

Mapping of Feminist Movements and Actors In Portuguese Speaking African Countries





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Acronyms

AWDF	African Women's Development Fund
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and more
NVivo	Qualitative Data Analysis Software
PALOP	<i>Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa</i>
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
WROs	Women's Rights Organisations





Executive Summary



This report presents a comprehensive mapping of feminist and women's rights movements across Portuguese-speaking African countries, Angola, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe. It offers rich analysis of how feminist actors, formal and informal, young and intergenerational, rural and urban, organise under conditions of political restriction, linguistic marginalisation, and economic fragility. Despite these constraints, feminist organising in Portuguese-speaking Africa is dynamic, intersectional, and deeply rooted in community resilience, creativity, and care.

Scope and Objectives

Commissioned by the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF), this study was conducted to:

- Analyse the political, economic, and cultural contexts shaping feminist organising in Portuguese-speaking African countries
- Understand typologies and strategies of feminist and women's rights actors
- Identify funding patterns, gaps, and systemic barriers to access
- Explore the presence of anti-rights/anti-gender movements and feminist counter-responses
- Offer strategic recommendations to AWDF and the broader donor ecosystem to enhance support, visibility, and sustainability of feminist organising in the region

Methodology

The mapping employed a mixed-methods feminist methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches across six Portuguese-speaking African countries. Over 48 feminist actors participated in focus group discussions, offering grounded insights into the realities of movement-building, programmatic priorities, and contextual challenges. Complementing this, a rapid quantitative survey was conducted with 60 feminists to capture broader trends and perspectives across the region. Additionally, three key informant interviews with funders provided strategic insight into the funding





landscape and institutional dynamics. A feminist participatory analysis was applied to examine thematic areas, structural constraints, and movement strategies. The research also included an extensive review of literature and policy frameworks, particularly those aligned with regional feminist agendas. Finally, the study analysed country-specific data on funding patterns, advocacy trends, and historical trajectories of feminist mobilisation to build a nuanced and comparative understanding of the ecosystem.

Limitations and Mitigation Strategies

Limitations	Mitigation Strategies
Limited digital infrastructure particularly in rural areas significantly hindered broader participation from grassroots actors operating in remote communities	The team used in-person focus group discussions and worked with in-country feminist researchers to collect data offline.
Language disparities posed a challenge, as the coexistence of Portuguese, Creole, and English complicated real-time analysis and required additional translation support.	The research team worked with multilingual in country feminist researchers from the outset ensuring language consistency and relevance in the different contexts.
In politically sensitive contexts such as Equatorial Guinea, the high risk of surveillance and repression made it difficult to verify data or access reliable information, resulting in underrepresentation.	The team employed anonymous questionnaires for data collection and partnering with trusted local feminist researchers.
The civil unrest which took place in Angola also delayed the data collection process.	The consultants managed to adjust the workplan as they’d factored in flexible data collection dates.





Summary of Findings

a. Typology of feminist organisations and actors



Community Based Organisations

Often informal and unregistered, these groups focus on different issues including economic solidarity, GBV response, and peer education (for example, cooperatives in Guinea-Bissau, rural groups in Cape Verde and movements in Equatorial Guinea).



Youth and Digital Movements

Like MovFemme in Mozambique, these emerging digital-led initiatives amplify intersectional feminism and LGBTQIA+ issues among younger audiences.



Institutional NGOs

Such as the Cape Verdian Institute for Gender Equality (ICIEG) or the Mozambique Women's Organization (OMM), that work closely with the state but often struggle with grassroots reach.



Faith-Engaged Feminists

Like MovFemme in Mozambique, these emerging digital-led initiatives amplify intersectional feminism and LGBTQIA+ issues among younger audiences.



Creative & Healing Initiatives

Art collectives in post-conflict zones like Northern Mozambique use theatre, poetry, and murals to mobilise and heal.





b. Country-Level Spotlights

Country	Spotlight
Angola 	The feminist movement is decentralised and largely urban, with key actors navigating civic repression and surveillance. Organisations focus on legal reform, women's economic rights, and access to justice, particularly for GBV survivors. Digital platforms are increasingly used for feminist awareness and mobilisation, despite connectivity and cost barriers. Collaboration across regions remains limited, but there is growing interest in inter-movement solidarity and youth engagement. In Angola, feminism faces entrenched structural barriers rooted in social and cultural conservatism, the Church's influence in government, and religious principles embedded in public institutions. Although there is no formal anti-feminist movement, coordinated resistance from political, religious, and media actors actively undermines feminist agendas. This was evident during the 2020 Penal Code revision, when these groups united to oppose maintaining abortion exceptions and legalising abortion. Using cultural, religious, and moralistic rhetoric, feminists were stereotyped as immoral and anti-family, reflecting a persistent and organised public resistance to feminist progress.
Cape Verde 	Feminist organising foregrounds care work, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and the visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities. Youth-led digital movements are gaining traction, fostering feminist discourse in schools and urban spaces. Women in coastal and fishing communities are emerging as key actors in climate justice activism. There is growing inter-island coordination and interest in regional feminist solidarity. There is no anti-gender movement, although there was a protest against a woman who had cut off her husband's genitals.



**Equatorial
Guinea**

Feminist organising occurs under intense repression, with activists facing surveillance, censorship, and limited civic freedoms. Core issues include gender-based violence, lack of SRHR access, and criminalisation of LGBTQIA+ identities. Strategies include informal networks, discreet community mobilisation, and diaspora-led advocacy due to domestic risks. Entrenched patriarchal structures and restrictive state policies create a hostile environment for gender equality despite the absence of formal anti-feminist movements. Feminist and queer advocates face stigmatisation, exclusion, and moral censorship, with feminism often framed as a Western imposition and cultural betrayal. Government actions further entrench traditional gender norms and limit civic space for women's rights defenders.

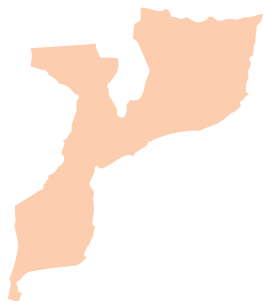
Guinea Bissau

The feminist movement is defined by grassroots, informal organising rooted in local knowledge, mutual aid, and solidarity. Activists prioritise literacy, economic autonomy through cooperatives, and civic awareness as tools of feminist empowerment. Most groups operate without formal legal registration or consistent funding, instead relying on community trust and volunteerism. Their organising is quiet but powerful, embedded in daily survival and collective care. There's no anti-gender movement in Guinea-Bissau.



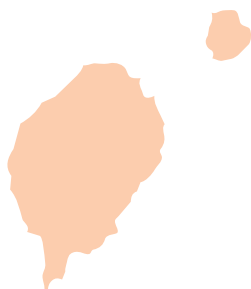


Mozambique



The country is recognised for its vibrant and diverse feminist ecosystem, marked by strong coalitions and robust intergenerational leadership. Its proximity to English-speaking countries places it at a better advantage compared to other Portuguese-speaking movements and organisations. Feminist actors work across rural and urban divides, employing artistic, digital, and legal strategies. Key issues include gender-based violence, women's political underrepresentation, and the compounded impact of climate disasters in the northern regions. Despite structural limitations, movements have pioneered creative responses, from mobile awareness campaigns to feminist healing spaces. Although no formal anti-rights or anti-feminist movements are clearly organised, religious fundamentalist groups promote harmful practices such as polygamy, control over women's bodies, denial of sex education, and opposition to sexual minority rights. This hostility is exemplified by public figures making violent statements against feminist activists. In response, feminist, especially young women's, movements have mobilised through marches, campaigns, and public debates using powerful slogans to challenge sexism, defend human rights, and reject efforts to roll back gender equality.

São Tomé and Príncipe



The feminist movement demonstrates strong grassroots commitment to feminist organising, even in the face of societal stigma and limited infrastructure. Youth-led initiatives, such as the PERIQUETE project, are expanding gender education and awareness. Informal associations play a vital role in mobilising communities through door-to-door outreach and storytelling. Despite resource scarcity, nearly all surveyed groups expressed interest in joining Portuguese-speaking feminist networks.



c. Main Issues of Focus

Priorities in the 6 countries



Gender-Based Violence

Feminist groups are responding through awareness campaigns, survivor support, and advocacy for legal reforms, particularly in regions where state protection remains weak or inconsistent.



Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights

Organisations advocating for bodily autonomy, access to safe abortion, menstrual dignity, and comprehensive sexuality education for young people. Implemented in challenging cultural and religious contexts, requiring careful community engagement and coalition-building.



Economic Freedom

Feminist movements are increasingly vocal about women's exclusion from formal financial systems and social protections. Advocating for access to credit, recognition of informal labour, and gender-responsive budgeting particularly in rural and peri-urban areas where women's livelihoods are most precarious.



Political Participation

Women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making spaces. Feminist actors continue to push for reforms that not only increase numbers but also ensure meaningful participation within party structures and policymaking processes.



LGBTQIA+ rights

Highly marginalised across the region, often criminalised or culturally stigmatised. A few feminist groups are beginning to openly include queer women in their advocacy, challenging silences within both society and the feminist movement itself.



Climate Feminism

Gaining traction especially in climate-vulnerable areas like Cape Verde and northern Mozambique. Feminist actors are connecting environmental justice with care work, displacement, and food security highlighting the gendered impacts of climate crisis and the need for community-led adaptation strategies.





d. Main Challenges





e. Opportunities

Across Portuguese-speaking Africa, there is a growing appetite for movement-building and feminist solidarity, both within and across national borders. Feminist organisations and actors expressed a clear interest in joining a regional feminist network, demonstrating a desire for shared learning, joint advocacy, and collective visibility. Storytelling, oral history, and cultural work are gaining traction as powerful tools for organising, especially in rural or low-literacy contexts. These approaches honour local traditions while enabling narrative change and community mobilisation, particularly among youth and marginalised groups.

Encouragingly, intergenerational mentorship is beginning to take shape, with seasoned feminists mentoring emerging leaders through informal knowledge-sharing and structured initiatives. Diaspora communities are also playing a supportive role, helping bridge funding gaps and international advocacy. Many feminist groups across the region are actively seeking to co-create inclusive, intersectional frameworks that reflect the realities of disability, queerness, age, and racial inequality. Meanwhile, strategic alliances are emerging, such as partnerships with government ministries or public universities, demonstrating that feminist actors are not only challenging the status quo but are also shaping institutional practices and public policy through collaboration and innovation.







Strategic and Programmatic Recommendations

Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Linguistic marginalisation	Establish a Portuguese Language Feminist Infrastructure: translation, support desk, and grant clinics	Ensure linguistic inclusion and increased access to funding and participation	- Set up a Portuguese-speaking-language support desk, staffed with Portuguese-speaking grant and movement officers. - Translate calls for proposals, tools, reports, and platforms into Portuguese, Spanish and Creole where applicable. - Offer free grant-writing clinics in Portuguese and Spanish at least twice a year. - Fund interpretation/translation costs for regional convenings and feminist publications.	- Full Portuguese accessibility across all donor platforms by the end of 2026. - At least 30 grassroots groups assisted annually through the different support desks.	Use multilingual facilitation (Portuguese, Creole, local languages) and translation tools in all processes.
Lack of consistent, flexible funding for community-based organisations and unregistered groups.	Provide long-term core funding for unregistered and community-based organisations	Strengthen movement resilience and sustainability at grassroots level	- Identify community-based organisations and unregistered groups. - Provide them support to apply for long term core funding.	At least 10 organisations from Portuguese speaking African countries provided funding annually.	Allow for flexible reporting and reduce audit requirements to include informal collectives
Linguistic barriers in grant applications.	Develop linguistically accessible and low-barrier grant-making platforms	Enable equitable access to donor resources and visibility for all movement actors	Translate all resources into Portuguese, Spanish and Creole where possible.	All grant documents for funders are translated and shared by the end of 2026.	Provide templates, voice-note applications, and asynchronous feedback mechanisms
Weak cross-country feminist solidarity among Portuguese-speaking countries	Launch a regional Portuguese-Speaking Feminist Solidarity Network and facilitate convenings.	Build cross-border alliances for advocacy, learning, and joint mobilisation.	- Identify key feminist players within the 6 countries. - Identify online platforms to host the network. - Establish a web-based solidarity network. - Plan for regional convenings.	A regional network is established by the second quarter of 2026.	Use storytelling and shared campaigns to build trust and visibility across countries





Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Limited digital access and connectivity, especially in rural areas	Support feminist movements in developing a hybrid digital strategy with low-bandwidth platforms and offline outreach	Bridge urban-rural divides and strengthen digital feminist mobilisation.	- Assess digital access and communication needs of feminist groups, especially in rural and low-connectivity areas. - Co-create and fund hybrid communication models that combine low-bandwidth digital tools (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook Lite) with offline outreach methods (e.g., radio, storytelling, community forums). - Deliver digital safety and literacy workshops tailored to informal, youth-led, and grassroots feminist movements.	- By Q2 2026, at least 5 country-level assessments completed, with findings used to guide digital support strategies. - By Q4 2026, at least 6 feminist groups across the region will pilot hybrid communication models, with 60% reporting improved community engagement. - By the end of 2026, 300 feminist actors will have been trained in digital safety and literacy, with at least 30% improvement in knowledge measured through pre- and post-evaluations.	Leverage WhatsApp, community radio, and peer-to-peer training in low-connectivity areas
Surveillance and civic repression in countries like Equatorial Guinea and Angola	Connect feminists with a Solidarity & Safety Fund to protect activists and support underground organising.	Reduce risk for frontline activists and ensure continuity of resistance efforts.	- Map and validate existing solidarity and protection funds (regional and international) suitable for feminist and LGBTQIA+ activists in restrictive contexts. - Develop a confidential referral system via trusted local intermediaries or partner organisations to enable safe and discreet fund access. - Create and distribute secure, multilingual guidance (including oral/audio formats) on how to access and use the fund, particularly in low-connectivity and rural settings.	- At least 3 active solidarity/safety funds identified and available for referral within the first 6 months. - A functioning referral mechanism operational in at least 4 countries, with protocols for anonymity and security established by end of Year 1. 50 feminist activists or groups supported through the fund by end of Year 2, with at least 75% reporting increased safety, visibility, or mobility.	Work through trusted in-country researchers and anonymised platforms for high-risk contexts





Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Exclusion of marginalised voices (e.g. LGBTQIA+, rural women, trans activists)	Fund oral storytelling, translation projects, and feminist research on inclusion gaps.	Amplify underrepresented feminist voices and knowledge systems.	- Launch a micro-grant scheme for community-based organisations to document feminist experiences through oral storytelling, especially among rural, older, LGBTQIA+, and disabled women. - Support translation of feminist research and advocacy materials into local languages and Creole variants to expand reach and understanding.	10 storytelling or translation initiatives funded within 12 months, with geographic and demographic diversity. - At least 5 key feminist resources translated and disseminated in local languages across 3+ countries.	Partner with community based leaders to reach rural and marginalised communities
Fragmentation between youth-led and institutional feminist movements	Establish Intergenerational Mentorship Programmes and Feminist Assemblies.	Promote intergenerational learning and reduce organisational fragmentation.	- Design and implement intergenerational mentorship programmes that pair seasoned feminists with younger activists using oral storytelling, digital exchange, and in-person gatherings. - Fund national feminist assemblies where diverse actors (youth, elders, LGBTQIA+, rural voices) can collectively identify inclusion gaps and propose feminist strategies. - Support multilingual documentation and translation of mentorship stories, assembly findings, and feminist knowledge into accessible formats (audio, local language, visual).	- At least 3 mentorship cohorts launched across different countries, each with a minimum of 10 mentor-mentee pairs annually. 4 national feminist assemblies convened within two years, with 30% rural or underrepresented participants. - Minimum of 6 feminist outputs (stories, briefs, reports) produced in at least 3 local languages or oral formats per year.	Facilitate informal, trust-based mentorship alongside formal programmes





Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Burnout and weak care infrastructure for feminist organisers	Invest in collective care, healing justice, and mental health support programmes	Build sustainable and trauma-informed feminist ecosystems	- Support core funding for feminist organisations to cover wellbeing infrastructure, including salaries, rest cycles, and mental health services. - Facilitate regional training and peer-learning sessions on trauma-informed care, collective healing, and burnout prevention for feminist leaders and organisers. - Create a feminist care fund to resource emergency support, psychosocial care, and community-based healing practices—particularly for activists facing violence or burnout.	- At least 30% of funded feminist groups receive core (non-project-based) funding that includes allocations for care and wellbeing. - A minimum of 4 regional trainings or retreats on trauma-informed practices are held annually, with participation from at least 5 countries. - Feminist Care Fund launched with at least 10 grants disbursed annually to support mental health, rest, or trauma recovery initiatives	Embed care as core to grants, timelines, and reporting expectations.
Underrepresentation in global feminist fora and decision-making spaces	Support Portuguese-speaking delegates and publish position papers at global forums	Position Portuguese-speaking feminists in global decision-making arenas	- Provide dedicated funding and accompaniment for participation in AWID, CSW, African Feminist Forum, and Portuguese-speaking summits. - Support production of position papers, manifestos, and communiqués authored by Portuguese-speaking feminists.	- Portuguese-speaking-authored position paper submitted at each major feminist forum from 2026 onward. - At least 5 Portuguese-speaking delegates per international forum supported annually.	Translate global advocacy tools into Portuguese and sponsor presence at global events





1

Introduction and Background



Feminist organising in Portuguese-speaking African countries has historically operated at the periphery of global and regional feminist discourse, constrained by linguistic isolation, postcolonial authoritarianism, and systemic funding inequities. Understanding the historical and socio-political trajectories of Portuguese-speaking African countries is essential to contextualising the emergence and evolution of feminist movements within them.

1.1 Historical and Political Legacy

The legacy of Portuguese colonialism in the PALOP countries carries a distinct historical trajectory that continues to shape the socio-political and gendered realities of these nations. Unlike other European empires, which began dismantling their African colonies in the 1950s and 1960s, Portugal maintained its grip until the mid-1970s, only relinquishing control following the Carnation Revolution in Lisbon in 1974. This delayed decolonisation created abrupt and unprepared transitions to independence, leaving behind institutional vacuums, weak state structures, and limited local governance capacity (Chabal, 2002; Cann, 1997).

During colonisation, the Portuguese state employed Lusotropicalism, an ideological framework advanced by Gilberto Freyre and institutionalised under the *Estado Novo* regime, as a justification for its imperial project. Lusotropicalism suggested that Portuguese colonialism was more “humane” and culturally integrative than its British or French counterparts. It celebrated racial miscegenation, language assimilation, and Catholic missionary education as tools of civilisation, while masking profound racial, cultural, and gendered hierarchies (Castelo, 2007). In practice, this ideology legitimised patriarchal domination, the erasure of Indigenous cultures, and the suppression of gender dissent. It framed colonised African women as submissive mothers, sexualised labourers, or objects of Christian charity, roles that remain embedded in post-independence gender norms (Nascimento, 2020).

After gaining independence between 1974 and 1975, the majority of PALOP nations transitioned into single-party states. In these post-liberation states, power was consolidated in former anti-colonial movements such as the MPLA in Angola and the FRELIMO in Mozambique. These regimes maintained





a militarised and centralised mode of governance, often characterised by authoritarianism, surveillance, and limited tolerance for political pluralism (Vines, 2011; Roque, 2009). Civil society, particularly feminist and grassroots movements, was either co-opted into state structures or severely curtailed, as ruling parties sought to monopolise ideological authority and suppress dissenting voices, including those calling for gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, or sexual autonomy.

In Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau, the immediate post-independence period was further destabilised by protracted civil conflicts. These wars devastated national economies and social infrastructure and entrenched cultures of violence and distrust in governance. In such contexts, feminist organising became both dangerous and fragmented. Public space was militarised, and state legitimacy was eroded, resulting in limited engagement with civic actors or transformative gender policy.

By contrast, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe underwent comparatively peaceful transitions to independence and democratic governance. However, these small-island states have remained highly dependent on international aid, with external donors heavily influencing gender policy priorities. Feminist agendas in these contexts are often constrained by a lack of sustainable domestic funding, weak policy autonomy, and limited representation in national decision-making bodies. Although civic space is less restricted, autonomous feminist organising is still emerging and is often concentrated in urban centres with little reach into rural or youth-led activism.

Equatorial Guinea presents a unique and complex case. While it joined the PALOP bloc in 2014 after adopting Portuguese as a co-official language (alongside Spanish and French), its colonial past under Spain and its contemporary authoritarianism place it outside the shared Portuguese-speaking trajectory. Under President Teodoro Obiang, Equatorial Guinea has consistently ranked among the world's most repressive regimes, with systematic violations of freedom of expression, assembly, and association (Sundiata, 1996; Civicus, 2024). Feminist and LGBTQIA+ activists in the country face heightened risks of surveillance, imprisonment, and state violence, and most operate underground or in exile. Despite official gestures toward inclusion, Portuguese language adoption has not translated into cultural or political alignment with Portuguese-speaking feminist movements.

Taken together, the postcolonial trajectories of PALOP countries reveal how deeply colonial legacies, ideological constructs like Lusotropicalism, and liberation-era militarism have shaped the contours of contemporary feminist





activism. These systems have institutionalised gender inequality, stifled civic expression, and left Portuguese-speaking feminist actors under-recognised within broader Pan-African and global feminist landscapes. Nevertheless, these movements persist, often informally, across linguistic and cultural divides, and under threat, they build intersectional, community-driven forms of resistance that demand not only visibility but also transformative justice.

1.2 Socio-Economic Dimensions

Economic Extractivism

Portuguese-speaking African countries, particularly Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, and São Tomé and Príncipe, remain entrenched in primary commodity-dependent economies, a direct legacy of colonial extractivism. These economies rely heavily on a narrow set of export commodities: crude oil in Angola, natural gas and coal in Mozambique, cashew nuts in Guinea-Bissau, and cocoa in São Tomé. This mono-export structure leaves countries exceptionally vulnerable to fluctuations in global market prices, external shocks, and the interests of multinational corporations (UNCTAD, 2020). The dominance of foreign direct investment in extractive industries often bypasses local communities, with minimal reinvestment in social infrastructure or gender-responsive development.

From a feminist lens, these extractivist models are not gender neutral. Women, especially in rural and Indigenous communities, are disproportionately affected by land dispossession, environmental degradation, and the militarisation that often accompanies resource exploitation. Feminist scholars such as Dianne Elson (2002) and African organisations like Fórum Mulher in Mozambique have critiqued these economies as deeply patriarchal and exploitative, reinforcing gendered divisions of labour while excluding women from decision-making on land, environmental governance, and revenue distribution.

Furthermore, national economic priorities that focus on resource extraction often result in chronic underinvestment in care infrastructure, health, and education- sectors that directly impact women's livelihoods and well-being. In Angola, for example, despite high oil revenues, public health systems remain underfunded, with maternal mortality rates among the highest globally. This paradox of wealth amidst gendered poverty is a hallmark of extractivist patriarchy.





Informal Labour Dominance

Across the PALOP countries, many economically active women are employed in the informal economy. This includes street vending, small-scale agriculture, domestic work, artisanal fishing, and petty trade. While the informal sector is often portrayed as a site of entrepreneurial resilience, feminist economists argue that it is more accurately a space of survival amid structural exclusion (UN Women, 2018; Elson, 2002). Women in these sectors face low wages, poor working conditions, no legal protections, and are excluded from labour benefits such as maternity leave, pensions, or health insurance.

This reality is compounded by intersectional inequalities; rural women, disabled women, and LGBTQIA+ individuals in informal economies often experience multiple layers of discrimination, including from within feminist and workers' movements themselves. For instance, in Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique, informal women traders are frequently subjected to police harassment, arbitrary taxation, and verbal abuse, with no recourse to justice.

Moreover, the centrality of women's informal labour in sustaining households and community economies is often invisibilised in national economic planning and policy design. Feminist activists and movements have consistently called for the recognition, redistribution, and remuneration of women's informal labour. However, donor-funded economic programs rarely prioritise these demands, focusing instead on formal entrepreneurship, microfinance, or vocational training schemes that fail to challenge structural inequality.

Despite the weight of colonial legacies, extractive economic systems, authoritarian governance, and systemic marginalisation, feminist organising in Portuguese-speaking Africa continues to demonstrate remarkable resilience, creativity, and political vision. Across urban and rural landscapes, formal and informal collectives are reclaiming agency through culturally rooted, community-led approaches to justice, healing, and liberation. Recognising the distinct historical, linguistic, and socio-political realities of Portuguese-speaking African countries is not merely an act of inclusion; it is a necessary step in decolonising global feminist frameworks and funding ecosystems.





2

Findings



2.1 Regional Analysis

2.1.1 Feminist Mobilising

Feminist mobilisation across Portuguese-speaking Africa is vibrant yet deeply contextual, shaped by colonial legacies, authoritarian governance, economic precarity, and patriarchal norms highlighted in the contextual analysis. Despite vast differences between the countries, common threads emerge: grassroots leadership, informal networks, and the critical role of feminist consciousness rooted in lived realities.

“Feminism is contextual... there’s no one way. The woman in the south in Mozambique will not experience discrimination in the same way as the woman in the north.”

~ **Feminist Funder.**

This deeply localised orientation drives strategies that are grounded in storytelling, oral traditions, cooperative organising, and spiritual resistance.

In places like Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe, feminist work often occurs informally, with “organising through cooperatives” and community circles that prioritise unity and shared survival. In Angola and Mozambique, more formalised movements exist, such as Fórum Mulher and Rede Mulher, yet even they are entangled in political affiliations and historical institutional dependencies.

“Some of the NGOs were set up by the government... they’re still very much connected to government institutions.”

~ **Feminist Funder.**

A key distinction arises between explicit feminist actors and gender-focused organisations. While feminist actors have a specific, although contextual ideology, gender focused organisations work on women’s rights in general.





In some contexts, outrightly adapting a feminist positioning poses significant threats to the welfare of activists and institutions.

“We are explicitly feminist, but the choice of partners is not necessarily feminist.”

~ **Feminist Funder**

This reflects how feminist identities are often strategic, adaptive, and sometimes concealed due to political repression or cultural conservatism.

2.1.2 Funding Landscape

The funding ecosystem for feminist actors in Portuguese-speaking Africa is highly constrained. Portuguese-speaking feminist organisations face a double exclusion in the global funding landscape: both as actors from geopolitically marginalised countries and as organisers operating outside the dominant linguistic ecosystems of English-speaking and French-speaking Africa. Donor engagement with Portuguese-speaking Africa is minimal and often mediated by regional intermediaries unfamiliar with local contexts. Grant application processes, reporting templates, monitoring frameworks, and even technical assistance are almost exclusively in English or French. This linguistic dominance systematically excludes Portuguese-speaking feminist actors, particularly grassroots and unregistered collectives, from accessing funding opportunities (AWID, 2021). There are also very few funding mechanisms dedicated specifically to Portuguese-speaking countries- and those that do exist are often structured along colonial lines, such as Portuguese state-funded initiatives, which tend to replicate hierarchical donor-recipient dynamics rather than support decolonial or community-rooted feminist priorities.

Beyond language, the bureaucratisation of donor processes creates high entry barriers.. Donors’ emphasis on project-based, time-bound funding, often with rigid outputs and performance indicators, contradicts the relational, care-centred, and long-term nature of feminist movement-building (Mama Cash, 2018). This creates a situation where the most visible or English-speaking-adjacent groups are repeatedly funded, while more radical, queer-led, or rural feminist collectives are rendered invisible.





In response to the registration challenges, some donors encourage unregistered and nascent organisations to work with fiscal sponsors. This approach is not without its challenges.

“They [donors] do allow fiscal organisations to apply and then sub-grant... but audit requirements stop many movements from applying.”

~ **Feminist Funder.**

The paradox is striking: feminist actors are expected to work without institutional support, yet they are excluded from support precisely because they lack formal structures. At the same time, funders face structural constraints. Some are prohibited from sub-granting, thus limiting their flexibility. Despite this, there are efforts to explore workaround models using intermediaries and trust-based funding mechanisms.

The funders also identified high costs in some of the Portuguese-speaking countries as another deterrent.

“Angola is especially expensive. It would not make sense for us to give \$20,000 to an organisation if we spend \$50,000 just to get there.”

~ **Feminist Funder.**

Cape Verde and São Tomé were similarly described as “tourism-style economies” with high costs of engagement.

2.1.3 Challenges

Feminist organising in Portuguese-speaking Africa operates within a deeply complex and constrained political and socio-economic environment, as articulated by funders and local actors alike. A core challenge is the pervasive





presence of authoritarianism and surveillance in countries such as Angola, Mozambique, and Equatorial Guinea, where political regimes actively repress civic dissent and women's movements. As one feminist funder described,

“It’s not only patriarchy, but also those very authoritarian systems... If they can’t consent, they use force.”

This militarised and patriarchal context significantly narrows the space for overt feminist mobilisation, forcing movements to adopt more cautious, often informal or hidden strategies to avoid retaliation.

Colonial legacies continue to shape the structures of civil society. Post-independence and structural adjustment policies resulted in NGOs that were often birthed by or aligned with state institutions. This co-optation blurs lines between activism and state agenda, weakening autonomy and trust within feminist spaces. Moreover, exclusion remains a key concern. Rural women, trans women, Indigenous activists, and disabled people are frequently left out of feminist discourse and strategy. Imported frameworks for inclusion often fail to resonate locally, highlighting the urgent need for homegrown, context-specific approaches.

Despite the absence of explicitly organised anti-feminist movements across Portuguese-speaking African countries, they continue to display deep-rooted patriarchal structures and social hostility toward gender equality. In Equatorial Guinea, feminist voices often face stigmatisation from both state institutions and communities, and women who publicly support feminist or queer causes are frequently subjected to exclusion, intimidation and moral censorship. In this context, being openly feminist is often perceived as a form of Western imposition and is met with accusations of cultural betrayal. At the same time, the government enforces policies that reinforce traditional gender norms and restrict the civic space available for women's rights defenders. In Angola and Mozambique, feminists are confronted with social and cultural conservatism, primarily expressed in the resistance to applying progressive aspects of the legislation, particularly those related to abortion rights and non-discrimination against LGBTQI+ rights.





In addition to structural barriers, donor practices contribute to fragility in the feminist ecosystem. Rigid compliance demands, such as audit requirements, governance policies, and fixed timelines, favour formalised NGOs over grassroots, often unregistered movements. As one funder noted, “Feminist organising is not project-based. It is the long haul.” Nevertheless, the current funding architecture tends to ignore this truth, favouring short-term visibility over sustainable impact. For feminist movements in Portuguese-speaking Africa to thrive, a more trust-based, participatory and long-term funding approach is essential, one that centres accountability co-designed with local actors and is sensitive to the realities of political repression, infrastructure limitations, and linguistic diversity.

2.1.4 Opportunities

Despite persistent structural limitations, feminist actors across Portuguese-speaking Africa are innovating new strategies to organise, connect, and resist. One notable avenue is the rise of digital and diaspora organising. Activists are increasingly leveraging encrypted platforms such as WhatsApp, alongside support from diaspora networks, especially in Portugal and Brazil, to preserve movement continuity, build transnational solidarity, and maintain a layer of safety in contexts where overt feminist mobilisation is dangerous or criminalised. These transborder exchanges are critical in authoritarian settings such as Angola and Equatorial Guinea, where repression and surveillance restrict political organising.

Arts and culture are also being tactically deployed as forms of resistance and consciousness-raising. In countries where open advocacy is risky, theatre, storytelling, mural painting, and poetry serve as subversive platforms for expression. As one feminist funder aptly noted, “Feminism lives in the songs, the poems, the performances.” These creative strategies not only circumvent censorship but also reach broader audiences through cultural familiarity. Parallel to this, regional solidarities are emerging, with an increasing interest in convenings and collaborations among Portuguese-speaking, English-speaking, and French-speaking movements. Youth-led initiatives are increasingly grounded in intersectionality, with new actors centring queer, rural, and Indigenous women’s experiences. This marks a notable shift toward more inclusive, participatory, and decolonial models of feminist organising.





2.2 Country-Specific Analysis

2.2.1 Angola

a. Contextual Analysis

Angola's sociopolitical landscape is shaped by decades of civil war, followed by an extended period of authoritarian governance. Although the 2002 peace accords marked a formal end to civil conflict, the country has yet to implement meaningful transitional justice mechanisms. The persistent influence of patriarchy, combined with a lack of basic services and political repression, makes feminist organising exceptionally difficult.

The legal and institutional framework on women's rights is considered somewhat progressive. Angola ratified the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, and the women's rights guaranteed in those instruments are enshrined in the 2010 Constitution. Despite legislative advancements such as the 2011 Law Against Domestic Violence and the 2019 Penal Code reforms, challenges around implementation, funding, and patriarchal resistance remain entrenched. For instance, abortion was partially decriminalised, and discrimination based on sexual orientation was outlawed in 2021, yet these victories are undermined by institutional inertia and a conservative cultural climate. The family code maintains provisions that allow for the marriage of girls below the age of 18, in a clear violation of the Maputo protocol's provisions.

b. Landscape of Women's Rights and Feminist Organisations

Feminist organising in Angola has gained notable traction since the 2010s. One feminist collective, Ondjango Feminista, is recognised for its intersectional, decolonial framework and arts-based approach to trauma healing. Many collectives operate informally due to bureaucratic hurdles that limit access



to legal registration and, thus, funding. Examples of organisations operating in Angola are Rede Mulher, Mwana Pwo, “Eu sou Trans” Movement and the Angolan Identity Archive Organisation.

The Angola mapping revealed strong feminist leadership despite political and logistical obstacles. Participants underscored the need to differentiate between feminist and women-led organisations.

“Feminist values are immutable and non-negotiable principles that guide a society, valuing the dignity of men and women equally.”

~ Angolan Feminist

Another participant emphasised the importance of horizontal leadership in feminist movements, a strategy that is often challenging to implement in traditional hierarchical societies.

“A society accustomed to a hierarchy of power and privileges... will obviously have difficulty adopting horizontal management.”

c. Key Issues and Thematic Focus

Feminist actors in Angola engage with a broad spectrum of interconnected struggles that reflect the complex realities of gender injustice in the country.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains the most pressing and pervasive concern. In the national mapping, an overwhelming 95% of respondents cited GBV as the most urgent issue, underscoring its widespread and systemic nature. Survivors face immense barriers to justice, including patriarchal policing practices, medical gatekeeping, and a judiciary often insensitive to women’s lived realities. Feminist groups are providing vital feminist-informed legal accompaniment, public education, and healing justice initiatives to address this epidemic.





Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is another key battleground, where access to safe abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, maternal healthcare, and menstrual dignity remain highly contested. While abortion is legal under restricted conditions following the 2019 Penal Code reform, implementation is hindered by religious conservatism, stigma, and conscientious objection from medical professionals. Feminist organisations are advocating for an SRHR agenda rooted in bodily autonomy, cultural relevance, and anti-colonial care models. One organisation, for instance, integrates menstrual health, youth education, and rural maternal care into its community health programs.

Political participation also emerges as a critical front, as Angolan feminist organisers challenge a political system that has historically sidelined women's voices. Despite formal representation quotas, real influence is hampered by party patronage networks, gender stereotyping, and tokenistic inclusion. Feminist actors are not only advocating for greater representation but also for a redefinition of leadership rooted in feminist ethics, collective decision-making, and anti-authoritarian governance.

In the realm of **economic justice**, Angolan feminists draw attention to the exclusion and exploitation of women in informal labour sectors, particularly in market vending, agriculture, and domestic work. These sectors lack social protection, and women are routinely exposed to abuse, precarity, and economic violence. For example, women involved in market vending are targeted by the police interfering in their economic activities. Feminist collectives are promoting access to social security, labour rights, and equitable access to credit and resources, while also interrogating the extractivist economic model that displaces communities and deepens inequality.

A vibrant but under-resourced strand of organising focuses on **LGBTQIA+ rights**. Despite the repeal of colonial-era sodomy laws in 2021, queer communities continue to face violence, exclusion, and invisibility. LGBTQIA+ collectives are fostering queer feminist spaces and knowledge production while challenging cisheteronormative frameworks within broader women's rights organisations. As one activist noted during the mapping,





“We must dismantle the idea that feminist struggles belong only to cisgender heterosexual women.”

~ LGBTQIA+ activist

Additionally, disability justice, climate justice and refugee rights are emerging as crucial feminist priorities. Disabled women are advocating against ableism within both state policy and feminist movements themselves, highlighting barriers to healthcare, education, and public life. Meanwhile, women in rural areas, particularly farmers and herbalists, are at the forefront of eco-feminist resistance to land grabs, deforestation, and water crises. These struggles highlight the interconnectedness of environmental and gendered injustices, underscoring the need for feminist engagement in climate governance.

d. Strategies and Approaches

To address these complex issues, Angolan feminists employ a diverse and innovative range of strategies. These include direct action, such as public demonstrations and digital campaigns; capacity building through feminist leadership schools and community workshops; solidarity networks offering psychosocial and legal support to gender-based violence survivors; and storytelling, theatre, and visual art as tools for healing, testimony, and political mobilisation. A feminist collective’s use of feminist schools and trauma-informed care exemplifies a commitment to holistic, community-rooted transformation. These strategies affirm that feminist organising in Angola is not just reactive but visionary, reimagining justice, care, and power from the ground up.

e. Achievements and Milestones

Angola has made several landmark gains in feminist and queer rights over the past decade—many of which are the result of persistent, grassroots organising led by feminist collectives. One of the most significant legal victories came with the repeal of colonial-era sodomy laws in 2021, which marked a critical step toward recognising the dignity and rights of LGBTQIA+ Angolans. This legislative change, long demanded by queer and feminist activists, officially decriminalised same-sex relationships, symbolically dismantling one of the enduring legacies of Portuguese colonial moral codes. However, while the repeal





altered the legal framework, activists continue to highlight that societal stigma, family-based violence, and institutional discrimination remain entrenched. As one queer activist reflected during the mapping,

“The law has changed, but the daily fear we live with has not disappeared.”

~ LGBTQIA+ activist

Another major advance occurred in 2019, when Angola’s Penal Code was reformed to include legal access to abortion under restricted conditions, including cases of rape, fetal malformation, or threats to the mother’s health (physical or mental) or life. This development, influenced by sustained advocacy from feminist organisations was hailed as a partial victory. However, access remains highly uneven. Many women, particularly in rural areas, still face stigma, bureaucratic delays, and gatekeeping by conservative medical practitioners. Feminist groups continue to push for a rights-based and non-punitive approach to reproductive justice, rooted in autonomy and informed choice.

A cultural and political milestone for Angola’s feminist ecosystem is the FAOFEM (Fórum Angolano Feminista)- an annual feminist forum hosted by Ondjango Feminista. Now in its tenth year, FAOFEM serves as a vibrant space for feminist exchange, political education, healing justice, and intergenerational dialogue. It is widely regarded as a landmark event for the feminist movement in Angola, bringing together activists from across the country and diaspora.

“FAOFEM is not just a forum—it is a space of political safety and healing. It’s where we breathe as feminists”.

~ Angolan Feminist

The forum has elevated the visibility of intersectional struggles, including those of queer, rural, and disabled women, and has catalysed collaborative projects and advocacy campaigns.





Alongside these events, the increasing political visibility of women and LGBTQIA+ communities represents a major cultural shift in Angola's public discourse. More women are entering political spaces, both within and beyond formal government structures, and feminist vocabulary is gradually being integrated into mainstream media and civil society. Queer visibility, while still precarious, is also on the rise, particularly in digital and artistic spaces where LGBTQIA+ youth are asserting their presence and narratives. These shifts challenge long-standing norms of heteropatriarchal silence and signal a growing appetite for inclusive governance and justice.

Finally, Angola has witnessed the emergence and institutionalisation of digital feminist archives and queer safe spaces, which serve both as repositories of memory and as protective environments for organising. Initiatives like the *Arquivo de Identidade Angolana* are documenting Angola's feminist and queer histories through oral testimonies, zines, and digital storytelling. These archives counter the erasure of Portuguese-speaking feminist knowledge, creating intergenerational continuity for future movements.

“When our stories are archived in our own language and voices, we claim space in history.”

~ **Angolan Feminist**

Meanwhile, informal and semi-clandestine safe spaces- especially for queer and trans individuals- are being fostered through networks of trust, community care, and online organising.

Together, these gains reflect the creativity, resilience, and strategic tenacity of Angola's feminist movement. While the terrain remains uneven and often hostile, these victories lay important groundwork for a deeper, more transformative feminist future.

f. Funding Landscape

The Angolan feminist movement operates within a deeply constrained funding environment, marked by both historical neglect and recent donor withdrawal. Chronic underfunding has left many collectives without the financial security





required to sustain their operations, let alone grow their impact. This scarcity has been exacerbated by the abrupt exit of key international donors. For instance, the Open Society Foundation, once a major funder in Angola, withdrew entirely in 2022, citing internal strategy changes. This departure left a critical gap in support for rights-based and feminist organising, particularly for organisations that had depended on its flexible funding streams.

The volatility of donor commitments was further underscored in 2025, when USAID unexpectedly cancelled a five-year agreement with Rede Mulher—a major feminist network—just a month after it had been signed.

“Rede Mulher signed a 5-year agreement with USAID in December 2024... it was canceled in January 2025.”

~ Angolan Feminist

Such sudden reversals not only disrupt programmatic continuity but also erode trust and planning capacity among feminist actors. This pattern reflects a broader problem in the funding ecosystem, where shifts in geopolitical priorities or donor bureaucracy can destabilise years of movement-building work.

Compounding this problem is the fact that many feminist groups remain structurally excluded from traditional donor calls. Language barriers are a major obstacle—most funding calls are issued in English or French, effectively sidelining Portuguese-speaking actors. Furthermore, bureaucratic requirements such as legal registration, annual audits, and formal banking systems are often out of reach for grassroots collectives operating informally or under restrictive civic conditions. Ideological misalignment also plays a role; many feminist groups that challenge capitalism, heteronormativity, or international development orthodoxy find themselves ignored by mainstream funders.

In this challenging landscape, the African Women’s Development Fund (AWDF) has emerged as a rare example of responsive, feminist-aligned philanthropy. Multiple respondents praised the fund’s flexibility and trust-based approach.





“The fund allowed us to talk about issues like menstruation, sexual harassment in schools, and LGBTQIA+ visibility.”

~ Angolan Feminist

These themes—often seen as “too sensitive” or politically risky by traditional donors—are central to feminist work on the ground. AWDF’s approach, which includes funding in Portuguese, support for informal groups, and allowance for care and healing practices, was repeatedly cited as a model for feminist resourcing.

Nevertheless, the broader funding landscape remains uneven and fragile. Without sustained, core, multi-year support, Angolan feminist organisations are forced to operate project-to-project, limiting their strategic autonomy. What is urgently needed is a reimagining of donor relationships, one that centres language justice, trust, and long-term investment in feminist ecosystems, rather than short-term service delivery.

g. Challenges and Structural Barriers

The feminist movement in Angola continues to operate under intense structural constraints, many of which are deeply rooted in the country’s political, linguistic, and institutional context. One of the most persistent challenges identified by activists is the bureaucratic complexity involved in registering feminist organisations. Legal recognition remains essential for accessing funding, renting space, opening bank accounts, and participating in national policy dialogues. However, the process of legalisation is both costly and highly centralised in Luanda, requiring extensive documentation, legal representation, and time. Many grassroots or emerging feminist groups, particularly those led by youth, queer activists, or rural women, struggle to meet these requirements. As a result, they operate informally, which renders them ineligible for most donor grants and leaves them vulnerable to state scrutiny.

Compounding this issue is the barrier posed by language. Most international funding calls, training opportunities, and advocacy toolkits are published in English or, occasionally, French. This creates a significant accessibility gap for Portuguese-speaking feminist organisations. Translation support is rarely





provided, and many local groups do not have in-house capacity to translate complex grant documents or policy frameworks. The result is systemic exclusion from regional and global feminist ecosystems.

“We are not less political or less radical. We are just excluded by the power of language.”

~ **Angolan Feminist**

This linguistic marginalisation perpetuates a dynamic where Angolan feminists are seen as peripheral, despite their extensive work on the ground.

Political and religious interference further restricts the scope of feminist organising. Angola remains a politically sensitive environment, where civic space is narrowing and dissent is often criminalised. Feminist organisations working on issues like abortion, LGBTQIA+ rights, or sex education are frequently accused of “*corrupting morals*” or “*importing foreign ideologies*.” Religious institutions, particularly Evangelical and Catholic churches, exert immense influence over public discourse and education, and have consistently opposed feminist policy demands. Feminist activists report instances of threats, digital surveillance, and public defamation campaigns, especially when advocating for bodily autonomy or queer visibility. The absence of academic-led gender studies and consistent, disaggregated data on women’s social status significantly hinders efforts to advance women’s agency. Feminist actors are frequently pressured to substantiate their claims with statistics that simply do not exist. As a result, organisations are often compelled to divert limited resources toward generating their own data—an undertaking that demands technical expertise and capacities that are not always accessible or equitably distributed.

Internal exclusions within feminist spaces themselves exacerbate these pressures. LGBTQIA+ and disabled women are often left out of mainstream women’s rights agendas or included only tokenistically. Many organisations lack the language, frameworks, or physical accessibility to include disabled women meaningfully, and queer activists have reported feeling unsafe or marginalised even within feminist coalitions. This calls for an urgent rethinking of movement architecture to embed intersectionality as a core organising principle.





In addition, the digital divide continues to reinforce inequalities, particularly between urban and rural areas. Feminist campaigns, educational materials, and virtual events often presume access to stable internet and digital literacy. Yet in many rural provinces, women do not have smartphones, cannot afford data, or lack safe online environments. As digital organising becomes increasingly central to feminist mobilisation, there is a real risk of erasing rural and economically marginalised voices unless alternative communication strategies- such as radio, community theatre, or in-person convenings- are actively supported.

Finally, feminist organisers continue to contend with stereotyping and social stigma. Feminism is often portrayed in Angolan media and public discourse as foreign, elitist, or anti-family. Women who identify openly as feminists are sometimes shamed as “angry,” “unmarriageable,” or “against culture.” These narratives are not only misogynistic but politically dangerous, as they delegitimise feminist critique and reproduce harmful binaries between “traditional” values and feminist change. Furthermore, this has also enabled constant online violence against feminist activists and collectives causing reputational damage.

Yet despite these intersecting challenges, Angolan feminist activists have not retreated. Instead, they are building intersectional, community-led networks that prioritise care, creativity, and collective resistance. Through feminist schools, healing spaces, arts-based advocacy, and digital archives, they are cultivating an ecosystem of solidarity that reaches beyond the limitations imposed by the state or donors. This work, often invisible to outsiders, is not only transformative but visionary. It models a feminist future rooted in language justice, interdependence, and radical care.

h. Opportunities and Recommendations

Despite the significant structural and political constraints facing Angola’s feminist movement, there are also powerful opportunities for deepening, expanding, and sustaining feminist organising in the country. These opportunities lie not only in external funding and support, but in the rich ecosystem of feminist resistance already in motion—particularly through regional alliances, digital organising, and feminist leadership in climate justice. The national mapping clearly highlighted that these areas offer a fertile foundation for growth and collaboration, if they are supported in ways that respect linguistic, cultural, and political realities.





One of the most urgent and widely shared recommendations is the need for core, multi-year, and flexible funding, particularly for informal and emergent feminist collectives. Many of these groups are not legally registered and operate in precarious conditions, often without office space, digital infrastructure, or salaries. They rely heavily on voluntary labour and emotional resilience. Long-term, trust-based funding, untied to narrow project outcomes, would enable feminist organisations to develop internal systems, retain staff, support community leaders, and respond promptly to crises. This kind of funding is especially critical for groups that work on sensitive issues such as sexual rights, LGBTQIA+ advocacy, or post-conflict trauma—areas often considered “*too political*” or “*too controversial*” by mainstream donors.

A second key opportunity lies in institutional support in Portuguese, particularly in the form of translation, research archiving, and knowledge production. As Angola is a Portuguese-speaking country, feminist actors are often locked out of international resources, training opportunities, and feminist literature that is overwhelmingly published in English or French. Donors and partners can bridge this gap by ensuring all communications, calls for proposals, and capacity-building materials are available in Portuguese. Moreover, supporting the development of archival initiatives, such as oral histories, community zines, and digital storytelling, would help preserve and amplify the unique voices of Angolan feminists, many of whom work in rural and Indigenous communities where resistance is often oral, embodied, and deeply rooted in ancestral traditions.

Integration into regional and international feminist networks also presents a valuable pathway forward. Angolan feminists have much to share—and much to gain—through reciprocal learning with movements across Southern Africa, Latin America, and Portuguese-speaking diaspora spaces such as Brazil and Timor-Leste. These networks can facilitate strategic solidarity, joint campaigns, cross-border protection for activists at risk, and regional convenings that centre Portuguese-speaking realities.

“We are tired of being invisible in African feminism- we need a seat at the table, in our own language.”

~ Angolan Feminist





The mapping also highlighted the potential to theorise and cultivate an Angolan feminism that is rooted in matriarchal heritage, communal life, and ancestral practices. Rather than adopting foreign frameworks wholesale, feminist organisers are drawing inspiration from precolonial matrilineal traditions, Indigenous land stewardship, and oral storytelling to imagine models of justice and governance that feel culturally grounded and politically radical. This re-grounding in local cosmologies could serve as a powerful counter-narrative to dominant development discourses, while also building broader public legitimacy for feminist ideals.

Finally, the mapping called for capacity-building programs that equip activists with tools for safe advocacy, resource mobilisation, and political literacy. Many collectives expressed a desire for technical skills, grant writing, budget management, digital security, and legal literacy. However, they emphasised that such training must be led by feminists, in Portuguese, and rooted in local realities. Activists also requested mentorship opportunities with regional feminist leaders, safe spaces for healing and reflection, and support for youth and queer-led groups who are often the first targets of state repression.

Taken together, these opportunities present not just a path for survival but a roadmap for transformational feminist movement-building in Angola. With the right kind of support, grounded in language justice, intersectionality, and political solidarity, Angolan feminists are ready to lead, create, and imagine new feminist futures rooted in their own histories, communities, and struggles.





2.2.2 Cape Verde

a. Contextual Analysis

Cape Verde stands out among Portuguese-speaking African countries for its relatively stable democracy and consistent legal progress in gender equality. The nation has ratified key international instruments, including CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, and has integrated them into national law. Despite this, gaps in implementation and persisting patriarchal norms limit the realisation of women's rights. Political representation of women has increased, notably with the adoption of Law No. 67/IX/2019 establishing a minimum quota of 40% for either gender on electoral lists. However, structural inequalities remain, particularly in access to land, resources, and leadership outside formal political spheres.

b. Landscape of Women's Rights and Feminist Organisations

Cabo Verde is home to a diverse and decentralised network of women's organisations, many of which emerged during the post-independence period. Key actors include MORABI, REMPF, ACLCVBG, and ICIEG. These organisations focus on a spectrum of issues, from economic justice and GBV to political participation and environmental resilience. A significant development is the emergence of young, urban feminist collectives like Plataforma Mulher Cabo Verde, who are using digital media and creative arts to challenge gender stereotypes and advocate for bodily autonomy.



c. Key Issues and Thematic Focus

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Despite the existence of legal protections against domestic and sexual violence in Cabo Verde, the issue remains deeply rooted and significantly underreported. Survivors often face social stigma, institutional apathy, and a lack of accessible support services, which deter them from seeking justice. While the government has enacted frameworks to combat GBV, implementation remains uneven, particularly in rural areas where police presence and healthcare infrastructure are minimal. As a result, many cases go unpunished, reinforcing cycles of silence and impunity. Feminist organisations have raised concerns about the lack of trauma-informed responses and have advocated for survivor-led reforms.

Economic Inequality

Women in Cabo Verde are disproportionately concentrated in the informal economy, engaging in activities such as domestic work, market vending, and small-scale agriculture. These sectors offer little to no social protection, leaving women vulnerable to income instability, health shocks, and exploitation. The informal nature of their labour also excludes them from legal labour protections, pensions, and maternity benefits. Furthermore, financial services and training programs are often not accessible to women in low-income or rural settings. Feminist groups have called for a revaluation of women's unpaid and informal labour and for policies that include social protection, land rights, and access to credit.

Political Participation

Although Cabo Verde has implemented gender quotas to increase women's representation in formal political spaces, these measures have not translated into substantive influence within political parties or policymaking bodies. Women remain largely excluded from leadership positions and strategic decision-making roles, often relegated to symbolic participation. Party structures continue to be dominated by patriarchal norms, where feminist agendas are sidelined in favour of elite consensus-building. Activists note that while visibility has improved, the political culture must shift to ensure meaningful participation and accountability. Mentorship and intergenerational leadership programs are emerging as promising tools to bridge this gap.





Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

Access to comprehensive SRHR services in Cabo Verde is hampered by persistent cultural and religious taboos. Open dialogue about contraception, abortion, and sexual education remains sensitive, particularly among adolescents and within conservative communities. Although abortion is legally permitted under specific circumstances, stigma and lack of information restrict access. Sexual education in schools is often limited, heteronormative, or completely absent. Feminist organisations have emphasised the need for intersectional SRHR frameworks that are youth-friendly, culturally sensitive, and inclusive of LGBTQIA+ needs. Community-based education and peer-led outreach are being used as alternative strategies to reach marginalised groups.

Climate Vulnerability

As a small island developing state, Cabo Verde is acutely vulnerable to climate change impacts, including water scarcity, desertification, and coastal erosion. These environmental challenges disproportionately affect women, particularly in rural and fishing communities where livelihoods are tied to natural resources. Women often bear the brunt of food insecurity and caregiving burdens during environmental crises, yet they are rarely included in climate planning or decision-making processes. Feminist actors in Cabo Verde have begun to link gender justice with climate justice, advocating for ecofeminist approaches that recognise women as both victims and agents of resilience in the climate crisis.

Anti-Gender Movement

There is no record or evidence of an organised or active anti-feminist movement, as we see in other countries. However, some people have a divergent opinion regarding the feminist movement and question some of its aspects. The primary focus in Cape Verde has been the advancement of women's rights and the fight against gender-based violence, with movements and organisations such as the Organisation of Women of Cape Verde (OMCV) and the Cape Verdean Association for the Fight Against Gender-Based Violence leading important initiatives in this regard.

d. Strategies and Approaches

Feminist organisations in Cabo Verde utilise a multi-pronged approach to respond to the identified issues. Legal advocacy remains a cornerstone of feminist work in Cabo Verde, particularly in addressing gender-based violence





(GBV). Organisations are supporting survivors by offering direct legal assistance, helping them navigate judicial processes, file complaints, and access protective measures. These interventions are often supplemented by awareness campaigns aimed at informing women of their rights and available legal protections. In parallel, feminist groups are pushing for the stronger enforcement of existing GBV laws, which are often underutilised or inconsistently applied. This includes training police officers, magistrates, and health professionals on gender sensitivity and survivor-centred approaches to justice.

In addition, feminist organisations across Cape Verde are implementing training programs that equip women with skills in agriculture, artisanal crafts, and micro-entrepreneurship. These efforts aim to enhance women's economic autonomy and reduce dependency on precarious or informal employment. Special attention is given to rural women, who face compounded barriers due to limited access to markets, credit, and land. Economic empowerment initiatives often integrate financial literacy, cooperative formation, and value-chain development, ensuring that income generation is coupled with community resilience and feminist values of solidarity and mutual aid.

Recognising the importance of early feminist consciousness, organisations have increasingly prioritised youth engagement. This includes the development of digital campaigns using social media to disseminate messages about gender equality, consent, and reproductive rights. School-based programs have also been introduced, focusing on age-appropriate feminist education, anti-bullying, and leadership development for girls. Youth-led feminist clubs and peer education models are emerging as effective tools to foster activism among adolescents, counter gender-based stereotypes, and create safe spaces for dialogue within both formal and informal learning environments.

The arts have become a powerful medium for feminist mobilisation in Cabo Verde. Music, theatre, poetry, and visual art are increasingly used to challenge patriarchal norms, disrupt stereotypes, and imagine more inclusive futures. Theatre collectives, in particular, use performance to open public discussion on taboo subjects like GBV, sexual autonomy, and LGBTQIA+ rights, often gaining access to audiences beyond traditional activist circles. Visual artists and musicians are also collaborating with grassroots organisations to amplify feminist narratives and reclaim cultural spaces from hegemonic and exclusionary discourses.





In response to Cabo Verde's climate vulnerability, women-led cooperatives are advocating for environmentally sustainable and gender-just approaches to climate adaptation. These include promoting agroecological practices, advocating for equitable water distribution, and incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into climate policy. Feminist organisations have linked environmental justice to broader social equity goals, recognising that women, especially in rural and coastal areas, are often frontline defenders of land and water.

“Women are the first to feel the drought, the first to act, and the last to be heard.”

~ Cape Verdian Feminist

This growing ecofeminist lens positions women not only as victims of climate change but also as leaders in building resilient, sustainable communities.

e. Achievements and Milestones

Cabo Verde has made notable policy strides in promoting gender equality, particularly through the implementation of the gender quota law, which mandates a minimum level of representation for women in elected and appointed positions. This legislative development was fuelled by feminist movements and has been a significant step in increasing women's participation in political decision-making spaces and shifting societal perceptions about leadership. Additionally, the development and operationalisation of the National Gender Equality Plan has helped consolidate strategic objectives for women's rights across multiple sectors—health, education, justice, and employment—serving as a guiding framework for both public institutions and civil society actors.

A key driver of progress in Cabo Verde has been the strength of institutional partnerships. Collaborations between feminist NGOs and state institutions, particularly the Instituto Cabo-Verdiano para a Igualdade e Equidade de Género (ICIEG), have facilitated greater inclusion of civil society perspectives in policy-making and monitoring. These partnerships have improved gender-sensitive governance and led to joint programming, such as awareness campaigns and training workshops for public servants. While challenges remain in terms of





consistency and resource allocation, these alliances reflect a more integrated and participatory model of feminist policy advocacy.

The feminist movement in Cabo Verde has experienced a visible cultural shift, especially among younger generations. There is a growing public embrace of feminist language, concepts, and narratives in media, academia, and activist circles. Youth-led organisations and collectives are increasingly vocal in calling out sexism, promoting bodily autonomy, and advocating for LGBTQIA+ rights. Social media has amplified this visibility, with digital campaigns pushing back against misogyny and creating platforms for feminist expression.

“Feminism is no longer a taboo—it’s a tool we use to make our voices heard.”

~ **Young Feminist**

Given Cabo Verde’s archipelagic geography, cross-island coordination has historically posed a challenge for movement-building. However, feminist actors have begun to overcome this fragmentation through the establishment of multi-island platforms that connect local organisations for shared learning and joint action. These platforms allow for coordination of advocacy strategies, resource sharing, and collective mobilisation on issues such as gender-based violence, reproductive health, and climate justice. By fostering unity across the islands, these networks are helping to build a more coherent and resilient national feminist movement.

f. Funding Landscape

While Cabo Verde receives support from institutions like the United Nations and European Union, feminist actors highlight a lack of long-term, flexible funding. Most grants are short-term and project-based, with bureaucratic hurdles that exclude grassroots and informal actors. Language remains a barrier, as many opportunities are issued in English or French, bypassing Portuguese-speaking networks. Several interviewees also noted the “*donor fatigue*” in targeting Cabo Verde, perceived as a “*success story*,” which masks persisting gender inequalities.





g. Challenges and Structural Barriers

While Cabo Verde has made commendable strides in developing gender equality policies—such as the National Gender Equality Plan and legislative quotas—their implementation remains inconsistent and under-resourced. Many gender-responsive policies lack the institutional follow-through needed to translate intentions into concrete changes at the community level. Localised enforcement mechanisms, particularly around gender-based violence (GBV), remain weak, and judicial actors are often not trained in survivor-centred approaches. As a result, policies meant to protect and empower women often fall short of their intended impact, especially in marginalised communities.

A persistent urban-rural gap continues to shape the accessibility of feminist services across Cabo Verde. While feminist organisations and support centres are increasingly visible in urban centres like Praia and Mindelo, rural and remote island communities often lack access to these essential services. Women in these areas face barriers such as limited transportation, digital exclusion, and lower literacy rates, which hinder their ability to participate in empowerment programs or seek justice for violations. This geographic disparity exacerbates inequality and often leaves rural women isolated from both state and civil society support systems.

Despite increasing feminist visibility in public discourse, the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ rights within mainstream feminist advocacy in Cabo Verde remains limited. LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly trans and non-binary persons, are often sidelined or erased in national debates around gender equity. Although some youth-led groups are making efforts to integrate queer perspectives, more established feminist institutions have been slow to fully embrace intersectionality. This exclusion not only weakens solidarity within the movement but also undermines the holistic vision of gender justice that many activists seek to advance.

A noticeable generational divide is emerging within Cabo Verde's feminist landscape. Longstanding women's rights institutions, often structured around formal advocacy and policy engagement, sometimes struggle to connect with the new wave of digital-first, youth-led feminist activism. Younger activists tend to favour more radical, decolonial, and intersectional approaches, using social media platforms to mobilise and educate. While both groups share common goals, limited dialogue and collaboration between them have led to fragmented





efforts. Building bridges across these generational and methodological divides will be crucial for sustaining a cohesive and dynamic feminist movement in the country.

h. Opportunities

Cape Verde's young feminists are increasingly harnessing the power of digital platforms to challenge patriarchal norms, raise awareness on gender justice, and build peer networks across the islands. Social media has become a key space for feminist dialogue, particularly for issues traditionally silenced in public discourse, such as LGBTQIA+ rights, sexual autonomy, and menstrual justice. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp groups are being used to run educational campaigns, share survivor stories, and mobilise around local advocacy efforts. By expanding training in digital literacy and online safety, particularly for young women and girls, Cape Verde can deepen the reach and sustainability of its feminist youth organising.

“The internet is our meeting place. It’s where we build community when we cannot find it in physical spaces.”

~ Cape Verdian Feminist

A key opportunity lies in bridging the gap between legacy women's organisations and the new wave of digitally-savvy, youth-led movements. While older institutions bring experience in policy engagement, institutional navigation, and coalition-building, younger activists often bring fresh energy, intersectional approaches, and novel communication strategies. Facilitating intergenerational learning spaces, through mentorship programs, collaborative campaigns, and shared training forums, can foster mutual respect and deepen strategic alignment. This kind of dialogue is crucial for overcoming tensions between formal and informal organising styles and for building a resilient, multi-generational feminist movement capable of adapting to evolving socio-political realities.

Cape Verde's rich cultural traditions, ranging from music and poetry to theatre and oral storytelling, offer a powerful medium for feminist messaging and consciousness-raising. Artists have historically played a central role in shaping





national identity and public imagination, and feminist actors are increasingly collaborating with musicians, writers, and visual artists to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and advocate for social change. Campaigns that centre local art forms such as morna, batuque, and tabanka can effectively communicate feminist values in culturally resonant ways. By supporting art-based interventions and creative collectives, the movement can foster wider public engagement and reach audiences beyond formal activist spaces.

Cape Verde holds strategic potential to act as a convening centre for Portuguese-speaking feminist actors across Africa and the diaspora. Its democratic stability, geographical accessibility, and history of pan-African cultural diplomacy make it an ideal location for hosting regional gatherings, leadership retreats, and feminist festivals. Such convenings can offer critical platforms for shared learning, solidarity-building, and co-strategising among feminist groups from Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea and beyond. Moreover, by strengthening its presence in networks like FEMNET or AWDF, Cabo Verdean feminists can amplify Portuguese-speaking voices that have long been marginalised within continental and global feminist movements.





2.2.3 Equatorial Guinea

a. Contextual Analysis

Equatorial Guinea remains one of the most politically repressive countries in Africa, governed since 1979 by President Teodoro Obiang. The concentration of power in the executive branch and the lack of political pluralism have created a hostile environment for civil society.

“Equatorial Guinea presents a particularly challenging context for the development of feminism, due to historical, cultural, political, and legal factors.”

~ Equatoguinean Feminist

The country’s strong adherence to traditional and religious values, mainly Christian and animist, underpins a deeply patriarchal worldview that discourages feminist organising and reinforces gender hierarchies. Feminist activists face a dual burden: political repression that curtails their rights and freedoms, and societal stigma that marginalises them as “*subversive*.”

b. Landscape of Women’s Rights and Feminist Organisations

Formal feminist organisations are scarce in Equatorial Guinea due to the restrictive legal environment. Most feminist advocacy is embedded within broader human rights, cultural, or service-oriented initiatives. Some feminist groups provide key platforms for collective feminist expression, often without



legal registration. Additionally, hybrid models for example one law firm, Jones and Sacristan, while technically a commercial entity, delivers crucial pro bono legal support to women and LGBTQIA+ communities.

“We are forced to work in the shadows. Even getting a room for meetings requires knowing the owner personally and ensuring no one reports you.”

~ Equatoguinean Feminist

This need for discretion has shaped a unique feminist landscape characterised by artistic activism, private gatherings, and transnational networks of solidarity.

c. Key Issues and Thematic focus

Feminist actors in Equatorial Guinea face a multitude of interconnected and deeply entrenched challenges. Foremost among these is the extreme restriction on freedom of expression and association. The 1999 Law on Associations continues to be a major barrier, as it stipulates that all civil society organisations must receive prior approval from the state to operate—without providing any mechanism for appeal or review in cases of denial. This legal framework not only stifles independent organising but also cultivates an atmosphere of fear and self-censorship. Feminist initiatives, which often challenge the status quo around gender, sexuality, and power, are especially vulnerable under this system.

Compounding these restrictions is the widespread criminalisation and social hostility directed at LGBTQIA+ individuals, with transgender women bearing the brunt of this violence and marginalisation. Reports highlight that trans women are frequently harassed, denied employment, and subjected to both police violence and familial rejection. Without legal protections or recognition of gender identity, they exist in a state of near-total invisibility. Feminist collectives seeking to include queer and trans voices are often forced to operate clandestinely, using encrypted messaging platforms or convening in diaspora spaces to strategise and find solidarity.





Gender-based violence (GBV), sexuality, and reproductive health are all topics cloaked in silence and stigma in Equatorial Guinea. Cultural taboos, coupled with the lack of comprehensive sex education or public health campaigns, mean that survivors of GBV often have no safe avenues for disclosure or support. This silence is reinforced by patriarchal norms that blame victims and protect abusers, making it dangerous and emotionally taxing for women and gender-diverse individuals to seek justice or even speak out.

Religious conservatism and entrenched cultural narratives further undermine feminist organising. The influence of conservative Christian institutions has played a significant role in shaping public opinion, often casting feminism as a foreign import that threatens family values and social harmony. As a result, many women—especially those outside urban elite circles—are hesitant to self-identify as feminists or align with feminist causes for fear of ostracism or spiritual condemnation. The perception of feminism as anti-religious or immoral poses a major barrier to movement-building, limiting the reach of feminist ideas and reducing the political space for gender justice advocacy.

Despite these daunting realities, feminist actors continue to resist in creative and resilient ways, building underground networks, engaging with faith leaders, and finding hope in youth-led and diasporic organising.

Anti-rights movement

Despite the absence of explicitly organised anti-feminist movements in Equatorial Guinea, the country continues to display deep-rooted patriarchal structures and social hostility toward gender equality. Feminist voices often face stigmatisation from both state institutions and communities, and women who publicly support feminist or queer causes are frequently subjected to exclusion, intimidation and moral censorship. In this context, being openly feminist is often perceived as a form of Western imposition and is met with accusations of cultural betrayal. At the same time, the government enforces policies that reinforce traditional gender norms and restrict the civic space available for women's rights defenders.

d. Strategies and Approaches

In Equatorial Guinea's highly repressive political context, feminist organising must rely on strategies that are both discreet and culturally resonant. Traditional advocacy methods are too risky under a regime that surveils and criminalises





dissent, so feminist actors have developed innovative, context-sensitive approaches that allow them to navigate censorship and social hostility while still pushing for gender justice and collective liberation.

One of the most potent approaches is the use of cultural and artistic activism, particularly theatre. Feminist Collectives engage in storytelling, dance, and performance as vehicles for feminist expression and consciousness-raising. These performances are not only accessible to broad audiences but also provide a safer space for dialogue on sensitive issues such as gender-based violence, early marriage, and reproductive autonomy.

*“Theatre allows us to say what cannot be said
in political spaces.”*

~ **Equatoguinean Feminist**

This creative medium becomes both a shield and a sword—protecting organisers from direct confrontation while also challenging oppressive social norms through symbolism, humour, and metaphor.

Legal accompaniment and advice have also become a crucial area of feminist resistance. A national law firm has emerged as an essential ally to women and LGBTQIA+ individuals, offering strategic legal aid in cases of domestic violence, unjust detentions, and discrimination. Although the firm operates as a commercial entity and is therefore excluded from most international NGO funding streams, it has carved out a unique space in the ecosystem of feminist defence. Survivors and organisers alike refer to the firm as a lifeline in an environment where police and judicial institutions often work against, rather than for, vulnerable populations.

In the absence of public organising spaces, digital platforms and encrypted communication have become central tools for coordination and education. Platforms like WhatsApp are used to discreetly share information about sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), circulate feminist materials, and coordinate underground workshops. These workshops—often hosted in private homes or church meeting rooms—equip young women and queer people with knowledge about consent, bodily autonomy, and feminist histories. Given the high surveillance and risk of digital monitoring, encryption and trust within networks are essential, and many young organisers receive digital safety training from diasporic allies.





Lastly, transnational solidarity plays a vital role in sustaining feminist organising in Equatorial Guinea. Collaborations with feminist actors in São Tomé and Príncipe, Cameroon, and the broader Portuguese-speaking diaspora provide protection, shared learning, and legitimacy. These cross-border alliances allow activists to access resources, build regional campaigns, and retreat to safer environments when threats escalate. They also help counter the isolation imposed by state repression by affirming that Equatoguinean feminists are not alone, but rather part of a broader continental and global struggle for liberation.

These approaches reflect a feminism that is deeply adaptive, community-rooted, and imaginative—one that reclaims cultural tools, legal tactics, and global solidarities to resist silencing and build collective power under siege.

e. Achievements and Gains

Despite the immense structural constraints imposed by authoritarian governance, religious conservatism, and widespread social stigma, feminist actors in Equatorial Guinea have managed to carve out meaningful spaces for resistance, transformation, and cultural reimagination. These efforts, while often discreet and under-recognised, reflect both the resilience and creativity of grassroots organising in one of Africa's most repressive states.

One significant area of progress is the increased awareness among youth about concepts such as consent, bodily autonomy, and gender justice. Through informal education spaces, peer-led discussions, and digital outreach, feminist language is gradually entering public consciousness, particularly among younger generations who are more digitally connected and globally aware. Activists report that although public demonstrations are impossible, conversations about power, patriarchy, and gender inequality are taking place in schools, homes, and social media platforms. This quiet shift in discourse represents a foundational step toward broader cultural change.

Another key advancement has been the establishment of virtual safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ and feminist dialogue, particularly among the Equatoguinean diaspora in Spain and Portugal. These online communities have become vital sanctuaries for expression, political education, and emotional support. They offer a rare space where queer and feminist individuals can speak openly without fear of surveillance or persecution. Beyond solidarity, these digital networks





serve as logistical hubs for organising, resource-sharing, and international advocacy. They also enable diaspora activists to amplify voices from within the country, bridging local struggles with global feminist movements.

Perhaps most uniquely, theatrical and literary collectives have found ways to speak truth to power through art. Framing their critique in the language of culture and creativity, these groups have managed to secure limited public platforms—even receiving state cultural funding on occasion. By embedding feminist messages in poetry, storytelling, and stage performance, they open conversations that would otherwise be censored. These artistic interventions are able to critique gender violence, political silencing, and marginalisation without triggering direct repression, precisely because they operate within an “acceptable” cultural register.

“Even if we are not in the street, we are in the minds of people. Our words are in the poems, the songs, the performances.”

~ Equatoguinean Feminist

This statement captures the essence of feminist resistance in Equatorial Guinea—its ability to infiltrate hearts and minds through indirect yet powerful means. By embedding feminist critique in art, digital spaces, and intergenerational education, these actors continue to cultivate a consciousness of justice and autonomy that cannot be easily erased, even under constant threat.

These achievements highlight the importance of recognising diverse forms of feminist resistance, particularly those that may not conform to traditional NGO models but are deeply rooted in culture, community, and care.

f. Funding Landscape

The funding ecosystem in Equatorial Guinea presents a stark example of structural exclusion that not only limits feminist organising but also actively undermines its sustainability. International funding is heavily centralised in the hands of international NGOs (INGOs), multilateral institutions, and foreign embassies—entities that often operate with little or no consultation with local feminist voices. This disconnect leaves community-rooted feminist groups





without the resources, legitimacy, or autonomy required to scale or sustain their work. Feminist collectives that are informal, unregistered, or operating underground due to security risks find themselves entirely locked out of traditional donor systems.

A particularly telling illustration of this exclusion is the case of a law firm that has become an essential provider of feminist legal aid and protection services for survivors of gender-based violence and LGBTQIA+ discrimination. Despite its vital work, the firm is systematically disqualified from most feminist or human rights grants because of its legal status as a private business. This reflects a critical blind spot in donor frameworks: *“a gap in support mechanisms that penalise hybrid models.”* In contexts like Equatorial Guinea—where civil society registration is nearly impossible—actors often turn to hybrid organisational models out of necessity, not choice. Yet, rigid funding criteria fail to account for this political reality.

The **language barrier** further exacerbates these funding inequities. Most funding applications and calls for proposals are issued in French or English, with very few available in Portuguese or Spanish—languages spoken in Equatorial Guinea.

“We do the work. But we can’t tell anyone officially that we exist or apply for help.”

~ **Equatoguinean Feminist**

This statement encapsulates the devastating contradiction many activists face: doing crucial grassroots feminist work in hostile environments while remaining invisible to the very systems designed to support them.

The result is a deeply skewed funding landscape that rewards visibility, legality, and linguistic access over community embeddedness and political relevance. Without a radical shift toward more inclusive, flexible, and linguistically accessible funding models, feminist organising in Equatorial Guinea will continue to be undervalued and under-resourced, despite its profound impact and courageous resilience. Funders must reconsider eligibility frameworks, invest in translation and accompaniment, and develop grant mechanisms that embrace rather than penalise the diverse and adaptive forms feminist organising takes under repression.





g. Challenges and Structural Barriers

Feminist actors in Equatorial Guinea operate under immense structural and social constraints that shape both the form and scope of their organising. At the forefront of these challenges is the persistent threat of state surveillance and retaliation. The authoritarian regime maintains tight control over civic life through intelligence networks, censorship, and restrictive laws such as the 1999 Law on Associations. Public events, even those framed as educational or cultural, are closely monitored, and attempts to register independent feminist organisations are often denied outright or delayed indefinitely. This surveillance creates a climate of fear that discourages mobilisation, silences dissent and drives feminist action into the shadows. As a result, many groups avoid visibility and operate informally, forfeiting access to basic protections and institutional legitimacy.

Another significant obstacle is systemic exclusion from decision-making spaces and funding opportunities. Most grassroots feminist groups remain legally unrecognised, leaving them ineligible for government consultations or donor funding that require official registration. Donors, meanwhile, tend to impose rigid criteria that favour established NGOs- criteria that local collectives cannot meet under repressive conditions. This double exclusion compounds precarity and burnout, as activists must navigate both state hostility and international neglect. Many are forced to rely on personal networks, volunteer labour, and intermittent diaspora support to sustain their work.

Internalised stigma and social rejection further restrict the reach of feminist organising, especially in rural areas where traditional gender norms and religious conservatism dominate. In such environments, feminism is often framed as foreign, immoral, or anti-religious assumptions that deter women from openly identifying with the movement. The fear of being labeled “*feminista*” can carry real consequences: isolation from family, loss of community standing, or even violence. Feminist actors note that while youth engagement is growing, older generations and religious leaders often remain hostile or dismissive, reinforcing patriarchal structures through moral rhetoric.

Equally troubling is the exclusion of trans women from mainstream women’s rights spaces, despite their central role in advancing feminist and LGBTQIA+ struggles. Trans women in Equatorial Guinea face compounded marginalisation: criminalisation, familial abandonment, and invisibility in public policy. Yet,





many have emerged as powerful organisers, artists, and legal advocates. Still, their contributions are frequently sidelined in “mainstream” women’s forums, which remain cisnormative and cautious of queer inclusion due to social conservatism and donor pressure. This exclusion undermines the intersectional vision of feminism that many activists are working to build and limits the transformative potential of the movement as a whole.

In sum, feminist organising in Equatorial Guinea is defined not just by its resistance to external repression, but also by the difficult work of navigating internal fractures and systemic neglect. Addressing these challenges requires not only protection and funding but also sustained efforts to shift cultural narratives, expand feminist imaginaries, and build inclusive, intersectional solidarities across diverse communities.

h. Opportunities

The report identifies several emerging opportunities that, despite the repressive environment, offer promising entry points for the growth and resilience of the feminist movement in Equatorial Guinea. These openings reflect both the adaptability of local organisers and the shifting dynamics of youth engagement, digital technology, and diasporic solidarity.

First, youth leadership and digital mobilisation are on the rise, presenting powerful new avenues for connection and resistance. Younger generations, many of whom have had some exposure to feminist discourses through social media or study abroad, are showing growing interest in concepts like bodily autonomy, consent, and gender justice. WhatsApp groups, encrypted messaging apps, and Instagram pages are being used not only to circulate information but to create informal learning circles and coordinate actions under the radar of state surveillance. This digital sphere offers relative safety and flexibility for experimentation and exchange, especially for queer youth and young women in urban areas. The shift toward online organising also allows feminists to sidestep the logistical and legal barriers of formal registration, giving rise to a form of “underground digital citizenship.”

Another critical opportunity is the strategic use of culture and media, particularly through theatre, storytelling, poetry, and visual arts. Feminist artists and collectives are crafting messages that resonate deeply with local cultural norms while subverting patriarchal narratives. Because these messages are often





framed as artistic or educational rather than political, they can reach public audiences without immediately triggering censorship or backlash. For instance, some theatre troupes integrate feminist themes into performances that address gender-based violence and reproductive health, using metaphor and allegory to provoke critical reflection. This creative strategy not only broadens public engagement but also opens space for cultural legitimacy in a context where “feminism” is still taboo.

Diaspora-based organising—particularly in Spain and Portugal—has become an increasingly vital resource for Equatoguinean feminists. Diaspora communities have established virtual safe spaces where knowledge is shared, campaigns are planned, and international advocacy is mobilised. These transnational networks offer protective distance from the direct threats faced inside the country, allowing for bolder forms of expression and resource mobilisation. Moreover, they serve as crucial bridges for mentorship, translation, and capacity building, helping to overcome language and legal barriers that exist within Equatorial Guinea itself.

At the heart of these developments is the resilience and adaptability of local feminist actors, who continue to find ways to survive, resist, and reimagine their political agency under extraordinary pressure.

“We are still here. We are surviving. And that is resistance.”

~ Equatoguinean Feminist

This insistence on presence, survival, and continuity in the face of authoritarian silencing speaks to a deep well of collective strength and determination.

These opportunities must not be romanticised as substitutes for systemic change—but they do offer footholds for funders, allies, and regional networks to engage in principled, sustained support. With careful attention to safety, language justice, and local political realities, these openings can become stepping stones toward a more robust, inclusive, and emancipatory feminist ecosystem in Equatorial Guinea.





2.2.4 Guinea-Bissau

a. Contextual Analysis

Political instability, military coups, and weak democratic institutions have marked Guinea-Bissau's post-independence trajectory. These systemic disruptions have profoundly affected the development of civic movements and women's rights. However, despite these constraints, a vibrant, though often informal, network of feminist and women-led grassroots organisations is actively mobilising across the country.

As reflected in one focus group discussion, women in community organisations describe their work as a “*collective effort based on mutual support, respect, and daily resistance*”. They emphasise feminism not only as a political identity but as a shared practice of empowerment, rooted in local values and solidarity.

b. Landscape of Women's Rights and Feminist Organisations

Feminist organising in Guinea-Bissau is deeply rooted in community-based action and led by women who are often excluded from formal structures due to limited access to education, stable income, or legal recognition. These women, many of whom operate within the informal economy- as traders, subsistence farmers, or cooperative workers- have nonetheless built resilient and intersectional feminist practices grounded in lived realities, collective care, and local knowledge.

Among the most notable actors is an organisation that has played a foundational role in women's literacy and informal education efforts. Through non-formal education and training sessions, the organisation builds women's agency using critical thinking tools and basic reading and writing skills. These interventions facilitate women's economic participation and serve as gateways



to civic awareness, political agency, and feminist consciousness. As several interviewees attested, the organisation's programming has significantly *"helped build women's self-esteem and capacity,"* offering many their first opportunity to articulate their rights and share their experiences of violence, inequality, or marginalisation.

Other key players are known for their grassroots organising and legal support initiatives. One organisation has been instrumental in pushing for women's political participation, leading campaigns on quotas and electoral reform. Another organisation, on the other hand, focuses on budget monitoring and gender-responsive governance, engaging with economic justice from a feminist lens. These groups demonstrate how feminist organising in Guinea-Bissau is not confined to gender-based issues alone, but rather intersects with broader concerns such as governance, accountability, and public resource allocation.

Equally important are individual and collective feminist leaders who have emerged as key organisers within cooperative and economic justice spaces. Their work exemplifies the interweaving of feminist principles with daily survival strategies, where community organising doubles as both political resistance and a response to systemic neglect. These women often serve as informal educators, mentors, and protectors, holding their communities together in the absence of reliable state infrastructure.

It is important to highlight that most of these actors operate without formal legal registration or stable funding. This leaves them vulnerable to political manipulation, exclusion from donor programs, and burnout. Nonetheless, their work persists due to the strength of internal leadership, deep community trust, and a vision of feminism that is both localised and collective.

"Feminism only makes sense when there is unity among women... no woman should walk alone."

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**





This quote reflects the ethos of Guinea-Bissau's feminist movement: not a top-down framework imposed from above, but a horizontal, interconnected, and communal model of activism rooted in solidarity, lived experience, and mutual care.

In essence, Guinea-Bissau's feminist initiatives challenge dominant narratives of what constitutes feminist leadership or legitimacy. They remind us that movement-building does not always require institutional visibility or legal status—but rather, the courage to organise, the power of collective voice, and the belief that no one should be left behind.

c. Key Issues and Thematic Areas

Feminist activism in Guinea-Bissau is grounded in practical, community-led interventions that weave together daily survival, empowerment, and systemic change. These interventions reflect a broad understanding of feminism that is deeply intersectional and responsive to local contexts, particularly for women and girls who face multiple, overlapping forms of exclusion.

Literacy is widely recognised among feminist organisers as the first and most essential step toward building feminist consciousness and agency. Many women in Guinea-Bissau have been denied access to formal education due to poverty, early marriage, or domestic responsibilities. In response, community organisations have created informal schools and literacy circles, often hosted in local homes or community centres. These spaces are more than classrooms—they are platforms for empowerment, where women learn to read, write, and express themselves while discussing gender norms, violence, and political rights.

“Literacy is not only about letters—it’s about knowing your value and speaking your truth.”

~ Bissau-Guinean Feminist

These spaces build both skills and civic awareness, enabling women to participate in local governance, join cooperatives, and advocate for their rights.





Economic independence is a recurring theme across all feminist initiatives in the country. Grassroots groups organise income-generating activities such as fruit preservation, soap-making, food vending, and handicrafts, providing women with a stable income stream. These projects are often collective and closely tied to other forms of education, including nutrition, child care, and financial literacy training. Many of these cooperatives double as safe spaces for sharing feminist values and learning about reproductive health, legal rights, and community decision-making. This economic focus is not only about survival; it is about building power through solidarity and financial autonomy, enabling women to exit abusive relationships or challenge exploitative practices.

Although GBV is still shrouded in silence in many communities—due to cultural taboos, victim-blaming, and limited legal recourse—grassroots feminist actors are creating discreet avenues for intervention and support. Safe spaces are being established where women can share their experiences without fear of stigma, and peer-led workshops are used to raise awareness around consent, domestic violence, and mental health. In some communities, trusted women leaders serve as first responders, accompanying survivors to clinics, police stations, or legal aid providers. The aim is not only to address GBV after it occurs, but to build protective networks of mutual support and community accountability, particularly in areas where the state is absent or complicit.

Recognising the importance of early empowerment, several feminist organisations work specifically with adolescent girls and young women, offering life skills training, mentorship, and vocational education. These programs teach girls to understand their rights, assert their boundaries, and dream beyond traditional gender expectations. Mentorship is often intergenerational, connecting younger girls with older women leaders who can guide them through school, family challenges, or early adulthood.

“We want girls to see themselves as leaders—not just as wives or mothers.”

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**





This work is critical in breaking cycles of early marriage, sexual violence, and educational exclusion.

While formal legal systems remain difficult to navigate—especially for rural or low-income women—there is growing feminist advocacy around access to justice and legal documentation. Cooperatives are receiving support from progressive lawyers and paralegals to obtain legal recognition, which opens doors to public funding, service provision, and political participation. At the same time, feminists are challenging customary legal practices that often disadvantage women in matters of land rights, inheritance, or child custody. Legal empowerment efforts also include rights education, teaching women how to file complaints, report violence, and demand institutional accountability.

Together, these areas of work demonstrate the holistic and locally anchored nature of feminist movements in Guinea-Bissau. They reflect a politics of care and survival that is both strategic and deeply transformative, centred not on abstract theory but on real-life change in the lives of women, girls, and marginalised communities. These initiatives represent a feminist movement that is practical, courageous, and profoundly attuned to the lived realities of those it serves.

d. Strategies and Organising Approaches

Feminist organising in Guinea-Bissau is deeply interwoven with community structures, cultural sensitivity, and everyday resilience. Rather than replicating formal or urban-centric models of activism, feminist actors across the country have developed contextually relevant strategies that resonate with their communities while advancing gender justice. Four core approaches stand out in the work of local feminists:

Community Organisation and Cooperatives

One of the most potent vehicles for feminist mobilisation in Guinea-Bissau has been the use of women's cooperatives, not only as platforms for economic empowerment, but also as transformative feminist spaces. In Grancha, for example, a women's cooperative has been established with the explicit aim of combining income-generating skills training with the transmission of feminist values such as dignity, mutual support, and self-worth. The cooperative is intentionally structured around principles of solidarity rather than competition.





“We don’t just make soap or sell fruits—we build each other’s confidence. We learn to speak in public, to say no, and to help our sisters when they’re in pain.”

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**

This model illustrates how feminist politics can be cultivated through practical, relational, and collective efforts, particularly in environments where formal activism may be met with suspicion or hostility.

Dialogue and Respectful Engagement

Given the socio-political fragility of Guinea-Bissau, feminist actors have adopted a non-confrontational communication strategy when engaging with local leaders, religious figures, and broader society. A commonly cited approach is to “*communicate with society through wise and respectful language, avoiding a confrontational tone.*” This careful framing is not a sign of weakness, but a tactical decision designed to avoid backlash, especially in conservative rural settings where feminism is often misunderstood or perceived as foreign. By choosing strategic language that resonates with local values and customs, activists create space for difficult conversations—about violence, bodily autonomy, or girls’ rights, without provoking immediate resistance. This “respectful radicalism” is a hallmark of feminist organising in the country, allowing movements to grow organically without alienating potential allies.

Faith and Cultural Sensitivity

Religious and cultural identity are central to life in Guinea-Bissau, and feminist actors are acutely aware of this dynamic. Rather than opposing religious norms outright, many activists promote a culturally grounded feminism, one that seeks to reinterpret spiritual and cultural values through a gender-equitable lens. This includes working with female religious leaders, community elders, and traditional healers to co-create messaging that affirms women’s rights as part of local moral frameworks.

“We show that dignity for women is already in our faith. We just remind people.”

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**





This approach reflects a decolonial feminist ethic, acknowledging that feminism in Guinea-Bissau does not have to be modelled on Western liberalism, but can grow from within indigenous and spiritual traditions that value community, care, and reciprocity.

Informal Learning Spaces

Finally, feminist knowledge production and sharing in Guinea-Bissau thrives in informal, locally accessible spaces. Organisations run workshops, community dialogues, and women's circles in villages and urban peripheries. These learning spaces are not only about literacy or skill-building; they are hubs of consciousness-raising, where women explore themes of identity, patriarchy, motherhood, and justice. The small scale of these gatherings fosters trust, intimacy, and dialogue, which are essential in environments marked by trauma, silence, and mistrust of institutions. Feminist organisers recognise that change begins in conversation, often around kitchen tables, under mango trees, or during cooperative meetings.

e. Achievements and Innovations

Feminist organisers in Guinea-Bissau have made meaningful, if often under-recognised, gains in recent years—particularly through strategic partnerships, community-based training, and innovative leadership models that prioritise relational and context-sensitive approaches. While their work may not always receive international attention due to limited digital presence, these initiatives are quietly reshaping norms and expanding the reach of women's rights across diverse regions of the country.

Strategic Partnerships with Government

One significant success has been the ability of feminist and women-led organisations to forge partnerships with governmental institutions, most notably the Ministry of Education. Through these alliances, feminist actors have been able to expand access to literacy programming, particularly for adult women and girls who were previously excluded from formal education systems. These programs go beyond basic reading and writing—they serve as gateways to civic participation and gender consciousness, empowering women to engage with their rights and with their communities.





“When a woman learns to read, she also learns to ask questions, to make decisions, and to vote with her own voice.”

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**

The collaboration with government agencies lends these programs institutional legitimacy, which can be especially important in rural areas where feminist actors might otherwise be viewed with suspicion.

Community-Based Training in Remote Areas

Feminist organisers have also been successful in delivering training and education in areas with little or no formal infrastructure. In many rural communities, schools and government offices are sparse, and state services are minimal. Nevertheless, activists have developed flexible, mobile training programs, often held in homes, markets, or cooperative spaces, that provide women with the tools to understand and advocate for their rights. These include not only literacy and numeracy but also gender-based violence awareness, health education, financial literacy, and cooperative development. The adaptability of these programs is key: by meeting women where they are, both physically and socially, feminist actors ensure that knowledge is shared in ways that feel accessible, relevant, and safe.

Storytelling and Cooperative-Based Leadership Models

Another significant gain has been the rise in visibility and legitimacy of women’s rights discourse within community structures, particularly through storytelling and cooperative-based leadership. Storytelling, whether through oral narratives, poetry, or song, is a powerful vehicle for feminist education in Guinea-Bissau. Women leaders often use personal testimonies and traditional forms of communication to illustrate gender inequalities and spark collective reflection. These stories resonate deeply within local cultural contexts and help bridge the gap between lived experience and political analysis.

In addition, women who lead cooperatives or informal associations are increasingly recognised as community leaders and advocates, often stepping into roles that challenge patriarchal authority while still operating within respected social frameworks. Their leadership is not based on formal titles or degrees, but on trust, wisdom, and practical effectiveness.





“We are not ministers, but people listen when we speak—because we work with the truth of our lives.”

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**

Quiet Ripples, Deep Impact

While Guinea-Bissau’s feminist movement lacks the media infrastructure, social media reach, or digital advocacy tools seen in other regions, this does not mean it is less effective. On the contrary, its impact is felt through gradual but persistent shifts in attitudes toward women’s roles, rights, and leadership. These “small wins”—from a girl returning to school, to a woman refusing an abusive marriage, to a collective demanding land rights—have ripple effects that extend across families and communities. In many cases, these local transformations set the stage for broader cultural change, even if they remain under the radar of international observers.

f. Funding Landscape

Participants unanimously stated that *“there is no regular donor support”*. Financial sustainability remains one of the most significant barriers. While institutions like the African Development Bank (ADB) have shown interest, disbursements are inconsistent and rarely reach community-based actors. As a result, many women’s groups operate on a volunteer basis and without funding, relying entirely on volunteerism.

Language barriers (Portuguese or Creole vs. English/French), lack of legal registration, and poor connectivity further limit access to donor networks and application processes.

g. Challenges

Trust and Legitimacy

One of the most recurring themes across Guinea-Bissau’s feminist landscape is the challenge of trust and social legitimacy. Feminist organisers frequently encounter scepticism from both male community leaders and even from some women, especially in conservative and rural settings. Feminism is often misunderstood or deliberately framed as an import, disconnected from





local traditions and family values. As a result, movement growth is slowed, with organisers having to spend significant time *“building trust before building programmes”*.

This trust-building is not superficial outreach- it is a deliberate and strategic process that involves respectful listening, contextual framing of feminist principles, and engagement with religious and cultural leaders. Feminist actors emphasise the need to ground their language in local idioms of dignity, mutual care, and community protection, rather than confrontational or externally imposed narratives. This is not compromised- it is cultural fluency, and it remains essential to building legitimacy and broad-based support for feminist causes in the country.

Digital and Communication Gaps

Another major challenge is the widespread lack of access to digital tools and platforms. Most organisers operate in contexts of digital exclusion, without consistent access to smartphones, computers, the internet, or even electricity. This hinders not only their ability to coordinate nationally and regionally but also limits opportunities for training, advocacy, visibility, and donor engagement. In an increasingly online donor ecosystem, this places Guinea-Bissau’s feminist groups at a disadvantage when competing for funds, learning from peers, or sharing their impact.

Moreover, the lack of digital literacy or tech infrastructure means that even basic communication, such as writing reports or participating in Zoom trainings, is out of reach for many grassroots organisers.

“We do the work. But we are invisible online, so people think we are not doing anything.”

~ **Bissau-Guinean Feminist**

The digital divide, therefore, not only reflects inequality but reproduces it, reinforcing the marginalisation of grassroots feminist actors from key conversations, alliances, and resource flows.





Exclusion from Regional and Global Feminist Networks

Closely tied to the digital barrier is the exclusion of Guinea-Bissau's feminist actors from broader feminist ecosystems, both regional and global. Despite the growing number of alliances across the African continent, most community-based groups in Guinea-Bissau are not members of networks such as FEMNET, AWID, or the African Feminist Forum. This leaves them isolated from shared learning, solidarity mechanisms, advocacy platforms, and funding pools.

This exclusion is not due to a lack of interest but stems from language barriers, limited visibility, and lack of access to application platforms. Without regional allies or formalised cross-border relationships, many activists struggle alone, without the benefit of mentorship, institutional backing, or peer support.

Absence of Protection Mechanisms for Organisers

Finally, the issue of safety and protection for feminist organisers remains urgent. Across Guinea-Bissau, women who speak out against gender inequality, advocate for legal reform, or lead cooperatives often face backlash from family members, religious leaders, political actors, and even state institutions. Nevertheless, there are virtually no legal or institutional protections for these defenders. There is no functional human rights commission, no feminist legal clinics, and no emergency response system for activists under threat.

As a result, many organisers self-censor or abandon advocacy, particularly when they or their families are targeted. This is especially dangerous for younger organisers and those working in more politically sensitive thematic areas like SRHR, land rights, or LGBTQIA+ rights. Without safe reporting channels, solidarity mechanisms, or legal accompaniment, feminist defenders operate in constant risk and isolation.

h. Opportunities

Expanding Feminist Literacy Circles as Catalysts for Empowerment

Community-run literacy spaces already operate as hubs for learning, dialogue, and organising. These informal spaces not only teach reading and writing but also promote critical thinking, awareness of rights, and political agency. There is a need to scale up these literacy circles across rural and peri-urban areas, integrating them with leadership training, civic education, and gender-based violence (GBV) awareness.





Supporting Women's Cooperatives as Anchors of Feminist Infrastructure

Women's cooperatives across Guinea-Bissau are more than economic units—they are feminist ecosystems where empowerment, solidarity, and resistance converge. From soap-making and fruit processing to financial literacy and peer support, these collectives serve as practical platforms for mobilising women at scale. Providing core, long-term funding to women-led cooperatives, recognising them as critical vehicles of feminist organising. These spaces should be supported not only as income-generating models but as sites of feminist leadership and community advocacy.

Cultivating Culturally Rooted, Faith-Aligned Feminist Messaging

Given Guinea-Bissau's strong religious and cultural traditions, feminist organisers have developed a strategy of "*respectful radicalism*"—engaging with community leaders, elders, and religious figures in ways that affirm local values while challenging patriarchal norms. There is a need to strengthen and replicate these culturally sensitive approaches by investing in *faith-based feminist education*, intergenerational dialogue, and translation of feminist ideas into local idioms.

Building Intergenerational Leadership and Mentorship Models

There is a growing focus on *girls' rights*, *youth organising*, and *intergenerational mentorship* in Guinea-Bissau. Feminist elders are already guiding younger girls through informal channels, helping them navigate school, family expectations, and early leadership. There is an opportunity to formalise and expand mentorship programs that connect adolescent girls with experienced feminist leaders. These programs should include life skills, vocational training, and digital literacy to ensure girls see themselves not only as survivors, but as future leaders.

Creating Low-Tech, Feminist Communication Networks to Overcome Digital Exclusion

With limited internet access and poor connectivity, most feminist work in Guinea-Bissau remains *invisible* to donors and regional allies. However, local organisers are experimenting with SMS networks, WhatsApp groups, and storytelling via radio. There is a need to support the development of low-tech, community-based communication infrastructure—such as mobile audio hubs, radio programs, and offline knowledge-sharing materials—to document and disseminate feminist work across regions, languages, and access levels.





2.2.5 Mozambique

a. Contextual Analysis

Mozambique's feminist movement emerged in earnest after the 1993 civil war and gained formal momentum in 2005. The creation of Fórum Mulher, a national coordinating network of over 90 member organisations, was pivotal in catalysing gender discourse. Feminism was initially perceived as Western and foreign, causing many organisations to resist the label. However, this resistance has softened over time, with increasing acknowledgement of the need to dismantle patriarchy and build an egalitarian society. Many groups now recognise their feminist practice, even if they do not self-identify as feminist. Legal constraints remain, including the inability of LGBTQIA+ associations to formally register, and shrinking civic space has curtailed public mobilisation and expression.

b. Landscape of Women's Rights and Feminist Organisations

Mozambique hosts a diverse ecosystem of feminist organisations, ranging from national networks to community-led collectives. Fórum Mulher stands out for its national reach and international advocacy. Other key actors include Movimento das Jovens Feministas, Associação Horizonte Azul, Por Ela, and Ophenta, among others. While many of these operate primarily at the local level, they cover municipal and rural districts and maintain growing engagement with regional platforms such as Femnet, Gender Links, and the World March of Women.



c. Key Issues and Thematic Focus

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence remains one of the most urgent concerns for feminist movements in Mozambique. While legal frameworks exist to address domestic and sexual violence, enforcement remains inconsistent, and social stigma continues to silence survivors. The situation is further aggravated in conflict-affected areas, particularly in northern provinces like Cabo Delgado, where displacement, militarisation, and poverty heighten women's vulnerability. Feminist organisations and networks are responding with survivor-led advocacy, peer counselling, and informal reporting mechanisms in areas where state protection is absent or distrusted. Many groups also run awareness-raising campaigns in schools and communities to promote consent education and challenge patriarchal norms that normalise violence.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

SRHR is a central theme in the work of Mozambican feminist actors, who advocate for access to contraception, comprehensive sexuality education, and safe, legal abortion. The struggle for bodily autonomy is often contested in both policy and community spaces, where religious conservatism and gender norms restrict open dialogue. Feminist groups engage in grassroots education, digital campaigns, and alliance-building with health workers to ensure that young women and girls are equipped with accurate information and resources. In rural areas, mobile clinics and informal educators serve as the primary sources of SRHR services. Youth-led organisations are also leading efforts to destigmatise abortion and amplify youth voices in policy forums.

Economic Inequality

Economic justice is a cross-cutting concern for feminist organisers, especially given the country's reliance on extractive industries and the informal economy. Women are overrepresented in precarious and low-paid sectors like agriculture, domestic work, and market trading, jobs that often lack labour protections. Feminist initiatives are supporting women's cooperatives, providing microcredit, and offering entrepreneurship training that centres feminist values such as autonomy, mutual aid, and financial solidarity. Moreover, feminist organisations are increasingly engaging in budget advocacy, demanding transparency





and gender-responsive allocations in state spending. These actions position women not only as economic actors but as political agents shaping national development priorities.

Climate Justice and Crisis Response

Mozambique is one of the African countries most affected by climate disasters, cyclones, flooding, and prolonged droughts. Feminist organisations have been central to both emergency response and long-term resilience-building, particularly in disaster-prone areas such as the North. Their work includes organising food distribution, reconstructing shelters, and providing trauma support for women and children. More broadly, feminist activists are framing the climate crisis as a gendered issue, where women, particularly in agriculture and fishing communities, bear the brunt of ecological devastation. Women-led collectives are calling for greater representation in environmental policy and climate adaptation planning, arguing that local knowledge and care-based strategies are critical to survival and sustainability.

Women, Peace, and Security

Feminist actors are increasingly active in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery, especially in regions affected by terrorism and insurgency. Women in Cabo Delgado and other crisis-impacted zones face displacement, sexual violence, and the collapse of essential services. Feminist organisations are addressing the psycho-social dimensions of trauma through community healing circles, arts-based therapy, and legal accompaniment. They also advocate for the inclusion of women in peace negotiations and transitional justice processes, insisting that security must be redefined beyond militarisation to include bodily integrity, access to healthcare, and freedom from fear. Their interventions highlight the interconnection between peace, gender justice, and structural transformation.

LGBTQIA+ Rights

Although LGBTQIA+ rights remain marginalised in Mozambique's mainstream feminist discourse, some organisations are pushing the boundaries of inclusion. Groups such as Por Ela and Hixikamwe work with lesbian, bisexual, and queer women under challenging political and social conditions. Their work includes providing safe spaces, legal guidance, and psychosocial support to queer women facing discrimination or violence. Due to cultural stigma and lack of





legal protections, much of this organising takes place informally or discreetly, particularly in conservative or rural areas. Nonetheless, these actors are planting critical seeds for a more intersectional and inclusive feminist movement, even as they navigate systemic erasure and safety concerns.

d. Strategies and Approaches

Community Mobilisation

Feminist mobilisation in Mozambique is deeply rooted in local engagement and awareness-building. Organisations prioritise “*mobilização comunitária*” (community mobilisation) as a core strategy, especially in rural and conflict-affected areas where state presence is minimal. This work involves local dialogues, group sensitisation meetings, educational campaigns on rights, and solidarity actions. As reported during the focus group discussions, direct actions involving women and youth are used to raise awareness about rights, build leadership capacity, and foster a collective identity. Significantly, this mobilisation is based on a principle of mutual support and the understanding that “*juntas somos mais fortes*” (together we are stronger), reinforcing solidarity between movements and with other social justice causes.

Legal Support

Many feminist organisations provide legal advocacy and assistance, especially for women seeking justice in cases of domestic violence, sexual abuse, or child support. Two organisations mentioned in the report explicitly offer legal help to women, often the only form of justice accessible to them. They not only support individual cases but also push for more vigorous enforcement of gender-based violence (GBV) laws. Legal aid efforts are often linked to broader campaigns that aim to raise awareness about women’s rights and challenge institutional barriers to justice. The feminist legal support infrastructure remains underdeveloped, but it is an essential pillar of feminist work in Mozambique.

Healing and Artistic Practices

In post-conflict and climate-disaster-affected areas, feminist associations use healing justice frameworks to respond to trauma. Cultural and artistic tools, such as “*pinturas murais, círculos terapêuticos e escrita de poesia*” (murals, therapeutic circles, and poetry writing)—are employed as entry points for GBV prevention, awareness raising, and emotional healing. These creative





forms of activism have become powerful vehicles for community engagement, particularly in areas where violence, terrorism, and displacement have left deep psychological scars. Through these expressions, women reclaim space, tell their stories, and foster collective recovery.

Storytelling and Narrative Change

Storytelling is recognised as a powerful tool in feminist advocacy in Mozambique. Organisations document impact and elevate women's voices through testimonies, oral histories, and visual media.

“Narratives of change have been used to publicise results and impacts.”

~ **Mozambican Feminist**

These stories not only humanise the statistics but also serve as counter-narratives to dominant, patriarchal interpretations of women's roles and struggles. While this approach is praised, the organisations also expressed the need for stronger tools and support better to harness storytelling as a method of advocacy and learning.

Youth Digital Organising

Digital activism is an emerging but critical terrain for feminist youth movements. Groups like *MovFemme* and *Por Ela* have developed vibrant online campaigns targeting young women and girls. These campaigns focus on feminist education, SRHR, and gender-based violence, using social media as the primary engagement tool. However, challenges persist high internet costs and limited infrastructure often hinder the sustainability of these digital efforts. As noted in the mapping, many youth-led organisations struggle to maintain a “permanent communications officer,” limiting their reach and impact. Despite these constraints, youth-led digital organising remains a vital site of feminist visibility and mobilisation in Mozambique.

Political Engagement

Feminist movements in Mozambique are increasingly participating in formal policy spaces, particularly in state budget debates and regional governance forums. National organisations, such as Fórum Mulher, have participated in





discussions on reparations for colonial injustices and are engaging in topics like economic justice and climate policy. Feminist associations push for gender-responsive budgeting and transparency in resource allocation. These efforts reflect a shift from service provision to structural engagement, where feminist organisations aim to reshape public policy from a gender and equity perspective. Participation in such forums allows grassroots demands to be articulated at national and even regional levels.

e. Achievements and Gains

Integration of Gender Discourse into National Politics

Feminist associations in Mozambique have steadily influenced national political conversations, particularly around economic justice, political participation, and budget allocations. Organisations have played a pivotal role in inserting gender concerns into national dialogues and have actively contributed to discussions on reparations for colonial exploitation and environmental accountability, including in debates around the carbon credit market. While some organisations do not always identify with the feminist label, their coordinated actions reflect clear feminist practices. This integration is most visible in the work of national platforms, which “train women and youth at the grassroots level and coordinate collective advocacy agendas.” Their strategic presence in both national and regional bodies (e.g., SADC and FEMNET) has enabled grassroots concerns to be translated into policy influence. Furthermore, the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda is gaining prominence due to the compounded effects of conflict and climate disasters on women, leading to more gender-sensitive crisis responses in political forums.

Emergence of Intergenerational Feminist Dialogue

A notable evolution within the Mozambican feminist movement is the strengthening of intergenerational feminist dialogue. Senior activists from organisations such as Fórum Mulher and Ophenta are now mentoring younger leaders, ensuring continuity in feminist knowledge and strategy. This is reflected in the work of youth-led movements like Movfemme and Por Ela, which engage in digital organising and online feminist campaigns. However, intergenerational dynamics are not without friction. The mapping revealed the persistence of “strong power relationships between older and younger feminists,” underlining the need for governance models rooted in feminist principles that facilitate





equitable participation and shared leadership. Nonetheless, this exchange of experience and innovation enriches movement-building and deepens feminist consciousness across age groups.

Inclusion of LGBTQIA+ Women in Advocacy

Despite restrictive legal environments and a lack of official recognition, lesbian and queer women are increasingly becoming part of Mozambique's feminist discourse. Organisations such as Por Ela and Hixikamwe have emerged as safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ advocacy, offering support and engagement for women with non-conforming sexual and gender identities. Due to Mozambique's legal ban on the registration of sexual minority organisations, these groups often operate informally or under the umbrella of registered allies. The inclusion of LGBTQIA+ concerns is generally cross-cutting rather than central in most feminist programming, but alliances and advocacy partnerships are gradually expanding their reach. As one key informant stated, strategic collaboration is necessary because “the fight for gender equality cannot exclude those who are most marginalised.”

Creative Strategies for GBV Awareness and Mobilisation

Feminist associations are adopting innovative and culturally embedded strategies to address gender-based violence (GBV), particularly in conflict- and climate-affected regions like Cabo Delgado. Healing justice approaches, such as mural painting, therapeutic poetry circles, and theatre, have become essential tools for both individual recovery and collective mobilisation. These initiatives are not only cathartic but also serve to break the silence around violence, enabling women to tell their stories and build community resilience. In regions affected by terrorism or cyclones, where traditional outreach may be limited, these creative mediums become both message and method. Organisations such as Promura and Ophenta exemplify this work by integrating art with trauma-informed feminist education, often in contexts where formal institutions are absent or non-functional. These strategies also promote solidarity and communal care, reflecting feminist values of healing and collective strength.

f. Funding Landscape

Over the past three years, all surveyed feminist associations and movements in Mozambique have received some form of donor funding, with support primarily coming from organisations such as AWDF, OSISA, the European Union, Amplify





Change, UNFPA, Hivos, and the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation. However, despite this past support, feminist organisations consistently reported a decline in available resources, which has placed a strain on operations and forced many to scale back programming or reduce staff.

Language barriers persist as a significant obstacle to accessing donor resources. Most calls for proposals and funding opportunities are issued in English or French, languages that are not widely spoken or understood in Mozambique's activist circles. Although groups attempt to bridge this gap using tools like DeepL or Google Translate, they often fall short of producing the formal and nuanced language donors expect. This leaves Portuguese-speaking feminist organisations systematically disadvantaged and excluded from major funding pipelines.

Another key challenge lies in the eligibility criteria imposed by donors, which many grassroots organisations are unable to meet. Requirements such as up-to-date audit reports, governance manuals, and internal management tools are often out of reach for emerging or community-based feminist groups. As a result, organisations that are deeply embedded in their communities and carrying out vital work are sidelined in favour of more formally structured NGOs, regardless of actual impact. One respondent observed, *“criteria are required that exceed the groups’ capacity.”*

Short-term funding cycles exacerbate this issue even further. These time-limited grants make it difficult for feminist associations to plan long-term strategies, retain qualified staff, or build sustainable infrastructure. The lack of core funding or multi-year grants undermines organisational resilience, particularly in crisis-prone contexts such as northern Mozambique, where climate disasters and conflict are ongoing. As one reflection from the field explained,

“Short-term projects prevent [systemic] transformation from occurring, leaving associations to implement superficial actions in the gender field.”

~Mozambican Feminist





In addition, visibility challenges affect access to funding. Feminist actors noted that those with the most significant capacity to promote themselves, especially in urban and international spaces, are often perceived as more active and impactful, despite not necessarily being engaged in community-level work.

“Associations that have the greatest capacity to publicise end up being more visible, even though they have done little in the way of concrete action,”

~ **Mozambican Feminist**

This dynamic marginalises grassroots actors who are focused on direct service delivery and who may lack dedicated communications teams or digital infrastructure.

Lastly, the absence of real-time access to information is a concern. Even for urban-based associations, details about upcoming donor calls are often delayed, filtered through intermediaries, or shared informally. This creates intense competition and a culture of secrecy, where groups are hesitant to share opportunities or knowledge for fear of losing funding themselves. Rural organisations are even more disadvantaged, with some unaware of available support mechanisms altogether.

g. Challenges and Structural Barriers

Resource Scarcity and Institutional Fragility

Many feminist organisations in Mozambique operate on the brink of collapse due to chronic underfunding and an overreliance on short-term grants. The mapping makes it clear that “resources are scarce and irregular,” leading to a situation where strategic planning is undermined and organisational resilience remains fragile. The closure of longstanding institutions like WLSA (Women and Law in Southern Africa) exemplifies how the absence of sustained institutional investment can cause significant setbacks, especially when feminist actors lack core funding for infrastructure and staffing.





Shrinking Civic Space and Political Repression

Several organisations described the current political environment as increasingly repressive, with limited space for civic action. Feminist actors face surveillance, censorship, and political pushback, especially when dealing with sensitive topics such as gender-based violence or sexual diversity.

“State hostility limits the ability of feminist groups to organise openly,”

~ **Mozambican Feminist.**

This makes mobilisation not only difficult but potentially dangerous. This atmosphere deters many from publicly identifying as feminist or engaging in policy critique.

Burnout and Absence of Care Structures

The emotional and physical toll on feminist activists is profound. Many leaders, especially in rural or post-conflict areas, work without salaries, psychological support, or adequate rest. A recurring sentiment in the interviews was the question: *“Who cares for those who care?”* This highlights the lack of internal care systems and sustainable wellness strategies within the movement. The report underscores that burnout is more than exhaustion—it is a structural outcome of overwork, underfunding, and social isolation.

Linguistic Marginalisation and Exclusion of Rural Voices

Mozambique’s linguistic diversity, combined with the dominance of Portuguese in formal feminist discourse, continues to marginalise rural women and non-Portuguese speakers. Most community-based actors speak local languages and struggle to engage with national networks, donor applications, or public debates that often exclude their voices. As a result, urban-based organisations with greater visibility disproportionately shape narratives and gain access to resources, while rural feminist actors remain under-recognised.

Lost Potential and the Cost of Invisibility

The closure of pivotal organisations like WLSA has had a ripple effect, not only in terms of services lost but also in terms of missed opportunities for coalition-building and feminist legal advocacy.





“Many associations that do the real work remain invisible because they cannot ‘sell’ themselves well to donors.”

~ **Mozambican Feminist**

This reflects a broader trend where visibility, rather than impact, drives funding decisions—leaving behind powerful, grassroots-led work that operates below the radar.

h. Opportunities

Peer Learning and Feminist Knowledge Exchange

The mapping found that peer learning has been essential in strengthening connections between feminist movements across Mozambique. Camps, exchanges, and experience-sharing sessions have created opportunities for grassroots organisations to build relationships, reflect on common challenges, and share strategies. These engagements not only deepen understanding of feminist practices but also serve as tools for strengthening movement infrastructure, especially in areas where isolation and burnout are common. Participants noted that learning from others who have already faced similar problems is both empowering and practical.

Caravans and Joint Campaigns for Visibility and Advocacy

Joint caravans and coordinated campaigns have proven effective for public mobilisation and raising awareness on key feminist issues such as gender-based violence, political participation, and climate justice. These actions extend reach across diverse communities, particularly in rural and post-conflict regions. By creating visibility through shared action, smaller and less resourced groups benefit from collective legitimacy and public presence, which helps challenge their marginalisation and facilitates entry into policy spaces.

Strengthening Portuguese-speaking Feminist Regional Connections

Many Mozambican feminist actors expressed a strong interest in engaging more deeply with Portuguese-speaking feminist networks across Africa, such as those in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde. The feminists noted prior engagement through Fórum Mulher with the PALOP bloc and SADC regional





networks (e.g. FEMNET, Gender is My Agenda, and the World March of Women). However, most grassroots groups remain disconnected from these broader spaces. Building dedicated platforms for Portuguese-speaking feminist exchange would amplify mutual learning, facilitate solidarity actions, and bridge linguistic isolation that currently limits access to funding and political leverage.

Mentorship Across Generations

Intergenerational mentorship is framed as a valuable but underdeveloped opportunity. Young feminist collectives like Movfemme and Por Ela have extensive digital engagement and creativity but require guidance to grow their strategic influence and institutional durability. Older feminist institutions, on the other hand, hold institutional knowledge and experience but may lack digital fluency or youth outreach. A structured mentorship model—combining digital strategy with political training—could serve both groups, reducing fragmentation and building a stronger, inclusive feminist ecosystem.

Shared Infrastructure and Healing Spaces

The Mozambique mapping strongly advocates for feminist movement-building funds that allow associations to invest in shared infrastructure, coordination tools, and healing spaces. Emotional fatigue and burnout were repeatedly cited, and the lack of spaces for care undermines the sustainability of activism. Feminist solidarity must therefore include material and psychological support mechanisms. Building inter-movement networks that also share physical and emotional care resources (such as mobile healing circles or regional feminist retreats) can help activists recharge and continue organising with renewed energy.





2.2.6 São Tomé and Príncipe

a. Contextual Analysis

São Tomé and Príncipe, a small island nation off the west coast of Africa, faces a unique set of social and economic vulnerabilities. Despite having a relatively young and educated female population, systemic gender inequality remains entrenched. Traditional sectors primarily drive the economy, and women continue to be excluded from the formal labour market. As of 2018, most women were engaged in domestic roles without formal employment, underscoring significant disparities in professional opportunities.

In response, the state has made institutional efforts toward gender equality. These include the creation of the Ministry of Health and Women's Rights, which also oversees gender equity bodies, such as the National Institute for the Promotion of Gender Equality (INPG) and the Centre for Counselling Against Domestic Violence (CACVD). Furthermore, São Tomé has adopted several progressive policies and ratified key protocols, including ENIPG 2019–2026: National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equity, Parity Law Proposal, National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women.

Despite these measures, implementation gaps persist due to social stigma, patriarchal culture, financial limitations, and rural-urban disparities.

b. Landscape of Women's Rights and Feminist Organisations

Feminist activism in São Tomé and Príncipe is growing but remains fragmented. The landscape consists of national NGOs (38.5%), community-based organisations (30.8%), and an emerging cohort of individual activists



(15.4%), many of whom lead grassroots awareness campaigns in schools and communities. Notably, legal registration of organisations (61.5%) has allowed some access to external funding and engagement in national policy dialogues.

Most organisations operate at a national level (53.8%), but a significant share (30.8%) is rooted in community-level mobilisation. Collaboration and shared values of “respect, inclusion, participation, and equality” are recurring themes among these actors.

c. Key Issues and Thematic Focus

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

A dominant focus of feminist organising in São Tomé and Príncipe, with 84.6% of surveyed organisations addressing gender-based violence. This includes both domestic and sexual violence, which remain prevalent due to entrenched patriarchal norms, lack of legal enforcement, and social stigma. Community mobilisation strategies such as door-to-door campaigns and awareness sessions are commonly used, especially in rural areas where state protection is weaker. Organisations are increasingly advocating for better implementation of national strategies, including the “National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence.”

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)

61.5% of the organisations focus on SRHR, often linking it to the empowerment of young girls and women through education. However, discussions around SRHR remain constrained by cultural conservatism and taboos. Topics like menstruation, contraception, and abortion are seldom addressed publicly, and efforts to integrate SRHR into school programs remain limited. Still, some partnerships with schools have started to promote life skills, citizenship education, and bodily autonomy from an early age.

Political Underrepresentation of Women

Despite having a Parity Law Proposal and a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, women remain significantly underrepresented in political and community decision-making spaces. Organisations report that although many women hold academic qualifications, they are often excluded from leadership roles due to cultural biases, low confidence, and stigma around feminism. One respondent noted that in São Tomé society, it is still commonly accepted for an educated man to marry a less educated woman, whereas the reverse is socially frowned upon. Feminist movements are working to shift these narratives by pushing for inclusion in local councils and other governance spaces.





Economic Exclusion and Informal Labour

Despite the high educational attainment of women, the majority remain outside the formal economy. Many are engaged in domestic labour or informal market activities, without social protection or upward mobility. Feminist associations are beginning to link economic autonomy with broader empowerment, but access to credit, property, and employment rights is still limited.

LGBTQIA+ Rights and Taboos Surrounding Sexuality

Only 15.4% of the surveyed organisations reported working on issues related to sexuality and LGBTQIA+ rights. These topics are still highly taboo and largely absent from the national discourse. In the focus groups, it was acknowledged that no organisation is explicitly focused on LGBTQIA+ advocacy due to social conservatism and potential backlash. However, some actors are trying to raise awareness around broader issues of sexual autonomy and inclusion, with cautious efforts to integrate sexual rights into feminist education.

Elderly Women and Accusations of Witchcraft

A particularly marginalised group identified in the mapping was elderly women, who are often abandoned and accused of witchcraft, especially in rural communities. Despite their wisdom and contributions, they receive minimal attention from existing organisations. Feminist actors noted that this neglect reflects deep cultural prejudices and a failure to consider age as a feminist axis of concern. Efforts are needed to build intergenerational solidarity and protect older women from stigma and isolation.

Intersectionality and the Specificity of Black Feminism:

A powerful quote from a community activist illustrates the movement's emerging consciousness around intersectionality:

“The struggles of white women are different from those of Black women... Black feminism has much more than skin colour.”





This framing recognises that São Toméan feminism must contend with colonial legacies, racialised exclusion, and unique socio-economic realities that differ from Western feminist frameworks. Participants argued for a decolonial, context-sensitive feminism that centres local experience, intergenerational mentorship, and racial identity.

d. Strategies and Approaches

Feminist organisations in São Tomé and Príncipe engage a wide range of approaches to drive change, many of which are rooted in both tradition and innovation and tailored to the island's sociocultural context.

Community Mobilisation and Awareness Campaigns

Most organisations prioritise grassroots mobilisation through direct engagement such as door-to-door awareness, community meetings, and local dialogues. These strategies are seen as essential to challenging entrenched gender norms and building trust, especially in rural or conservative settings. As noted in the report, many organisations are led by women with strong community ties, who use informal spaces to spread messages of empowerment and resistance.

Capacity Building and Leadership Development

Approximately 69.2% of respondents emphasised capacity development, especially for girls and young women. This includes leadership training, education on rights, and mentorship programs. The PERIQUETE project is one standout initiative: it empowers girls to “know their rights and what they are capable of doing,” promoting agency and self-knowledge. This training helps overcome the internalised barriers often reinforced by societal stigma.

Online Activism and Social Media Campaigns

Though digital access is limited, the surveyed organisations have begun leveraging online platforms for activism. These include awareness campaigns on Facebook and WhatsApp, which allow feminists, especially younger activists, to amplify their messages, connect with peers, and challenge misinformation. However, poor connectivity and high data costs remain barriers to broader digital engagement.





Narrative Change Through Storytelling and School Partnerships

Storytelling is used both as a tool for healing and as a strategy to challenge societal norms. Feminist actors use testimonials, oral histories, and school partnerships to foster critical thinking around gender issues from an early age. These initiatives not only reshape perceptions among youth but also elevate voices that are often marginalised.

Creation of Local Associations

Many movements operate without formal legal registration, yet they are powerful agents of change within their communities. These informal associations, often formed by women with shared lived experiences, create safe spaces for discussion, support, and political consciousness. While they may lack visibility in policy spaces, they are fundamental to sustaining feminist organising at the local level.

Solidarity Actions and Portuguese-speaking Alliances

Solidarity remains a key principle. Around 61.5% of respondents reported engaging in joint actions with other movements, including those in other Portuguese-speaking African countries. There is strong interest in strengthening connections with Portuguese-speaking feminist networks for exchange, advocacy, and collective mobilisation. These alliances are especially valuable for knowledge-sharing and fostering region-specific feminist narratives.

Achievements and Gains

Despite persistent structural and financial constraints, the feminist movement in São Tomé and Príncipe has made tangible advances across multiple fronts:

Raising Community Awareness on Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

84.6% of surveyed organisations actively address GBV, with many prioritising community mobilisations through door-to-door awareness, school partnerships, and local dialogue spaces. These interventions have not only increased recognition of GBV but have also promoted behavioural shifts, particularly among youth and community leaders who increasingly understand GBV as a systemic issue rather than a private matter.





Strategic Institutional Partnerships for Literacy and Gender Education

A notable success has been the establishment of collaborations with government bodies, particularly the Ministry of Education. Through joint efforts, feminist organisations have contributed to expanding literacy and gender-focused educational content. Such initiatives have bolstered young girls' self-esteem and knowledge of rights, primarily through transformative programs like *PERIQUETE*, which empowers girls to “know their rights and what they are capable of doing.”

Promoting Youth Engagement and Leadership Development

More than two-thirds of the organisations work on capacity-building and leadership development. There is a growing emphasis on involving young people in feminist organising—both through digital campaigns (46.2%) and direct training. Youth participation is evident in school-based programs and cooperatives where young women are encouraged to step into leadership roles, breaking long-standing gender norms.

Fostering Regional Solidarity and Portuguese-speaking Learning Aspirations

Notably, 92.3% of the surveyed organisations expressed a strong desire to join a Portuguese-speaking feminist solidarity network. This reflects a clear opportunity for regional alliance-building and cross-border learning with movements in Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and Cabo Verde. Many respondents highlighted the potential of language-based networks to facilitate mutual learning, exchange of workshops, and amplify shared struggles that are often excluded from global feminist discourse.

e. Funding Landscape

Access to funding remains inconsistent across feminist organisations in São Tomé and Príncipe. While 53.8% of organisations reported receiving funding within the last three years, a significant 46.2% had not accessed any financial support over the same period. The most prominent funders include OIKOS—noted for its rural economic support—alongside UNFPA, the European Union, and local government institutions. Nevertheless, feminist actors continue to face serious structural and institutional barriers that limit their financial sustainability and programmatic growth.





One of the key barriers cited by 23.1% of respondents is a lack of knowledge and technical support to navigate funding processes, including where to find appropriate calls and how to apply. Furthermore, donor priorities often do not reflect local realities, with short-term, externally driven projects leading to fragmented implementation and limited impact. Respondents also highlighted that most grants come with tight timelines and narrow thematic scopes, undermining strategic planning and long-term sustainability.

Infrastructure deficits compound these challenges. Many organisations lack basic facilities—such as reliable office space, electricity, internet access, and even running water—which constrains both day-to-day operations and their ability to meet donor reporting standards. In addition, financial and legal administrative requirements, including audited accounts and formal governance policies, exclude grassroots and informal associations, even when they are deeply embedded in the communities they serve.

Interestingly, language barriers were cited by only 7.7% of organisations, suggesting that translation strategies are increasingly used to overcome linguistic exclusion in Portuguese-speaking contexts. This demonstrates the adaptive capacity and determination of feminist actors in accessing funding across linguistic divides.

A more profound frustration expressed by participants lies in the visibility politics of funding ecosystems. As one activist noted, *“Associations that have the greatest capacity to publicise end up being more visible, even though they have done little in the way of concrete action.”* This insight speaks to a growing concern that digital presence, rather than community impact, often dictates funding access, further marginalising local movements without media infrastructure.

Organisations overwhelmingly (69.2%) called for flexible, multi-year funding as the most urgent need. Others requested mentoring, training in fundraising, and support with physical infrastructure. Additionally, many emphasised the importance of partnerships with Portuguese-speaking feminist funders and increased investment in youth-led and grassroots organisations to ensure a more just and locally grounded feminist ecosystem.





f. Challenges and Structural Barriers

Stigma Around Feminism

Feminism is often misunderstood and socially stigmatised. Many in São Toméan society view feminist ideologies as radical or anti-family. This stigma creates barriers for women who might otherwise engage in feminist advocacy, as they fear social judgment, ostracism, or being labelled as aggressive. In conservative and rural areas, especially, feminism is seen as an import rather than a local response to inequality.

Deeply Rooted Patriarchal Norms

Macho and misogynistic societal norms remain pervasive. Despite gains in women's education, their participation in decision-making processes and leadership remains minimal. Feminist activists point to persistent beliefs that devalue women's capabilities and leadership potential, often relegating them to domestic roles regardless of education or professional skills.

Fear of Self-Identification and Retaliation

Due to widespread cultural resistance and social pressure, many women are reluctant to publicly identify as feminists. This fear is not unfounded; participants in focus groups reported experiences of retaliation and backlash, particularly for vocal women challenging male authority or traditional gender roles. This creates a chilling effect that curbs open participation and limits activist visibility.

Institutional Fragmentation and Capacity Gaps

While the country hosts several feminist organisations and grassroots initiatives, they often operate in silos. Limited coordination between movements weakens collective influence and diminishes strategic impact. Many associations also lack the institutional infrastructure, such as stable funding, professional staff, and physical offices, necessary for sustained advocacy.

Lack of a Feminist Care Infrastructure

Burnout among feminist organisers is a pressing issue. Many activists operate as volunteers or under precarious working conditions, with limited access to mental health care or spaces of well-being. This emotional and physical toll leads to exhaustion and, in some cases, withdrawal from activism altogether.





Low Female Participation and Mobilisation

Mobilising women—especially in rural and conservative communities—remains a core challenge. Despite growing awareness, only a small percentage of women actively participate in feminist organising. This is compounded by a lack of care infrastructure (e.g., child care, transport), which restricts women’s time and ability to engage in public activities.

Limited Rural Coverage and Outreach

Most feminist activities are concentrated in urban areas, leaving rural communities underserved. This urban bias perpetuates disparities in access to resources, training, and rights education for women in peripheral regions.

g. Opportunities

Strong Youth Leadership

Youth engagement is one of the most promising aspects of feminist activism in São Tomé and Príncipe. The mapping identifies a new generation of young, qualified leaders—particularly young women—who are spearheading awareness campaigns, school-based programming, and community education. The PERIQUETE project stands out as an innovative initiative empowering girls to “know their rights and what they are capable of doing.” Youth participation is further evident in the high levels of volunteerism and the creative energy channelled into feminist education and local mobilisation.

Growing Public Engagement Through Education and School

Feminist organisations have strategically partnered with schools to incorporate gender education and character formation at early stages. These school-based interventions promote civic participation and challenge deep-seated patriarchal norms. Educational spaces are used not just to teach, but to foster critical thinking about gender roles, rights, and equality. This connection to the formal education system also positions feminist groups to influence future policy and curriculum development.

Regional Exchange with Portuguese-Speaking Countries

São Tomé’s geographic and linguistic position has enabled the cultivation of ties with other Portuguese-speaking feminist movements, especially those in Angola, Mozambique, and Cabo Verde. Several actors have voiced interest





in deeper cross-border collaborations and joint campaigns. The mapping reveals a strong appetite for regional solidarity and knowledge exchange, with over 92% of surveyed organisations affirming their willingness to participate in a Portuguese-speaking feminist network. These exchanges not only offer learning opportunities but also help reduce the isolation experienced by São Toméan activists.

Use of Digital Tools and Online Feminist Education

Despite infrastructural limitations such as unreliable energy and internet access, activists have been leveraging WhatsApp, Facebook, and other platforms for mobilisation, awareness campaigns, and information sharing. Digital tools are particularly useful for young feminists, allowing them to access resources, connect with peers, and conduct public education campaigns in creative ways. Online activism complements offline methods such as community mobilisation and door-to-door awareness, broadening reach and visibility for feminist causes in the country.





3

Conclusion and Recommendations



3.1 Conclusion

This report underscores the remarkable strength, diversity, and resilience of feminist organising across Portuguese-speaking Africa. Despite varying political landscapes, economic conditions, and historical legacies, feminist actors in countries like Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, Cabo Verde, and Equatorial Guinea are advancing transformative agendas rooted in care, justice, and community-led action. From grassroots literacy programs in Guinea-Bissau to youth-led campaigns in São Tomé and Príncipe, from legal advocacy in Angola to climate justice mobilisation in Cabo Verde, the region's feminist ecosystem is both vibrant and evolving.

However, this potential is often undermined by systemic barriers, including resource scarcity, linguistic exclusion, patriarchal backlash, and limited digital infrastructure. Many movements remain disconnected from regional and global feminist platforms due to donor requirements and language barriers. Yet even within these constraints, Portuguese-speaking feminists continue to adapt and innovate—using digital tools, storytelling, cross-border solidarity, and intergenerational mentorship to sustain their efforts.

As this report demonstrates, the time is ripe for deeper investment in long-term structural support, knowledge production, and inclusive regional convenings. Strengthening Portuguese-speaking feminist movements is not only a matter of equity, but a vital contribution to the broader pan-African and global feminist struggle.





3.2 Recommendations

Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Linguistic marginalisation	Establish a Portuguese Language Feminist Infrastructure: translation, support desk, and grant clinics	Ensure linguistic inclusion and increased access to funding and participation	- Set up a Portuguese-speaking-language support desk, staffed with Portuguese-speaking grant and movement officers. - Translate calls for proposals, tools, reports, and platforms into Portuguese, Spanish and Creole where applicable. - Offer free grant-writing clinics in Portuguese and Spanish at least twice a year. - Fund interpretation/translation costs for regional convenings and feminist publications.	- Full Portuguese accessibility across all donor platforms by the end of 2026. - At least 30 grassroots groups assisted annually through the different support desks.	Use multilingual facilitation (Portuguese, Creole, local languages) and translation tools in all processes.
Lack of consistent, flexible funding for community-based organisations and unregistered groups.	Provide long-term core funding for unregistered and community-based organisations	Strengthen movement resilience and sustainability at grassroots level	- Identify community-based organisations and unregistered groups. - Provide them support to apply for long term core funding.	At least 10 organisations from Portuguese speaking African countries provided funding annually.	Allow for flexible reporting and reduce audit requirements to include informal collectives
Linguistic barriers in grant applications.	Develop linguistically accessible and low-barrier grant-making platforms	Enable equitable access to donor resources and visibility for all movement actors	Translate all resources into Portuguese, Spanish and Creole where possible.	All grant documents for funders are translated and shared by the end of 2026.	Provide templates, voice-note applications, and asynchronous feedback mechanisms
Weak cross-country feminist solidarity among Portuguese-speaking countries	Launch a regional Portuguese-Speaking Feminist Solidarity Network and facilitate convenings.	Build cross-border alliances for advocacy, learning, and joint mobilisation.	- Identify key feminist players within the 6 countries. - Identify online platforms to host the network. - Establish a web-based solidarity network. - Plan for regional convenings.	A regional network is established by the second quarter of 2026.	Use storytelling and shared campaigns to build trust and visibility across countries





Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Limited digital access and connectivity, especially in rural areas	Support feminist movements in developing a hybrid digital strategy with low-bandwidth platforms and offline outreach	Bridge urban-rural divides and strengthen digital feminist mobilisation.	- Assess digital access and communication needs of feminist groups, especially in rural and low-connectivity areas. - Co-create and fund hybrid communication models that combine low-bandwidth digital tools (e.g., WhatsApp, Facebook Lite) with offline outreach methods (e.g., radio, storytelling, community forums). - Deliver digital safety and literacy workshops tailored to informal, youth-led, and grassroots feminist movements.	- By Q2 2026, at least 5 country-level assessments completed, with findings used to guide digital support strategies. - By Q4 2026, at least 6 feminist groups across the region will pilot hybrid communication models, with 60% reporting improved community engagement. - By the end of 2026, 300 feminist actors will have been trained in digital safety and literacy, with at least 30% improvement in knowledge measured through pre- and post-evaluations.	Leverage WhatsApp, community radio, and peer-to-peer training in low-connectivity areas
Surveillance and civic repression in countries like Equatorial Guinea and Angola	Connect feminists with a Solidarity & Safety Fund to protect activists and support underground organising.	Reduce risk for frontline activists and ensure continuity of resistance efforts.	- Map and validate existing solidarity and protection funds (regional and international) suitable for feminist and LGBTQIA+ activists in restrictive contexts. - Develop a confidential referral system via trusted local intermediaries or partner organisations to enable safe and discreet fund access. - Create and distribute secure, multilingual guidance (including oral/audio formats) on how to access and use the fund, particularly in low-connectivity and rural settings.	- At least 3 active solidarity/safety funds identified and available for referral within the first 6 months. - A functioning referral mechanism operational in at least 4 countries, with protocols for anonymity and security established by end of Year 1. 50 feminist activists or groups supported through the fund by end of Year 2, with at least 75% reporting increased safety, visibility, or mobility.	Work through trusted in-country researchers and anonymised platforms for high-risk contexts





Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Exclusion of marginalised voices (e.g. LGBTQIA+, rural women, trans activists)	Fund oral storytelling, translation projects, and feminist research on inclusion gaps.	Amplify underrepresented feminist voices and knowledge systems.	- Launch a micro-grant scheme for community-based organisations to document feminist experiences through oral storytelling, especially among rural, older, LGBTQIA+, and disabled women. - Support translation of feminist research and advocacy materials into local languages and Creole variants to expand reach and understanding.	10 storytelling or translation initiatives funded within 12 months, with geographic and demographic diversity. - At least 5 key feminist resources translated and disseminated in local languages across 3+ countries.	Partner with community based leaders to reach rural and marginalised communities
Fragmentation between youth-led and institutional feminist movements	Establish Intergenerational Mentorship Programmes and Feminist Assemblies.	Promote intergenerational learning and reduce organisational fragmentation.	- Design and implement intergenerational mentorship programmes that pair seasoned feminists with younger activists using oral storytelling, digital exchange, and in-person gatherings. - Fund national feminist assemblies where diverse actors (youth, elders, LGBTQIA+, rural voices) can collectively identify inclusion gaps and propose feminist strategies. - Support multilingual documentation and translation of mentorship stories, assembly findings, and feminist knowledge into accessible formats (audio, local language, visual).	- At least 3 mentorship cohorts launched across different countries, each with a minimum of 10 mentor-mentee pairs annually. 4 national feminist assemblies convened within two years, with 30% rural or underrepresented participants. - Minimum of 6 feminist outputs (stories, briefs, reports) produced in at least 3 local languages or oral formats per year.	Facilitate informal, trust-based mentorship alongside formal programmes





Challenge	Strategic Recommendation	Objective/ Impact	Actions	Indicators	Implementation Learnings
Burnout and weak care infrastructure for feminist organisers	Invest in collective care, healing justice, and mental health support programmes	Build sustainable and trauma-informed feminist ecosystems	- Support core funding for feminist organisations to cover wellbeing infrastructure, including salaries, rest cycles, and mental health services. - Facilitate regional training and peer-learning sessions on trauma-informed care, collective healing, and burnout prevention for feminist leaders and organisers. - Create a feminist care fund to resource emergency support, psychosocial care, and community-based healing practices—particularly for activists facing violence or burnout.	- At least 30% of funded feminist groups receive core (non-project-based) funding that includes allocations for care and wellbeing. - A minimum of 4 regional trainings or retreats on trauma-informed practices are held annually, with participation from at least 5 countries. - Feminist Care Fund launched with at least 10 grants disbursed annually to support mental health, rest, or trauma recovery initiatives	Embed care as core to grants, timelines, and reporting expectations.
Underrepresentation in global feminist fora and decision-making spaces	Support Portuguese-speaking delegates and publish position papers at global forums	Position Portuguese-speaking feminists in global decision-making arenas	- Provide dedicated funding and accompaniment for participation in AWID, CSW, African Feminist Forum, and Portuguese-speaking summits. - Support production of position papers, manifestos, and communiqués authored by Portuguese-speaking feminists.	- Portuguese-speaking-authored position paper submitted at each major feminist forum from 2026 onward. - At least 5 Portuguese-speaking delegates per international forum supported annually.	Translate global advocacy tools into Portuguese and sponsor presence at global events





4

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