

Customary and Informal Justice Systems: Expanding Women's Access to Justice Launch Event and Webinar

Date: Thursday, 10 September 2020, 14:00 – 16:00 pm, Rome/CET (TBC)

Format: Zoom webinar – Panel discussion (Link to be provided by ICT)

Organizer: International Development Law Organization (IDLO)

Description:

Around the world, people claim rights and resolve disputes and grievances through a range of justice mechanisms. In many settings, however, it is estimated that 80-90 per cent of disputes are dealt with outside the formal courts. Women, among others, often go to customary and informal justice (CIJ) systems to resolve their concerns, such as those related to family formation, inheritance, divorce, property rights, control and governance over land and natural resources, and even protection from violence.

Justice and development actors have been increasingly discussing how to improve engagement with CIJ to contribute to Sustainable Development Goal 16 and access to justice for all as well as Goal 5 on gender equality. Despite their perceived advantages, many CIJ systems perpetuate patriarchal values, reflect male-dominated structures, and produce discriminatory and harmful outcomes for women and girls. These challenges call for a better understanding by placing women's issues and concerns at the center of discussions on policy directions and entry points for engagement. COVID-19 has exacerbated justice challenges, with reports of harmful practices, for example, surging in some contexts, while the long-term impacts of the pandemic point to the need to "enhance the ability of customary and informal justice systems to fill the widening justice gap."¹

The webinar will provide the occasion for the online launch of IDLO's third Brief in the *Navigating Complex Pathways to Justice* series, [Women and Customary and Informal Justice Systems](#), which provides recommendations for engaging with CIJ systems to facilitate and improve justice for women.

Key issues to be discussed:

Experts and practitioners will reflect on ways to enhance women's justice experiences through CIJ systems, looking at good practices and promising entry points.

Key questions for discussion include:

¹ UN Women, IDLO, UNDP, UNODC, the World Bank and the Pathfinders, supported by the Elders. *Justice for Women Amidst COVID-19*, 2020, p. 35, available at: <https://www.idlo.int/publications/justice-women-amidst-covid-19>.

- What can be done to improve strategic engagement with CIJ systems for the promotion and protection of women's rights?
- What practical entry points and good practices offer concrete pathways for engagement?
- What challenges are presented by COVID-19 for strategic engagement with CIJ systems for the enhancement of women's human rights? How can we address these challenges?

Agenda

Part 1 - Opening Remarks and Launch of the Issue Brief on *Navigating Complex Pathways to Justice: Women and Customary and Informal Justice Systems*

- *Jan Beagle*, Director-General, IDLO

Part 2 - Panel discussion

- *Hilary Gbedemah*, Chairperson, CEDAW Committee
- *Dr. Gina Alvarado*, Senior Research and Evaluation Advisor and/or *Beth Roberts*, Program Manager, Center for Women's Land Rights, Landesa
- *Emerlynne Gil*, Senior International Legal Adviser, International Commission of Jurists
- *Rita Aciro-Lakor*, Chief Executive Officer, Uganda Women's Network (UWONET)
- *Dr. Fiona Hukula*, Senior Research Fellow, Papua New Guinea National Research Institute
- *Romualdo Mavedzenge*, Regional Manager, Africa, IDLO
- *Dr. Ilaria Bottigliero*, Director, Policy, Research and Learning, IDLO (Moderator)

IDLO's work on Customary and Informal Justice

In a bid to make justice accessible for all, IDLO has conducted a global consultation on CIJ systems and information about the events organized as part of the global consultation, its main findings and related resources, will be made available on the IDLO website: <https://www.idlo.int/consultation-customary-and-informal-justice-systems>.

The global dialogue is informed by a [series of publications](#) titled *Navigating Complex Pathways to Justice* that seeks to advance policy dialogue and distil lessons from programming and research, to help realize Sustainable Development Goal 16. As the international community strives to achieve Goals 5 and 16 of the 2030 Agenda, engaging with CIJ systems becomes increasingly important to realize justice for all and ensure that no one is left behind. [Women and Customary and Informal Justice Systems](#) brings together current research, expert perspectives and programmatic experience, addressing:

- the evolution of legal and policy debates on women and CIJ;
- challenges women encounter in accessing justice through CIJ systems;
- gender-focused engagement entry points, modalities, and good practices for CIJ systems; and
- policy recommendations to improve women's rights and access to justice.