WOMEN IN THE JUDICIARY IN AFRICA: JUSTICE SOLUTIONS FOR EQUALITY AND DEVELOPMENT

#CSW68 side event | online via Zoom

📅 20 March 2024
🕒 10:00 - 11:30 EST

REGISTER HERE
**BACKGROUND**

Access to justice is a fundamental human right, a cornerstone of the rule of law and good governance. It is a prerequisite for achieving gender equality and realizing other human rights. Equal access to justice is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

At the same time, the compounding effects of climate change, conflicts, economic downturns and COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated the justice gap for women. According to the 2023 World Justice Project Index, women face greater barriers to justice than men in nearly 70 percent of countries surveyed. In many places, formal justice systems are geographically inaccessible, expensive and/or fail to respond to the justice needs of women. This gap signifies a troubling trend given that access to justice is intrinsically linked to poverty, access to resources, financial independence, access to healthcare and education.

To meet and respond to the needs of women, justice systems have to be transparent, accessible, inclusive and accountable. And women need to be actively present in these systems. Equal and effective participation of women in the judiciary enhances gender equality in justice systems and makes justice more accessible to women, as well as to marginalized and/or vulnerable groups.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW) recommends increased women’s participation in judicial systems as professionals within all bodies and levels of judicial and quasi-judicial systems and providers of justice-related services.

With their different perspectives and experiences, women leaders in justice can challenge gender stereotypes, reshape narratives about women’s roles in society under an intersectional approach and enable better responses to address gender-based violence and inequality.

**UNDP AND UN WOMEN STUDY ON WOMEN IN JUSTICE IN AFRICA**

In Africa, despite numerous challenges, inspiring initiatives showcase the transformative role of women in the judiciary. Women’s participation has an impact on closing the justice gap, facilitate better access to justice for all and instill trust in justice systems.

Through the Gender Justice Platform partnership, UNDP and UN Women conducted a regional study of women judges in 14 African countries. The research helped to understand the situation with women’s representation in justice, identify what prevents women from entering the system and moving up in the hierarchy. The study provides recommendations and demonstrates best practices to support and strengthen gender-responsive justice institutions.
**THE EVENT**

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**Organizers:**
The event is organized through the Gender Justice Platform, a partnership framework between UNDP and UN Women to advance gender equality and close the global gender justice gap.

**Co-hosts:**
Permanent Missions of the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Kenya, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Republic of Zimbabwe to the United Nations.

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UNDP and UN Women will present their regional study of women judges in 14 African countries to showcase good practices and opportunities for women to champion justice responses. The objective of this event is to underscore the crucial contribution of women judges to advancing gender equality and facilitating access to justice for women in their communities and countries.

The event will provide expert insights and practical tools to achieve and sustain progress on gender equality in justice, including through strategic programming interventions that can bring transformative change.

Fostering women’s leadership in the justice system contributes to a more inclusive and gender-responsive legal environment. The event is a call for the international community and national partners to amplify efforts and advocate stronger for gender-responsive justice institutions and to provide strategic solutions for women’s access to justice, reduction of poverty, social cohesion and, ultimately, development.
10:00 Welcome and opening remarks

Katy Thompson  
Head of Rule of Law, Security and Human Rights, Crisis Bureau, UNDP

Raquel Lagunas  
Head of Gender Team, Crisis Bureau, UNDP

Moderator

10:10 Keynote remarks

Bärbel Kofler  
Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (video statement)

Monica Mutsvangwa  
Hon. Minister of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprise Development, Government of Zimbabwe

10:20 Key messages and reflections of the report “Women in justice in Africa: A study of women judges in 14 countries

Lucianna Thuo  
Researcher who worked on the report, electoral law and governance specialist, Kenya
10:30 - 11:15  Conversation with judges and national actors on challenges and recommendations for women’s leadership in justice

**Hon. Judge Atila Ferreira**  
National Supreme Court of Guinea-Bissau

**Hon. Judge Sehel Barke**  
Justice of Court of Appeal of Tanzania and chairperson of Tanzania Women Judges Association (TAWJA)

**Hon. Judge Roli Harriman**  
International Association of Women Judges of Nigeria

**Hon. Judge Harrison Barasa**  
Senior Principal Magistrate at the Engineering Law Courts of Kenya

11:15  Reflections, questions and answers

11:25  Closing remarks

**Hodan Addou**  
UN Women Country Representative in Tanzania