

A RESOURCE GUIDE

# Understanding and Applying the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria

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*A Plain-Language Guide for Advocacy,  
Legal Literacy and Action*



SOLIDARITY FOR  
AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
A force for freedom



MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ  
POUR LES DROITS  
DES FEMMES AFRICAINES  
Une force pour la liberté

# Understanding and Applying the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria

A Plain-Language Guide for Advocacy, Legal Literacy and Action

Published by BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights

Abuja, Nigeria, 2026, in the organisation's thirtieth year

## PRODUCED UNDER

The Advancing Bodily Autonomy and Integrity: Making the Maputo Protocol a Reality in Africa project, implemented by BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights as Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR) Anglophone West Africa Cluster Lead, with the support of Akina Mama wa Afrika.

*The views expressed are those of BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights and do not necessarily reflect those of Akina Mama wa Afrika.*

## SUGGESTED CITATION

BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights (2026). *Understanding and Applying the Maputo Protocol in Nigeria: A Plain-Language Guide for Advocacy, Legal Literacy and Action*. Abuja: BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights.

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# 1 How to Use This Guide

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This guide explains the Maputo Protocol in plain language, and shows what it can and cannot do for a woman in Nigeria today.

It is written for four kinds of reader, and each can start in a different place.

- **A woman whose rights have been violated**, or someone helping her, should start at Section 7, which says where to go.
- **A community educator or trainer** will find Section 4 ready to teach from, article by article.
- **A lawyer or paralegal** should start at Section 5, which maps each Protocol article to the Nigerian law that carries it.
- **An advocate or organiser** should start at Section 6, then use the checklist at Section 8.

Read Section 3 whoever you are. It explains what the Protocol can be used for in Nigeria and what it cannot, and everything else in this guide depends on it.

## 2 What the Maputo Protocol Is

The Maputo Protocol is Africa's treaty on the rights of women. Its full name is the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. It is called the Maputo Protocol because it was adopted in Maputo, Mozambique.

It is one of the strongest women's rights treaties in the world. It was the first international treaty to require countries to allow abortion in cases of rape and incest, and the first to call for an end to female genital mutilation by law.

### How Nigeria became bound by it

- 11 July 2003** ● The African Union adopted the Protocol.
- 16 December 2003** ● Nigeria signed it, showing it intended to be bound.
- 16 December 2003** ● Nigeria ratified it, accepting it as binding. Nigeria entered no reservation, which means it accepted every article without exception.
- 25 November 2005** ● The Protocol came into force, once fifteen countries had ratified it. From that date it has been binding on Nigeria.

The Protocol has 32 articles. Articles 1 to 26 set out rights and what governments must do about them, and those are the articles explained in this guide. Articles 27 to 32 deal with how the Protocol is interpreted, signed, amended and brought into force. They matter to lawyers rather than to daily advocacy, with one exception: Article 27 gives the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights the power to interpret the Protocol.

### 3 What the Protocol Can and Cannot Do in Nigeria

Before using this guide, you need to know one thing.

#### Nigeria has ratified it but has not passed it into Nigerian law.

These are two separate steps.

- **Ratification** is a promise made to other African countries and to the African Union. Nigeria made that promise in 2004 and has never taken it back.
- **Domestication** is passing the treaty into Nigerian law so that Nigerian courts can apply it. The Constitution requires an Act of the National Assembly for this. The National Assembly has not passed one.

#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR A WOMAN TODAY

*She cannot stand in a Nigerian court and ask a judge to enforce the Maputo Protocol by name. Telling her otherwise wastes her time and her money.*

Three things she can do instead.

#### The Maputo Protocol binding on Nigeria since 2005

Not passed into Nigerian law — cannot be cited on its own

1

**Use the Nigerian law that carries the right**  
VAPP Act and your State's laws, in a Nigerian court

2

**Take the case to the ECOWAS Court**  
in Abuja; it applies the Protocol directly

3

**Hold the government to its reporting promise**  
through the African Commission

## Use the Nigerian law that already carries the right

A great deal of the Protocol is already in force in Nigeria under other names. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 covers seven of its articles without ever mentioning it, and thirty-four States have adopted that Act. Section 5 of this guide shows which Nigerian law carries which Protocol article, so that you can cite the one the court will accept.

## Take the case to the ECOWAS Court

The Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States sits in Abuja and hears cases brought by individuals against member States. It applies the Maputo Protocol directly.

In 2017 four Nigerian women did exactly this. They had been seized in night raids in Abuja, assaulted and accused of prostitution. In *Dorothy Njemanze and 3 Others v Federal Republic of Nigeria*, decided on 12 October 2017, the Court held that Nigeria had breached Articles 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 25 of the Maputo Protocol, and awarded six million naira to each of three of the women. It was the first time any court ruled on the Protocol.

Two things make this route practical. The Court is in Abuja, and it does not require a woman to finish her case in the Nigerian courts first.

## Hold the government to its reporting promise

Nigeria must report to the African Commission every two years on what it has done about the Protocol. It has reported on the Protocol twice since 2004, and nothing has been considered since 2018. Civil society can submit its own account without waiting, and Section 8 explains how.

## 4 The Protocol in Plain Language

Each entry gives the article's proper title, so that it can be cited correctly, and then explains it in plain language.

### Article 1 Definition of Terms

This article explains what key words mean in the Protocol. Four are worth knowing.

- **Women:** people of the female gender, including girls. Every right in the Protocol belongs to girls as well as to adult women.
- **Discrimination against women:** any distinction, exclusion or restriction, or any different treatment based on sex, that stops women enjoying their rights, whether or not they are married.
- **Harmful practices:** any behaviour, attitude or practice that damages the rights of women and girls, including their right to life, health, dignity, education and bodily integrity.
- **Violence against women:** any act that causes or could cause women physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm, including threats of such acts, in peacetime and in war, in public and in private.

### Article 2 Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Governments must end all discrimination against women. They must pass laws to do it, write equality into the constitution, and work to change customs and attitudes that treat women as lesser.

### Article 3 Right to Dignity

Every woman has the right to be respected as a person and to develop freely as herself. Governments must protect women from all forms of violence, including sexual and verbal violence, and from being exploited or degraded.

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

Every woman has the right to life, and to be safe in her own body. All forms of violence against women are prohibited, including forced sex. Governments must pass and enforce laws against violence, punish those who commit it, and set up services to help survivors recover and obtain compensation. They must stop trafficking in women. They must set aside money in the budget to make this work. Where the death penalty still exists, it must not be carried out on a woman who is pregnant or breastfeeding.

## **Article 5 Elimination of Harmful Practices**

Governments must ban and condemn harmful practices, including all forms of female genital mutilation, whether carried out by a traditional cutter or by a medical worker. Bans must be backed by punishment. Governments must also raise public awareness, and support women who have been harmed with health care, legal help, counselling and training.

## **Article 6 Marriage**

A woman and a man must both agree freely before a marriage takes place.

**The minimum age of marriage is 18.** A marriage should be recorded in writing and registered. A married woman keeps the right to use her own name, to keep her own nationality or take her husband's, and to acquire and manage property in her own right.

## **Article 7 Separation, Divorce and Annulment of Marriage**

A woman has the same right as a man to end a marriage. A marriage should be ended by a court order, and both parents keep the same rights and duties towards their children. When a marriage ends, the property built up during the marriage must be shared fairly.

## **Article 8 Access to Justice and Equal Protection before the Law**

Women are equal before the law and entitled to its equal protection.

Governments must make legal services available, including free legal aid for women who cannot pay, train police and court officials, appoint women as judges and law officers, and repeal laws that discriminate.

## **Article 9 Right to Participation in the Political and Decision-Making Process**

Women have the right to take part in running their country. Governments must take active measures, including affirmative action, to ensure that women can vote and stand for office, that women are represented equally at every stage of elections, and that women are equal partners with men in making and carrying out government policy.

## **Article 10 Right to Peace**

Women have the right to live in peace and to help build it. Governments must include women in preventing and resolving conflict, in running camps for refugees and displaced people, and in peace negotiations. They should reduce military spending in favour of social development.

## **Article 11 Protection of Women in Armed Conflicts**

Women and girls must be protected in war. Rape and sexual slavery in conflict are war crimes, and those who commit them must be prosecuted.

**Women and girls who are refugees, returnees, asylum seekers or displaced within the country must be protected from all forms of violence.** No child under 18, especially no girl, may take part in fighting.

## **Article 12 Right to Education and Training**

Every girl and woman has the right to education at every level. Governments must remove stereotypes from textbooks and lessons, **protect girls from sexual harassment in schools and punish those who harass them**, provide counselling for those who have been harassed, and keep girls in school.

## **Article 13 Economic and Social Welfare Rights**

Women have the right to equal opportunity at work and **equal pay for equal work**. Governments must protect women from exploitation and harassment at work, guarantee paid maternity leave before and after birth, ensure workplaces are safe, extend social security to women in the informal sector, and recognise the economic value of the work women do in the home.

## **Article 14 Health and Reproductive Rights**

Women have the right to the best health care available, including sexual and reproductive health care. The Protocol names four parts of this right.

- the right to control their own fertility, and to decide whether to have children, how many, and when;
- the right to choose any method of family planning;
- the right to protect themselves against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and to be told their own HIV status and that of a partner;
- the right to family planning education.

Governments must provide affordable health services, especially to women in rural areas, and strengthen care before, during and after childbirth.

Governments must also allow medical abortion where the pregnancy results from sexual assault, rape or incest, or where continuing the pregnancy endangers the mother's mental or physical health, or the life of the mother or the unborn child. This is Article 14(2)(c). Several countries limited their acceptance of it when they ratified. Nigeria accepted it in full. Nigerian criminal law has not been changed to match, and Section 6 explains where that leaves a woman today.

## **Article 15 Right to Food Security**

Women have the right to safe and nutritious food. Governments must give women access to clean drinking water, cooking fuel, land, and the means to grow food, and must build proper systems for storing and supplying it.

## **Article 16 Right to Adequate Housing**

Women have the right to decent housing and acceptable living conditions in a healthy environment, whatever their marital status.

## **Article 17 Right to a Positive Cultural Context**

Women have the right to live within a culture that respects them, and to take part in deciding cultural policy at every level.

### **Article 18 Right to a Healthy and Sustainable Environment**

Women have the right to a clean and healthy environment. Governments must include women in managing and protecting the environment, protect women's indigenous knowledge, and control the storage, transport and disposal of waste, including toxic waste.

### **Article 19 Right to Sustainable Development**

Women must benefit from, and take part in shaping, their country's development. Governments must give women **access to and control over land and productive resources, guarantee their right to property, and provide access to credit, training and extension services** in both rural and urban areas.

### **Article 20 Widows' Rights**

A widow must not be subjected to inhuman, humiliating or degrading treatment. After her husband's death she automatically becomes the guardian of her children, unless that would harm them. She has the right to remarry, and to marry a person of her own choosing.

### **Article 21 Right to Inheritance**

A widow has the right to a fair share of her husband's property, and the right to continue living in the family home. Daughters and sons have the right to inherit their parents' property in fair shares.

### **Article 22 Special Protection of Elderly Women**

Governments must protect older women, meet their physical, economic and social needs, **give them access to employment and training**, and protect them from violence, including sexual abuse, and from discrimination because of their age.

### **Article 23 Special Protection of Women with Disabilities**

Governments must protect women with disabilities, **help them into employment and vocational training, and include them in decision-making**. They must be protected from violence, including sexual abuse, and from discrimination because of disability.

## **Article 24 Special Protection of Women in Distress**

Governments must give particular support to **poor women and women heading households, including women from marginalised groups,** and must ensure that **pregnant and breastfeeding women, and women in detention,** are held in conditions suited to their circumstances and are treated with dignity.

## **Article 25 Remedies**

When a woman's rights are violated she must have a way to obtain justice. Governments must provide remedies through the courts or other competent authorities, including compensation.

## **Article 26 Implementation and Monitoring**

Governments that have ratified the Protocol must report on their progress every two years to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, as part of their reports under Article 62 of the African Charter. The African Commission reviews those reports and issues observations. Civil society organisations can submit their own reports, known as shadow reports, to give an independent account of what is really happening. Governments must also provide the budget and resources needed to make these rights real.

# 5 What You Can Use in Nigeria Today

The Maputo Protocol cannot be cited on its own in a Nigerian court. Much of its content can be, under Nigerian law. This table shows where.

**BEFORE YOU USE THIS TABLE**

*The VAPP Act applies in your State only if your State has adopted it. Thirty-four have. Kano has not, and Lagos relies on its weaker Protection Against Domestic Violence Law 2007. The thirty-four State laws are separate statutes and their wording differs, so check the law as your own State passed it.*

| Article                               | What you can use in Nigeria today                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3</b><br>Dignity                   | Offences of emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, and forced isolation.<br>VAPP Act 2015, and your State's VAPP law                            |
| <b>4</b><br>Life, integrity, security | Offences of rape, spousal battery, physical injury, coercion, deprivation of liberty, attack with a harmful substance, and incest.<br>VAPP Act 2015 |
| <b>5</b><br>Harmful practices         | Offence of female circumcision or genital mutilation, and of harmful traditional practices.<br>VAPP Act 2015, section 6                             |
| <b>6</b><br>Marriage                  | Minimum age of 18 for marriage, in States that have adopted the Act.<br>Child's Rights Act 2003, section 21                                         |
| <b>8</b><br>Access to justice         | Right to a fair hearing; protection orders; free legal aid.<br>Constitution s 36; VAPP Act; Legal Aid Act 2011                                      |

| Article                                            | What you can use in Nigeria today                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>9</b><br><b>Political participation</b>         | In Kwara, neither sex may hold less than 35% or more than 65% of the offices listed in the Schedule, and the Governor can be petitioned to correct a breach within two months; gender and equal opportunities laws in five States; a 2022 Federal High Court judgment ordering the 35% target to be applied.<br><i>Kwara Political Offices (Gender Composition) Law, No. 9 of 2021, ss 1 and 3; State GEO laws</i> |
| <b>13</b><br><b>Economic and social welfare</b>    | Offences of economic abuse, forced financial dependence, and abandonment without means of support.<br><i>VAPP Act 2015, sections 12 and 16</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>14</b><br><b>Health and reproductive rights</b> | Maternal and reproductive health services under national health policy. No legal route to Article 14(2)(c): abortion remains a crime in most circumstances.<br><i>National Health Act 2014; Criminal Code and Penal Code</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>20</b><br><b>Widows' rights</b>                 | Offence of subjecting a widow to harmful widowhood practices; offence of forceful ejection from the home.<br><i>VAPP Act 2015, ss 15 and 9; Anekwe v Nweke (2014)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>21</b><br><b>Inheritance</b>                    | Supreme Court rulings striking down customary rules that disinherit daughters and widows.<br><i>Ukeje v Ukeje (2014); Anekwe v Nweke (2014)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>23</b><br><b>Women with disabilities</b>        | Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of disability.<br><i>Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>25</b><br><b>Remedies</b>                       | Protection orders and compensation; procedure for enforcing fundamental rights.<br><i>VAPP Act 2015; Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules 2009</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>2, 3, 4, 8</b><br><b>In general</b>             | The African Charter itself is Nigerian law, enacted in 1983, and the Supreme Court has held it superior to ordinary statutes.<br><i>African Charter (Ratification and Enforcement) Act, Cap A9; Abacha v Fawehinmi (2000)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                      |

## **Articles with no Nigerian law behind them**

Articles 19 on land and credit, 22 on elderly women and 24 on women in distress have no dedicated Nigerian statute. Article 21 on inheritance rests on court judgments, so each woman must litigate for herself. These are the gaps where advocacy is most needed and least organised.

## 6 Four Things to Check Where You Are

The same right can mean different things in Kano and in Ekiti. Before advising anyone, or planning any campaign, establish these four things for your own State.

### Which violence law applies here

Thirty-four States have adopted the VAPP Act. Kano has not. Lagos uses its own Protection Against Domestic Violence Law of 2007, which is older and covers less.

Each adopting State passed its own version, so the wording differs from State to State. Get a copy of the law as your State passed it, not the federal text, and check three things: which offences it creates, what protection orders it allows, and which court hears them.

Where the law exists, find out who runs it. Ask which ministry is responsible, whether there is a budget line for it, and how many cases have been prosecuted. Very often nobody has been asked before, and the absence of an answer is itself worth recording.

### Which system of law governs this woman's situation

Nigeria runs three systems side by side. Statutory law is made by the legislatures. Customary law comes from a community's traditions. Sharia law applies in the twelve northern States with Sharia penal codes. Marriage, inheritance, custody and land can each fall under a different one.

When a custom or a practice denies a woman a right, Section 42 of the Constitution, which forbids discrimination on grounds of sex, overrides it. The Supreme Court has said so twice, and both judgments are usable in any Nigerian court.

- **Ukeje v Ukeje (2014)** struck down the Igbo custom that barred a daughter from inheriting her father's estate.

- **Anekwe v Nweke (2014)** struck down the custom that disinherited a widow who had borne no son.

Keep both citations to hand. They are the strongest instruments Nigerian women have on inheritance, and many practitioners still do not use them.

## **What your State can do about women in public office, without waiting for Abuja**

Reserved seats in the legislatures need the Constitution amended, and that is a long national campaign. Two other things are entirely within your State's own power and need no federal permission.

- **Public appointments.** A Governor can meet a target for women by decision, today. Kwara went further and put it in law. Its Political Offices (Gender Composition) Law, No. 9 of 2021, assented on 7 December 2021, requires that neither sex hold less than 35% or more than 65% of five classes of office: commissioners; chairmen and members of commissions; special advisers and senior special assistants; chairmen and members of governing councils of educational institutions; and chairmen and members of boards of agencies and parastatals. It is written as a band for either sex rather than a quota for women, which is easier to pass and easier to defend, and it is anchored to section 208(4) of the Constitution. Where a resignation, removal or death puts the balance out, the Governor may be petitioned and must put it right within two months. The law gives no one a right to be appointed, and a candidate must still hold the qualifications the office requires.
- **Local government.** Your State House of Assembly makes the law for council elections. It can require that the chair and vice-chair of every council be of opposite sexes, and set a minimum share of council leadership positions for women. Several States, among them Kogi, Niger and Ekiti, already do something close to this by the Governor's decision, which means it lasts only as long as he does. Putting it in law makes it permanent.

These are the asks to take to a State House of Assembly. Kwara's law runs to six short sections and a schedule, and both are achievable in one legislative year.

### **What a woman can actually obtain for her reproductive health**

This is where Nigerian law and the Protocol are furthest apart, so state the position plainly rather than raising expectations.

Antenatal care, delivery care, contraception and family planning information are all provided for in national health policy, and a woman is entitled to ask for them at a public facility. Find out what your nearest facility actually offers and what it charges, because policy and practice differ widely.

On abortion, Nigerian criminal law makes it an offence in almost all circumstances, under the Criminal Code in the southern States and the Penal Code in the north. Article 14(2)(c) of the Protocol says otherwise. Several countries, among them Cameroon, Kenya and Uganda, limited their acceptance of that article when they ratified. Rwanda limited it too, then withdrew the limitation in 2012. Nigeria limited nothing and accepted the article in full, and its criminal law has not been changed to match.

Advocacy here meets the most organised opposition of any issue in this guide. Work with allies in the health professions, be accurate about what the law currently says, and do not promise a woman a service that cannot lawfully be provided where she lives.

## 7 Where to Go When Rights Are Violated

Find the row that matches her situation. More than one may apply, and she can use them together.

### **If she is in immediate danger**

Go to the nearest police station and ask for the Gender Desk or the Family Support Unit. Every command is supposed to have one. Ask for the officer's name and the case reference.

### **If she has been sexually assaulted**

Go to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, known as a SARC, as soon as possible, ideally before washing or changing clothes. A SARC provides free medical care, emergency contraception, HIV prevention medication, counselling, and forensic evidence collection that a court will accept. Most States have at least one. She does not have to report to the police first, and she can decide later whether to press charges.

### **For free legal help**

Contact the International Federation of Women Lawyers, known as FIDA, which has a branch in every State and represents women without charge. The Legal Aid Council of Nigeria also provides free representation. Your State's Ministry of Women Affairs has a complaints desk.

### **To make a formal human rights complaint**

The National Human Rights Commission receives complaints from individuals, investigates them, and can summon officials. It has offices in every State and its services are free.

### **To go to court in Nigeria**

A case about violence, inheritance or discrimination is brought in the State High Court. Where a fundamental right under Chapter IV of the Constitution is in question, the Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules 2009 provide a faster procedure, and those Rules expressly allow reliance on the African Charter, which is Nigerian law.

### **To take Nigeria itself to court**

The ECOWAS Community Court of Justice in Abuja hears human rights cases brought by individuals against member States, and applies the Maputo Protocol. It does not require a complainant to finish her case in the Nigerian courts first. This is the route the women in Njemanze used.

### **To complain to the African Commission**

An individual or an organisation may send a communication to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, but only after local remedies have been exhausted, unless they are unavailable or unreasonably prolonged.

## 8 What Advocates Can Do

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Each item is something an organisation or an individual advocate can start this quarter.

### Teach the rights

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- ☐ Translate Section 4 of this guide into the languages spoken where you work.
- ☐ Teach Section 3 first, so that women understand what the Protocol can and cannot do for them, and are not sent to court expecting something the law cannot yet give.
- ☐ Use Section 5 in every training, so that participants leave knowing the name of the Nigerian law that applies to them.

### Work on your State

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- ☐ Find out whether your State has adopted the VAPP Act, and get a copy of the State law, since the wording differs from State to State.
- ☐ Ask your State's Ministry of Justice how many VAPP prosecutions it has brought, and publish the answer, including when there is no answer.
- ☐ Ask for a dedicated line in the State budget for implementing the law, and follow the appropriation debate.
- ☐ Press your State House of Assembly for a gender and equal opportunities law, an appointment floor for women as Kwara enacted, and a rule on women in local government council leadership.
- ☐ Ask your Governor to name a single ministry answerable for each gender law in force.

## Hold the country to account

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- ☐ Prepare or contribute to a shadow report to the African Commission. Nigeria's last periodic report was considered in 2018. Civil society does not need to wait for the government to report before submitting its own account.
- ☐ Record what you see: cases brought, cases dropped, services that exist, services that closed. Nigeria has no national record of this, so the record kept by organisations is the only one there is.
- ☐ Where a case is strong and domestic remedies have failed, consider the ECOWAS Court.

## Work with others

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- ☐ Join or work through CODMAP, the Coalition for the Domestication of the Maputo Protocol, hosted by Alliances for Africa.
- ☐ Agree with other organisations which States each of you will cover, so that effort is not duplicated in Abuja and absent elsewhere.
- ☐ Bring in traditional and religious leaders early, particularly on Articles 5, 6, 20 and 21, where custom and law meet most directly.

## 9 Words Used in This Guide

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**African Charter** the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the continent's main human rights treaty. Nigeria enacted it into Nigerian law in 1983.

**African Commission (ACHPR)** the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Union body that supervises the Charter and the Protocol and receives country reports.

**Domestication** passing a treaty into national law so that national courts can apply it.

**ECOWAS Court** the Community Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States, based in Abuja, which hears human rights cases against member States.

**FGM** female genital mutilation, the cutting or removal of part of a girl's or woman's genitals for non-medical reasons.

**FIDA** the International Federation of Women Lawyers, which provides free legal representation to women.

**INEC** the Independent National Electoral Commission, which runs federal and State elections in Nigeria.

**NHRC** the National Human Rights Commission, which receives and investigates human rights complaints.

**Ratification** a country's formal acceptance that a treaty binds it.

**Reservation** a statement made when ratifying a treaty, excluding or changing the effect of a particular provision. Nigeria entered no reservation to the Maputo Protocol.

**SARC** a Sexual Assault Referral Centre, which provides free medical care, counselling and forensic examination to survivors of sexual assault.

**Shadow report** a report submitted to a treaty body by civil society, giving an independent account alongside the government's own report.

**VAPP Act** the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015.

**VAWIP** violence against women in politics, meaning threats, abuse and attacks directed at women because they seek or hold public office.

## 10 About BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights

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BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights is a Nigerian feminist organisation founded in 1996, and this guide is published in its thirtieth year. It works where law, culture and social justice meet, and its particular focus is the position of women under Nigeria's three parallel legal systems of customary, religious and statutory law. BAOBAB is present across all six geopolitical zones, including in Muslim-majority and rural communities where rights-based advocacy is most contested.

BAOBAB has been a member of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR) since 2005 and leads its Anglophone West Africa Cluster, covering Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone and The Gambia. It is a member of CODMAP, and hosts the Secretariat of the Pan-African Feminist Solidarity Network in Abuja.

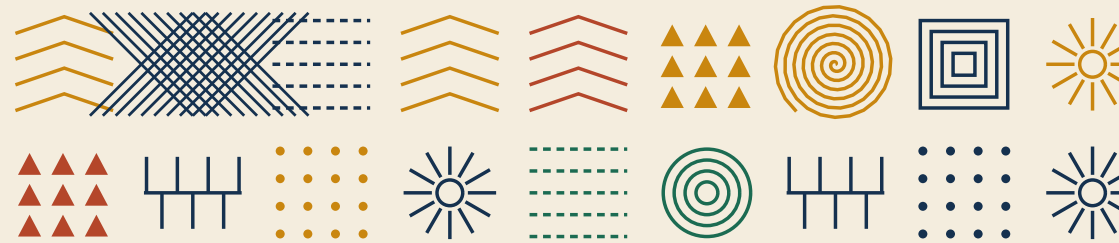
Readers who want the full analysis of why the Protocol has not been domesticated, and what would change it, will find it in BAOBAB's report *Statutes Without Protection: Nigeria's Maputo Protocol Gap and How to Close It* (2026).

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Nigeria promised to honour the Maputo Protocol in 2004. More than twenty years later, a woman still cannot ask a Nigerian court to enforce it by name.

This guide explains the Protocol in plain language, article by article. It shows which Nigerian law already carries each right, so that an advocate can cite the one a court will accept. It sets out where a woman can go when her rights are violated, in her State and beyond it. And it shows what a State House of Assembly can change now, without waiting for Abuja.

It is for activists, community leaders, legal practitioners, educators, and everyone working to make these rights real.

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