

WOMEN JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS AND GENDER EQUALITY: Contributions, Challenges and Ways Forward

A panel discussion organized by IDLO and GQUAL

Thursday, 28 March 2018

17:00 – 18:30 hrs

IDLO Office, Hofweg 9E, The Hague

The effective participation of women in all aspects of justice delivery is a human right – an integral part of their participation in public and political life, and a valuable component of governance.

This right has been affirmed at the highest level, with the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) focusing squarely on women's full and effective participation at all levels of governance as well as ensuring inclusive and representative decision-making.

In addition to its intrinsic value, there is also growing evidence that increased presence of women judges can contribute to broader development outcomes – improving access to justice for women, increasing diversity and legitimacy of justice institutions, and enhancing policy and legal dialogues and interventions on gender justice.

Although women justice professionals (whether as judges, prosecutors, lawyers) continue to face barriers, they are – in a number of key areas – improving their participation, whether through increased numbers, better quality of participation, or enhanced capacity to influence legal and policy reform. Furthermore, as their numbers and influence solidify, women justice professionals emerge as leading actors in their respective national and international arenas, as role models for other women justice professionals and aspiring young women, and as advocates and champions for gender justice—able to identify and rectify situations of gender inequality, discrimination and other forms of injustice in women's lives.

Exploring more concretely the contributions of women judges to gender equality is particularly timely and significant as gender justice remains elusive in multiple aspects. In many countries of the world, women are still denied justice. Women and girls continue to suffer appalling levels of discrimination, violence and neglect, with limited means to access an effective remedy to claim their rights.

Women are unable, in many places, to avail of courts because they are too expensive, remote or complicated, do not provide for effective remedies, or simply non-existent in many localities. Gender-based violence cases are often characterized by high attrition rates and multiple arenas for re-victimization and re-stigmatization. In many cases, the outcomes of justice institutions, whether courts, alternative dispute resolution systems, or traditional/customary councils still fail to meet international and constitutional guarantees of equality.

At the international level, participation of women in tribunals and bodies is not experiencing linear nor sustainable improvement. Data shows that regressions are frequent, making it imperative that concerted measures and efforts be implemented to increase the participation of women in international justice institutions.

Drawing from local and global experiences, this event seeks to discuss:

How can women justice professionals, individually and collectively, (continue to) contribute to enhancing gender-equality?

In addressing this question, discussions may cover topics such as:

- Do women justice professionals matter for the delivery of justice? What specific contributions have women justice professionals made to gender equality?
- Are these contributions captured through research, monitoring and other evidence collection activities?
- What challenges do women justice actors face, individually and collectively, in being a more effective gender and justice actor or champions? Is there a backlash facing women justice professionals?
- What is the best way to address the debate on whether we should prioritize numbers or quality of women justice professionals?
- Do we need to address the argument that women and men justice professionals are equally able to transform the justice sector into a gender-responsive one?
- What policy and programmatic directions should we prioritize when it comes to supporting women justice professionals and women's access to justice?

Speakers to the event will include:

- Prof. Dr. Liesbeth Lijnzaad, Judge, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea
- Hon. Teresa Doherty, Judge, Special Court for Sierra Leone
- Nani Jansen, founding Director of the Digital Freedom Fund and Associate Tenant at Doughty Street Chambers (TBC)
- Renée Romkens, Director of ATRIA and Professor of Gender Based Violence at University of Amsterdam (TBC)

This event is organized by the International Development Law Organization (IDLO) and GQUAL.

The event will be moderated by Dr. Ilaria Bottigliero, Director of Research and Learning, IDLO.

RSVP to Nupur Prakash at nprakash@idlo.int by Friday, 23 March 2018