

# Special Issue Proposal for the African Journal of Social Work

## Proposed Title:

Women and Conflict: Intersections of Victimisation, Criminalisation, and Gender Equality

## Overview

In South Africa, entrenched socio-economic inequalities, high levels of gender-based violence (GBV), and systemic neglect continue to push women and girls into conflict with the law. Despite comprising a small portion of the prison population, incarcerated women's stories are often shaped by complex and intersecting experiences of poverty, exclusion, and trauma. These pathways to criminalisation are deeply gendered and largely ignored by mainstream justice discourse.

This special issue—proposed in alignment with Women's Month in South Africa and the national and international calls for gender equality—will explore the multifaceted relationship between gender, victimisation, and criminalisation. It will bring together critical voices across scholarship, activism, and lived experience to centre women's stories not just as “offenders,” but as survivors, caregivers, and agents of change.

The issue responds directly to the **National Development Plan (NDP)** and the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**, particularly **SDG 5** (Gender Equality) and **SDG 16** (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Through an intersectional lens, the special issue will challenge punitive systems that perpetuate gendered harm and advocate for structural and community-based alternatives that uphold dignity and justice.

## Proposed Guest Editors

**Dr Nokukhanya Mbonambi** is a lecturer in the Department of Criminology and Security Science at the University of Pretoria. She holds a PhD in Criminology and her research focuses on gender, victimology, and the intersections of crime, justice, and inequality in South Africa. Dr Mbonambi's work explores the lived experiences of women in conflict with the law, particularly in the context of gender-based violence and systemic marginalisation. Her publications examine issues such as the victimisation of women, state responses to violence, and the socio-legal challenges of criminal justice reform. With extensive experience in both academic research and community-based initiatives, she is committed to advancing feminist and transformative approaches to criminology. Dr Mbonambi brings a critical and intersectional lens to the special issue, bridging theory, practice, and advocacy for gender justice.

**Simone Robinson**, is a registered social worker, PhD candidate in Social Work and a lecturer at the University of Pretoria. She holds a Bachelor of Social Work and two Master's degrees—one in Social Work and the other in Forensic Social Work. With over a decade of experience working with children and families affected by trauma, abuse, and systemic inequality, Simone is also an experienced play therapist, supervisor, and consultant. Her current research focuses on harmful sexual behaviour in children, gender-based violence, and the criminalisation of young girls and children. Simone has published and presented widely on issues of child protection, sexual

abuse and intervention. She brings a practice-led perspective to social work and is committed to amplifying the voices of marginalised women and girls in both research and policy spaces.

**Mr Luvuyo Teko** is a registered social worker and lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Criminology at the University of Pretoria. Holding a master's degree in social work, Luvuyo is currently pursuing a PhD in Social Work. Current research interests include substance use disorders, intimate partner violence, male perpetrator intervention and crime prevention. Mr Teko was part of the scientific committee as an abstract reviewer for an international conference in 2025. His work emphasizes the importance of multidisciplinary approaches to addressing social challenges, particularly in violence prevention and intervention strategies. Passionate about advancing social work practices that address complex social challenges, Luvuyo is committed to co-creating practical solutions for addressing crime and violence in communities.

## **Proposed Article Topics / Thematic Sections**

- 1. Pathways to Criminalisation: The Impact of Structural Inequalities on Women**
  - Socio-economic drivers of criminalisation (poverty, unemployment, lack of education)
  - GBV, coercive relationships, and trauma histories
  - The criminalisation of survival strategies (sex work, migration, informal economies)
- 2. Women in Conflict with the Law: Incarceration and Reintegration**
  - Gendered experiences of incarceration
  - Health, parenting, and dignity in correctional settings
  - Post-release stigma, reintegration challenges, and support systems
- 3. Women as Victims of Violence and Crime**
  - Long-term impact of GBV and institutional neglect
  - Intersection of victimisation and criminalisation
  - Legal, technological, and community responses
- 4. Incarceration and Its Impact on Families and Children**
  - Experiences of incarcerated mothers and their children
  - Intergenerational impacts of imprisonment
  - Family reunification, trauma-informed support, and healing
- 5. Empowerment and Community-Led Interventions**
  - Restorative and alternative justice approaches
  - Community organisations, peer networks, and survivor-led initiatives
  - Policy and advocacy strategies for structural change

## **Target Contributors**

We invite submissions from:

- Scholars in social work, criminology, gender studies, law, and public health
- Practitioners in the criminal justice and social welfare sectors

## **Timeline (Proposed)**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Date</b>
Finalisation of Call for Papers	10 June 2025
Call Released	15 June 2025
Submission Deadline	5 July 2025
Peer Review Completed	10 August 2025
Revisions Finalised	31 August 2025
Editorial Submission	1 November 2025
Proofreading and Final Checks	December 2025
Special Issue Publication	December 2025

## **Editorial**

The guest editors will prepare a 2–3 page editorial that introduces the theme, highlights key contributions, and outlines the implications for practice, policy, and research.

## **Compliance with AJSW Requirements**

- Minimum of **10 articles** will be sourced to ensure quality and allow for possible rejections.
- A list of potential peer reviewers will be submitted (optional).
- Final submissions will meet all AJSW formatting and ethical standards.