African Union

Nala

Pre-CSW71

Pan-African Youth Consultations

TOWARDS THE COMMON AFRICAN POSITION



REPORT

Pan-African CSW71 Youth Report

Young African women's realities, priorities and demands for the Common African Position

Prepared for the Africa Pre-CSW71 Consultation, Expert Segment (23 to 24 October 2026)

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Executive summary

This report brings together a live consultation with 208 young participants on 12 October 2026 and a survey answered by 184 young people in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese. Participants in the live consultation and survey respondents together came from 39 African countries; the survey alone reached 31 African countries, plus six respondents in the diaspora.

The consultation in numbers

208
young participants in the live consultation on 12 October 2026

184
survey responses in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese

39
African countries among registrants and survey respondents

95%
voted to adopt the youth priorities in the closing poll

Africa has robust normative frameworks (Agenda 2063, the Maputo Protocol, the African Youth Charter and the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls), yet young women still lack financial security, safety and representation in leadership.

CSW71 will consider the priority theme "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". Its review theme is “achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”, while the cross-cutting issue is “poverty and the economic empowerment of women”.

Participants endorsed the youth priorities in a live poll at the close of the consultation, in which 95% voted to adopt them and 5% abstained. The Pan-African Youth Statement to the Africa Pre-CSW71 Ministerial Segment sets out 20 commitments under 8 headings. This report provides the evidence for each:

- **Economic justice (Commitments 1 and 2).** Ratify ILO Convention 190 by 2030 where not yet ratified, and ensure its full implementation; prohibit and sanction sexual coercion in recruitment and employment; protect young women from dismissal or sanction for pregnancy or maternity; extend social protection to young women in informal work; and guarantee paid internships. Measure economic empowerment programmes by the income, assets and decent work young women gain, not by the number of women trained, and link every training programme to affordable childcare and decent, secure employment. *Report Section 2.*
- **Financing for gender equality (Commitments 3 to 5).** Collateral-free finance for young women and youth-led organisations; targeted financing, public procurement and digital-innovation opportunities for enterprises owned by young women, including in AI; climate and disaster-risk finance channelled directly to women-led and youth-led organisations through long-term core funding, reachable without land title or collateral; and national and continental mechanisms to identify youth-led solutions from the start and scale them across borders. *Report Sections 2, 5, 9 and 10.*

- **Criminalising violence against women and girls (Commitments 6 to 8).** Declare femicide and sexual violence a national and regional emergency, with a costed prevention and response plan developed with young women and survivor-led organisations. Reform police and justice systems with survivors, fund and pay women-led response networks, and vet all violence-response personnel. Eliminate child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM), with enforcement that reaches communities where they are practised in secret, and protect all children from child marriage and its associated sexual exploitation and abuse. *Report Section 3.*
- **Digital justice (Commitments 9 and 10).** Develop and adopt a supplementary protocol to the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls establishing enforceable continental standards on technology-facilitated violence, with clear duties for digital platforms to prevent harm, act on reports, preserve evidence and cooperate with lawful investigations, while protecting freedom of expression and survivors' rights. Prohibit arbitrary internet shutdowns in law and publish the legal basis and duration of every restriction. Ensure affordable, safe and accessible connectivity for rural, refugee, stateless and displaced young women and young women with disabilities. *Report Sections 3 and 6.*
- **Conflict, displacement and humanitarian settings (Commitments 11 to 14).** Make women, peace and security a standing priority of the Common African Position (CAP) and bridge it with youth, peace and security in National Action Plans. End impunity for conflict-related sexual violence, abduction, trafficking and recruitment by armed groups, and publish aggregate numbers of cases investigated, prosecuted and resulting in convictions, while protecting survivors' confidentiality and safety. Ratify and domesticate the Kampala Convention, issue identity documents, recognise the right of refugee and displaced youth to work and access financial services, and safeguard education, psychosocial support and sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian settings. Guarantee young women's participation in peace negotiations, mediation and recovery, with a published share of peace and security spending for local peacebuilding they lead. *Report Section 4.*
- **Access to justice and protection (Commitments 15 and 16).** By 2030, revise, amend or repeal laws that deny women equal rights to inherit, own land, pass on their nationality or borrow and run a business without a husband's consent, and ensure equal protection of women's land and property rights under customary and civil law, including through joint land titling. Protect young women activists, leaders, politicians and human rights defenders from intimidation, arbitrary arrest, detention and election-related violence. Protect peaceful protest and investigate police violence against youth. Ensure the prompt release of those detained solely for exercising their rights to peaceful assembly and civic engagement, and review and repeal laws that unduly restrict civic space and penalise youth and women's organising. *Report Sections 2, 3 and 8.*
- **Education, health and well-being (Commitments 17 and 18).** Guarantee free, safe, quality secondary education for every girl and the right of pregnant girls and young mothers' to return to school, with support for fees, transport and tax-free menstrual products. Protect domestic funding for maternal, sexual and reproductive health in line with the Abuja Declaration. Expand youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information, including contraception, in schools, health facilities and humanitarian settings, and remove legal and policy barriers, including parental or spousal consent requirements that unduly restrict access to essential services. Finance mental health services co-designed with young women, and ensure access to HIV prevention, testing and treatment. *Report Section 7.*
- **Intergenerational co-leadership (Commitments 19 and 20).** Enforce quotas for young women within women's and youth quotas, with target representation of at least 35% of young people aged 15–35, half of them young women, in national delegations and oversight bodies, including every national CSW delegation and the Africa Group's negotiating team. Fully resource youth participation, including transport, interpretation, accessibility and visas. Establish and fund the annual youth consultation as a standing

mechanism for every Common African Position, with a public, youth-led tracker of commitments, budgets and outcomes, disaggregated by age and sex. *Report Sections 8 and 9.*

The primary demand for CSW71 is direct economic and political power for young women, backed by transparent funding and public accountability.

The four consultation rooms each agreed on a headline. The Arabic room asked leaders to "give power, economic and policy, to women in leading their fate, beyond just amplifying their voices"; the French room called for a move "from digital inclusion to economic power"; and the English and Portuguese rooms asked leaders to "fund the actual women, protect girls and young women from violence". Together they produced the consultation's closing line:

> “
> Fund women. Protect girls and young women. Hold leaders accountable.

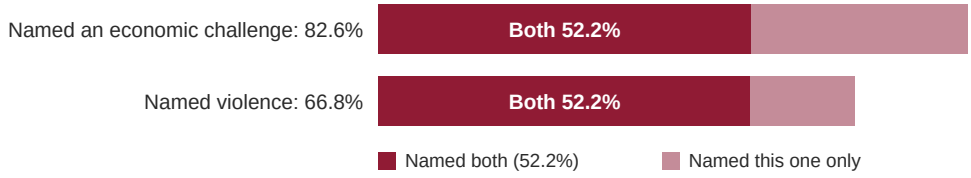
Key evidence from the survey and the consultation

- 82.6% of survey respondents named at least one economic challenge among the three biggest facing young women, 66.8% named a form of violence, and 52.2% named both. Economic empowerment and physical safety are deeply linked.
- Gender-based violence (GBV, 53.8%) and unemployment (46.7%) were the most frequently named challenges overall.
- The main barriers to a decent and secure income were lack of skills (41.8%), too few jobs (41.8%) and lack of access to finance (38.6%). 47.3% named unsafe workplaces or sexual harassment, gender discrimination, or both (25.5% and 29.9% respectively when counted separately).
- About half of respondents (52.2%) feel young people like them have a meaningful say in decisions; 31.5% said only sometimes and 16.3% rarely or never. Yet when asked what most prevents young women from taking part in decisions, 75.5% named not being invited, or not being listened to when they are. Young people are getting into the room more often than they are being heard in it.
- 60.3% want youth representatives in monitoring bodies; only 13.6% chose government progress reports.
- On technology and AI, 62.5% see opportunities and risks equally, 26.6% mostly opportunities, 8.2% mostly risks, and 2.7% were unsure.
- Conflict, insecurity and displacement were among the top concerns of respondents in North Africa (n = 17) and Central Africa (n = 30) and in the Arabic-language survey (n = 18).

Figure 1

82.6% named an economic challenge, 66.8% named violence, and 52.2% named both

Share of 184 survey respondents. Economic empowerment and physical safety are deeply linked.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184). Only the shared segment (52.2%) is labelled; the other segments are the remainder of each bar.

Headline findings

53.8%
named gender-based violence, the most frequently named challenge

46.7%
named unemployment and lack of decent jobs

75.5%
named not being invited, or not being listened to when they are, as what most prevents young women taking part in decisions

Primary income barriers

41.8%
lack of skills or training

41.8%
too few jobs

38.6%
lack of access to finance

47.3%
unsafe workplaces or sexual harassment, gender discrimination, or both

Accountability, technology and voice

60.3% vs 13.6%
want youth representatives in monitoring bodies; only 13.6% chose government progress reports

62.5%
see technology and AI as offering opportunities and risks equally (26.6% mostly opportunities, 8.2% mostly risks, 2.7% unsure)

52.2%
feel young people like them have a meaningful say; 31.5% said only sometimes and 16.3% rarely or never

Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184) and the live poll of 12 October 2026.



Watch the consultation

Pre-CSW71 Pan-African Youth Consultation, live session of 12 October 2026, with all four language rooms and the closing poll.

> **After the war we went back to square one: child marriage has increased, FGM has returned, along with harassment and rape.**
>
> Young woman, 30 to 35, Sudan; translated from Arabic

How this report maps to the Issues Paper

Issues Paper priority	What young women add	Report section
(a) Poverty and gender inequality	Poverty and cost of living is the third most named challenge (37.5%); young women in informal work earn but cannot build savings, assets or social protection (88.2% of women's employment is informal); survivors of violence cannot afford to leave; discriminatory land, inheritance and nationality laws keep women poor	1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2
(b) Care systems	Care is under-named in the survey (3.8%) but runs through every account of who is left behind; childcare must be linked to work and training, and rural water and energy infrastructure counts as care infrastructure	2.1, 2.4, 7
(c) Women's economic empowerment	Collateral and land title as a recurring barrier in consultation testimony; sexual coercion as a gatekeeper to work; laws on nationality and spousal consent; outcomes measured by income and assets, not people trained	2
(d) Inclusive digital transformation	Ownership of the digital economy, not only access; internet shutdowns as an economic harm; youth-led digital platforms	6, 10
(e) Ending violence against women and girls	Femicide as an emergency; survivor-centred police and justice intake; a supplementary protocol on technology-facilitated violence; protection of all children from child marriage and its associated sexual exploitation and abuse	3
(f) Gender-responsive climate action	Direct, long-term funding for African women-led organisations; adaptation finance without land title; links between climate shocks, child marriage and GBV	5
(g) Women's leadership and decision-making	At least 35% representation of young people aged 15–35, half of them young women; paid, resourced participation; visas; protection of activists; a standing youth mechanism in the CAP process	8
(h) Financing, accountability and data systems	A public, youth-led commitments tracker that records failures; publicly tracked budget lines; data disaggregated by age, sex, disability and location	9
(i) Health and reproductive rights	Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services; parental-consent barriers to services; HIV-related discrimination; menstrual health	7
Conflict, insecurity and humanitarian crises (an "emerging risk" in the Issues Paper, §6.3)	For many young women, conflict is the condition that shapes every other priority; peace and security should be a standing priority of the CAP	4

> **"Give power, economic and policy, to women in leading their fate, beyond just amplifying their voices.**
>
> Arabic room, agreed single commitment

SECTION 1

Lived realities at a glance

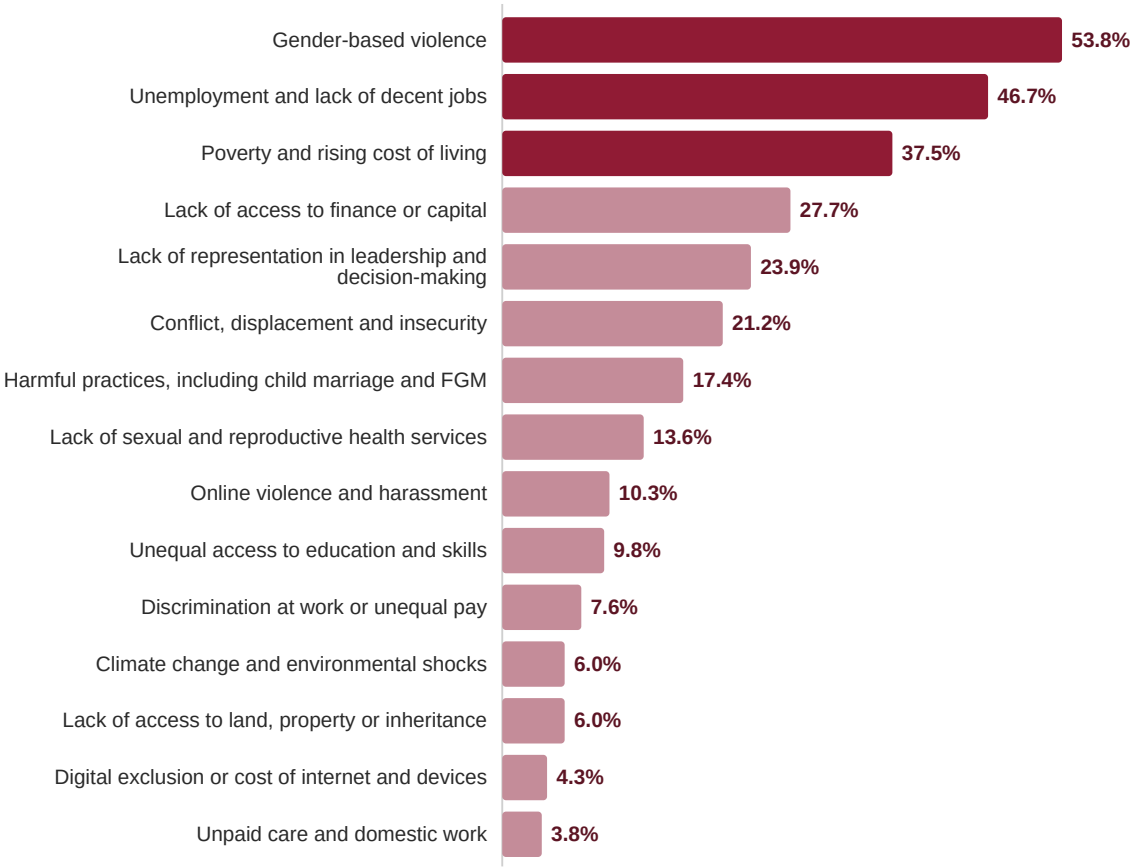
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1.1 The most urgent challenges

Figure 2

The most urgent challenges facing young women

Share of 184 survey respondents; each chose up to three challenges. Leading three highlighted.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), section 1.1.

Among women respondents (n = 132), the weight on violence is higher still: 58% named gender-based violence, 44% unemployment and 37% poverty and cost of living.

Regional priorities vary: conflict and displacement rank high in North and Central Africa, while leadership exclusion is most prominent in West Africa. Regional sub-samples are small, so the figures below indicate direction rather than precise shares.

> **“We should be able to trace a young woman's contribution through to the decision, and be told when it was rejected and why.**
>
> Young woman, Kenya; live consultation

Top challenges by region

Share of regional respondents who named the challenge in their regional top three. Blank = not in the top three.

Region (n)	Unemployment	Gender-based violence	Poverty and cost of living	Leadership exclusion	Conflict, displacement and insecurity
East Africa (72)	56%	51%	35%		
West Africa (39)	38%	54%	54%	33%	
Central Africa (30)	47%	53%			37%
Southern Africa (20)	40%	60%	45%		
North Africa (17)	41%	59%			53%

Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), section 1.1. West Africa shows four items because gender-based violence and poverty tie for first place (54% each): unemployment ranks third (38%) and leadership exclusion fourth (33%).

By survey language: Arabic-language respondents (n = 18) most often named conflict and displacement (12 of 18, 67%); French-language respondents (n = 31) named unemployment, access to finance and GBV equally (15 of 31 each, 48%); and five of the six Portuguese-language respondents named GBV.

1.2 Priorities agreed in the consultation rooms

Priority = what women said needs to change.
Structural barrier = the underlying system, institution, power relation or policy failure that prevents that change.

Theme	Priority issues	Structural barriers
1. Ending violence against women and girls in all its forms (femicide, child marriage, technology-facilitated violence)	Ending violence against women and girls in homes, schools, communities and online spaces; protecting women leaders and activists; preventing child marriage	Patriarchal gender norms and unequal power relations that normalise and reproduce violence; discriminatory socio-cultural practices; weak or poorly enforced legal and protection frameworks; impunity for perpetrators; inadequate accountability of technology companies for technology-facilitated violence
2. Peace, security and displacement	Ensuring peace, security and protection for displaced and refugee women and girls; addressing the specific risks women face in contexts of conflict, displacement and insecurity	Militarisation, protracted conflict and gender-blind peace and security systems; exclusion of women from peace and security decision-making; inadequate protection and services for displaced and refugee women; unequal distribution of the social and economic burdens of conflict and displacement
3. Digital rights and online safety	Preventing and responding to technology-facilitated violence against women and girls; equitable digital access; access to information	Gendered digital inequality and weak digital governance and accountability; arbitrary internet shutdowns and restrictions; unequal access to technology and digital infrastructure; inadequate regulation and accountability of digital platforms; erosion of privacy, freedom of expression and other human rights protections

Theme	Priority issues	Structural barriers
4. Economic justice	Economic empowerment and financial inclusion of women facing exclusion, including Indigenous women and girls; equal access to and participation in decent work and economic opportunities	Gendered economic systems and unequal control over resources; discriminatory land and property ownership systems; unpaid and unequal care burdens; economic dependency; exclusion from formal financial systems; discriminatory labour markets and unequal access to decent work, credit and productive resources
5. Inclusion and access to services	Equitable access to education, health and other essential services; rural inclusion; inclusion of persons with disabilities; adolescent health and wellbeing	Unequal and under-resourced public service systems; geographic and rural–urban inequalities; discriminatory and inaccessible infrastructure and institutions; educational exclusion; inadequate disability-inclusive and adolescent-responsive services
6. Participation and representation	Meaningful participation and inclusion of women and girls in decision-making; equal participation in policy development and political processes	Institutional and political exclusion of women from decision-making and agenda-setting; tokenistic participation and weak mechanisms for meaningful representation; discriminatory mobility and visa regimes that restrict African women's access to regional and global decision-making spaces; unequal access to political and institutional power
7. Resourcing and accountability	Sustainable funding for women's rights and gender equality priorities; greater African resource self-reliance and ownership	Unequal and externally dependent financing structures; limited direct funding for women-led and grassroots organisations; opaque allocation and management of resources intended for women and girls; donor-driven priorities; weak transparency and accountability mechanisms

1.3 Who is being left furthest behind

Young women facing intersecting disadvantages remain the most marginalised:

- **Rural young women**, far from banks, training centres, transport, health facilities and markets, and often working in subsistence agriculture without land title. In Lesotho, for example, economic activity is concentrated in one urban centre out of ten districts; and in Malawi most of the population is rural while services are not.
- **Adolescent mothers, young single mothers and girls who left school** because of pregnancy, child marriage or school costs, who then lack qualifications and carry childcare alone, often after being abandoned by their partners and families. A participant from Ghana cited figures, which we have not independently verified, showing that about 54,000 girls aged 10 to 19 became pregnant between January and June 2026.
- **Young women with disabilities**, who face a "double disadvantage" of gender discrimination and inaccessible education, transport, workplaces, digital tools and financial services. Participants reported that persons with disabilities are left to beg, and that disability laws exist but are not applied.
- **Displaced, refugee and conflict-affected young women** (Sudan, eastern DRC, Cabo Delgado in Mozambique, the Sahel, north-east Nigeria, Cameroon's North-West and South-West, refugee camps in Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda, and the Sahrawi refugee camps), who have lost land, savings, documents, work rights and family support.
- **Young women in the informal economy** (traders, domestic workers, platform workers), who earn but cannot build savings, assets or social protection.

- **Survivors of gender-based violence**, who often cannot leave abusive situations without income.
- **Educated but unemployed young women and recent graduates**, including those coerced into "sex for jobs".
- **Intersex women and girls**, who participants said face blame, bullying, exclusion from school and work, and harmful practices. One participant from Zambia described an intersex girl married off at ten to a traditional healer who promised to "heal" her and then extorted the family's land and cattle, leaving them in poverty.
- **Others named:** Indigenous and ethnic minority women, young women living with HIV, sexual minorities, young widows and orphans, women from poor urban settlements, women and girls in societies where marriage is defined as their only achievement, and African women-led organisations themselves.

1.4 New and emerging pressures

- **Technology-facilitated gender-based violence:** cyberstalking, sextortion, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, AI-generated deepfakes, online shaming of women who work alongside men, and threats against women politicians, journalists and activists that escalate offline. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has called on States to address digital violence against women [22].
- **Femicide and rising killings of women by partners**, raised by participants from Kenya, South Africa, Malawi, Cameroon and Mozambique. UN data show that Africa recorded the highest number of women and girls killed by intimate partners or family members of any region in 2023, an estimated 21,700 [18].
- **Cost-of-living crisis**, making independence unaffordable for survivors of violence, including technology-facilitated violence against women and girls (TF-VAWG). Participants described "the increasing financial cost of independence, safety and opportunity", where a survivor may have legal rights but cannot afford to relocate.
- **Cuts in international funding** for gender equality and for women's and youth organisations, including the abrupt end of USAID-funded programmes. The OECD reports that, after a decade of growth, official development assistance with gender equality objectives is now declining [37]. A participant from Somalia called on African women and women-led organisations to press for these cuts to be reversed, warning that harms such as child marriage will escalate if they go unchallenged.
- **Perpetrators inside the response system.** A participant from Cameroon reported that perpetrators of violence have worked inside GBV programmes themselves, which makes safeguarding and vetting standards a condition of every funded programme.
- **AI and automation**, which threaten female-dominated occupations while young women lack advanced digital skills.
- **Conflict-related sexual violence, abduction, trafficking and the recruitment and use of girls by armed groups** (Sudan, eastern DRC, Cabo Delgado), and a reported resurgence of child marriage and FGM in war-affected Sudan. Cases of conflict-related sexual violence verified by the UN more than doubled, from 4,617 in 2024 to 9,788 in 2025 [23].
- **Backlash against women's rights and shrinking civic space**, where women's and girls' rights are "being weaponised" through changes to language in UN processes, and African women are excluded from CSW itself by visa barriers and deprioritisation by funders.
- **Engaging men and boys.** The Issues Paper promotes engaging men and boys, including through the AU Positive Masculinity Initiative. Participants support that work, but it must not displace young women's leadership of gender equality movements or the funding for it.

- **Other emerging pressures named:** internet shutdowns (for example, the suspension of social media in Gabon since February 2026 [43]), mental health strain, period poverty, rising STI and HIV infection among adolescent girls, and social-media lifestyle pressure.

SECTION 2

Poverty and the economic empowerment of young women

02

2.1 The issue

Young women's economic exclusion is not simply a question of skills or employability. Across the consultations, participants highlighted structural barriers that prevent education, training and work from translating into secure livelihoods, assets and long-term economic independence. On current trends, 351 million women and girls will still be living in extreme poverty in 2030 [6].

Training without access to capital and markets does not create economic security. Skills and entrepreneurship programmes are often disconnected from start-up capital, employment opportunities, markets and resilient local economic sectors such as agriculture and livestock. Success is frequently measured by the number of women completing training rather than whether participants subsequently secure decent work, generate sustainable income, build assets or establish viable businesses. Training alone cannot overcome structural economic exclusion.

Collateral requirements, discriminatory laws, unequal land rights and customary tenure systems restrict access to finance. Participants from Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania and Zimbabwe highlighted how financial exclusion intersects with unequal access to land, inheritance and property, and with customary norms limiting women's financial independence. A participant from Cameroon described a real case, anonymised here, of a young woman whose access to a loan was blocked by collateral requirements, the barrier the Issues Paper itself identifies ("financial institutions usually demand collateral like land titles, the lack of it blocks women from receiving loans to improve their livelihoods "). The same logic applies more widely: a young woman in Burundi, for example, may be trained to sew, process products or sell online, yet still be unable to access credit because a bank requires a land title or a husband as guarantor, and she has neither. Similarly, when land is registered in a husband's name, a widow who has worked and depended on that land may lose it to relatives after his death.

Discriminatory laws compound these barriers. A participant from Somalia raised laws that prevent women from passing their nationality to their children, and another participant described rules requiring a husband's consent before a woman can borrow or run a business. In the CSW70 agreed conclusions of March 2026, Member States committed to “promote comprehensive legislative reviews and evaluation of national legal frameworks to identify and amend provisions that discriminate against women and girls and are inconsistent with international human rights law” [44].

Women make up 49% of the agrifood systems workforce in ‘sub-Saharan Africa’, yet in 28 of 33 countries with data men are more likely than women to own land or hold secure land rights [10]. The Maputo Protocol already commits States to promote women's access to and control over productive resources such as land and to guarantee their right to property and inheritance (Arts. 19(c) and 21) [14]. Economic empowerment therefore cannot be separated from women's rights to land, property, inheritance, nationality and independent access to finance.

Sexual harassment and coercion operate as economic gatekeepers. Unsafe workplaces and sexual harassment were identified as major barriers to young women entering, remaining in and advancing within employment and business. Participants described practices including "sex for jobs" during recruitment, harassment of recent graduates, sexual demands made of women entrepreneurs, and young women losing employment or economic opportunities after refusing sexual advances. Sexual violence and harassment are therefore not only protection concerns; they directly shape women's access to livelihoods, income and economic power. ILO Convention 190 recognises the right of everyone to a world of work free from violence and harassment, and covers workers in the informal economy [13].

Informal work leaves young women economically active but unprotected. Many young women earn their livelihoods in informal and precarious work without adequate labour protections, social security, maternity protection or effective mechanisms to challenge wage theft, exploitation and unsafe working conditions. In Africa, 88.2% of women's employment is informal, compared with 81.4% of men's [7]. Economic participation should therefore not be treated as equivalent to economic security.

Unpaid care work limits women's economic choices. The unequal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work restricts the time, mobility and flexibility young women have to pursue education, paid employment, entrepreneurship and leadership opportunities. Women perform 76.2% of all unpaid care work worldwide, and in Africa women spend about 3.4 times as much time on unpaid care work as men [11]. In Kenya alone, women perform an estimated 25.8 billion hours of unpaid domestic and care work each year [40]. Without affordable childcare, care infrastructure and greater redistribution of care responsibilities, women continue to absorb costs that remain largely invisible in economic policy.

Women entrepreneurs are over-trained and under-funded. Participants highlighted a persistent gender investment gap: young women are repeatedly offered training, mentorship and capacity-building while lacking access to the capital needed to start, sustain or expand businesses. Gendered lending practices, collateral requirements and unequal access to investment reinforce this gap. The African Development Bank estimates the financing gap facing African women across business value chains at USD 42 billion [12], and in ‘sub-Saharan Africa’ women remain 12 percentage points less likely than men to have any type of account [8]. The challenge is therefore not simply to make women "investment-ready", but to address the financial systems and investment practices that systematically disadvantage them.

Conflict, violence and climate shocks deepen existing economic inequalities. Conflict, displacement, gender-based violence and climate-related shocks disrupt education, markets, mobility, livelihoods and access to land and productive assets. These crises do not affect young women in isolation from existing inequalities; they compound them. Young women who already have limited assets, insecure land rights and restricted access to finance are less able to absorb shocks, recover livelihoods or rebuild economic independence. UN Women estimates that climate change could push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty by 2050 [28].

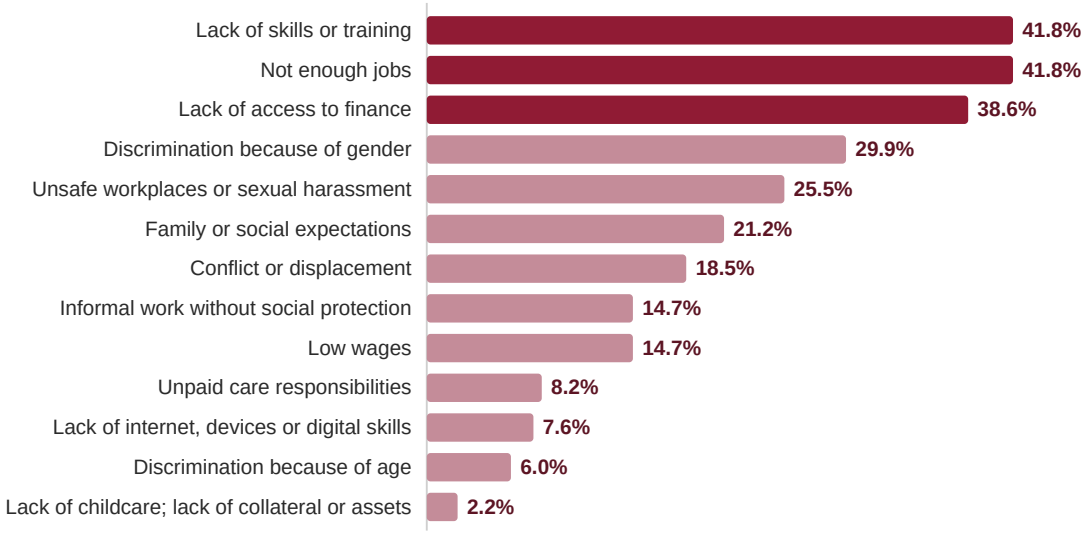
Intersectionality. These barriers show that young women's poverty cannot be addressed through skills development alone. Economic empowerment requires structural change across financial systems, land, inheritance and nationality rights, labour protections, care systems, workplace safety, social protection and access to capital and markets. The measure of success should not be how many young women are trained, but whether they gain income, assets, economic security, decent work and greater control over economic decisions.

2.2 The evidence

Figure 3

Barriers to a decent and secure income

Share of 184 survey respondents (more than one answer allowed). Leading three highlighted.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), section 2.2. The last bar combines two items at 2.2% each: lack of childcare; lack of collateral or assets.

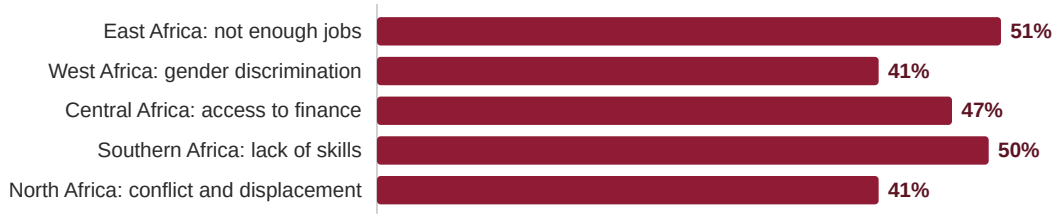
- Combined, 47.3% of respondents named unsafe workplaces or sexual harassment, gender discrimination, or both.
- Regionally, East Africa (n = 72) put "not enough jobs" first (51%); West Africa (n = 39) put gender discrimination first (41%); Central Africa (n = 30) put access to finance first (47%); Southern Africa (n = 20) put skills first (50%) and ranked unsafe workplaces third (35%); and North Africa (n = 17) put conflict and displacement first (41%).
- 82.6% named at least one economic challenge among the three biggest facing young women.
- Only 3.8% named unpaid care as a top-three challenge and 8.2% as an income barrier, yet care burdens appeared throughout open answers on who is left behind. Care is under-named, not unimportant. A Kenyan participant cited the National Gender and Equality Commission's estimate of 25.8 billion hours of unpaid domestic and care work performed by Kenyan women each year [40].
- A participant from the investment sector in Kenya reported that for every 100 dollars invested in men's businesses, about 10 dollars is invested in women's, although women's businesses perform as well. This is participant testimony rather than a verified ratio, but it is consistent with the financing gap documented by the African Development Bank [12].
- External evidence corroborates these findings: 88.2% of women's employment in Africa is informal [7]; 48% of women in sub-Saharan Africa remain unbanked and the gender gap in account ownership is 12 percentage points [8]; the gender gap in mobile money ownership in the region stands at 25% [9]; men are more likely than women to own land in 28 of 33 sub-Saharan countries with data [10]; and African women face a USD 42 billion financing gap [12].

> **"The one who controls the laws and the rules controls the outcome.**
>
> Young man, Zambia; live consultation

Figure 4

The number-one income barrier in each region

Share of respondents in each region who named the region's most-cited barrier.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), section 2.2.

From the survey and consultation

82.6%

named at least one economic challenge among the three biggest facing young women

3.8% 8.2%

named unpaid care as a top-three challenge (3.8%) and as an income barrier (8.2%). Care is under-named, not unimportant

$100 : $10

about $10 invested in women's businesses for every $100 in men's, reported by a Kenyan investment-sector participant

Participant estimate and external evidence

25.8 bn

hours of unpaid domestic and care work by Kenyan women each year, a national estimate cited by a Kenyan participant [40]

88.2%

of women's employment in Africa is informal [7]

48% 12-pt gap

of women in sub-Saharan Africa remain unbanked; the gender gap in account ownership is 12 percentage points [8]

25%

gender gap in mobile money ownership in sub-Saharan Africa [9]

28 of 33

sub-Saharan countries with data where men are more likely than women to own land [10]

USD 42 bn

financing gap faced by women-led businesses [12]

Source: section 2.2 and the references numbered there.

2.3 Youth Voices

> Legalise access to land for young women. By giving them a title deed, you give them the guarantee they need to obtain credit, finance their innovations and lift our nations out of poverty.
>
> **(Young man, 30 to 35, Chad; translated from French)**

> “Stop funding projects about women and start funding systems owned by young women. You cannot empower what you do not know and what you cannot count. You can't count me as a statistic because I'm not there on paper. You think I don't exist! … Make it mandatory that if a couple is married, whether in customary law or legally, all of these titles should be in both their names to protect the woman.
>
> **(Young woman, Zimbabwe; live consultation)**

> “In Uganda young women are not simply 'jobless'; many are working hard in invisible, unpaid, or undervalued roles without the protections and opportunities needed to build independent livelihoods.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Uganda)**

> “Everybody is starting acceleration projects and wants to train us, and we already have these skills. But when it comes to investors putting money into women's businesses, the gap is still high. There is so much money locked up in pensions. It's time for us women to demand access to those funds.
>
> **(Young woman, investment sector, Kenya; live consultation)**

> “Put care in national budgets, create safe community childcare centres, support trained childcare workers, and make childcare part of economic policy, not just family policy. If we invest in care, we invest in women's time, income, independence and leadership.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Uganda)**

2.4 Call to action

1. **Fund** young women and their organisations directly through collateral-free guarantee funds, small grants and mobile-based finance, with transparent, merit-based allocation and independent evaluation of results.
2. **Guarantee** women's equal rights to own, inherit and control land, including joint titling of land held by married couples under customary or civil law, and recognise alternative collateral and credit histories.
3. **By 2030, revise, amend or repeal** laws that deny women equal rights to inherit, to own land, to pass their nationality to their children, or to borrow and run a business without a husband's consent, in line with the CSW70 agreed conclusions.
4. **Link** every skills programme to affordable childcare, capital, buyers, apprenticeships and paid work, and judge programmes by the income, assets and decent work young women gain, not by the number of women trained.
5. **Ratify** ILO Convention 190 by 2030 where not yet ratified and ensure its full implementation, prohibit and sanction sexual coercion in recruitment, employment and business finance, protect young women from dismissal or sanction for pregnancy or maternity, extend social protection and maternity protection to informal, domestic and platform workers, and guarantee paid internships.

6 **Measure** unpaid care in national statistics and invest in community childcare linked to work and training.

7 **Open domestic capital**, including public pension funds and procurement, to women-owned enterprises, and prioritise local processing and value addition under the AfCFTA so that young women find industrial jobs.

8 **Integrate psychosocial support** into economic empowerment programmes, particularly for survivors of violence.

2.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Financing. AU Member States commit to adequately and sustainably financing women-led and youth-led organisations and enterprises from domestic resources, including through dedicated, publicly tracked budget allocations for young women's economic empowerment; to establishing accessible, collateral-free financing and guarantee mechanisms for young women aged 15 to 35, including small grants and mobile-based finance; to reserving a defined, published share of public digital-innovation and AI funding for enterprises owned by young women; to opening public procurement and domestic capital, including public pension funds, to enterprises owned by young women; and to ensuring transparent, merit-based allocation and independent evaluation of all public funds intended for women and youth.

Land, productive resources and discriminatory laws. AU Member States commit to guaranteeing in law and in practice young women's equal rights to own, inherit and control land and property, including under customary tenure and through joint titling for married couples; to revising, amending or repealing, by 2030, laws that deny women equal rights to inherit, to own land, to pass their nationality to their children, or to borrow and run a business without a husband's consent; and to recognising alternative forms of collateral and credit history so that the absence of land title is no barrier to finance.

Decent work and informality. AU Member States commit to ratifying ILO Convention 190 by 2030 where not yet ratified and ensuring its full implementation, including its coverage of the informal economy; to prohibiting and sanctioning sexual coercion in recruitment, employment and access to finance and business opportunities; to protecting young women from dismissal or sanction for pregnancy or maternity; to extending social protection, maternity protection and labour rights to young women in informal, domestic and platform work; and to guaranteeing paid internships.

Measuring outcomes. AU Member States commit to measuring women's economic empowerment programmes by disposable income, access to social protection and accumulation of savings and assets, not only by numbers of participants, and to piloting integrated economic mobility approaches through existing national programmes.

Care. AU Member States commit to recognising, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work, including by measuring it in national statistics, investing in affordable community childcare linked to employment and training, and integrating care into economic, not only social, policy.

Builds on: Maputo Protocol Arts. 13, 19(c) and 21 [14]; African Youth Charter Art. 15 [39]; AU Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion 2020 to 2030 [38]; AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade [15]; ILO Conventions 100, 189 and 190 [13] and Recommendation 202; CSW68 agreed conclusions [16]; CSW70 agreed conclusions [44]; SDG 5.4, 5.a and 8.5.

SECTION 3

Ending violence against women and girls 03

3.1 The issue

- **Femicide as a continental pandemic.** Femicide is a priority for young women; participants described it as a "pandemic". Participants from Kenya called on Member States to declare femicide and gender-based violence a national and regional emergency, noting that killings now cross borders from Kenya to Uganda, Tanzania and Mozambique. Africa had the highest number of intimate partner and family-related femicides of any region in 2023, an estimated 21,700 women and girls [18].
- **Justice systems that fail and re-traumatise survivors.** Police questioning forces survivors to relive abuse, prosecutors decline cases, perpetrators are repeatedly released on bail, and a culture of family honour and silence discourages reporting. A participant reported that a survivor in Kenya passes through an average of 11 institutions before reaching the courts. The figure comes from the Dada Collective Network's own case-tracking tool and is presented here as testimony; it has not been independently verified.
- **Harmful practices.** Child marriage and FGM persist, including in northern Kenya, where participants described girls as young as 5 to 9 being cut, some bleeding to death, in practices hidden within communities. Child marriage must be named for what it is: the sexual abuse of children. Of the more than 230 million girls and women alive today who have undergone FGM, 144 million are in Africa, and the global rate of decline would need to be 27 times faster to end the practice by 2030 [20]. Sub-Saharan Africa is over 200 years away from ending child marriage at its current pace [21].
- **Economic dependence keeps women in violence.** Survivors who leave are "abandoned to themselves without any means of subsistence".
- **Technology-facilitated violence.** Sextortion, image-based abuse, deepfakes, online pimping networks targeting young women in Goma, cyberbullying of women who post about their work, and harassment of women MPs, journalists and students. Participants also raised the exploitation of African content moderators, paid about two dollars an hour to review child sexual abuse material, and the absence of African laws that global platforms are required to respect. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has called on States to protect women against digital violence [22], and the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls recognises online platforms as a setting of violence [17].
- **Unequal criminalisation of young mothers.** Adolescent girls and young women abandoned by male partners after unintended pregnancy can face criminal prosecution for unsafe abortion, child neglect or abandonment, while paternal responsibility and economic coercion go uninvestigated.
- **Violence against women leaders, activists and human rights defenders.** Participants reported arbitrary arrest, abduction and poisoning of activists in the Great Lakes, online campaigns against women in politics, and declining tolerance for dissent in parts of the East African Community. National human rights defender laws exist in Gabon and the DRC, but such laws can contain repressive as well as protective provisions.

3.2 The evidence

- Gender-based violence was the most cited challenge in the survey (53.8%) and the first-ranked challenge in Central (n = 30), Southern (n = 20) and North Africa (n = 17); 58% of women respondents (n = 132) named it.

- Two thirds (66.8%) named at least one form of violence (GBV, harmful practices or online violence); 17.4% named harmful practices including child marriage and FGM; 10.3% named online violence and harassment.
- All four consultation rooms placed violence among their top three priorities.
- External evidence corroborates these findings: 17% of ever-partnered women in sub-Saharan Africa experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months, against 11% globally [19]; Africa recorded an estimated 21,700 intimate partner and family-related femicides in 2023, the highest of any region [18]; 144 million women and girls in Africa have undergone FGM [20]; and sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 20% of the world's child brides [21]. The AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls, adopted in February 2025, now requires ratification and domestication to become binding [17].
- These forms of violence show that ending violence against young women cannot be achieved through laws on paper or awareness campaigns alone. It requires structural change across justice and policing systems, child protection, economic support for survivors, accountability for digital platforms, and protection for women in public life. The measure of success should not be how many laws are adopted or campaigns are run, but whether young women can report violence without being re-traumatised, leave violence without losing their livelihoods, and see perpetrators held to account.

3.3 Youth Voices

> “
> I don't think women can meaningfully participate in education, in employment, or in public life when their safety is constantly threatened… Our African leaders, our African presidents need to declare femicide and gender-based violence a national and a regional emergency… You cannot marry a child… Statutory rape has to be said as it is. African countries need to stand up and say it as it is. We are marrying children, and you cannot marry children… Many young Kenyan women in particular are concentrated in precarious informal work with very limited access to decent wages, social protection and affordable credit and productive assets… Content moderators here in Kenya were forced to look at [child sexual abuse material]… and they were paid two dollars per hour… Kenya is approaching 2027 general elections… They will rape us for our vote, they will rape us for trying to get voted in, they will rape us and kill us for trying to get into the front lines of leadership… I am tired of femicide. I am tired of having to talk about data of women being murdered and children being murdered and mutilated every day. I am tired of begging these [leaders] to recognise that it is my right to live.
>
> **(Young woman, femicide movement, Kenya; live consultation; edited for length)**

> “
> For me, ending GBV is fundamental because young women cannot fully participate in education, entrepreneurship, employment, leadership, or community development if they do not first feel safe, protected, and respected.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Cameroon)**

> “
> A young woman who has been abused goes to the police station to report it, and the officers ask: how did it happen, did it hurt? These are traumatised children; the mother is wounded. How do we change the questionnaire so that survivors can be supported by the police and the justice system?
>
> **(French room record; translated)**

> “I lost my sister to FGM. She bled to death. That incident traumatised me, and I was so young. I started fighting for girls even though no one listens.
>
> **(Young woman, 18 to 24, Kenya)**

> “After the war we went back to square one: child marriage has increased, FGM has returned, along with harassment and rape.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Sudan; translated from Arabic)**

3.4 Call to action

1. **Recognise** femicide and sexual violence as a national and regional emergency, and adopt and begin implementing a costed national prevention and response plan developed with young women and survivor-led organisations, with clear institutional responsibility for who responds at each stage.
2. **Develop and adopt** a supplementary protocol to the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls establishing enforceable continental standards on technology-facilitated violence, with clear duties for digital platforms to prevent harm, act on reports, preserve evidence and cooperate with lawful investigations, while protecting freedom of expression and survivors’ rights, and ensure fair conditions for African content moderators.
3. **Ratify**, domesticate and finance the Maputo Protocol and the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls.
4. **Institutionalise survivor-led reform of** police and justice systems so that survivors are received with dignity, reduce the number of institutions a survivor must pass through, and fund multidisciplinary survivor task forces.
5. **Finance** women-led community response networks connecting survivors to shelters, health care, legal aid, emergency transport and flexible survival assistance, and pay the young women who run them.
6. **Vet everyone working in violence prevention and response, and safeguard** every funded GBV programme so that perpetrators cannot work inside it.
7. **Provide** economic support, safe housing and free legal aid for survivors so that they can leave violence.
8. **Eliminate** child sexual abuse, child marriage and FGM with enforcement that reaches communities where the practices are hidden, and protect all children from child marriage and its associated sexual exploitation and abuse.
9. **Enforce** paternal maintenance obligations and ensure gender-responsive investigations in pregnancy-related and childcare offences.
10. **Protect** women leaders, activists and human rights defenders from intimidation, arrest and violence.

3.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Femicide and emergency declarations. AU Member States commit to recognising femicide and sexual violence as a national and regional emergency, and to adopting and implementing a costed national prevention and response plan, developed with young women and survivor-led organisations, with clear institutional accountability.

Technology-facilitated VAWG. AU Member States commit to developing and adopting a supplementary protocol to the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls establishing enforceable continental standards on technology-facilitated violence, with clear duties for digital platforms to prevent harm, act on reports, preserve evidence and cooperate with lawful investigations, while protecting freedom of expression and survivors' rights, and to ensuring fair working conditions for African content moderators.

Legal frameworks and convention implementation. AU Member States commit to ratifying, domesticating and fully financing the Maputo Protocol and the AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls.

Survivor-centred justice and support. AU Member States commit to survivor-led reform of police and justice systems to prevent re-traumatisation; funding multidisciplinary survivor task forces and women-led community response networks; applying safeguarding and vetting standards to all GBV programmes and everyone working in violence prevention and response; and providing free legal aid, safe housing and economic support so survivors can leave violent situations.

Harmful practices. AU Member States commit to eliminating child sexual abuse, child marriage and female genital mutilation through strict enforcement reaching local communities where these practices are hidden, and to protecting all children from child marriage and its associated sexual exploitation and abuse.

Paternal accountability. AU Member States commit to enforcing paternal maintenance obligations and conducting gender-responsive investigations into pregnancy-related and childcare offences.

Protection of human rights defenders. AU Member States commit to protecting women leaders, activists, whistleblowers and human rights defenders from intimidation, arbitrary arrest and violence, including election-related sexual violence.

Builds on: AU Convention on Ending Violence against Women and Girls (2025) [17]; Maputo Protocol Arts. 4 and 5 [14]; ACHPR Resolution 522 on the protection of women against digital violence in Africa [22]; African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child Art. 21; CEDAW General Recommendation 35; CSW67 agreed conclusions [3]; SDG 5.2 and 5.3.

SECTION 4

Conflict, displacement and humanitarian settings

04

4.1 The issue

Conflict and displacement do not simply create new risks for young women; they intensify existing gender inequalities while placing additional responsibilities for survival, care and recovery on them. Participants described humanitarian and security systems that often respond to young women primarily as victims or beneficiaries, while giving them limited power over the decisions, resources and peace processes that shape their lives.

Peace and security should be a standing priority of the Common African Position. Conflict, insecurity and humanitarian crises are conditions that determine every other priority and SDG. Conflict was the top concern of Arabic-language survey respondents (n = 18), ranked in the top three in North (n = 17) and Central Africa (n = 30), was the first priority of the Arabic room and one of the three priorities of the French room, and was described by the Portuguese room as intensifying every other vulnerability in Cabo Delgado. As a participant from the DRC put it, "without peace nothing can be done": economic empowerment, education and health programmes cannot reach young women who cannot safely move, study or work. Treating conflict as a passing risk rather than a standing area of commitment leaves the CAP without a place for the protection and participation of young women in the countries where gender gaps are widest. The Issues Paper addresses women, peace and security mainly under leadership and as an emerging risk; young women ask that it become a standing priority area in its own right. Women, peace and security should therefore be a standing priority area of the CAP, with young women's protection and participation at its centre, as commitment 11 of the Youth Statement asks.

- **In conflict-affected areas, survival and insecurity override every other priority.** Young women take on responsibility for family survival, care and income while facing sexual violence, abduction, trafficking, forced marriage and recruitment by armed groups, and losing their education, land, documents and livelihoods. Participants from Sudan (including Darfur and Kordofan), eastern DRC (Goma, North and South Kivu), Mozambique (Cabo Delgado), Burkina Faso, Chad, north-east and north-west Nigeria, Cameroon's Anglophone and Far North regions, South Sudan and the Sahrawi refugee camps described this reality. Sudan is now the world's largest displacement and humanitarian crisis, with some 4.3 million Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries [24]. The structural problem is therefore not only women's vulnerability during conflict, but the gendered distribution of the costs of war: young women are expected to sustain households and communities while having less access to resources, protection and decision-making over humanitarian response, peace and recovery.
- **Displacement can turn legal and administrative status into a barrier to economic survival.** Refugee and internally displaced young women described language barriers, lack of identity documentation and restrictions on the right to work as obstacles to employment, education, financial services and other opportunities. These barriers intersect with gender discrimination and displacement-related poverty, making it difficult for young women to rebuild independent livelihoods. Humanitarian assistance alone cannot address these barriers where legal, documentation and labour systems themselves restrict displaced and refugee women's ability to participate economically and exercise their rights. The AU Kampala Convention obliges States Parties to protect and assist internally displaced persons, including through access to documentation [25].
- **Militarised spending priorities leave local peacebuilding under-resourced.** Participants questioned the imbalance between resources directed towards conflict and security responses and those reaching local peacebuilding, prevention and community-led initiatives. One participant from the DRC illustrated this perceived imbalance by describing governments as spending "100 dollars on war" for every "0.1 dollar" reaching local peacebuilders. While this reflects participant testimony rather than a verified spending ratio, it captures a broader concern raised in the consultations: those closest to preventing violence and sustaining peace often operate with a fraction of the resources available to militarised responses. This is particularly significant for young women and women-led organisations, which frequently undertake community-level peacebuilding and humanitarian work while remaining underfunded and excluded from decisions over how peace and security resources are allocated. The AU Continental Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security and UN Security Council resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security both call for women's and young people's participation in peace processes [26, 27].

- **Impunity for conflict-related sexual violence reproduces insecurity.** Participants highlighted the continued lack of accountability for conflict-related sexual violence, including in Sudan and the DRC. Where perpetrators are not investigated or held accountable, violence against women becomes embedded within wider systems of impunity. UN-verified cases of conflict-related sexual violence more than doubled between 2024 and 2025 [23]. Addressing conflict-related sexual violence therefore requires more than emergency protection and survivor services. It requires accountability, survivor-centred justice, functioning legal and protection mechanisms, and action against the political and military structures that enable violations to continue without consequence.
- **Young women carry a disproportionate share** of the social and economic costs of conflict while remaining under-represented in decisions about humanitarian response, security, peacebuilding and reconstruction. Responses must therefore move beyond treating young women only as vulnerable populations and recognise them as rights-holders, economic actors and political actors whose participation and leadership are essential to decisions about protection, peace and recovery.

4.2 The evidence

- Conflict, displacement and insecurity was the top challenge in the Arabic-language survey (12 of 18 respondents, 67%) and ranked in the top three in North Africa (53%, n = 17) and Central Africa (37%, n = 30).
- 18.5% of all respondents (n = 184) named conflict or displacement as a barrier to decent income, rising to 41% in North Africa (n = 17), where it ranked first.
- 13.6% of survey respondents identified as refugee, displaced or migrant youth.
- Peace and security was the first priority of the Arabic room and one of three priorities of the French room, and the Portuguese room named the conflict in Cabo Delgado as intensifying every other vulnerability.
- External evidence corroborates these findings: the UN verified 9,788 cases of conflict-related sexual violence in 2025, compared with 4,617 in 2024 [23]; and UNHCR describes Sudan as the world's largest displacement crisis, with 4.3 million Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries [24].

4.3 Youth Voices

> “
> Girls who were abducted during the war are being sold as commodities in neighbouring countries or within the country itself.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Sudan; translated from Arabic)**

> “
> In conflict-affected regions such as Cabo Delgado, girls have been abducted and subjected to marriage, sexual slavery and other forms of exploitation by armed groups… an often overlooked dimension of the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Mozambique)**

> “
> In the DRC, young women have never known peace after three decades of war of aggression. Stopping the violence is the ultimate priority, because it is what will open access to education, health and employment.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, DRC; translated from French)**

> “War has added new responsibilities to displaced and refugee women, who become focused on the survival of their families, the physical and psychological care of themselves and their families, and on seeking economic stability, all while mitigating the risks of being abused, injured or killed.
>
> **(Arabic room record, Sudan; translated)**

> “It is the politicians who make war and we who suffer the consequences: no home, no work, we lose our property and the people dear to us.
>
> **(Young woman, 18 to 24, refugee in Uganda; translated from French)**

4.4 Call to action

1. **Recognise** women, peace and security as a standing priority area of the Common African Position, with young women's protection and participation at its centre, and ensure that National Action Plans bridge the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas.
2. **Treat** peace and security as a precondition for any empowerment programme, and institutionalise young women's participation in peace negotiations, mediation and recovery, with documentation of their contribution.
3. **Protect** young women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence, trafficking, abduction and recruitment by armed groups, and end impunity by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators and publishing each year aggregate numbers of cases investigated, prosecuted and resulting in convictions, while protecting survivors’ confidentiality and safety.
4. **Guarantee** psychosocial support and access to sexual and reproductive health in humanitarian settings.
5. **Ensure** continuity of education for displaced and refugee girls.
6. **Provide** livelihood recovery for displaced women and survivors through direct, flexible grants rather than conventional loans, with vocational training, market access and protection built into programme design.
7. **Ratify** and domesticate the Kampala Convention, issue identity documents, and recognise the right of refugee and displaced women to work and to financial services.
8. **Rebalance** public spending towards local peacebuilding by allocating and publishing a defined share of peace and security spending for initiatives led by young women.

4.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Standing priority. AU Member States commit to recognising women, peace and security as a standing priority area of the Common African Position, with young women's protection and participation at its centre, and to ensuring that National Action Plans bridge the women, peace and security and youth, peace and security agendas.

Protection in conflict settings. AU Member States commit to protecting young women and girls in conflict-affected areas from sexual violence, trafficking, abduction and recruitment by armed groups, and to ending impunity by investigating and prosecuting perpetrators and publishing each year aggregate numbers of cases investigated, prosecuted and resulting in convictions, while protecting survivors' confidentiality and safety.

Essential services and documentation. AU Member States commit to ensuring continuity of education, psychosocial support and accessible sexual and reproductive health services in humanitarian settings, while ratifying and domesticating the Kampala Convention and guaranteeing displaced women and refugees their right to identity documents, legal work and financial services.

Livelihoods and peacebuilding. AU Member States commit to providing flexible, collateral-free grant funding for displaced women entrepreneurs and allocating and publishing a defined share of peace and security spending to directly finance local peacebuilding led by young women.

Participation in peace processes. AU Member States commit to institutionalising young women's participation in peace negotiations, mediation and recovery, with documentation of their contribution.

Builds on: Maputo Protocol Arts. 10 and 11 [14]; AU Kampala Convention [25]; AU Continental Results Framework on Women, Peace and Security [26]; UNSCR 1325 and 2250 [27].

SECTION 5

Climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction 05

The review theme of CSW71 is climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes, which evaluates progress on the CSW66 agreed conclusions [29]. This section sets out what young women told us about that theme.

5.1 The issue

- **Climate is a driver** of livelihood loss, displacement, food insecurity, school dropout, GBV and health risk. Young women experience climate change through its effects on income, safety and services, not as a separate issue. UN Women projects that, in a worst-case scenario, climate change may push up to 158 million more women and girls into poverty and 236 million more into food insecurity by 2050 [28].
- **Climate vulnerability is a land-rights and finance problem.** Women do much of the farm work but lack title and credit to adapt. Climate-adaptation finance that requires collateral or land title will miss them. Women make up 49% of the agrifood workforce in sub-Saharan Africa but are less likely than men to own land in most countries with data [10].
- **Climate shocks increase VAWG and child sexual abuse** through displacement, longer journeys for water and firewood, and families' use of early marriage as a coping strategy. The CSW66 agreed conclusions recognise these links and call for gender-responsive climate and disaster risk reduction policies [29].
- **African and local organisations are left out of climate action and disaster risk management.** Most long-term funding goes to organisations in the global North that then sub-grant to African women-led organisations, and rural organisations lose funding

because of complex fiscal procedures. East Africa's predicted El Niño was given as an example of disaster risk funding that bypasses local women's organisations.

5.2 The evidence

- Only 6.0% of survey respondents named climate change as a top-three challenge, but climate appeared throughout open answers and the live consultation as a cause of the challenges they did rank highly (unemployment, poverty, conflict and GBV). The low ranking signals that young women meet climate change through its effects, not that it is unimportant.
- Participants described drought and floods in the Sahel and South Sudan, extreme heat and water scarcity in the Sahrawi refugee camps, and erratic rainfall affecting rain-fed agriculture in Rwanda.
- The English room identified African women-led organisations working on climate action and disaster risk reduction among those "left behind".
- External evidence corroborates these findings: up to 158 million more women and girls could be pushed into poverty by climate change by 2050 [28]; and the AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy (2022–2032) identifies gender and social inclusion as a cross-cutting priority for Africa's climate response [30].

5.3 Youth Voices

> “
> Climate change and environmental shocks clearly derail the lives of people in Maroua [in the Sahel]. The very dry climate causes drought, while heavy rains cause floods, population displacement and food crisis, and damage schools and health centres. GBV is exacerbated when partners move to other communities in search of food, leaving wives and children at the mercy of predators.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Cameroon)**

> “
> The camps are in a very harsh desert environment, with summer temperatures above 50 degrees Celsius and severe water scarcity. Women and young women bear the greatest burden of managing daily life and basic household needs under these conditions.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Sahrawi refugee camps; translated from Arabic)**

> “
> Rwanda's economy relies heavily on rain-fed agriculture, where a significant portion of the rural female workforce is concentrated. Young women in rural areas are disproportionately affected by soil erosion, erratic rainfall and droughts because they often lack secure land tenure rights and financial resources to adapt.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Rwanda)**

> “
> African women-led organisations are always a day late and a dollar short. They should not wait for us to face the havoc and then use those statistics to write reports on how they can empower us, and sub-grant us less than what is required to prevent it in the first place.
>
> **(Young woman, East Africa; live consultation)**

5.4 Call to action

1. **Connect** disaster risk and economic empowerment, in line with the Issues Paper's call for gender criteria in climate funds.
2. **Make** adaptation finance reachable by women farmers without collateral or land title, and secure women's land rights as a climate adaptation measure.
3. **Channel** climate and disaster risk reduction funding directly to African women-led and youth-led organisations, with long-term core funding rather than sub-grants, and finance prevention before disasters strike.
4. **Address** the links between climate shocks, displacement, child marriage and GBV in climate and humanitarian plans.
5. **Support** youth-led green enterprise, including solar, energy and climate-smart agriculture solutions.

5.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Land rights and adaptation finance. AU Member States commit to integrating women's land and property rights into national climate strategies and ensuring climate adaptation finance is accessible to women farmers without requiring land titles or traditional collateral.

Direct funding for local organisations. AU Member States commit to channelling climate and disaster risk reduction funding directly to African women-led and youth-led organisations through long-term core grants rather than complex sub-granting structures.

Green enterprise and GBV links. AU Member States commit to supporting youth-led green enterprises and addressing the heightened risks of gender-based violence and child marriage linked to climate-induced displacement.

Builds on: CSW66 agreed conclusions [29]; Maputo Protocol Art. 18 [14]; AU Climate Change and Resilient Development Strategy [30]; Sendai Framework; UNFCCC Gender Action Plan.

SECTION 6

Inclusive digital transformation and artificial intelligence 06

6.1 The issue

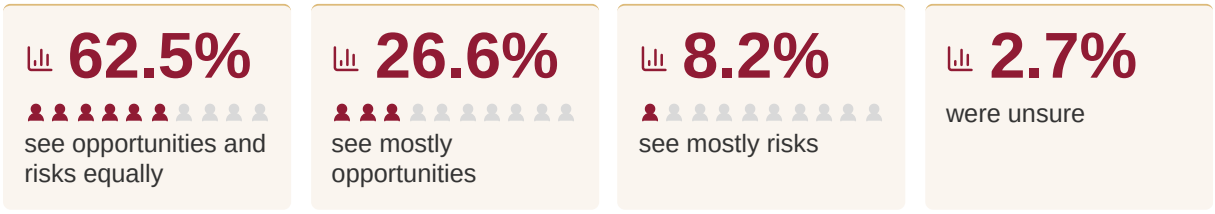
- **Connectivity alone is not inclusion.** Digital transformation and artificial intelligence can expand access to education, markets, financial services and entrepreneurship, and the AU Digital Transformation Strategy and African Digital Compact place inclusive digital development among continental priorities [1, 5]. Meaningful inclusion, however, requires affordable devices and data, reliable electricity, relevant content, accessible design, practical skills, safety and the ability to convert digital participation into economic and social opportunities. The CSW67 agreed conclusions recognise affordability, language, training, local content and disability accessibility as dimensions of quality access [3].

- **Access remains unequal.** ITU figures for 2024 indicate that 31% of women in Africa used the internet, compared with 43% of men [2]. Young women in rural, refugee and conflict-affected settings face compounded barriers relating to infrastructure, mobility and cost [3].
- **Services built for the connected exclude the rest.** Digital services designed for advanced literacy, dominant languages and uninterrupted connectivity risk excluding informal-sector entrepreneurs, Indigenous women and girls, and women with disabilities. Policy and investment should therefore support local-language, voice-enabled, low-literacy, offline-capable and accessible services [3].
- **Women are users, not yet owners.** Women face unequal opportunities to design, develop and own technologies, including AI systems. Algorithmic discrimination, automation-related changes to work, online gender-based violence, insecure digital financial services and restrictions on connectivity can further undermine participation. The AU Continental AI Strategy provides a basis for equitable and responsible AI governance [4], and the CSW67 agreed conclusions call for action on technology-facilitated violence [3]. These challenges are particularly acute for young women with disabilities, Indigenous women and girls, refugees, internally displaced persons, and women living in rural and conflict-affected communities.
- **The objective must change.** Digital transformation is not only a technological priority but an economic inclusion, gender equality, human rights and development imperative. The policy objective must shift from counting women connected or trained to ensuring that women can safely learn, earn, innovate, own digital enterprises and influence technological decisions.

6.2 The evidence

- Asked whether technology and AI currently create more opportunities or more risks for young women, 62.5% of survey respondents (n = 184) said both equally, 26.6% mostly opportunities, 8.2% mostly risks and 2.7% were unsure. Young women see technology as a route to income and a source of harm at the same time.
- Integrated digital opportunity platforms were among the most frequently proposed innovations and were proposed in all four survey languages. In a keyword review of answers to the innovation question (not a full coding exercise), 55 of 184 respondents proposed a digital platform: 37 of 129 in English, 11 of 31 in French, 4 of 18 in Arabic and 3 of 6 in Portuguese.
- A participant from Equatorial Guinea, national ambassador for Mission ShakthiSAT, a programme that trains girls in space technology, described bringing 90 girls from schools in Malabo into its fully virtual training. Their participation was constrained by lack of devices, connectivity and transport to a connected venue. This is a consultation account rather than an independent programme evaluation.
- External evidence corroborates the digital gender divide: ITU reports 2024 internet-use rates of 31% for African women and 43% for African men [2]. The CSW67 agreed conclusions recognise intersecting digital barriers in poverty, rural settings and situations of vulnerability [3].

Do technology and AI currently create more opportunities or more risks for young women? (n = 184)



6.3 Youth Voices

> “Many women become casualties of systems that were built without their input, without their needs in mind, and, worse, without their data.
>
> **(Young woman, 18 to 24, Nigeria)**

> “Digital inclusion is no longer a luxury: it is an essential condition for African women's economic autonomy, safety and leadership. And let us measure this commitment not by the number of women connected or trained, but by the number of lives truly transformed.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Côte d'Ivoire; translated from French)**

> “Africa is lagging behind once again, yet Africa is feeding the digital economy. We should invest in women's ownership of the digital economy: businesses, platforms, creative work and routes to customers.
>
> **(Young woman, Kenya; live consultation)**

6.4 Call to action

1. **Guarantee** meaningful and affordable access: expand reliable electricity, affordable connectivity, suitable devices and accessible infrastructure, prioritising rural, Indigenous, refugee, displaced and conflict-affected communities and persons with disabilities.

2. **Invest** in inclusive capabilities: integrate practical digital literacy, AI literacy, online safety and digital entrepreneurship into formal and non-formal education, with programmes adapted to different literacy levels, languages, abilities and economic realities.

3. **Translate** digital inclusion into economic opportunity: support young women, particularly in informal and rural economies, to use digital technologies to increase productivity, reach customers, access financial services, take part in digital trade and generate sustainable income.

4. **Finance** women-led and youth-led technological innovation through dedicated mechanisms with transparent funding windows, incubation programmes, public procurement and market access that support women as creators, developers, entrepreneurs and owners of digital technologies and AI solutions.

5. **Make** digital participation safe: improve data protection, digital financial consumer safeguards and accessible, survivor-centred responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence, prohibit in law arbitrary internet shutdowns and restrictions, publish the legal basis and duration of every restriction, and protect freedom of expression.

6. **Ensure** inclusive and responsible AI governance: guarantee meaningful participation by young women, including those from Indigenous and marginalised communities, in the design, deployment, regulation and oversight of AI systems; address discriminatory outcomes; and support workers affected by technological transitions.

7. **Support** locally relevant and accessible innovation: incentivise multilingual, voice-first, low-literacy, disability-accessible and offline-capable solutions developed with the women who will use them.

8. **Measure** results: adopt financed action plans and publish progress on access, skills, safety, earnings, enterprise ownership and participation, using disaggregated data where safe and appropriate.

6.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Universal and meaningful digital inclusion. AU Member States commit to progressively ensuring affordable, safe and meaningful digital access for young women and girls, including connectivity, electricity, appropriate devices, accessible services and practical digital and AI literacy, giving priority to rural and remote areas, Indigenous communities, displacement and conflict settings, and persons with disabilities.

Economic empowerment and digital ownership. AU Member States commit to dedicated financing, entrepreneurship support, skills development, market access and procurement opportunities that enable young women to create, lead and own digital and AI enterprises, and to assessing success through income, productivity, decent work, business growth and economic independence, including in the informal economy.

Safety, rights and inclusive governance. AU Member States commit to effective privacy and data protection safeguards, action against technology-facilitated gender-based violence, responsible AI governance and a legal prohibition of arbitrary internet shutdowns and restrictions, with the legal basis and duration of every restriction published, with young women, Indigenous communities, persons with disabilities and youth-led organisations participating meaningfully in policy design and oversight.

Financing and accountability. AU Member States commit to costed national action plans, transparent resource allocation, measurable targets and regular public reporting, supporting youth-led and women-led organisations as delivery and independent accountability partners, and assessing progress by changes in women's economic agency, safety, ownership and leadership, not solely by connectivity or training totals.

Builds on: AU Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa (2020–2030) [1]; AU Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy (2024) [4]; African Digital Compact [5]; AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection (Malabo Convention); CSW67 agreed conclusions [3].



62.5%

see opportunities and risks equally

SECTION 7

Education, health and sexual and reproductive health and rights 07

7.1 The issue

Education and health are the foundation of economic empowerment rather than separate sectors. Early pregnancy, child marriage and school dropout are among the most cited reasons why young women are left behind economically. Girls are often expected to marry after secondary school, families may sacrifice a girl's education for her brother's, and schools prepare girls to pass examinations rather than to earn a living. Sub-Saharan Africa had more children and youth out of school than any other region, 98 million in 2021, and was the only region where that number was still rising [31]. Worldwide, 273 million children, adolescents and youth were out of school in 2024, a number that has grown over the past seven years, and three quarters of them live in sub-Saharan Africa or Central and Southern Asia [45].

- **School retention is the first economic intervention:** free, safe, quality secondary education with a market-linked skill, no exclusion for pregnancy, marriage, poverty, disability or conflict, and support for fees, uniforms, transport and menstrual products.
- **Access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information**, including in schools and refugee settings. A respondent from Kenya cited the age at which young people can consent to these services on their own, without a parent, as a barrier to using them. The Maputo Protocol guarantees women's right to health, including sexual and reproductive health (Art. 14) [14].
- **HIV and STIs:** rising STI rates among adolescent girls and young women linked to poverty and transactional relationships, and discrimination against young women living with HIV in employment. Around 3,300 adolescent girls and young women in sub-Saharan Africa acquire HIV every week, and women and girls account for about two in every three new infections in the region [32].
- **Menstrual health and period poverty** as a cause of school absence and a matter of dignity.
- **Mental health and psychosocial support**, particularly for survivors and young women in conflict, integrated with economic programmes.

7.2 The evidence

- 13.6% of respondents named lack of sexual and reproductive health services as a top challenge, and 9.8% unequal access to education and skills.
- Early pregnancy and child marriage were the leading challenges named by the Portuguese room (Mozambique) and appeared in open answers from Nigeria, Zambia, Ghana, Eswatini, Tanzania and South Sudan (see also section 1.3).
- External evidence corroborates these findings: sub-Saharan Africa has 98 million children and youth out of school (2021) [31]; about 3,300 adolescent girls and young women in the region acquire HIV each week [32]; and the region is over 200 years away from ending child marriage at current rates [21].

> **“Our voices should not have to cross borders through others to be heard.**
>
> English room

7.3 Youth Voices

> Education opens the door, but financial inclusion hands them the keys.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Nigeria)**

> Unemployment, because some of us are school drop-outs due to the lack of money or teenage pregnancy. This makes it harder for us to find jobs since we don't have the right qualifications.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Eswatini)**

> African leaders should consider schools as transition readiness. Education should prepare us not only to pass examinations but also to navigate what happens after them: career guidance, mentorship, and how to use our skills to earn a living.
>
> **(Young woman, student, Tanzania; live consultation)**

> Most of these policies are made without young women… Most African homes will sell their girl child to cater for their boy child's education, which is alarming. We should tell the girl to know her worth is beyond marriage and beyond any institution.
>
> **(Young man, Ghana; live consultation)**

> Guarantee universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and education for all young women and girls, with dedicated funding, accountability mechanisms, and youth-led monitoring.
>
> **(Young man, 18 to 24, Kenya)**

7.4 Call to action

1. **Guarantee** free, safe, quality secondary education for every girl, with re-entry for pregnant girls and young mothers, support for fees, transport and menstrual products, and removal of taxes on menstrual products.
2. **Make** schools "transition-ready" through career guidance, mentorship, entrepreneurship and market-linked skills.
3. **Protect domestic funding for maternal, sexual and reproductive health in line with the Abuja Declaration; expand** youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information, including contraception, in schools, health facilities and humanitarian settings; and remove legal and policy barriers, including parental or spousal consent requirements that unduly restrict access to essential services.
4. **End** discrimination against young women living with HIV in employment.

5 **Finance mental health services co-designed with young women, and integrate** mental health and psychosocial support into education, protection and economic programmes.

7.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Secondary education and retention. AU Member States commit to guaranteeing free, safe and quality secondary education for all girls, with mandatory re-entry policies for pregnant girls and young mothers, alongside support for fees, transport and menstrual health products and the removal of taxes on menstrual products.

Transition to work. AU Member States commit to making school curricula market-relevant by embedding career guidance, mentorship, digital skills and entrepreneurship training.

Health and workplace protection. AU Member States commit to protecting domestic funding for maternal, sexual and reproductive health in line with the Abuja Declaration; expanding youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information, including contraception, and removing legal and policy barriers, including parental or spousal consent requirements that unduly restrict access to essential services; prohibiting employment discrimination against young women living with HIV; and financing mental health services co-designed with young women.

Builds on: Maputo Protocol Arts. 12 and 14 [14]; African Youth Charter Arts. 13, 16 and 23 [39]; CARMMA; ICPD Programme of Action; SDG 3.7, 4.1 and 5.6.

SECTION 8

Leadership, participation and civic space 08

8.1 The issue

Presence does not equal influence. Young women described:

- **Tokenism.** "Often, young people participating in policy is just symbolic and beneficial for the policymaker's reputation and public relations" (Arabic room, Morocco). Participants asked to move "from abstract consultation to concrete actions and accountability".
- **Unpaid participation and economic dependence.** Youth participation is often voluntary or supported by modest stipends, which excludes those who cannot afford transport, accommodation or time. Unpaid activism also discourages the next generation from community careers.
- **Fear and retaliation.** Arrests, abductions and intimidation of young activists, restrictive laws on civil society (participants cited Uganda's Protection of Sovereignty Act [42]), and sexual violence linked to elections. More than 80% of people in sub-Saharan Africa live in countries where civic space is rated "repressed" or "closed" [35].
- **Class and connections.** Young people invited to high-level spaces are disproportionately from connected, elite backgrounds, and opportunities flow to those with political affiliations.
- **Patriarchal norms.** The Lingala saying from the DRC, "Muasi atongaka mboka te" ("a woman does not build a nation"), describes the attitude young women confront. Men make laws "for themselves", without lived experience of what young women face. Women hold 27.1% of parliamentary seats in sub-Saharan Africa [33], and women aged 30 or under make up just 1.2% of parliamentarians worldwide [34].

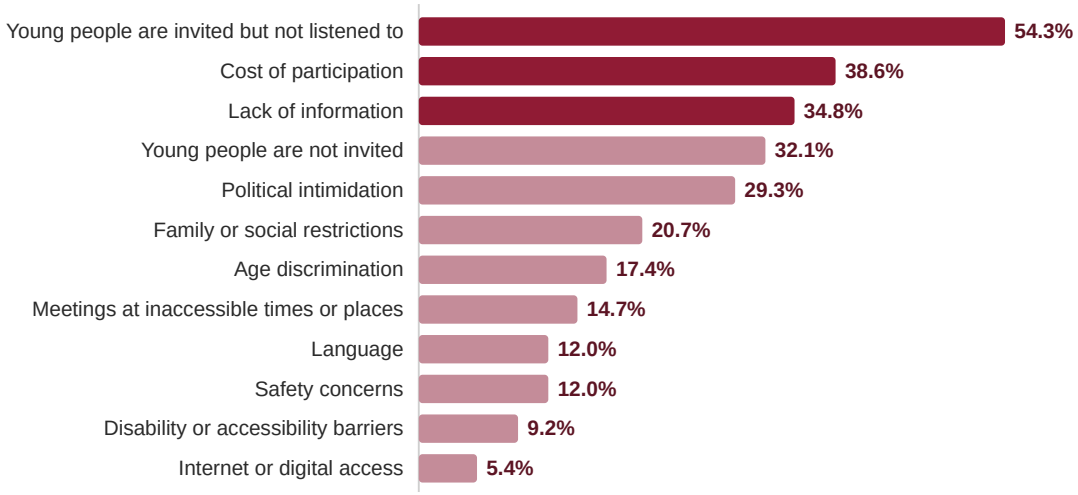
- **Exclusion from global processes.** Visa refusals and executive orders keep African young women from attending CSW, and progressive language agreed in Africa can be diluted once negotiations reach New York.
- **Linguistic and ethnic diversity** within countries (Morocco was cited) and inaccessible venues for persons with disabilities.
- **Exclusion of Sahrawi young women** from AU youth activities was raised by a respondent from the camps, who asked that they be enabled to attend relevant AU activities and trainings.

8.2 The evidence

Figure 5

What most prevents young women from participating in decisions

Share of 184 survey respondents; each chose up to three. Leading three highlighted.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), section 8.2.

75.5%
cited not being invited, or not being listened to when they are

61.4%
cited the cost of participating or lack of information

39.1%
cited political intimidation or safety

Combined, 75.5% cited not being invited, or not being listened to when they are, among the main barriers; 61.4% cited the cost of participating or lack of information; and 39.1% cited political intimidation or safety. In the Arabic survey (n = 18), family and social restrictions (44%), language (39%) and political intimidation (39%) ranked highest, showing that barriers differ by context.

These answers should be read alongside a separate question. Asked whether young people like them have a meaningful say in decisions that affect their future, 52.2% of respondents said yes, 31.5% sometimes, and 16.3% rarely or never. Many respondents are activists and youth leaders (47.8%), who are more likely than most young women to be in the room. The two answers together show the gap this report is about: young people are being invited, but are not yet heard, and their contributions are not traceable to decisions.

External evidence corroborates these findings: women hold 27.1% of parliamentary seats in sub-Saharan Africa (1 January 2026) [33]; only 2.8% of the world's parliamentarians are aged 30 or under, and young women aged 30 or under just 1.2% [34]; and over 80% of people in sub-Saharan Africa live in countries with repressed or closed civic space [35].

8.3 Youth Voices

> Give power, economic and policy, to women in leading their fate, beyond just amplifying their voices.
>
> **(Arabic room, agreed single commitment)**

> Do not just invite us, invest in us and count us. Nothing for us without us.
>
> **(Young woman, 18 to 24, Rwanda)**

> Young women should not only be consulted; they should be paid, contracted and given meaningful roles in the systems they are helping to shape.
>
> **(Young woman, 25 to 29, Kenya)**

> It's not about us sitting at this round table, having this consultation, writing great policies. What about the implementation? Some of these laws, even where they are implemented, are implemented in urban areas. What happens to those in rural areas who face double the issues we are discussing?
>
> **(Young woman, northern Nigeria; live consultation)**

> If I still depend on my parents and I come from a far village, I will need transport and accommodation to participate. And each time you speak up, you have to worry whether you will even get home by the end of the day.
>
> **(Young woman, Uganda; live consultation)**

> We should be able to trace a young woman's contribution through to the decision, and be told when it was rejected and why.
>
> **(Young woman, Kenya; live consultation)**

> Our stories are being told by people who are not young women, who are not girls, who do not live our realities. It is creating an erasure of data from our lived experiences, data that matters because it is what we breathe and live every single day.
>
> **(Young woman, lawyer, Kenya; live consultation)**

> Once we come up with a Common African Position, when it gets to New York the tune changes. This waters down what we developed here as Africa about what is affecting our girls and young women.
>
> **(Young woman, lawyer, Kenya; live consultation)**

> “The one who controls the laws and the rules controls the outcome.
>
> **(Young man, Zambia; live consultation)**

> “Our voices should not have to cross borders through others to be heard.
>
> **(English room)**

8.4 Call to action

1. **Adopt** legally binding representation quotas of at least 35% for young people aged 15–35, with half reserved for young women, in national delegations, budget oversight committees and AfCFTA trade planning boards, and enforce existing rules such as Kenya’s constitutional two-thirds gender rule [41]. Survey respondents proposed quotas of 30% to 50%; the Youth Statement settled on a target of at least 35% representation of young people aged 15–35, half of them young women.
2. **Include** young women negotiators on national CSW delegations and in the Africa Group’s negotiating team, with a mandate to defend the language of the Common African Position in full at CSW71, and make the AU youth consultation a standing mechanism feeding directly into every CAP.
3. **Resource and remunerate** youth participation, covering transport, accommodation, connectivity, interpretation and accessibility.
4. Appoint young women as special envoys and advisers at national, regional and continental levels.
5. **Make** youth input traceable: report back on which recommendations were adopted, which were rejected, and why.
6. **Establish** an African Protection Mechanism for Women in Political and Public Life under the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights’ Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa. It would monitor, give early warning of and respond rapidly to threats, political violence and harassment against women leaders, parliamentarians, candidates, human rights defenders and civic activists.
7. **Enforce** zero tolerance and criminal penalties for election-related violence and harassment against women, including digital harassment, image-based abuse and physical threats, and make candidate safety a mandatory criterion in AU election observation.
8. **Protect** young women activists, leaders, politicians, whistleblowers, journalists and human rights defenders in law; protect the right to peaceful protest and assembly and investigate police violence against young women; release women detained solely for peaceful political or civic engagement; and repeal restrictive civic-space laws that disproportionately penalise women’s public action and community organising.
9. **Create** national and continental mechanisms to identify youth-led solutions from the start and scale them across borders, with technical support, partnerships and access to regional markets through the AfCFTA.

10 **Hold** digital platforms accountable for targeted online abuse and deepfakes aimed at silencing women in public life, with rapid takedown and transparent reporting.

11 **Track** incidents of violence against women in political and public life, and the time states take to respond, in a public continental index reported each year to the AU Assembly.

12 **Guarantee** rapid-response protection for women peacebuilders and political leaders in conflict, post-conflict and authoritarian settings where state protection is compromised.

13 **Establish** women-led community committees to monitor policy and economic decisions.

14 **Defend** agreed language on gender equality in CSW negotiations, secure visa facilitation for African women and youth delegates to CSW and other UN processes, and push for CSW preparatory and side events to be held in Africa.

8.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Representation quotas. AU Member States commit to establishing binding representation quotas of at least 35% for young people aged 15–35, with half reserved for young women, across national delegations (including every national CSW delegation and the Africa Group's negotiating team), policy-making bodies, trade boards and budget oversight committees, and to appointing young women as special envoys and advisers at national, regional and continental levels.

Resourced participation. AU Member States commit to fully resourcing youth participation by covering travel, accommodation, interpretation and accessibility costs, ensuring young women negotiators are included in CSW and AU delegations, and making the AU youth consultation a standing mechanism that feeds into every Common African Position.

African Protection Mechanism for Women in Political and Public Life. AU Member States commit to establishing an African Protection Mechanism for Women in Political and Public Life under the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights' Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women in Africa. The mechanism will monitor, give early warning of and respond rapidly to threats, political violence and harassment against women leaders, parliamentarians, candidates, human rights defenders and civic activists, including in conflict, post-conflict and authoritarian settings.

Electoral safety. AU Member States commit to zero-tolerance policies and criminal penalties for election-related violence and harassment against women, including digital harassment, image-based abuse and physical threats, and to making candidate safety a mandatory criterion in AU election observation and monitoring.

Legal protection and civic space. AU Member States commit to enacting and enforcing legal protections for women human rights defenders, whistleblowers and journalists; to protecting the right to peaceful protest and assembly and investigating police violence against young women; to releasing women detained solely for peaceful political or civic engagement; and to repealing restrictive civic-space legislation that disproportionately penalises women's public action and community organising.

Youth-led solutions and market access. AU Member States commit to creating national and continental mechanisms to identify youth-led solutions from the start and scale them across borders, with technical support, partnerships and access to regional markets through the AfCFTA.

Digital political violence. AU Member States commit to holding digital platforms accountable for targeted online abuse and deepfakes aimed at silencing women in public life, through rapid takedown mechanisms and transparent reporting on violence against African women politicians and activists.

Data and reporting. AU Member States commit to maintaining a public, continent-wide index of incidents of violence, threat levels and state response times concerning women in political and public life, with annual reporting to the AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government.

Visa access. AU Member States commit to facilitating visa access for African women and youth delegates to global summits.

Builds on: Maputo Protocol Art. 9 [14]; African Youth Charter Art. 11 [39]; ACHPR Resolution 522 on the protection of women against digital violence in Africa [22]; UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders; Agenda 2063 Aspiration 6; UNSCR 2250 [27]; CSW65 agreed conclusions; SDG 5.5 and 16.7.

SECTION 9

Financing and accountability

09

9.1 The issue

- **Dependence on external funding.** Civil society is "left to itself"; in parts of Central Africa political parties receive parliamentary budgets while civil society does not. When USAID-funded programmes (for example, a digital skills initiative for women in Côte d'Ivoire) were cut, work stopped overnight. The English room asked what African self-financing looks like and called for African resource mobilisation. The OECD reports that official development assistance with gender equality objectives, after rising for a decade, is now declining [37].
- **Money not reaching young women.** Funds and women's centres are poorly publicised and allocated by managers "to whoever they want, without known criteria". Rural organisations lose funding because of complex fiscal procedures. Of 105 countries with data, only 26% have comprehensive systems to track budget allocations for gender equality [36].
- **Funding the wrong thing.** "Stop funding institutions but fund the actual women" (English room). Young women asked for direct, flexible, small grants, not only loans, and for funds managed with the participation of young women themselves.

On accountability, young people trust public, youth-led monitoring more than government self-reporting, and asked that failures be reported as well as achievements.

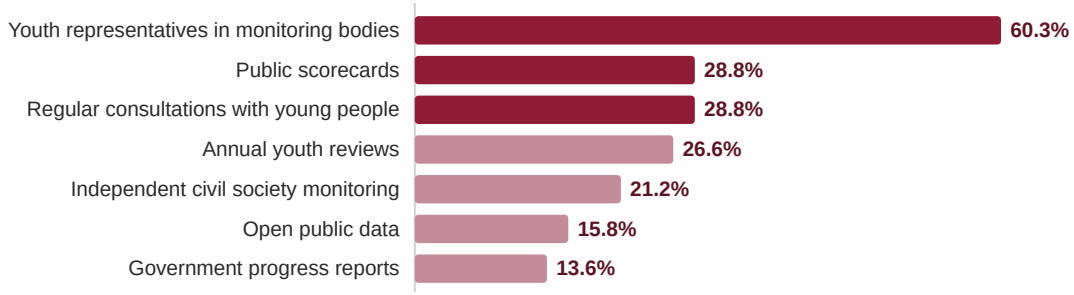
> **"It is not enough to listen to young people. Leaders must share power, mobilise resources and be accountable for their commitments.**
>
> Portuguese room report to plenary

9.2 The evidence

Figure 6

How young people say delivery of commitments should be checked

Share of 184 survey respondents; each chose up to three. Leading three highlighted.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), section 9.2.

- 73.9% chose at least one youth-led option (youth representatives or annual youth reviews), and 53.8% chose at least one public transparency option (scorecards, open data or government reports). Government self-reporting was the least chosen, a clear signal about trust.
- External evidence corroborates these findings: only 26% of countries with data have comprehensive systems to track gender equality allocations (SDG indicator 5.c.1) [36], and official development assistance for gender equality is falling [37].

Accountability mechanisms proposed by the rooms:

- **English room:** a public, youth-led African commitments tracker recording, for every promise, the action taken, the responsible institution, the budget, the deadline and the result, including failures.
- **Arabic room:** women-led review committees for policies and actions affecting women and girls, also used for needs assessment and recommendations.
- **French room:** public digital portals where governments present their commitments and the use of funds for women and girls; a country-by-country comparison tool modelled on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance; publication of citizen initiatives on official channels (citing Burkina Faso); and published activity reports from parliamentarians, with civil society acting as "the police of democracy".
- **Portuguese room:** a participatory gender equality monitoring mechanism of Member States, the AU, civil society and youth representatives, publishing regular reports on actions, resources allocated and results, with attention to rural, conflict-affected and underserved communities.
- **Survey proposals:** an annual scorecard reviewed by young women; reporting at every AU summit; a named minister accountable for girls' education targets; and a sunset clause under which laws that discriminate against women lapse within 24 months unless parliaments vote openly to retain them.

9.3 Youth Voices

> “We have sat in air-conditioned rooms with bottled water and notepads, and called it progress while nothing moved. So let this commitment be measured. Publish an annual scorecard, reviewed by young women themselves, so that we can see what was promised and what was delivered.
>
> **(Young woman, 18 to 24, Zambia)**

> “I fear we put too much trust in our governments when they have continuously failed us. What does it look like for the African public to be on the front line of commitment, showing every promise made, the action taken, the institution responsible, the budget, the deadline and the results?
>
> **(Young woman, Kenya; live consultation)**

> “It is not enough to listen to young people. Leaders must share power, mobilise resources and be accountable for their commitments.
>
> **(Portuguese room report to plenary)**

> “Commit to a dedicated, publicly tracked budget for young women and girls' economic empowerment… Give young women a direct role in deciding how that money is spent.
>
> **(Young woman, 30 to 35, Somalia)**

9.4 Call to action

1. **Create** dedicated, publicly tracked national budget lines for young women's economic empowerment and violence prevention, financed from domestic resources.
2. **Reserve** a defined, published share of public digital-innovation and AI funding for enterprises owned by young women, building on Statement Commitment 3, which calls for targeted financing, public procurement and digital-innovation opportunities for enterprises owned by young women, including in AI (participants proposed 15% of innovation and entrepreneurship budgets and 30% of youth economic empowerment funding).
3. **Establish** an African guarantee fund for young women aged 18 to 35 and a continental young women's innovation fund disbursing directly to youth-led and women-led ventures.
4. **Apply** transparent, merit-based selection criteria and post-funding impact evaluation to all funds for women and youth.
5. **Establish** a public African commitments tracker and national scorecards, with youth representatives in monitoring bodies and women-led review committees, reporting failures as well as progress.
6. **Report back** to young people at the Pre-CSW72 consultation on what happened to each commitment in the CSW71 Common African Position.

9.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Tracked domestic funding. AU Member States commit to creating dedicated, publicly tracked domestic budget lines for young women's economic empowerment and violence prevention.

Youth-led monitoring. AU Member States commit to establishing a public African commitments tracker and national scorecards, overseen by youth representatives and women-led review committees, that show for each commitment the action, the

responsible institution, the budget, the deadline and the result, including failures, and public spending on young women, with national data disaggregated by age, sex, disability and location.

Transparent reporting. AU Member States commit to regular, transparent reporting at AU and UN summits on progress, resource allocations and implementation challenges, including failures, and to reporting back to young people at the Pre-CSW72 consultation on the implementation of each commitment in this Common African Position.

Builds on: Agenda 2063 monitoring framework; African Peer Review Mechanism; AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment; CSW68 agreed conclusions [16]; SDG 5.c [36] and 17.18.

SECTION 10

Youth-led solutions and opportunities to scale

10

10.1 The issue

Young people are already building solutions, but "sometimes the issue is not lack of initiative, but limited or no support and sustainability of these solutions" (Arabic room). Governments tend to celebrate young innovators only once they have succeeded elsewhere, and youth-led organisations doing frontline work are often unpaid. Continental frameworks already provide a basis for scaling: the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade, adopted in February 2024, commits States Parties to support women- and youth-owned enterprises to participate in trade [15], and the AU has declared 2020–2030 the Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion [38].

10.2 The evidence

Initiatives and models named by participants include:

- **Integrated digital opportunity platforms**, among the most frequent proposals and named in all four survey languages (55 of 184 respondents in a keyword review; see section 6.2): mobile-first, low-data or offline, in local languages, accessible to persons with disabilities, combining skills training, mentoring, micro-finance through mobile money, job matching and online marketplaces. Respondents insisted these be designed and run by young women and measured by income generated.
- **Community digital and enterprise hubs**, including solar-powered hubs for refugee camps and rural villages, STEM and digital hubs beside schools, and "last-mile" hubs combining childcare, Wi-Fi and job links.
- **Women's cooperatives:** digital enterprise cooperatives that market collectively and build credit histories; solar micro-factories run by cooperatives of 10 to 15 young women (Burundi proposal).
- **Survivor-centred innovation:** a women-led community response network in Kenya, the Dada Collective Network, whose own digital tool, according to the participant, cuts the number of institutions a survivor must pass through from about 11 to 2 (testimony; not independently verified); a youth-designed app to report abuse without re-traumatisation (English room); an interdisciplinary survivor support practice and task force (Comoros and Tunisia); and trauma-informed economic empowerment combining psychosocial support with business support (Nigeria).

- **Named initiatives:** DigiFemmes (Côte d'Ivoire, planning expansion to Burkina Faso and Togo); SHINE Economic Empowerment (Mozambique, bridging education and the formal labour market); the AU Go Gal! innovation initiative of the AU Innovation Lab; Open Futures Learning Hub (Uganda, accessible learning with sign language, screen readers, ramps, local languages and childcare); FEPAD (Burundi); talent-based micro-loans and exhibitions for women in Kakuma refugee camp (Kenya); and Mission ShakthiSAT, a space-technology programme for girls (Equatorial Guinea).
- **Grassroots technical innovation:** solar-panel school bags that charge while children walk to school so they can study during load-shedding (South Africa); home-built inverters (Mozambique); recycling and green enterprises.
- **Storytelling and media:** social media creators, influencers and online radio telling African stories and spreading change, and rural media with content for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences.
- **Pan-African exchange:** structured skill-sharing between countries and regions facing similar challenges (the Arabic room's agreed innovation), and frameworks for youth initiatives to replicate across borders.
- **Public fundraising:** women's movements raising funds from their own public to reduce dependence on donors (Kenya).
- **Labour-market proposals:** an "AI Transition Dividend" in which participating employers commit a share of AI productivity savings to a jointly governed fund for paid apprenticeships and women-led businesses, with a youth-led AI employment observatory (South Africa respondent).

Opportunities to leverage: the AfCFTA and its Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade [15]; local processing and industrialisation of raw materials; mobile money and alternative credit scoring, noting that the mobile money gender gap in sub-Saharan Africa remains 25% [9]; remote and cross-border digital work; climate-smart agriculture and renewable energy; and the AU Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion [38].

10.3 Youth Voices

> “
> Two young men came up with a school bag with a solar panel that charges while children walk to school, so they can study during load-shedding instead of using candles that can burn down a shack. That solution hasn't been supported by our government. They only celebrate you when you have made it big.
>
> **(Young woman, 34, South Africa; live consultation)**

> “
> A victim has to go through 11 institutions on average before reaching the gates of justice. Reducing that to about two has been significant. Scaling that community capacity, and paying the young women and local women doing the work, would be important.
>
> **(Young woman, Kenya; live consultation)**

> “
> We expected the girls to have access to devices and internet, but no. Then the challenge was transport. Many of the girls told us: we cannot study this kind of career, it's not allowed for us, we are poor.
>
> **(Young woman, Equatorial Guinea; live consultation)**

> From digital inclusion to economic power: invest in young women so they become the creators, innovators and leaders of digital Africa.
>
> **(French room, headline message)**

10.4 Call to action

1. **Create** national and continental mechanisms to identify, fund and scale youth-led solutions early, rather than recognising them only after success.
2. **Invest** in integrated, youth-led digital platforms and community hubs that link skills, finance, markets and childcare, and measure them by income generated.
3. **Fund** women-led community response networks and pay the young women who run them.
4. **Support** cross-border replication and pan-African skill-sharing between youth initiatives.
5. **Use** the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade to open markets and procurement to young women's enterprises.

10.5 Proposed language for the CAP

Scaling youth innovations. AU Member States commit to creating national and continental mechanisms to identify, directly fund and scale youth-led digital platforms, community hubs and survivor support networks.

Pan-African replication. AU Member States commit to facilitating structured skill-sharing and cross-border replication of successful youth-led solutions across regions.

Preferential procurement. AU Member States commit to leveraging the AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade to guarantee preferential public procurement and market access for young women's enterprises.

Builds on: AfCFTA Protocol on Women and Youth in Trade [15]; African Youth Charter Art. 15 [39]; AU Decade of Women's Financial and Economic Inclusion [38]; Agenda 2063.

> **Fund women. Protect girls and young women. Hold leaders accountable.**
>
> Pan-African Youth Consultations towards the Common African Position

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> **Commit to a dedicated, publicly tracked budget for young women and girls' economic empowerment… Give young women a direct role in deciding how that money is spent.**
>
> Young woman, 30 to 35, Somalia

> **I lost my sister to FGM. She bled to death. That incident traumatised me, and I was so young. I started fighting for girls even though no one listens.**
>
> Young woman, 18 to 24, Kenya

Annex 1

Who took part

Live consultation. The live consultation took place on Zoom on 12 October 2026 with 208 participants.
There were 443 registrants.
Registrants came from 43 African countries: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Western Sahara, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A small number of registrants were in the diaspora.37
African countries represented at the live consultation on 12 October 2026: Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Libya, Malawi, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Western Sahara, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Live vote. At the close of the consultation, participants were asked by Zoom poll whether they endorsed the youth priorities summarised from the four rooms. 95% voted to adopt them and 5% abstained.

Survey. The youth survey received 184 responses in four languages (English 129, French 31, Arabic 18, Portuguese 6) from 31 African countries and the diaspora.

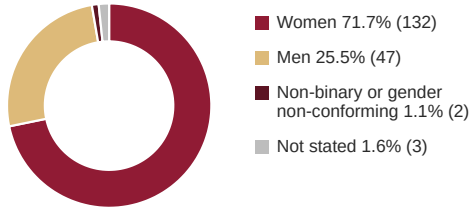
443
registrants from 43 countries for the live consultation

208
participants in the live consultation on 12 October 2026

184
pre-consultation survey responses, in four languages

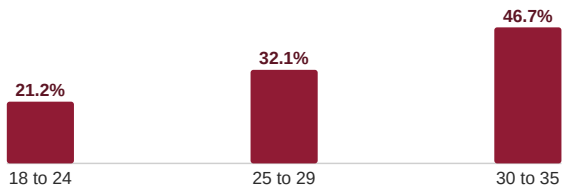
31
African countries among survey respondents

Figure 7
Gender
Survey respondents (n = 184)



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), Annex 1.

Figure 8
Age
Share of survey respondents (n = 184)

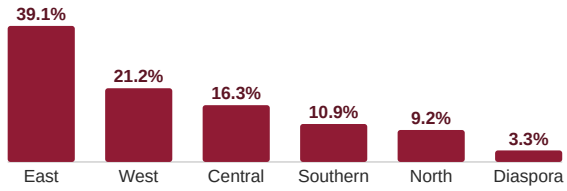


Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), Annex 1.

Figure 9

AU region

Share of survey respondents (n = 184)

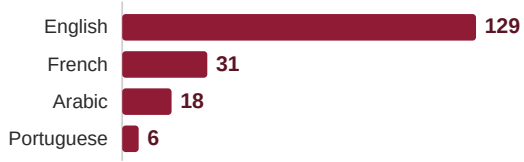


Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), Annex 1.

Figure 10

Survey language

Responses (n = 184)

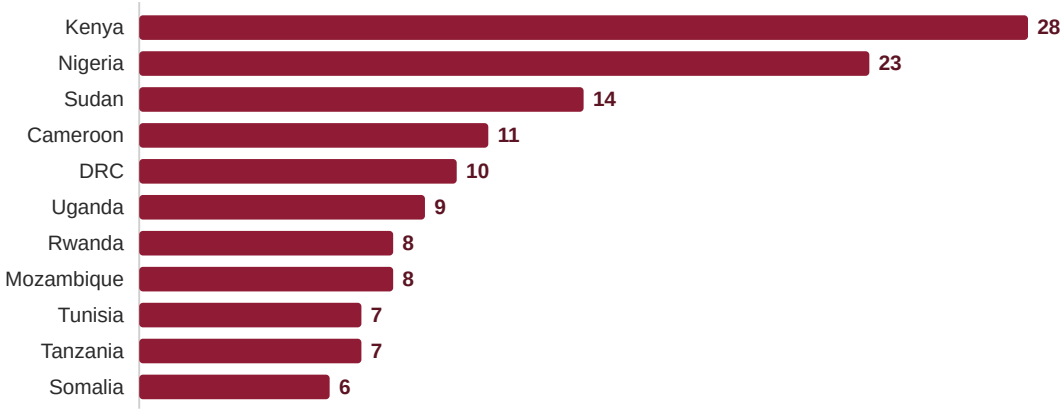


Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), Annex 1.

Figure 11

Survey responses by country: top eleven

Responses (n = 184) from 31 African countries, plus diaspora

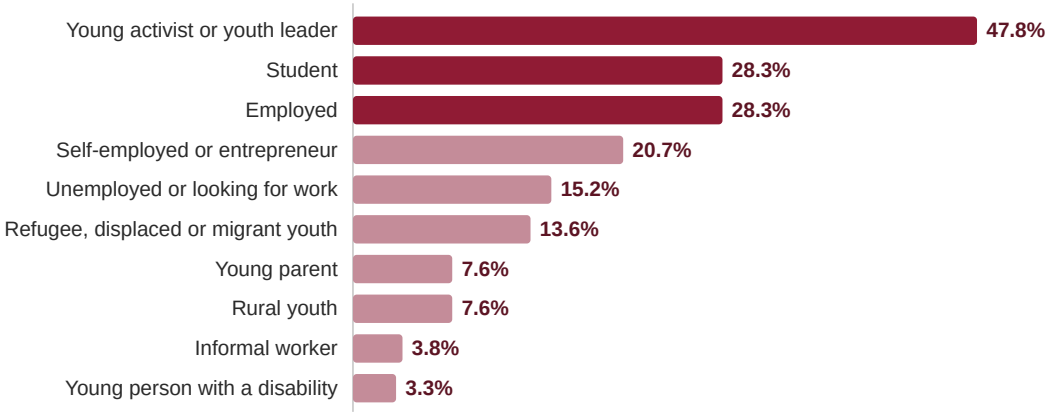


Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), Annex 1. Also Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, the Republic of the Congo, Senegal, South Africa, South Sudan, Western Sahara (SADR) and Zambia, plus diaspora in the United Kingdom

Figure 12

How respondents describe themselves

Share of 184 survey respondents (more than one answer allowed). Leading three highlighted.



Source: Pre-CSW71 youth survey (n = 184), Annex 1.

> **Education opens the door, but financial inclusion hands them the keys.**
>
> Young woman, 30 to 35, Nigeria

Methods note

- **Fieldwork dates.** The survey was open from 7 to 14 October 2026. English and French responses were received from 7 to 14 October, and Arabic and Portuguese responses from 9 to 13 October. The live consultation took place on 12 October 2026.
- **Sample.** The survey was self-selected and shared through the networks of Nalafem, the AU Women, Gender and Youth Directorate and partners. It is not representative of young African women as a whole. Respondents are more likely than their peers to be activists, youth leaders, connected and literate in an official language.
- **Language balance.** English responses dominate (129 of 184, 70%). Results for the French (31), Arabic (18) and Portuguese (6) surveys are reported separately where they differ.
- **Small sub-groups.** The sample size (n) is shown next to every sub-group figure. Percentages are not given for sub-groups of fewer than 10 respondents; counts are given instead. Regional and language figures indicate direction rather than precise shares.
- **Regions.** AU region was self-reported by respondents in a separate question, not derived from their country of residence. Regional totals therefore do not always match the country counts; for example, some respondents from Sudan, Somalia or South Sudan may have placed themselves in North Africa or in another region. Regional figures should be read as respondents' own regional identification.
- **Open answers and quotes.** Open answers were reviewed by theme; counts of proposals (such as digital platforms) come from a keyword review, not a full coding exercise. Quotes from the live consultation are taken from the transcript and room records; longer quotes are edited for length, as marked, and quotes in French, Arabic and Portuguese are translated. Figures cited by participants are presented as testimony unless a published source is given.
- **Live vote.** The vote result is the final figure from the Zoom poll at the close of the consultation.

> **Girls who were abducted during the war are being sold as commodities in neighbouring countries or within the country itself.**
>
> Young woman, 25 to 29, Sudan; translated from Arabic

> **From digital inclusion to economic power: invest in young women so they become the creators, innovators and leaders of digital Africa.**
>
> French room, headline message

Acknowledgements

This report brings together the voices of young African women and feminists from across the continent and the diaspora. It was convened by the Nala Feminist Collective (Nalafem) in collaboration with the African Union Women, Gender and Youth Directorate. Its purpose is to make sure that African women's realities, priorities and leadership shape the consultations and agreed conclusions of the Seventy-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW71).

We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time, expertise and resources to this process. Above all, we honour the young women and feminists who shared their stories with courage and honesty. Their lived experiences, collective wisdom and resilience are the foundation of this report and the force behind our movement.

We recognise the young people from 43 African countries, and from the diaspora, who registered, completed the survey or attended the consultation: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Malawi, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Western Sahara, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

We thank the speakers, whose insights enriched every conversation: Prudence Nonkululeko Ngwenya, Aya Chebbi, Britney Isambi Ngube, Fatihah Quadri Eniola, Lindiwe Patience Ngwenya and Rose Wachuka Macharia.

We appreciate the facilitators and moderators, who created spaces for open, honest and inclusive dialogue: Enass Abdalla, Nadine Zoro, Luthando Madhlopa and Sónia Catingue.

We thank the rapporteurs, whose careful documentation made this report possible: Sarra Hannachi, Shukri Mahad Abdullahi, Chantal Faida, Catherine Mseteka, Wanjiku Thiga, Lorena Roberts and Monique Kabanza.

We thank the editors, Syeda Re’em Hussain and Aya Chebbi, and the designer, Kene Nwachukwu.

This report belongs to all of you. Together, we carry African women's voices to the global stage.

> **Fund women. Protect girls and young women. Hold leaders accountable.**
>
> Pan-African Youth Consultations towards the Common African Position

PAN-AFRICAN YOUTH REPORT TO CSW71

Scan to read and present

Point a phone camera at a code to open it.

THE STATEMENT

Pan-African Youth Statement to the CSW71 Common African Position

All 20 commitments, with proposed language for the Common African Position.

THE PRESENTATION

Youth Statement presentation

A short visual presentation of who took part, what young women named first, and the commitments young people are asking governments to adopt.