented **institutional reforms** establishing support services, such as shelters. Other reforms have sought to improve access to justice for survivors of GBV (Congo Republic) or to raise awareness about various forms of GBV (South Africa).

WHAT MORE COULD GOVERNMENTS BE DOING?



- ✓ **Prioritise VAW as a critical national security issue**, allocating significant resources and funding to prevention, response, and support mechanisms, equivalent to other security concerns, including survivor-centred services.
- ✓ **Create community-based initiatives to engage men and boys** as allies in addressing the root causes of GBV, promoting healthy masculinities, and advocating for gender equality.
- ✓ **Strengthen and enforce comprehensive laws and policies that criminalise all forms of violence against women and girls**, including domestic violence, marital rape, sexual harassment, and trafficking, and adopt mechanisms to address impunity for perpetrators of VAWG, including expedited legal proceedings and transparent accountability measures within the justice system.
- ✓ **Develop robust public awareness campaigns** to challenge harmful cultural norms and promote zero tolerance for VAWG at all social levels, utilising diverse media channels to reach various communities effectively.
- ✓ **Enhance education and training programmes** for law enforcement, judicial personnel, healthcare providers, and social workers to ensure sensitive handling of GBV cases and uphold survivors' rights.
- ✓ **Implement reliable data systems** to provide disaggregated data by location, type of violence, and demographics, ensuring evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation.
- ✓ **Integrate education on gender equality and human rights** into school curricula to foster early understanding of respectful relationships and consent, breaking the cycle of violence across generations.



WHAT WOULD A FUTURE WHERE ARTICLE 4 OF THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL IS IMPLEMENTED LOOK LIKE?

Women and girls live free from fear, their rights fully protected by robust laws, well-trained justice systems, and community-based mechanisms that ensure accountability for perpetrators. Survivors of violence receive accessible and compassionate support services, including shelters, counselling, and legal aid, allowing them to rebuild their lives with dignity. **Educational and awareness programmes challenge harmful gender norms, fostering a culture of respect and equality across generations. Men and boys actively advocate against violence, standing as allies in breaking cycles of abuse and promoting lasting social transformation.** Grandchildren and great-grandchildren struggle to fathom how violence against women and girls was ever tolerated, their lives shaped by a world that treasures dignity and the unshakable safety of all its members.



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