



Universal Periodic Review: Stakeholder Report

Submitted by Global Freedom Group (GFG)

Country in Review – Mozambique

Submitted in October 2025

The Global Freedom Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to amplifying the voices of women & girls in public decision-making processes. The organization aims to inspire women & girls worldwide to assume leadership roles across various public spheres. In addition to its advocacy efforts, the Global Freedom Group offers educational & mentoring programs, such as the Global Freedom Exchange. This initiative provides dynamic opportunities for emerging & established women leaders who are actively engaged in combating human trafficking. The Global Freedom Group strives to bridge the gap between women, girls, & policymakers, working towards enhanced human security & social justice.

Major Contributors:

- Ahadzada, Zarifa
- Minahan, Isabella
- Moura-Koçoğlu, Michaela, Ph.D.

www.globalfreedomgroup.org

Email: cindyr@globalfreedom.group

Mailing Address: 200 N Vineyard Blvd

Executive Summary

Overview

This stakeholder report highlights the status of women and girls in Mozambique, focusing on persistent gaps in gender equality and human rights. Three major areas represent a reinforcing cycle of challenges: Gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response; the impact of child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) on girls' education, health, and mental well-being; and a lack of economic empowerment for women that impedes their independence. A lack of enforcement and entrenched social norms despite a 2019 law banning CEFM drives early marriage and school dropout, with almost half of girls married before 18. This in turn fuels women's economic exclusion. Despite economic initiatives—including savings products and skills programs—obstacles such as unpaid care burdens, limited access to finance and land, and gender bias constrain women's participation in paid employment. Women's lack of social, economic, and political power increases their vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV). Breaking this cycle requires reducing CEFM, keeping girls in school, redistributing unpaid care work, and eliminating gendered barriers to financial services and land. Advancing these priorities is essential for gender justice, human rights, and sustainable development in Mozambique.

Methodology

This UPR stakeholder report assesses Mozambique's progress toward SDG 5 (gender equality) with a focus on gender-based violence (GBV), child, early and forced marriage (CEFM), and the educational and economic outcomes of girls and women. It contextualizes evidence from prior UPR submissions; national laws and policies; materials and datasets from the UN (CEDAW, UNICEF, UNFPA) and the World Bank; peer-reviewed scholarship; and reports from Mozambican women's rights and international development organizations. Mozambique's performance is benchmarked against regional and international standards—including SDG 5 targets, CEDAW, the CRC, and the Maputo Protocol. The report includes concrete, time-bound recommendations to strengthen prevention and accountability for GBV and to expand services, education pathways, and economic opportunities that reduce CEFM and advance the rights and well-being of girls and women.

A. Gender-Based Violence

A1: Overview

Gender-based violence (GBV) in Mozambique- including domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and early marriage, remains widespread despite existing legal frameworks. Surveys indicate that 37% of women aged 15-49 have experience physical or sexual

violence (UNFPA, 2022). In Cabo Delgado, armed groups have used sexual violence during conflict, further increasing risks for displaced women and girls (Human Rights Watch, 2023). The persistence of GBV undermines Mozambique's progress toward SDG 5 and perpetuates cycles of poverty, exclusion and early marriage.

A2: Current Policies

A2-1: Domestic Violence Law (2009): Criminalizes intimate partner violence but lacks consistent enforcement mechanisms.

A2-2. Law No.19/2019: Prohibits child, early and forced marriage, with penalties for facilitators.

A2-3. National Strategy on Preventing and Combating GBV (2022-2029): Aims to strengthen multi-sectoral prevention and response to GBV.

A2-4. International Commitments: Mozambique has ratified the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW and the CRC, aligning with regional and international standards.

Implementation gaps remain significant. Police and judiciary lack specialized training, survivor protection measures are weak, and rural health facilities often lack essential post rape care. Funding for GBV programs is insufficient, particularly in remote provinces.

A3: Key Issues

A3-1. Prevalence: GBV rates remain high, with one in three women reporting violence. National data confirm little change in prevalence despite existing laws.

A3-2. Cultural Norms: Patriarchal traditions normalize violence and stigmatize survivors. These norms discourage reporting and limit community-level accountability.

A3-3. Service Gaps: Safe houses, legal aid, and psychosocial services are scarce outside urban areas. Most provinces lack shelters or specialized support services for survivors.

A3-4: Humanitarian Contexts: Conflict in Cabo Delgado and cyclone displacement have heightened risks of sexual exploitation. Displaced women and girls face heightened vulnerability in camps and host communities.

A3-5: Emerging Challenges: Online harassment and digital exploitation of adolescent girls are rising. There is currently no legal framework to address cyber-GBV.

A3-6: Intersectional Vulnerability: Adolescent mothers, girls with disabilities and rural women are disproportionately excluded from protection and justice systems. These groups face compounded barriers in accessing justice and services.

A4: Recommendations

A4-1. Strengthen enforcement of existing GBV laws through judicial training.

A4-2. Establish survivor-centered one stop centers in all provinces, integrating legal, medical and psychosocial services.

A4-3. Expand safe houses and support services, particularly in conflict affected and rural regions.

A4-4. Incorporate GBV indicators into national SDG monitoring, with disaggregated data by age, location, and disability.

A4-5. Implement nationwide awareness campaigns to challenge harmful norms, targeting men, boys and community leaders.

A4-6. Allocate direct, flexible funding for grassroots women's organizations providing frontline survivor support.

A4-7. Develop a legal framework addressing online harassment and cyber GBV.

B. Eliminating Child Marriage and Supporting Girls' Education

B1: Overview

Mozambique reports the fifth highest rate globally for child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), with severe impacts on girls' education, health, safety, and future earnings. Despite reforms,¹ the practice persists: 48% of girls are married before the age of 18, and 14% before the age of 15.² CEFM both drives and results in low educational attainment: More than 50% of girls drop out by fifth grade, only 11% reach secondary level, and only 1% attend college.³ The persistence of CEFM jeopardizes the health and well being of girls through increased risks of intimate partner violence, maternal mortality, malnutrition, obstetric fistula, and HIV⁴ and undermines advancing SDG 4 and 5. Secondary schooling sharply reduces early marriage,⁵ but factors such as rural residence, poverty, gendered expectations, as well as limited reproductive health services fuel early marriage.⁶

B2: Current Policies

B2-1: Legal Reforms: The 2019 *Law on the Prevention and Combatting of Premature Unions*⁷ sets the legal marriage age at 18 without exception and criminalizes facilitation with penalties of up to 12 years' imprisonment.⁸ Liberalized abortion access (2014)⁹ and Decree 435/2018 revoked night-school mandates, protecting pregnant girls' right to daytime schooling.¹⁰

B2-2: Girls' Empowerment Initiatives: The *Eu Sou Capaz* program (2021-ongoing) provides school uniforms, bicycles, and mentoring to improve enrollment and retention.¹¹ The *Rapariga Biz* program (2016-ongoing) establishes safe spaces, mentoring, sexual and reproductive health services,¹² alongside vocational training and community outreach.¹³ The *East Africa Girls' Empowerment and Resilience* (EAGER) program

(2023–2029) provides direct support for girls to remain in or return to school, builds skills, and shifts harmful norms.¹⁴

B3: Key Issues

B3-1. Enforcement Gaps: Limited awareness, weak capacity of local courts, and social resistance to reform, particularly in rural areas.

B3-2. Education Barriers: Only 11% of girls attend secondary school, and only 1% progress to college. Most married girls aged 15–17 are out of school. In 2021, gross completion rates remained below 50% at primary (47.8%) and lower-secondary levels.¹⁵

B3-4. Birth Registration: Low/delayed registration impedes age verification, access to services, and prosecution of law violations.¹⁶

B3-4. Economic Insecurity and Harmful Norms: Indirect school costs, poverty, conflict, and climate crises drive CEFM. Initiation rites and norms reinforce the notion of girls as economic burdens.¹⁷ Young mothers face stigma and no childcare.¹⁸

B4: Recommendations

B4-1: Enforce the 2019 law: Train police, prosecutors, judges, community, and religious leaders to recognize, prosecute, and prevent CEFM. Institute and streamline data collection/monitoring.

B4-2: Remove financial barriers: Cash or in-kind transfers¹⁹ for uniforms, books, transport—52% of children live over 10 km from school and upper-secondary fees.²⁰

B4-3. Scale WASH in schools: Install protected water points; lockable girls' latrines; water, soap, bins, and drying materials to reduce menstruation and postnatal absenteeism—nearly 40% of schools lack proper toilets, and at least 30% lack water.²¹

B4-4. Transform Norms & Expand SRH: Provide SRH education, modern contraception & confidential counseling; deliver gender-transformative programs for boys, men & leaders via media and community theatre to support contraceptive use and delay pregnancy.²²

C. Empowering Women to Increase Their Economic Independence

C1: Overview

The economic empowerment of women and girls in Mozambique is essential to solving the issues of GBV and CEFM also highlighted in this report. Research has shown that economic empowerment interventions for women and adolescent girls have produced results that prevented GBV²³ and reduced the risk of CEFM.²⁴ Outside of GBV and CEFM, Mozambican women's economic empowerment is important because large swathes of women currently lack access to economic freedom and stability. Although labor force

participation is almost equal for men (79.8%) and women (78.1%), 92.3% of those women are engaged in vulnerable work.²⁵ Gender parity has yet to be reached in business ownership,²⁶ and small and medium-sized enterprises owned by women earn 16% less than those owned by men.²⁷ Less women than men have bank accounts.²⁸

C2: Current Policies

C2-1: Development Programs for Women and Girls' Economic Empowerment

The Female Economic Empowerment Program (2021-2023) sought to improve the economic situation of female entrepreneurs and women-led micro and small businesses in Mozambique.²⁹ The MUVA program (2015-2021) built the professional skills of and created new job opportunities for young urban women aged 19-24, the most economically disadvantaged demographic in the country. The program's effectiveness supported the creation of the MUVA NGO, which continues to implement innovative approaches to enhancing women's economic empowerment in Mozambique.³⁰

C2-2: M-Pesa Xitique: Empowering Women Through Innovative Financial Products

A 2023 diagnostic study led by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) analyzed the barriers that Mozambican women entrepreneurs and farmers in urban and rural areas face in their efforts to access financial services. The diagnostic found that rural Mozambican women have less financial autonomy and privacy than their urban counterparts, and face greater risks for violating social norms that discourage women's financial independence. However, their use of informal financial services, such as savings groups, is socially accepted. GIZ has partnered with M-Pesa Vodacom Mozambique to expand M-Pesa Xitique, a group savings product designed for rural women micro-entrepreneurs and smallholder farmers. While this product enables rural women to manage their finances within accepted societal norms, there is still more to be done to address the deep-seeded gender norms revealed in the diagnostic such as “women should not have financial privacy from husbands”.³¹

Current policies show that there is relative interest in remedying Mozambique's gendered financial inequality, yet barriers persist.

C3: Key Issues

C3-1: Gender inequality in distribution of unpaid childcare and domestic responsibilities

Many Mozambican women are not able to engage in stable and secure work due to taking on the majority of the burdens of unpaid domestic responsibilities and childcare.³² Taking lower-paying jobs, such as jobs in the agricultural sector, part-time work, or self-employment, enables women to work while balancing taking care of children and engaging in other domestic tasks. This reduces their access to full-time positions with more stability such as wage work with a fixed schedule.³³ As a result, women are less

likely than men to enter the country's higher-paying, non-agricultural sectors.³⁴ For self-employment, research has found that having children widens the gender gap in profits for small and medium-sized enterprises.³⁵

C3-2: Gender gap in access to formal financial services

Women in Mozambique face significant barriers to accessing formal financial services, which negatively impacts their business potential.³⁶ One obstacle is the lack of legal identification, which prevents many women from qualifying for banking services.³⁷ Additionally, while gender discrimination in financial services is prohibited by Mozambique's Code of Conduct for Credit and Financial Institutions Article 5(g), there is no equivalent protection for credit access.³⁸ Formal financial institutions are less likely to extend credit to women due to their lack of collateral, such as land,³⁹ and women are often faced with more extensive collateral requirements than men.⁴⁰ Social pressures further hinder women's ability to save, as earnings are often diverted towards household needs rather than investments in their businesses.⁴¹ This contributes to a lower savings rate among women, only 38% compared to 48% for men.⁴² Furthermore, as of 2021, only 38.7% of Mozambican women had accounts with financial institutions or mobile-money services, compared to 61% of men, highlighting a considerable gender gap in access to banking.⁴³ These challenges illustrate the structural inequalities that limit women's financial independence and entrepreneurial growth in Mozambique.

C3-3: Barriers to women's ability to own and inherit land

Owning land can enhance a woman's financial independence in Mozambique,⁴⁴ where women are less likely than men to own property independently.⁴⁵ The 1997 Land Law grants women the right to register land claims and participate in decisions, but customary practices still disadvantage them.⁴⁶ In matrilineal societies in the north, women inherit land, but men control its use. In contrast, in patrilineal societies in the south, land is inherited by men, thereby increasing women's dependence on men for access. Divorced or widowed women are especially vulnerable to losing land access in patrilineal societies.⁴⁷ Additionally, lower education levels among women hinder their knowledge of land rights.⁴⁸

C4: Recommendations

C4-1: Allocate government funds to increase women's access to childcare to allow women to engage in more stable, higher-paying work. Childcare interventions in Mozambique and Kenya have been found to increase mothers' employment rates,^{49,50} and shifted single mothers to jobs with more consistent schedules.⁵¹

C4-2: Enact policy that alters women's collateral requirements to provide women with more equitable access to formal financial services such as credit. In Ethiopia, loan products that rely on psychometric testing rather than access to collateral (land) to

gauge women borrowers' creditworthiness have been shown to increase women's access to credit without negatively impacting loan repayment rates.⁵²

C4-3: Create an educational campaign to inform women of their rights under the 1997 Land Law. When women are secure in their land rights they can increase their bargaining power within their household, decrease their dependency on their partner,⁵³ and work in more productive, non-agricultural sectors.⁵⁴

Conclusion

For Mozambique to uphold its commitments to women and girls under international human rights instruments like CEDAW, the CRC, and the Maputo Protocol; to work towards SDGs 4 and 5; and to ensure a high quality of life for women and girls within its borders, it will have to take significant measures to address GBV, CEFM, and cultural and structural barriers to girls' education and women's economic empowerment. It is imperative that Mozambique: fund and monitor enforcement of Law 19/2019; support access to childcare; expand cash/in-kind transfers, WASH, and transport to schools; upscale contraception use and acceptance; train local and leaders; strengthen GBV survivor services; alter credit qualification requirements; educate and empower women to exercise their land rights; to address these issues.

Mozambique's capital served as the grounds on which the Maputo Protocol—a key document to protect women's rights—was adopted. By implementing the measures outlined above, Mozambique can translate its commitment to protect the rights of girls and women into measurable results and demonstrate regional leadership on equality across Africa and beyond.

¹ Lei n.º 19/2019. [Lei de Prevenção e Combate às Uniões Prematuras](#). (Publicada a 22 de Outubro de 2019). *Boletim da República*, I Série – 203 (Terça-feira, 22 de Outubro de 2019).

² Nhampoca JM, Maritz JE. [Early marriage, education and mental health: experiences of adolescent girls in Mozambique](#). *Front Glob Womens Health*. 2024 Jun 12; Ministry of Health, Republic of Mozambique. *National Demographic and Health Survey*. Maputo, 2019; UNICEF. [Mozambique - Child Marriage in Brief](#). 2025; UNICEF Data Warehouse. [Child Marriage Mozambique](#). Accessed Sept. 12, 2025.

³ Heinonen, E. et al. "Child Marriage in Mozambique: report on implementation of children's rights, international program and challenges

⁴ UNICEF. [Child Marriage in Eastern and Southern Africa. A statistical overview and reflections on ending the practice](#). June 16, 2022.

⁵ Mumba Zulu (2025).

⁶ Nhampoca & Maritz (2024).

⁷ Law No. 19/2019 *Lei de Prevenção e Combate às Uniões Prematuras*

⁸ Odhiambo, Agnes. [Mozambique Passes Law to End Child Marriage](#). *Human Rights Watch*, July 19, 2019.

-
- ⁹ UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. (2018). Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. [Combined 3rd to 5th periodic reports submitted by Mozambique under article 18 of the Convention](#).
- ¹⁰ Salvi, F. (2019). [The Regulation of Pregnancy in Mozambican Schools: From Policy, to Practice, to Identities](#). *Comparative Education Review*, 63(3): 337-355
- ¹¹ World Bank Report. [Helping half a million girls stay in school in Mozambique](#). Feb. 14, 2024
- ¹² UNESCO Core Data Portal. [Action for Girls and Young Women \(Rapariga Biz\)](#). 2025.
- ¹³ UN SDG Group. [Rapariga Biz II. 2024 Annual Report](#).
- ¹⁴ World Bank. *East Africa Girls' Empowerment and Resilience Program (EAGER): Program appraisal document for Madagascar, Mozambique, and the African Union*, 2023.
- ¹⁵ O'Brien, Lily. ["Motherhood before Girlhood: A Look into Women and Girl's Access to Education in Mozambique."](#) *Columbia Undergraduate Law Review*, Oct. 7, 2024.
- ¹⁶ U.S. Dept. of State, [Mozambique 2019 Human Rights Report](#).
- ¹⁷ Mumba Zulu, J. et al. (2025). [Social norms and barriers hindering the elimination of child, early, and forced marriage in Mozambique, Uganda, and Ethiopia and policy responses: a qualitative study](#). *Journal of Community Systems for Health*, 2(1)..
- ¹⁸ O'Brien (2025).
- ¹⁹ Malhotra, Anju, and Shatha Elnakib. ["20 years of the evidence base on what works to prevent child marriage: A systematic review"](#). *Journal of Adolescent Health* 68.5 (2021): 847-862.
- ²⁰ The World Bank (2021).
- ²¹ Morgan, Camille, et al. "Water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools: Status and implications of low coverage in Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia." *International journal of Hygiene and Environmental Health* 220.6 (2017): 950-959; The World Bank (2021).
- ²² AMODEFA. (2020). [Report on the human rights situation of girls in Mozambique: The nexus between girls' economic, social and cultural situation, early or forced marriages, early pregnancy, and COVID-19](#).
- ²³ Jewkes et al. (2020). [Effective Design and Implementation Elements in Interventions to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls](#).
- ²⁴ Girls Not Brides. (2024). [CRANK Research Spotlight: Economic empowerment interventions to address child marriage](#).
- ²⁵ World Bank Group. (2025). [Gender Data: Mozambique](#).
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Reyes et al. (2023). [Mozambique Gender Assessment: Leveraging Women and Girls' Potential](#).
- ²⁸ World Bank Group. (2025).
- ²⁹ Netherlands Enterprise Agency. (2025). [Female Economic Empowerment Program \(FEEP\) in Mozambique](#).
- ³⁰ Oxford Policy Management. (2021). [MUVA: female economic empowerment in Mozambique](#).
- ³¹ Singh & Stocco. (2024). [Tackling Gender Norms in Mozambique's Financial Services](#).
- ³² Martinez et al. (2012). [The Promise of Preschool in Africa: A Randomized Impact Evaluation of Early Childhood Development in Rural Mozambique](#). The World Bank and Save the Children.
- ³³ Rubiano-Matulevich & Viollaz. (2019). [Gender Differences in Time Use: Allocating Time between the Market and the Household](#).
- ³⁴ Lachler & Walker. (2018). [Mozambique Jobs Diagnostic: Volume 1. Analytics](#).
- ³⁵ Clark et al. (2019). *The Impact of Childcare on Poor Urban Women's Economic Empowerment in Africa*.
- ³⁶ Reyes et al. (2023).
- ³⁷ Food and Agriculture Association of the United Nations (FAO). (2020). [Deconstructing the Gender Gap in Rural Financial Inclusion: The Cases of Mozambique and Tanzania](#).
- ³⁸ Reyes et al. (2023).
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Campos et al. (2019). [Profiting from Parity: Unlocking the Potential of Women's Businesses in Africa](#).
- ⁴¹ Reyes et al. (2023).

-
- ⁴² Demirgüç-Kunt et al. (2020). [*The Global Findex Database 2017: Measuring Financial Inclusion and Opportunities to Expand Access to and Use of Financial Services*](#).
- ⁴³ World Bank Group. (2025).
- ⁴⁴ Reyes et al. (2023).
- ⁴⁵ USAID (2015). [*The DHS Program—Mozambique: Standard AIS, 2015*](#).
- ⁴⁶ Reyes et al. (2023).
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Martinez et al. (2012). [*The Promise of Preschool in Africa: A Randomized Impact Evaluation of Early Childhood Development in Rural Mozambique*](#).
- ⁵⁰ Clark et al. (2019). *The Impact of Childcare on Poor Urban Women's Economic Empowerment in Africa*.
- ⁵¹ Ibid.
- ⁵² Campos et al. (2019).
- ⁵³ Reyes et al. (2023).
- ⁵⁴ Goldstein et al. (2018). [*Formalization Without Certification? Experimental Evidence on Property Rights and Investment*](#).