



LETTER TO PARTNERS

December 2021

Dear friends,

As we come to the end of 2021, I wanted to share some reflections from what has been a challenging but eventful year.

The COVID-19 pandemic has entered a new and worrying phase of unequal recovery, made worse by severe vaccine inequity. The race between vaccination drives and the spread of ever more infectious variants continues, reminding us that none of us are safe until all are safe.

This is not only true of the COVID-19 crisis, but of so many complex transnational threats facing the world today, including climate change, extreme inequality, corruption, and lack of trust in public institutions.

Increased fragility in many countries has compounded the impact of COVID-19 and made our operating environments even more challenging. In the past year, we saw growing violence and instability in many places where IDLO works, including Afghanistan and Myanmar.

These experiences highlight the continued importance of IDLO's mission, as the rule of law continues to be threatened in many parts of the world.

Despite facing strong headwinds throughout 2021, IDLO was able to make significant headway in the implementation of the [Strategic Plan 2021–2024](#), which seeks to put people's needs at the centre of justice systems and make the rule of law a driver of peace and sustainable development.

IDLO's contribution to the global pandemic response remains a key priority and is incorporated throughout the Plan.

Our achievements in the past year would not have been possible without the support of our partners and without the dedication, hard work and ingenuity of IDLO colleagues around the world.

EMPOWERING JUSTICE SEEKERS



Clan elders in Belet Weyne, Somalia
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An important element in IDLO's approach to people-centred justice is empowering justice seekers to claim their rights.

In **Kenya, Myanmar, Mongolia, Uganda, the Sahel, and Somalia**, IDLO engages with people and communities to increase legal awareness and provide legal aid and other assistance and advisory services.

We support access to justice through both formal and informal pathways and increasingly through digital platforms.

At a time of narrowing civic space, we work to promote participatory decision-making at the grassroots level.

In the **Sahel** region, we are working to improve respect for human rights and increase public trust in the criminal justice chains of **Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger**. Using innovative platforms called Cadres de Concertation (CdCs), we brought together criminal justice officials, traditional leaders, and civil society representatives to identify priority justice concerns and formulate solutions.

This year, IDLO helped to implement their recommendations. In **Mali's** Gao region, increased national capacity enabled a 15–20 percent reduction in the case backlog.

In response to the declaration of a state of emergency in **Myanmar**, we shifted our support to civil society and other non-governmental actors. We also partnered with UNFPA, UNICEF and others to assist legal aid service providers in meeting their clients' needs — helping women, poor people, and other vulnerable groups to understand and claim their rights.

Customary and informal justice systems play an important role in rule of law by offering affordability, flexibility, speed, and cultural relevancy. In 2021, IDLO worked in **Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda** to link formal and informal systems, increase access to justice and engender greater respect for international norms and standards.

In **Somalia**, IDLO supported 15 Alternative Dispute Resolution Centres that assist justice seekers in resolving disputes through the traditional Xeer system. Half of the 1,780 cases in these Centres between January and October were brought by women, and female paralegals were embedded in each Centre to support women litigants.

Issues that cannot be solved at the Centres, or fall outside their jurisdiction, are channeled to district courts, which have also begun to refer cases back to the Centres where appropriate. IDLO published a [report](#) drawing on insights from the experiences of the ADR Centres. It was launched at a

regional dialogue that brought together experts from the Sahel, the Kenyan National Council of Elders and civil-society organisations across Africa.

This is a good illustration of the increasingly integrated approach we are adopting under our new Strategic Plan.

MAKING LAWS AND INSTITUTIONS WORK FOR PEOPLE

COVID-19 has shown the consequences of years of underinvestment in justice systems across the globe, and has challenged us to innovate, reimagine and explore alternative approaches to strengthening the rule of law in increasingly challenging environments.



High Anti-Corruption Court, Ukraine
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This year, IDLO promoted smart legal reform, improved the delivery of justice services, and strengthened criminal justice chains in **Armenia, the Bahamas, Colombia, Honduras, Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Liberia, Mexico, Moldova, Somalia, the Philippines, Tunisia, Uganda, and Yemen.**

I would like to highlight two areas in particular: anti-corruption and digital innovation.

Corruption has a corrosive effect on public trust and combatting it is high on the global agenda.

IDLO takes a multi-track approach to the problem. We build capacity to investigate and prosecute corruption, counter illicit financial flows, and recover assets. We also promote preventive measures including increasing transparency and integrity in the judiciary and public sector, and strengthen the monitoring role of civil society.

Our growing anti-corruption portfolio includes programmes in **Armenia, the Bahamas, Indonesia, Moldova, the Philippines, and Ukraine.**

In **Ukraine**, for example, IDLO has been supporting anti-corruption efforts since 2014. In the past year, we worked with the Prosecutor General's Office on the transparent, merit-based recruitment of prosecutors, and supported the establishment of a specialised High Anti-Corruption Court.

During the year, IDLO also organised and contributed to major global policy dialogues including the [Special session of the General Assembly against corruption](#), the [G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group](#) and the 9th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

In response to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, we are supporting justice institutions to develop nationally owned digital justice solutions in countries such as **Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, and Sierra Leone**.

In **Kenya** for instance, we supported the implementation of digital systems to reduce case adjudication times and provided capacity-building support for judicial staff on electronic filing and payment systems, virtual hearings, court recordings, and transcription services.

CLOSING THE JUSTICE GAP FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS



Our interventions help protect women's rights through the promotion of gender-responsive legal and policy frameworks, the elimination of discriminatory laws and practices, and the empowerment of women professionals in the justice sector.

For over a decade, IDLO's largest programme of work on gender-based violence (GBV) has been in **Afghanistan**. In the past year, we supported the Ministry of Women's Affairs in developing guidelines on processing and reporting cases of GBV.

While the political situation has jeopardised this work, IDLO is committed to staying engaged and doing our best to support Afghan women and girls.

In 2021, we implemented programmes to counter GBV in **Kenya, Myanmar, Mongolia, Tunisia, and Uganda**.

We have also partnered with UN Women on the reform of gender-discriminatory laws, policies, and institutions. This includes working with governments, civil society, and other stakeholders to review laws in **Kenya, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Tunisia**.

We launched a joint research project with the Global Women's Institute at George Washington University to generate evidence on effective approaches to countering GBV based on case studies from **Honduras, Papua New Guinea, South Sudan, the Philippines, and Tunisia**.

During the past year, IDLO highlighted the fundamental importance of justice for women and girls through our participation in multiple fora, including in the [Commission on the Status of Women](#), [the Generation Equality Forum](#) and the first-ever [G20 Ministerial Conference on Women's Empowerment](#).

INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At a time of increasing inequality and global financial upheaval, IDLO works to help partners promote inclusive economic development.

We support the development of legal frameworks, strengthen governments' capacities to enforce laws, implement investment agreements, resolve disputes, and support women's economic empowerment.



Training Session on International Investment Contracts Negotiation, The Gambia
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The Investment Support Programme for Least Developed Countries (ISP/LDCs), developed in partnership with UN-OHRLLS, uses a public-private partnership model to provide legal advice and capacity support to least developed countries at no cost.

In 2021, the Programme supported capacity building, negotiations, and the settlement of disputes in **Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, The Gambia, and Uganda**. In The Gambia, for instance, IDLO assisted the government in reviewing a draft model bilateral investment treaty — an important tool for attracting and managing foreign investment.

In **Armenia, Jordan, Montenegro, Serbia and the West Bank and Gaza**, we are promoting increased legal capacity on economic and commercial issues, including insolvency, commercial arbitration, mediation, and contract law.

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND FOOD SECURITY



Climate change represents perhaps the single largest threat to peace and sustainable development and has been identified as the most pressing challenge of our time.

IDLO recently published a policy brief on [Climate Justice](#), which shows the link between justice and climate change and proposes seven recommendations to advance transformative climate action grounded in the rule of law and human rights.

We are also engaging with key events on the international calendar to identify entry points for programming, advocacy, and partnerships on climate justice.

I led IDLO's delegation to Glasgow for COP 26, where we [advocated](#) for the importance of applying a justice lens to climate action to catalyse progress towards a more just, green and sustainable future.

And while the clear and urgent need for more ambitious action remains, it is a positive sign that the final text of the Glasgow Climate Pact included a reference to "climate justice" in the preamble.

We also continued to work at local, national, and international levels to advance the right to adequate food through the rule of law.

In collaboration with FAO, we are working to strengthen the legal environment for food security and nutrition of vulnerable groups in **Honduras** and **Uganda** as part of pandemic response and recovery. We have launched a [joint global assessment](#) of laws and policies on food security.

The 2021 United Nations Food Systems Summit and pre-Summit meetings, and the Committee on Food Security were important opportunities to highlight the link between the rule of law and inclusive and sustainable food systems transformations.

HEALTHY LIVES AND WELL-BEING FOR ALL

At a time when health issues are a global priority, we are promoting rule of law solutions for greater access to health services, supporting pandemic preparedness, and strengthening capacity to prevent and manage non-communicable diseases.

IDLO's [Pandemic Preparedness and Response Project](#), developed in collaboration with WHO, aims to strengthen legal and policy frameworks to prevent and respond to public health emergencies, including COVID-19. The project is being piloted in two countries.



In Geneva with World Health Organization
Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

IDLO is currently supporting the Government of **Uganda** in reviewing several pieces of legislation, and the Government of **Zambia** to draft statutory instruments.

The results will help these countries meet their goals to align their legal frameworks with the International Health Regulations.

IDLO also became a member of the Global Health Security Agenda Legal Preparedness Action Package, an initiative led by the United States, Argentina, and the O'Neill Institute, to advocate for coordinated international action around legal preparedness for public health emergencies.

In partnership with WHO and the International Development Research

Centre, IDLO's [Global RECAP Program](#) seeks to strengthen the capacity of countries to promote healthy diets and increase physical activity for the prevention of non-communicable diseases.

At the United Nations High-Level Meeting on AIDS in June, I [highlighted](#) the important role of the rule of law in addressing the underlying inequalities, stigma and discrimination that remain the most significant barriers to ending AIDS by 2030.

These are, of course, the same inequalities that are confronting the world with COVID-19.

MANAGEMENT UPDATES



Over the course of the strategic cycle, IDLO will invest in strengthening systems, capacities, and resources to achieve our Strategic Goals and deliver quality and value to our partners.

To maximise our impact, IDLO uses an integrated approach that ensures that our programmes are based on the best possible evidence and that our global research and advocacy draws on country-level insights.

In addition to developing a Strategic Results and Resources Framework that translates the Strategic Plan into a set of development and organisational results, we conducted a comprehensive review of our programme cycle to enhance design, implementation, evaluation, and learning, and to mainstream gender equality and human rights-based approaches.

As a specialised, knowledge-based organisation, IDLO's main asset is our people. The COVID-19 crisis forced IDLO to look closely at our staffing, human resources systems and policies, and compelled us to work in new ways and strengthen our support for people across the Organization.

We have also been developing a comprehensive human resources strategy and a gender action plan in order to strengthen our ability to attract, develop and retain high-performing staff.

I am pleased to report that in the past year, gender parity has been achieved in IDLO's senior management. Women now constitute 50 percent of the Senior Leadership Team, compared to 20 percent in 2020.

We undertook improvements in our policies, systems, and procedures to increase efficiency, transparency, and accountability and ensure appropriate recognition for our legal status.

I would like to thank colleagues and partners who have supported business continuity planning and crisis response during a challenging period, particularly in relation to the crisis in Afghanistan, which was IDLO's largest country operation.

IDLO is committed to supporting the Afghan people in accessing justice and securing greater recognition of their rights.

Through our engagement, we seek to protect past investments to the extent possible, and safeguard some of the gains made in Afghanistan over the last 20 years. IDLO's ability to carry out this work is contingent on continued donor support, and we are engaging in discussions with current and prospective partners.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

I consider partnerships and collaboration to be key to IDLO's success.

Over the past year, we have been able to pool expertise and resources, strengthen our convening power, and leverage our impact through partnerships with like-minded organisations.



We are pursuing a strategic partnership with the European Union and enhancing cooperation with the African Union.

During the Italian Presidency of the G20, IDLO was invited to join several streams of the Group's work. This engagement helped to raise the Organization's profile and allowed IDLO to contribute to several important policy debates relevant to our mandate.

We strengthened our partnership with entities in the UN system, including FAO, IFAD, OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, UNICRI, UNHCR, UNODC, UN Women, WFP and WHO.

In June, UNODC Executive Director, Ms. Ghada Waly, and I signed a Memorandum of Understanding between our two organisations.

We scaled up global partnerships with organisations working to advance the rule of law, access to justice and human rights, including the American Bar Association, the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF), the International Anti-Corruption Academy, the International Bar Association Human Rights Institute, the Pathfinders, and the World Justice Project.

We also increased our efforts to advocate for greater political and financial support for the rule of law at global, regional, and national levels.

This included the second global [SDG 16 Conference](#) in April, organised in partnership with UNDESA and Italy. The conference convened more than a hundred high-level speakers, including ministers, judges, heads of UN entities, academics, and members of civil society, on the theme of "transforming governance for a more peaceful, just, and inclusive future," and served as an input to the High-level Political Forum.

Significant advocacy engagements this year included [the Human Rights' Council](#), the [Kyoto Crime Congress](#), the Assembly of States Parties to the

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, the [East African Chief Justices' Forum](#), the [Tashkent Law Spring](#), the Justice Action Coalition and our own [Crisis Governance Forum](#).

I would like to thank all of IDLO's donors, and in particular Italy, the United States, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Kuwait, for their generous financial support to the organisation and our mandate at this critical time.

Another sign of growing political support was the accession of Mauritania as IDLO's newest Member Party. We are actively pursuing discussions with several countries with an interest in our mandate as part of a strategic approach to expand membership.

LOOKING AHEAD

We are living through an extraordinary moment in history.

At the high-level meeting of the 2021 General Assembly, the Secretary-General warned world leaders that “we are on the edge of an abyss — and moving in the wrong direction.”

Stepping back from this precipice will require bold, urgent, and transformative measures.

We must put people at the centre of justice systems in order to rebuild trust, promote equality and close the justice gap.

We must transform laws and institutions to cooperate fairly and effectively on complex, transnational issues like climate change, vaccine inequity, extreme inequality, and the digital divide.

To have any hope of success, our efforts must be grounded in the principles of rule of law, solidarity, and sustainability.

The Secretary-General's “Our Common Agenda” report presents an ambitious plan to address global challenges, strengthen multilateralism and accelerate progress on the SDGs. IDLO welcomes the report's acknowledgement of the need for a “new vision for the rule of law” to build back better and is committed to contributing to it.

Implementing this new vision will not be an easy task.

IDLO is committed to working with you all to create a culture of justice and build a future that is more peaceful, just, and inclusive.

Warm regards,



Jan Beagle
Director-General