



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Regional Conference on Child Marriage and Sexual Violence Against Adolescents in West and Central Africa

Location: Dakar, Senegal

Date: 9-11 February 2026

Format: Hybrid (In-person and Virtual)

Background

The Population and Health Research Institute (PHERI), the African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) and the Union for African Population Studies (UAPS), invite extended abstracts from junior/early-career researchers for a focused, hybrid technical workshop in Dakar that will seed a Special Issue of the Journal of African Population Studies (JAPS) on child marriage and sexual violence against adolescents (CM/SVAA) in West and Central Africa. The region bears the highest prevalence of child marriage globally, with nearly 60 million child brides; four in ten girls married before age 18. Additionally, one in three teenage girls have reported physical violence since age 15, and one in ten have experienced rape or sexual abuse. These challenges are compounded by high poverty rates (40%), youth unemployment (32.1%), and humanitarian crises affecting millions across the region.

This call targets actionable, policy-relevant studies that can inform near-term country responses and be developed into full manuscripts within 6–10 months. Accepted junior authors will participate in Author Clinics during the Dakar workshop (in person or virtually), receive mentorship from senior scholars, and contribute to the workshop's practical outputs—country/cluster mini action plans, a concise Dakar Technical Action Note, and the JAPS Special Issue—all aligned with ongoing AU, ECOWAS, UNICEF/UNFPA and national strategies to end CM/SVAA.

Purpose

This call invites **early-career researchers** to propose publishable studies that will (i) inform near-term country action on CM/SVAA and (ii) form a **Special Issue in the Journal of African Population Studies (JAPS)** within **6–10 months** post-workshop. Accepted junior authors will join **Author Clinics** and be paired with **senior mentors** during and after the Dakar workshop.

Who should apply (Eligibility)

- **Junior / early-career researchers** (≤ 5 years post highest degree OR current doctoral candidates) based in or working on **West & Central Africa**.
- Single-country or multi-country analyses welcome; feasibility (data access/ethics) is essential.
- Co-authorship with implementers, youth groups, or service providers is encouraged.

Themes and Topics

We invite original research papers, case studies, and programme evaluations addressing child marriage and sexual violence against adolescents in West and Central Africa. Submissions may focus on, but are not limited to, the following themes:

Theme 1: Epidemiology and Evidence

- Prevalence, trends, and spatial variations in child marriage and sexual violence
- Drivers and determinants (socio-economic, cultural, educational, humanitarian contexts)
- Health, education, and economic consequences for adolescents
- Impact of humanitarian crises, conflict, and displacement

Theme 2: Prevention and Response Strategies

- Community-based prevention programmes and interventions
- Educational and economic empowerment initiatives for adolescents
- Legal and policy frameworks: implementation and enforcement
- Health service delivery and survivor support systems

Theme 3: Data, Research, and Innovation

- Innovative methodologies for measuring child marriage and sexual violence
- Technology and digital solutions for prevention and response
- Longitudinal and multi-country comparative studies
- Qualitative research on lived experiences and survivor perspectives

Theme 4: Policy, Governance, and Accountability

- National action plans and their implementation
- Regional commitments (AU Campaign to End Child Marriage, Ouagadougou Partnership)
- Multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms
- Legal reform and access to justice
- Monitoring, evaluation, and accountability frameworks

Theme 5: Youth Engagement and Empowerment

- Youth-led initiatives and movements
- Adolescent participation in decision-making processes
- Safe spaces and peer support networks

Theme 6: Humanitarian and Emergency Contexts

- Child marriage and sexual violence in displacement settings
- Protection strategies in conflict-affected areas
- Integrating child protection into humanitarian response

Submission Guidelines

Eligible Submissions

- Research Papers: Empirical studies using quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods
- Case Studies: Documentation of programmes, interventions, or policy initiatives with demonstrated impact
- Programme Evaluations: Assessments of interventions addressing child marriage or sexual violence

Abstract Requirements

An extended abstracts of 500-800 words must include:

- Title: Clear and concise
- Background: Context and rationale for the study/intervention
- Objectives: Specific aims of the research or programme
- Methodology: Research design, data sources, analytical approach, or programme implementation strategy
- Key Findings/Results: Main outcomes or lessons learnt
- Conclusions and Implications: Significance for policy, programming, or further research
- Keywords: 4-6 relevant keywords

Additional Information Required:

- Author(s) name(s), affiliation(s), and contact details
- Presenter information (if different from corresponding author)
- Preferred presentation format (oral presentation – in person or virtual, or poster)
- Country/countries of focus

Formatting

- Language: English or French
- Font: Times New Roman, 12-point
- Line spacing: 1.5
- File format: Microsoft Word (.docx) or PDF
- File name: LastName_FirstName_Abstract.docx

Review Process

All submissions will undergo peer review by an international panel of experts. Abstracts will be assessed based on:

- Relevance: Alignment with conference themes and West and Central Africa context
- Methodological Rigour: Quality of research design, data collection, and analysis
- Innovation: Novel approaches, findings, or solutions
- Clarity: Quality of writing and presentation
- Potential Impact: Contribution to policy, programming, or research

Important Dates

Activity	Date
Call for Papers Opens	1 st December 2025
Submission Deadline	20 th December
Notification of Acceptance	12 th January 2026
Conference Dates	9 th -11 th February 2026

Presentation Formats

Oral Presentations: Selected abstracts will be allocated 15 minutes for presentation plus 5 minutes for discussion within thematic panel sessions.

Poster Presentations: Authors will present findings during designated poster sessions with opportunities for interactive discussion.

Publication Opportunity

Selected high-quality papers will be invited for submission to a Special Issue of the Journal of African Population Studies (JAPS) on child marriage and sexual violence against adolescents. Full manuscripts will undergo peer review according to JAPS standards.

Expected Publication Date: July 2026

Registration and Participation

Authors of accepted abstracts must register for the conference. Registration details will be provided upon notification of acceptance. The conference will be hybrid, allowing both in-person and virtual participation. Simultaneous interpretation (English/French) will be provided

How to Submit

Submit your extended abstract via email to:

Email: conferences@uaps-uepa.org

Subject Line: Abstract Submission – WCAC – Your Last Name

For queries, please contact:

UAPS Secretariat: uaps@uaps-uepa.org

Conference Outputs

Participants will contribute to:

- Actionable policy recommendations for governments and regional bodies
- A regional declaration on ending child marriage and sexual violence
- A repository of promising practices and resources
- Special Issue publication in JAPS

We look forward to receiving your submissions and welcoming you to Senegal in February 2026.

This conference aligns with continental and regional initiatives including the African Union Campaign to End Child Marriage, the Ouagadougou Partnership, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.