

Maputo Protocol, Meaning, Achievements & Current Status in Africa

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The Maputo Protocol is a human rights agreement adopted in 2003 by the African Union to protect and promote the rights of women in Africa, ensuring equality, dignity, and freedom in all aspects of life.

About Maputo Protocol

- The Maputo Protocol is a **major human rights agreement adopted in July 2003** by the **African Union** in **Maputo, Mozambique**. It is officially part of the **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights** and focuses specifically on **protecting the rights of women across Africa**.
- It was created to **address the long-standing problems faced by women** such as discrimination, violence, lack of opportunities, and limited access to basic rights. The protocol aims to **ensure that women live with respect, equality, and dignity in every sphere of life**.
- Over time, it has become **one of the most progressive and comprehensive legal frameworks for women's rights in the world**, covering not just basic rights but also important areas like reproductive health, political participation, and economic independence.
- **Purpose and Key Objectives**

- The main goal of the protocol is to **eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women** and ensure equal treatment of men and women in society. It clearly directs governments to take active steps to protect women's rights. It focuses on improving women's conditions in several areas, such as:

- **Ensuring equal access to education and employment** opportunities so women can grow and succeed.
- **Protecting reproductive and health rights**, including access to proper healthcare services.
- Encouraging **women's participation in politics** and decision-making, so their voices are heard.
- Promoting **economic empowerment**, helping women become financially independent..

• Adoption and Ratification Status

- The protocol was adopted on **July 11, 2003**, and became one of the **fastest human rights treaties to come into force**, showing strong initial support from African countries.
- Out of **55 member countries of the African Union**, **44 countries have ratified** or accepted the protocol, making it one of the **most widely accepted agreements in Africa**.
- However, not all countries have fully implemented it into their national laws, and some are yet to ratify it, which creates gaps in protection for women.
- The **African Union has set a goal of achieving universal ratification by 2028**, but several countries still need to take action to meet this target.

• Key Achievements Over the Years

- In the last two decades, the Maputo Protocol has led to **important improvements in women's rights across many African countries**.
- There has been a noticeable increase in **women's participation in politics and leadership roles**. For example, some countries like **Rwanda** have achieved very high representation of women in parliament.
- The protocol has helped **promote equal pay for equal work** in several countries and has **increased awareness about women's economic rights**.
- It has also **contributed to progress in healthcare services for women**, especially in areas like maternal health and reproductive rights.
- Overall, it has played a **key role in changing laws, policies, and social attitudes towards women's rights in Africa**.

• Findings from the 2023 Report

- A major report released in **2023** by organizations like **Equality Now** highlighted the **progress made over 20 years of the protocol**.
- The report shows that while progress has been made, **it is not equal across all countries**. Some nations have done very well, while others are still lagging behind.
- Many countries have **not fully included the protocol's provisions into their national laws**, which limits its real impact on people's lives.
- The report also pointed out that some countries have still not ratified the protocol, meaning **women there do not enjoy the same level of protection**.

• Countries Yet to Ratify and the Need for Action

- Around **12 African countries have not yet ratified the protocol**, which remains a major concern.

- **Women and girls in these countries are more vulnerable** as they do not have full legal protection under this framework.
- There is an urgent need for these countries to **commit to the protocol and implement its provisions** to ensure equal rights for all women across the continent.

- **Challenges and Ongoing Issues**

- **Despite progress, many challenges still exist:**
 - **Unequal pay and limited job opportunities** for women continue in several countries.
 - Women's participation in the labour force is still **lower than that of men**, and in some countries, it has even declined.
 - Serious issues like **child marriage, gender-based violence, and discrimination** still affect many women and girls.
- Global challenges such as the **COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and climate change** have slowed down progress and made conditions worse in some areas.
- The pandemic also increased the risk of **child marriages** and put pressure on healthcare systems, reducing access to maternal and reproductive health services.

- **Current Situation and Future Outlook**

- Even after more than 20 years, **full gender equality has not yet been achieved in many parts of Africa.**
- In some regions, it may take **many more years to reach equal status between men and women.**
- The Maputo Protocol still remains a **powerful and important tool**, but its success depends on how well countries implement it.
- Stronger efforts, better policies, and greater commitment are needed to ensure that the rights promised under the protocol are **fully realized in practice.**

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