wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

GLOBAL MODEL UN NEW YORK 2027

STUDY GUIDE

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Ensuring and Strengthening Access to Justice for All Women and Girls, Including by Promoting Inclusive and Equitable Legal Systems, Eliminating Discriminatory Laws, Policies and Practices, and Addressing Structural Barriers

United Nations E/CN.6/2026/3

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
15 January 2026

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women
Seventieth session
New York, 9–19 March 2026
Item 3 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and addressing structural barriers

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolutions 2022/4 and 2025/3 and provides an overview of key factors influencing women's and girls' access to justice. It outlines progress made and persistent obstacles, and examines the arrangements needed to advance the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (General Assembly resolution 70/1). The report concludes with recommendations for consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women.

* E/CN.6/2026/1.

** The present report was submitted for processing after the deadline for technical reasons beyond the control of the submitting office.

26-00524 (E) 090226

Please recycle

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women. It sets out global commitments and strategic objectives for advancing gender equality and women's rights across areas including violence, education. health, economic participation and decision making.

Definition

The 2030 Agenda is the UN's global framework for sustainable development, organized around 17 sustainable development goals. Women's access to justice is particularly connected to SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions.

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (2026–2029), the Commission on the Status of Women, at its seventieth session, will consider as its priority theme "Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and addressing structural barriers".

2. Access to justice is a right guaranteed under international law and reflected in national legislation around the world. The denial of that right undermines human rights, peace and sustainable development. Without equal access for women and men, there can be no justice, thereby eroding rule of law principles of equality, accountability and fairness. For women and girls, barriers to justice entrench inequality.

3. As the world grapples with polycrises, marked by widening income inequality, growing conflict, the erosion of democratic norms, climate change and disparate digital transformation, ensuring access to justice has never been more critical. Action to ensure such access is particularly urgent for women and girls, amid pervasive pushback on women's rights. The right of women and girls to have access to justice is increasingly threatened precisely when it is most needed, as progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality, remains stalled.

4. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States pledged to guarantee equal access to justice for all and to establish legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination.[1] Those commitments are rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

5. Under the terms of the Convention, States Parties are required to ensure that women enjoy and exercise all human rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men. It obliges States to ensure women's access to legal protection and remedies through competent national tribunals and public institutions, affirming that State Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.[2] In 2015, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, explicitly defining access to justice as a fundamental element of the rule of law and good governance, encompassing justiciability, availability, accessibility, good quality, the provision of remedies for victims and the accountability of justice systems.

6. Through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted by consensus by the Fourth World Conference on Women (the thirtieth anniversary of which was marked in 2025), the Convention was reinforced and Member States were urged to remove gender bias in the administration of justice. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Conference participants called for the establishment of affordable and accessible mechanisms, including legal aid. Governments and non-governmental organizations were called upon to promote women's legal literacy and to make information on remedies widely available.

7. Member States have made progress in fulfilling their international obligations and commitments and expressed determination to do more. In 2024, States reported that ensuring women's equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice was one of their top priorities in the preceding five years. Some 90 per cent of Member States reported that they had strengthened laws, implementation and

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 02

Access to justice means that people can understand and exercise their legal rights, reach justice institutions, receive fair treatment and obtain effective remedies when their rights are violated. It involves more than simply having courts or laws in place.

Something to Think About 02

A law may promise equal treatment, yet a woman may be unable to afford transport to court or a lawyer. Should governments prioritize free legal aid, mobile courts, simplified procedures, or all three? How should they decide which barriers to address first?

Definition 03

A polycrisis occurs when several major crises, such as conflict, economic inequality, climate change and political instability, happen simultaneously and interact with one another and make their combined effects more difficult to address.

Definition 04

CEDAW is an international human rights treaty adopted in 1979 that requires States parties to eliminate discrimination against women and ensure equality in political, economic, social, cultural and legal life.

Definition 04

A State party is a country that has agreed to be legally bound by a treaty. CEDAW obligations differ from political commitments in the Beijing Platform for Action. Delegates should distinguish legal duties from recommendations they may negotiate.

Definition 05

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 describes six essential dimensions of access to justice: 1) justiciability (rights must be legally enforceable); 2) availability (courts and services exist); 3) accessibility (people can reach and use them); 4) good quality (services are competent, impartial and timely); 5) remedies (violations can be corrected or compensated); and 6) accountability (justice officials can be held responsible).

Definition 05

Legal literacy means understanding basic legal rights, protections and procedures. A person may formally possess rights but still be unable to exercise them if they do not know those rights exist or how to claim them.

I. Introduction

1. In accordance with its multi-year programme of work (2026–2029), the Commission on the Status of Women, at its seventieth session, will consider as its priority theme "Ensuring and strengthening access to justice for all women and girls, including by promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems, eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices, and addressing structural barriers".

2. Access to justice is a right guaranteed under international law and reflected in national legislation around the world. The denial of that right undermines human rights, peace and sustainable development. Without equal access for women and men, there can be no justice, thereby eroding rule of law principles of equality, accountability and fairness. For women and girls, barriers to justice entrench inequality.

3. As the world grapples with polycrises, marked by widening income inequality, growing conflict, the erosion of democratic norms, climate change and disparate digital transformation, ensuring access to justice has never been more critical. Action to ensure such access is particularly urgent for women and girls, amid pervasive pushback on women's rights. The right of women and girls to have access to justice is increasingly threatened precisely when it is most needed, as progress towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5, on gender equality, remains stalled.

4. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States pledged to guarantee equal access to justice for all and to establish legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination.[1] Those commitments are rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

5. Under the terms of the Convention, States Parties are required to ensure that women enjoy and exercise all human rights and freedoms on an equal basis with men. It obliges States to ensure women's access to legal protection and remedies through competent national tribunals and public institutions, affirming that State Parties shall accord to women equality with men before the law.[2] In 2015, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women adopted its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, explicitly defining access to justice as a fundamental element of the rule of law and good governance, encompassing justiciability, availability, accessibility, good quality, the provision of remedies for victims and the accountability of justice systems.

6. Through the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was adopted by consensus by the Fourth World Conference on Women (the thirtieth anniversary of which was marked in 2025), the Convention was reinforced and Member States were urged to remove gender bias in the administration of justice. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Conference participants called for the establishment of affordable and accessible mechanisms, including legal aid. Governments and non-governmental organizations were called upon to promote women's legal literacy and to make information on remedies widely available.

7. Member States have made progress in fulfilling their international obligations and commitments and expressed determination to do more. In 2024, States reported that ensuring women's equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice was one of their top priorities in the preceding five years. Some 90 per cent of Member States reported that they had strengthened laws, implementation and

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Something to Think About **07**

Despite widespread legal reform, strengthening legislation does not automatically guarantee effective protection. Implementation, enforcement, funding and access to justice services remain essential.

enforcement measures to combat violence against women over the same period (see E/CN.6/2025/3/Rev.1). The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has noted that more than 40 countries have amended and rewritten their constitutions in the past decade to incorporate provisions aimed at advancing women's and girls' rights (see A/HRC/56/51). Research shows that autonomous feminist movements and women's rights organizations have been critical in advancing such reforms around the world.[3]

8. Despite this important progress, women and girls still struggle to gain access to justice. Women globally face greater barriers to justice than men in nearly 70 per cent of the countries surveyed.[4] Justice infrastructure often fails to uphold the rights of women and girls, who face challenges such as discriminatory laws, inaccessible justice mechanisms, weak implementation and restrictive and patriarchal norms. Failures of justice that threaten the lives of women and girls are often met with impunity – and sustained by it.

9. Globally, women have 64 per cent of the legal rights of men,[5] as discriminatory legal frameworks continue to prevail. Globally, 54 per cent of countries lack consent-based legal definitions of rape,[6] while 72 per cent allow child marriage in all or some circumstances, an issue that disproportionately affects girls.[7] More than 45 countries retain at least one provision in their legislation regarding nationality that discriminates on the basis of gender,[8] and 44 per cent of countries do not have legislation that mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value, the absence of which contributes to gender pay gaps.[9] Such deficits also blunt the law's ability to signal and socialize new norms, resulting in lost opportunities to drive change.

10. The implementation of legal frameworks continues to lag, as resources and norms fail to keep pace. As a result, even where formal equality – equal treatment before the law – is achieved, substantive justice – fairness in outcomes – remains out of reach for many. Power imbalances, in settings ranging from the household to the State level, often restrict women's access to justice and perpetuate impunity. For women and girls in conflict-affected settings and rural or otherwise underserved areas, access may be determined as much by such circumstances as by any law. Traditional justice systems,[10] which are relied upon by women around the world, can also produce discriminatory outcomes. A multidimensional understanding of justice – one that recognizes justice as constitutive of the dignity, freedom, voice, and agency of women and girls – reveals how deeply barriers to justice persist.

[3] Daniela M. Behr and others, "Empowering change: assessing the role of democracy, civil society, and women's rights groups in advancing legal gender equality", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 10788 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2024).

[4] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Annual report 2023: gender justice platform", 2024.

[5] World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

[6] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024* (New York, 2024).

[7] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "How marriage laws can contribute to protecting every girl's right to education", 7 March 2025.

[8] Catherine Harrington, "Gender discriminatory nationality laws and the principle of gender-equal citizenship", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[9] UN-Women, "The crucial role of legal frameworks in advancing gender equality: latest on SDG 5, target 5.1: end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere", 2024.

[10] As defined by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the present report uses "traditional justice systems" to refer to religious, customary, Indigenous and community justice systems.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Did You Know That... 07

Constitutional reform can place gender equality among a country's highest legal principles. However, constitutional guarantees still depend on legislation, institutions and enforcement to affect women's everyday lives.

Did You Know That... 08

This shows that access to justice remains unequal in a large majority of surveyed countries, even where women and men may formally have equal rights under national law.

Interesting Facts 09

The global legal gender gap extends across areas such as employment, family law, property, mobility, and economic participation, demonstrating that discrimination can still be embedded directly within legal frameworks.

Definition 09

A consent-based definition of rape focuses on whether a person freely agreed to sexual activity, rather than requiring evidence of physical force or resistance. Laws need clear rules for investigating allegations and protecting the rights of everyone involved.

Did You Know That... 09

Legal exceptions, such as parental or judicial consent, can allow marriage below the general minimum age. This leaves vulnerable girls to interrupted education, economic dependence and barriers to claiming their rights.

Definition 10

Formal equality means that laws apply equally to women and men on paper. It focuses on equal treatment rather than whether people actually have equal opportunities or outcomes.

Definition 10

Substantive justice looks beyond what the law says and asks whether women and girls can actually obtain fair results in practice. Achieving it may require addressing unequal starting conditions and structural barriers.

enforcement measures to combat violence against women over the same period (see E/CN.6/2025/3/Rev.1). The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has noted that more than 40 countries have amended and rewritten their constitutions in the past decade to incorporate provisions aimed at advancing women's and girls' rights (see A/HRC/56/51). Research shows that autonomous feminist movements and women's rights organizations have been critical in advancing such reforms around the world.[3]

8. Despite this important progress, women and girls still struggle to gain access to justice. Women globally face greater barriers to justice than men in nearly 70 per cent of the countries surveyed.[4] Justice infrastructure often fails to uphold the rights of women and girls, who face challenges such as discriminatory laws, inaccessible justice mechanisms, weak implementation and restrictive and patriarchal norms. Failures of justice that threaten the lives of women and girls are often met with impunity – and sustained by it.

9. Globally, women have 64 per cent of the legal rights of men,[5] as discriminatory legal frameworks continue to prevail. Globally, 54 per cent of countries lack consent-based legal definitions of rape,[6] while 72 per cent allow child marriage in all or some circumstances, an issue that disproportionately affects girls.[7] More than 45 countries retain at least one provision in their legislation regarding nationality that discriminates on the basis of gender,[8] and 44 per cent of countries do not have legislation that mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value, the absence of which contributes to gender pay gaps.[9] Such deficits also blunt the law's ability to signal and socialize new norms, resulting in lost opportunities to drive change.

10. The implementation of legal frameworks continues to lag, as resources and norms fail to keep pace. As a result, even where formal equality – equal treatment before the law – is achieved, substantive justice – fairness in outcomes – remains out of reach for many. Power imbalances, in settings ranging from the household to the State level, often restrict women's access to justice and perpetuate impunity. For women and girls in conflict-affected settings and rural or otherwise underserved areas, access may be determined as much by such circumstances as by any law. Traditional justice systems,[10] which are relied upon by women around the world, can also produce discriminatory outcomes. A multidimensional understanding of justice – one that recognizes justice as constitutive of the dignity, freedom, voice, and agency of women and girls – reveals how deeply barriers to justice persist.

[3] Daniela M. Behr and others, "Empowering change: assessing the role of democracy, civil society, and women's rights groups in advancing legal gender equality", Policy Research Working Paper, No. 10788 (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2024).

[4] United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Annual report 2023: gender justice platform", 2024.

[5] World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2024* (Washington, D.C., 2024).

[6] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2024* (New York, 2024).

[7] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "How marriage laws can contribute to protecting every girl's right to education", 7 March 2025.

[8] Catherine Harrington, "Gender discriminatory nationality laws and the principle of gender-equal citizenship", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[9] UN-Women, "The crucial role of legal frameworks in advancing gender equality: latest on SDG 5, target 5.1: end all forms of discrimination against women and girls everywhere", 2024.

[10] As defined by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in its general recommendation No. 33 (2015) on women's access to justice, the present report uses "traditional justice systems" to refer to religious, customary, Indigenous and community justice systems.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 10

Perpetuate impunity means to allow people to continue doing something wrong or illegal without being punished or held responsible. This can create a situation where others feel it is safe to engage in the same harmful or illegal actions without fear of punishment.

Definition 10

In this report, traditional justice systems include religious, customary, indigenous and community based mechanisms used to resolve disputes outside or alongside formal state courts.

Something to Think About 10

A woman may be able to approach either a customary forum or a state court over inheritance. If the two reach different results, should national law guarantee an appeal to a state court? Who should provide information about that option?

11. Progress is possible; achieving it requires a focus on access to substantive and participatory justice outcomes for women and girls, centred on the fundamental human rights to non-discrimination and equality, and an understanding of systemic exclusion and power asymmetries. The laws, policies, practices and other structural barriers referred to in the priority theme can either drive or inhibit access by women and girls. Political will, dedicated public financing, social mobilization, the gathering and use of evidence, as well as innovation, will be required in order to overcoming such challenges, and efforts must be constantly informed by the lived and diverse realities of women and girls.

II. Parallel roads: justice needs and justice mechanisms

12. Experts have compared the challenges faced by women and girls in gaining access to justice to a two-way highway: legal problems move in one direction, while justice mechanisms move in another. When these roads run parallel to each other, realities and remedies do not meet,[11] whereas their intersection enables justice. These dynamics require an understanding of how laws, other structural barriers, implementation gaps, traditional mechanisms and crisis or conflict settings affect women's and girls' access to justice.

A. Legal frameworks

13. Around the world, legal frameworks directly or indirectly discriminate against women and girls. Data reported for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.1.1, which measures whether legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor gender equality, show that no reporting country has yet closed legal gaps in the four areas assessed: overarching legal frameworks and public life, violence against women, employment and economic benefits and marriage and family. The information available for 2024 indicates that 54 per cent of countries have legal gaps in all four areas.[12]

14. Family and personal status laws can entrench systemic and systematic gender inequality. Surveys have found that women are more likely than men to face family-related legal issues.[13] Clawback clauses in 22 national constitutions exclude the application of non-discrimination principles in matters of personal and/or customary law, including as relates to marriage, divorce, custody and inheritance.[14] Where women lack equal rights to transmit nationality to their spouses and children, the resulting discrimination can increase statelessness, heighten socioeconomic human rights violations, fracture family unity and deepen intergenerational poverty. Upon marriage dissolution, the majority of jurisdictions lack adequate provisions for spousal maintenance and the equitable distribution of matrimonial property.[15] Discriminatory inheritance laws affect approximately 250 million women,[16] and 59

[11] Deliberations of the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[12] UN-Women, "The crucial role of legal frameworks in advancing gender equality".
[13] Paul Prettitore and Sandie Okoro, "Measuring the gender justice gap", Brookings, 21 June 2018.
[14] See http://constitutions.unwomen.org.
[15] Hyshyama Hamin, "From discrimination to justice: reforming family laws to achieve gender equality", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[16] Ibid.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 11

Power asymmetries are unequal distributions of influence, resources or authority between individuals or groups. In justice systems, these imbalances can affect who is able to report violations, obtain representation or influence outcomes.

Something to Think About 13

The report compares women's and girls' legal problems and the systems meant to resolve them to two roads that may never meet. For example, laws may give women fewer rights to inherit property; courts may fail to enforce laws against domestic violence; community or religious leaders may pressure women to settle disputes without protecting their rights; and conflict may force women to flee areas where courts and legal services have stopped operating. These examples show how different barriers can prevent women and girls from obtaining justice even when legal protections or justice institutions exist.

Something to Think About 13

The fact that 54% of reporting countries have legal gaps in all four areas suggests that discrimination against women is not confined to one part of the law. For example, a country might prohibit discrimination in employment but still allow employers to dismiss pregnant workers, give women fewer inheritance rights than men, or fail to provide effective legal protection against domestic violence. If a government strengthens protections in one area while leaving discriminatory laws in others unchanged, how much progress toward gender equality can it achieve? What would governments need to do to ensure that legal protections are consistent across these different areas?

Definition 14

A clawback clause creates an exception to a general constitutional right. In this context, some constitutions guarantee non discrimination but allow exceptions for personal laws such as marriage, divorce, inheritance or custody.

Something to Think About 14

How can nationality laws create consequences far beyond citizenship itself? Consider their effects on family unity, education, employment, healthcare and the ability of children to access legal rights.

Did You Know That... 14

Inheritance rules can directly affect women's ability to own land, accumulate wealth and achieve economic independence, making family law an important component of access to justice.

per cent of the countries reviewed have "low, very low or no protection at all"[17] of women's land rights as one key factor leading to discriminatory inheritance laws. This legal context erodes economic equality for women and girls, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty. Of particular concern are the ways in which discriminatory family and personal status laws have undermined women's agency, making it difficult to escape situations of abuse. In contrast, research indicates that since 1970, more than 600 million women have gained access to economic opportunities because of family law reform, thus reflecting its transformative impact.[18]

15. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Governments have made notable progress in passing and strengthening laws to address violence against women and girls. By 2023, 84 per cent of countries had passed laws on eliminating and responding to domestic violence, according to research by UN-Women.[19] While those laws were a tremendous step forward in legally shedding the notion of domestic violence as a private matter, only 104 of 164 countries[20] have enacted comprehensive legislation that integrates criminalization, prevention, survivor-centred measures for empowerment, protection and support consistent with global and regional standards. Emerging areas, such as addressing violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology, present new legal gaps that disproportionately affect women and girls,[21] thereby denying them equal protection under the law.

16. Gaps also persist in employment law. Since the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015, more countries have enacted legal provisions that prohibit at least some aspects of sex- or gender-based discrimination in employment.[22] Nevertheless, the rate of progress remains slow. Many countries still restrict women from certain jobs or do not offer protection to caregivers aimed at preventing their discrimination at work.[23] This reality, viewed in conjunction with the 708 million women citing unpaid care responsibilities as their primary barrier to labour force participation,[24] highlights the relationship between the law and the economic empowerment of women. Prohibitions on some forms of retaliation for seeking justice and reporting harassment exist in 60 per cent of countries, yet few protect against all types of adverse action, such as disciplinary measures, harassment or dismissal.[25] Meanwhile, the evidence required for presentation in discrimination and harassment cases is often held or controlled by employers, which compounds power imbalances.[26] Women and girls working in the informal economy are often completely excluded from legal protection.

[17] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, SDG Indicators Data Portal, available at www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-data-portal/data/indicators/5a2-women-s-equal-rights-to-land-ownership.

[18] Daniela M. Behr and Julia C. Braunmiller, "Changing laws, changing lives: family law reform as a catalyst for economic prosperity", Global Indicators Brief, No. 30 (World Bank, 2025).

[19] UN-Women, "Facts and figures: ending violence against women", 24 November 2023.

[20] Ibid.

[21] UN-Women, "Repository of UN-Women's work on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls", March 2025.

[22] Jody Heymann and Amy Raub, "Realizing equal legal rights and access to justice for all", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[23] Ibid.

[24] International Labour Organization (ILO), "Statistical brief: the impact of care responsibilities on women's labour force participation", October 2024.

[25] Heyman and Raub, "Realizing equal legal rights and access to justice for all".

[26] ILO, "Strengthening access to labour justice for women", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Did You Know That... 14

Weak land rights can limit women's economic security, access to credit and ability to escape poverty or abusive situations, demonstrating how property law can influence broader gender equality.

Did You Know That... 14

Family law reform can have effects far beyond the household. Changes to marriage, divorce, property and inheritance rights can substantially expand women's economic opportunities and independence.

Did You Know That... 15

The widespread adoption of domestic violence legislation represents major progress in recognizing such violence as a public and legal matter rather than solely a private family issue.

Did You Know That... 15

Having a domestic violence law does not necessarily mean having a comprehensive framework. Effective legislation may need to combine criminalization with prevention, protection, survivor support and empowerment.

Definition 15

A comprehensive approach addresses more than punishment: it can include prevention, emergency protection orders, accessible reporting, shelters, counselling and support for survivors. Countries may differ in how they fund and coordinate these services.

Definition 15

Technology facilitated violence may include online harassment, cybertalking, non consensual sharing of intimate images, digital surveillance and other forms of abuse enabled or amplified by digital tools.

Did You Know That... 16

Unpaid care work, including childcare, eldercare and household responsibilities, can limit women's ability to enter paid employment and may deepen economic dependence.

per cent of the countries reviewed have "low, very low or no protection at all"[17] of women's land rights as one key factor leading to discriminatory inheritance laws. This legal context erodes economic equality for women and girls, leaving them more vulnerable to poverty. Of particular concern are the ways in which discriminatory family and personal status laws have undermined women's agency, making it difficult to escape situations of abuse. In contrast, research indicates that since 1970, more than 600 million women have gained access to economic opportunities because of family law reform, thus reflecting its transformative impact.[18]

15. Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Governments have made notable progress in passing and strengthening laws to address violence against women and girls. By 2023, 84 per cent of countries had passed laws on eliminating and responding to domestic violence, according to research by UN-Women.[19] While those laws were a tremendous step forward in legally shedding the notion of domestic violence as a private matter, only 104 of 164 countries[20] have enacted comprehensive legislation that integrates criminalization, prevention, survivor-centred measures for empowerment, protection and support consistent with global and regional standards. Emerging areas, such as addressing violence that occurs through or is amplified by the use of technology, present new legal gaps that disproportionately affect women and girls,[21] thereby denying them equal protection under the law.

16. Gaps also persist in employment law. Since the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015, more countries have enacted legal provisions that prohibit at least some aspects of sex- or gender-based discrimination in employment.[22] Nevertheless, the rate of progress remains slow. Many countries still restrict women from certain jobs or do not offer protection to caregivers aimed at preventing their discrimination at work.[23] This reality, viewed in conjunction with the 708 million women citing unpaid care responsibilities as their primary barrier to labour force participation,[24] highlights the relationship between the law and the economic empowerment of women. Prohibitions on some forms of retaliation for seeking justice and reporting harassment exist in 60 per cent of countries, yet few protect against all types of adverse action, such as disciplinary measures, harassment or dismissal.[25] Meanwhile, the evidence required for presentation in discrimination and harassment cases is often held or controlled by employers, which compounds power imbalances.[26] Women and girls working in the informal economy are often completely excluded from legal protection.

[17] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, SDG Indicators Data Portal, available at www.fao.org/sustainable-development-goals-data-portal/data/indicators/5a2-women-s-equal-rights-to-land-ownership.

[18] Daniela M. Behr and Julia C. Braunmiller, "Changing laws, changing lives: family law reform as a catalyst for economic prosperity", Global Indicators Brief, No. 30 (World Bank, 2025).

[19] UN-Women, "Facts and figures: ending violence against women", 24 November 2023.

[20] Ibid.

[21] UN-Women, "Repository of UN-Women's work on technology-facilitated violence against women and girls", March 2025.

[22] Jody Heymann and Amy Raub, "Realizing equal legal rights and access to justice for all", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[23] Ibid.

[24] International Labour Organization (ILO), "Statistical brief: the impact of care responsibilities on women's labour force participation", October 2024.

[25] Heyman and Raub, "Realizing equal legal rights and access to justice for all".

[26] ILO, "Strengthening access to labour justice for women", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Something to Think About **16**

In discrimination and sexual harassment cases, employers may control important evidence, such as personnel records, emails, salary information or workplace complaints. This can make it difficult for women to prove what happened. Should courts be allowed to require employers to provide relevant records? If a worker presents credible evidence suggesting discrimination, should the employer then have to show that its actions were lawful? How can courts protect confidential employee information and prevent retaliation against complainants while giving employers a fair opportunity to respond to the allegations?

17. Laws that disproportionately affect the poorest, such as those criminalizing informal work, begging, homelessness or the non-payment of fines,[27] have an especially adverse effect on women and girls,[28] who are overrepresented among the poor.[29] Convictions under such laws contribute to rising rates of incarceration for women and girls worldwide (see A/HRC/56/61/Add.3), particularly for those belonging to racial minority groups, which often sets off a vicious cycle that reinforces their exclusion from legal protection.

B. Structural barriers and social norms

18. Structural barriers to justice for women and girls are systematic, society-wide phenomena, afflicting women as a group.[30] Such barriers stem from social structures and can be formal, as is the case of the laws discussed above, or informal, such as social norms.[31] Discriminatory social norms influence who can have access to justice and benefit from the rule of law. Such norms can affect the deliberation of facts, discourage women from reporting violence or limit women's representation within the judiciary.[32]

19. Discriminatory social norms can also lead to discriminatory laws or reduce compliance with the legal frameworks designed to advance gender equality. As noted by the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, "no matter how strongly the law is drafted, it is filtered through the biases and limitations of the individuals and institutions, public and private, responsible for grounding it in reality".[33] For example, while 51 of 92 countries had passed laws prohibiting female genital mutilation by 2024 (see A/79/514), enforcement is constrained, particularly where such practices retain social support.

20. Structural discrimination compounds the barriers to access to justice faced by women and girls on the basis of income level, racial or ethnic identity, Indigenous status, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity, disability, HIV status or refugee or migrant status, among other factors. The overlapping nature of the identities of these groups increases their vulnerability to harm and heightens their protection needs. Fear of retaliation or further marginalization deters many from even approaching justice actors, for example, in situations where the legal capacity of women with disabilities may automatically be questioned or where status- or conduct-based criminalization related to diverse sexual orientation and gender identity increases the risk of self-incrimination.[34]

[27] See also, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 11.
[28] Penal Reform International and Women Beyond Walls, *From Poverty to Punishment: Examining Laws and Practices which Criminalize Women Due to Poverty or Status Worldwide* (2025).
[29] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2025* (New York, 2025).
[30] S. Laurel Weldon, "Structural barriers and access to justice for women and girls", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[31] Ibid.
[32] UNDP, "The transformative power of women in the judiciary", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[33] See A/HRC/35/29; in 2019, the Working Group was renamed Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.
[34] Thilaga Sulathireh, "Access to justice for LGBTIQ+ people", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Something to Think About 17

Can a law be formally gender neutral but still disproportionately harm women? It is important to consider how poverty, gender and criminalization can interact even when a law does not explicitly mention sex or gender.

Definition 18

structural barriers are systematic obstacles created by laws, institutions, social arrangements or norms rather than simple individual actions. They can repeatedly disadvantage an entire group.

Something to Think About 19

If discriminatory attitudes persist among police, judges, employers or communities, is changing the law enough? What additional measures are needed to ensure legal reforms produce real change?

Something to Think About 19

The Secretary-General's report states that 51 of 92 countries had laws prohibiting female genital mutilation by 2024, while enforcement can remain difficult where the practice has social support. This illustrates why legislation may need to be accompanied by community education, survivor support and effective enforcement.

Definition 20

Intersectionality means that barriers can combine rather than operate separately. For example, a woman with a disability living in a rural area may face gender discrimination, inaccessible court buildings and long travel distances at the same time. Addressing only one barrier may leave the others intact.

C. Implementation gap

21. While laws that guarantee equality and non-discrimination are a necessary part of the justice access equation, the full sum depends heavily on implementation and service delivery. In spite of their varied personal circumstances, women and girls often face common barriers to justice, including in relation to costs, distance, language, low level of legal literacy, time poverty linked to care responsibilities, bias and stigma. These constraints deepen in different ways across the life course, leaving girls and older women in particular confronting unique and often underrecognized barriers to justice.

22. Girls face distinct and often overlooked obstacles in gaining access to justice services, including impediments such as the absence of child-centred and gender-sensitive procedures among justice actors. Child marriage and early pregnancy are barriers to girls claiming their rights where, as legal minors, they can find themselves dependent on the very individuals who may be harming them – a challenge in both civil and traditional justice systems. The combined legal, psychological and economic support needs of girls often go unmet[35] owing to a shortage of age-appropriate services for girls that are informed by an awareness of children's neurological development. Recognizing girls as a distinct legal and developmental group, and not as "women-in-training" but as rights holders with unique pathways and vulnerabilities, remains critical.[36]

23. Older women frequently face the accumulated effects of lifelong gender-based discrimination and economic disadvantage. They often lack the resources and institutional support to effectively assert their rights.[37] Gendered ageism undermines their credibility, leading to the dismissal of complaints, especially in cases involving violence, neglect, health rights, pension and property entitlements. Such abuses are pervasive, yet often underreported due to shame, stigma and the fear of reprisals.[38]

24. Independent research shows that for both men and women, the supply of justice services has not kept pace with the demand for justice solutions.[39] Some challenges include low budgets, capacity-constrained justice actors, poor intrasectoral and intersectoral coordination and political interference in matters of enforcement. Women and girls face compounded challenges, as entrenched patriarchal norms and systemic discrimination persist within justice institutions (formal and traditional). Gender bias also frequently intersects with other identity-based discrimination at all stages of the justice chain.

25. The justice sector also remains largely male-dominated at decision-making levels. The absence of female justice actors reflects structural gender imbalances and, as evidence from some contexts shows, can discourage women from engaging with

[35] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "The role of laws and justice systems in protecting girls from child marriage", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[36] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), "Access to justice for women and girls alleged or recognized as having infringed criminal law", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[37] Tanvi Patel, "Towards equitable justice: overcoming structural barriers faced by older women in accessing inclusive legal systems", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Daniela Barba and Alejandro Ponce, *Disparities, Vulnerability, and Harnessing Data for People-Centred Justice: WJP Justice Data Graphical Report II* (Washington, D.C., World Justice Project, 2023).

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 21

Time poverty occurs when unpaid work and responsibilities leave a person with too little discretionary time. Care responsibilities can make attending court hearings, seeking legal assistance or completing lengthy procedures difficult.

Something to Think About 22

If a girl reports abuse by her legal guardian, should she be able to approach a child-protection officer or court without that guardian's permission? What safeguards can protect her safety, privacy and right to be heard?

Interesting Facts 22

Girls have distinct legal and development needs. Justice services designed only for adult women may fail to provide age appropriate procedures, protection or even psychological support.

Definition 23

Gendered ageism describes discrimination produced by the interaction of age and gender stereotypes. Older women may face assumptions about credibility, dependency or capacity that affect how their complaints are taken and treated.

Did You Know That... 25

Representation can influence public confidence as well as institutional perspectives. However, increasing the number of women in justice institutions must also be accompanied by broader reforms addressing institutional bias.

justice systems and thus affect legal outcomes.[40] Research suggests that women's participation in the judiciary can influence decisions in the domains of employment discrimination, sexual harassment and gender-based violence, although findings remain context-specific and should be considered within broader institutional constraints.[41] Closer attention to who holds decision-making power within courts, and across the justice system more broadly, is important to understand how the law is interpreted, applied and enforced in practice.

26. In a criminal context, shortcomings in service delivery contribute to low reporting rates of violence by women and girls. Although global data remain limited, a 2025 report based on 12 countries, across all five regions, found that national justice funding for women experiencing violence was inadequate.[42] The police, an entry point for many survivors of violence, can fall short of implementing gender-responsive policing that meets the needs of women and girls: constrained resources and institutional cultures may normalize gender-based discrimination; discourage bystander intervention in the workplace;[43] and lead to less perpetrator-focused action and enforcement. In the courtroom, where witness testimony can be decisive in the absence of other corroborating evidence, the testimony of women and girls continues to be assessed without adequate consideration of credibility standards[44] and is influenced by non-trauma-informed notions of what constitutes a "good" or "bad" witness.[45]

27. Research has shown that attrition in the criminal justice chain is usually not random and happens at predictable process chokepoints.[46] Faced with retaliation risks, internalized stigma, community pressure to withdraw cases and the fear of impunity, women and girls may choose not to report crimes. Many women in both low- and high-income settings inherently do not trust justice systems or expect accountability, and victim-survivors frequently anticipate disbelief or inaction.[47] These dynamics reinforce cycles of impunity, and the most serious forms of violence, including femicide, often go unpunished.

28. The establishment of specialized gender justice mechanisms is important but there are challenges in ensuring effective implementation. One-stop centres have shown some promising results, but their effectiveness depends on context-specific design; sustained financing; integration into the justice system; coordinated, multidisciplinary teams; and robust evaluations that also consider alternative

[40] UNDP, "The transformative power of women in the judiciary".
[41] Ibid.
[42] UN-Women and others, *Financing Women's Justice Needs: Global Perspectives on Violence against Women, and a Case Study on Uganda* (2025).
[43] Jane Towsnley and Gerry Campbell, "A gender responsive approach to policing and the wider justice systems", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[44] Adila de las Mercedes, "International credibility standards: the impact of stereotypes and prejudices in cases of sexual violence against women", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[45] Bonita Meyersfeld, "Diffusion of international legal frameworks on women's rights to national laws and local initiatives", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[46] Nalini Singh, "Women's access to justice in Fiji: evidence and insights", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[47] S. Majumdar, "Working paper: police as an entry point to end violence against women and girls: lessons from civil society organizations funded by the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women", UN-Women, January 2020; and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Gender Equality in a Changing World: Taking Stock and Moving Forward, Gender Equality at Work* (Paris, 2025).

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Did You Know That... 26

Legal protections require financing to function. Underfunded police, courts, shelters, legal aid and survivor services can turn strong laws into protections that exist mostly on paper.

Definition 26

Gender responsive policing means designing police policies, training and procedures to recognize the different experiences and needs of women and girls while avoiding stereotypes and discriminatory practices.

Something to Think About 26

A survivor of violence may recall events out of order or appear calm while describing them. How should police and judges be trained to assess testimony without treating one emotional response as proof of truth or falsehood, while still testing evidence fairly?

Definition 27

Attrition refers to cases dropping out at different stages of the justice process. For example, because a crime is not reported, police do not investigate it, prosecutors do not proceed or a case fails before judgment.

Something to Think About 27

A survivor may fear that reporting violence will bring retaliation or no response. Should governments invest first in confidential reporting channels, independent complaint review, witness protection or better case follow-up? How could they measure whether trust improves?

Definition 28

One- stop centres bring several services, such as medical care, legal assistance, police support, counselling and referrals, into one coordinated location so survivors do not have to navigate multiple independent institutions.

Something to Think About 28

Putting health, police and legal services in one building does not automatically make them work together. Who should coordinate referrals, protect confidential records and ensure that rural survivors can reach the centre?

approaches. The instituting of specialized domestic violence courts has had successful outcomes[48] but such courts can also encounter challenges linked to resources and justice system integration. In police settings, while women's police desks can provide valuable support,[49] such mechanisms may similarly grapple with operational and institutional constraints. Heavy workloads and secondary trauma among service providers may result in high staff turnover, reducing the quality and continuity of service delivery. Well-structured referral mechanisms linking helplines, community counselling, shelters and legal and health services remain critical to provide timely, survivor-centred support.

29. Globally, many needs related to justice fall under the umbrella of everyday administrative practice and administrative justice. Government bureaucracies administer the processes through which rights related to housing, education, healthcare, immigration and employment are realized. Public agencies act as the gatekeepers of legal entitlements that "can mean the difference between homelessness and shelter, precarity and security, life and death".[50] When these institutions fail to deliver because of insufficient resources, complexity or bias, the consequences are most serious for groups that are already disadvantaged, often women and girls. The lack of a birth certificate can heighten the risk of child marriage,[51] or a wrongful pension denial can trigger a harmful series of consequences, undermining other rights and deepening gender inequality.

D. Traditional justice systems

30. In the area of access to justice, the lived reality of women and girls includes legal pluralism and the use of traditional justice mechanisms. Legal pluralism is a global phenomenon[52] that is present in some form across all regions. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the population in developing countries utilizes traditional justice systems.[53] Such structures frequently fill gaps where State justice mechanisms are absent or inaccessible, often stemming from legal-political arrangements shaped by colonial legacies.

31. Traditional justice systems have been described by independent experts as "pathways or fences",[54] as such mechanisms can offer greater physical and cultural accessibility. They are often cheaper, faster and have the potential to grant local recognition of harms suffered, including for claims that may not be recognized under formal law but that reflect moral obligations within a community.[55] Such mechanisms are also not static and can change over time.

[48] *Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women* (United Nations publication, 2010).
[49] Lisa Denney, "Tool 2: policing and gender", in *Gender and Security Toolkit* (Geneva, Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe – Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and UN-Women, 2019).
[50] Rebecca L. Sandefur, "Access to justice for women and girls and administrative practices", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[51] UNICEF, "The role of laws and justice systems in protecting girls from child marriage".
[52] Fareda Banda, "Legal pluralism and women's rights", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[53] See www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/access-to-justice-and-rule-of-law-institutions/informal-justice/.
[54] Celestine Nyamu-Musembi, "Are local norms and practices fences or pathways? The example of women's property rights", in *Cultural Transformation and Human Rights in Africa*, Abdullahi A. An-Na'im, ed. (Zed Books, 2002).
[55] Ibid.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Something to Think About 28

Justice systems depend on the well being of the people delivering services. How can governments protect frontline workers from burnout and secondary trauma while ensuring continuity of support for survivors?

Definition 29

Administrative justice concerns decisions made by government agencies rather than traditional courts, including matters involving pensions, immigration, housing, benefits, education, employment and healthcare entitlements.

Something to Think About 29

A simple administrative document can determine whether other rights are enforceable. What systems can Member States establish to ensure that lack of documentation does not create a chain of additional rights violations?

Definition 30

Legal pluralism describes situations in which multiple legal or justice systems operate within the same society, such as State courts alongside religious, customary, Indigenous or community based systems.

Did You Know That... 30

Traditional justice mechanisms can play a major role where state courts are geographically distant, expensive or inaccessible, making their relationship with women's rights extremely important.

Something to Think About 31

Traditional justice forums may be closer and less costly than state courts, but some may apply discriminatory inheritance or family rules. Should governments provide appeals to state courts, minimum procedural safeguards, training for customary authorities or a combination? How can women participate in designing the safeguards?

32. Traditional justice systems can also be affected by entrenched patriarchal norms, such as a low number of female decision makers and discriminatory outcomes that fail to align with international, regional and possibly domestic rights frameworks. As with the formal justice system, women and girls can face substantive discrimination in areas related to the family, including marriage, inheritance and property rights, as well as domestic violence. Older women in particular struggle to gain access to or claim land as traditional practices frequently privilege male relatives and discount women's lifelong contributions. The ability of women and girls to strategically navigate plural legal systems, with different justice forums serving different needs,[56] can be highly constrained and undermine access to justice for rural women.[57]

E. Crisis, conflict and post-conflict settings

33. In 2024, 676 million women and girls were living within 50 kilometres of a deadly conflict, the highest number recorded since the 1990s,[58] and the increased scale of conflict has led to increased levels of unmet justice needs. The proliferation of conflicts has been accompanied by a shocking disregard for international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The number of conflict-related sexual violence violations documented by the United Nations has increased by 87 per cent in just two years.[59] Independent human rights experts appointed by the United Nations have called attention to grave violations of international law. There is an urgent need to uphold international legal obligations, including by complying with the provisional orders and determinations of the International Court of Justice, and to prevent and punish crimes, especially those that disproportionately target women and girls.[60]

34. In conflict and crisis settings, including in contexts affected by natural disasters, both formal and traditional justice systems may be weakened or non-existent, or become deeply politicized. Access to justice may be limited physically as previously safe spaces become unsafe, courts and police stations are destroyed and justice sector professionals flee, while the risk of retaliation rises. Civil society organizations often attempt to fill gaps, with some making innovative use of technology to gather data about women's justice needs, while others engage through interventions such as alternative dispute resolution. However, they also contend with security threats. Women human rights defenders who report violations and abuses by State actors and armed groups, including in relation to their work with the United Nations, can face retaliation, surveillance and criminalization. Gender-based violence increases with the outbreak of conflict,[61] as do crimes such as theft and corruption. Women in detention face an even greater struggle to gain access to justice as systems collapse and the risk of violence against them increases. Women and girls in marginalized situations, including those with disabilities, living with HIV, or of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity, are at greater risk in the close quarters of refugee and displacement settings. Special procedures mandate holders and investigative bodies of the United Nations play an important role by documenting violations in conflict

[56] Banda, "Legal pluralism and women's rights".
[57] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women.
[58] UN-Women and United Nations, *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2025*.
[59] UN-Women, "Facts and figures: women, peace and security", 20 October 2025.
[60] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "UN experts warn international order on knife's edge, urge States to comply with ICJ Advisory Opinion", 18 September 2024.
[61] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, general recommendation No. 30 (2013).

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Something to Think About 32

How should governments address conflicts between customary practices and national or international equality standards, particularly in areas such as inheritance and land ownership?

Did You Know That... 33

In 2024, this was the highest number recorded since the 1990s, which sheds light on the enormous scale of women's exposure to conflict related insecurity and weakened justice systems.

Did You Know That... 33

Conflict can both increase gender based violence and weaken the institutions responsible for investigating and prosecuting it. This creates severe accountability gaps.

Something to Think About 34

When national justice institutions collapse during conflict, who should provide accountability and protection? Consider the potential roles and limitations of civil society, international mechanisms and post conflict justice.

Interesting Facts 34

During crises, civil society may provide legal assistance, documentation, counselling or alternative dispute resolution while state institutions cannot effectively operate .

and crisis situations and in so doing, keeping public attention focused on the need for justice.

35. Women and girls, who often experience overlapping types of discrimination, harm and crimes, have a right to truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence. Transitional justice processes should comprehensively address sexual and gender-based violence by ensuring the full and meaningful participation of women from diverse backgrounds and by responding to the gendered aspects of the root causes of conflict and abuse.[62] Administrative reparations programmes, for example, can reach more women and girls, be made more relevant through co-creation, and produce more timely results than judicial systems can.[63] Regional and international courts can provide avenues for accountability when national systems fall short, advancing jurisprudence on gender-based crimes and helping to uphold States' obligations under international law. The negotiation of a convention based on the draft articles on prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity would present States with an opportunity to close legal gaps in the architecture of atrocity prevention and punishment by[64] codifying and enumerating crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls, including reproductive violence, forced marriage, slavery crimes and institutionalized regimes of systematic oppression amounting to gender apartheid. Historical reparations for mass violations of human rights, such as slavery or the forced sterilization of Indigenous women, are also essential to acknowledge enduring harm, address persisting structural inequalities and advance meaningful justice and reconciliation.

III. Convergence: meeting women's and girls' justice entitlements

36. Overcoming challenges relating to access to justice for women and girls requires that the parallel roads of justice needs and justice mechanisms discussed above intersect. Achieving that convergence demands a whole-of-society approach that is shaped by evidence-based drivers of change: effecting institutional change in justice systems to meet women's and girls' needs; involving autonomous feminist movements and civil society; strengthening legal aid and fostering empowerment; and leveraging technology and digital innovation, as well as research and evidence. At their core, such efforts are about creating the conditions that allow women and girls to exercise their agency and make informed justice choices.

A. Institutional change in justice systems

37. Advancing system reform requires transformative legal reform. Such reforms concern not only the substance of legislation but also the related processes and impact, including by recognizing the bidirectional relationship between law and society. Reforms meaningfully co-created by Governments with the participation of women's rights organizations and movements tend to produce a greater impact. Successful examples include technical support to ensure that nationality laws do not discriminate against women, the integration of gender equality principles into constitution-making and the exclusion, in relevant legislation, of general amnesty

[62] United Nations, "Guidance note of the Secretary-General: transitional justice – a strategic tool for people, prevention and peace", 2023."

[63] Deliberations of the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025; see also, United Nations, "Guidance note of the Secretary-General: reparations for conflict-related sexual violence", June 2014.

[64] See General Assembly resolution 79/122.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 35

These are major components of transitional or post conflict justice. They aim not only to punish wrongdoing but also to acknowledge harms, compensate victims, establish what happened and prevent similar violations from recurring.

Definition 35

Reparations may include compensation, medical or psychological rehabilitation, restoration of rights, official acknowledgement and measures to prevent further abuses. Different forms address different harms and may require different institutions.

Definition 35

Transitional justice refers to measures used after conflict or widespread abuses to establish the truth, hold perpetrators accountable, provide reparations and help prevent recurrence. Measures may include criminal trials, truth commissions, compensation programmes and institutional reform.

Interesting Facts 35

Court proceedings may be lengthy and difficult to access. Administrative reparations can potentially compensate larger groups of survivors without needing every individual to complete a full judicial case.

Definition 35

The report uses this term in reference to institutionalized regimes of systematic oppression based on gender. It makes us question how international law should recognize and respond to severe, and state enforced gender discrimination.

Definition 36

A whole-of-society approach involves governments working alongside civil society, women's organizations, communities, justice institutions, researchers, technology providers and other stakeholders rather than treating access to justice as the responsibility of courts alone.

Something to Think About 37

Why might legal reforms designed with affected communities be more effective than reforms designed exclusively by governments institutions or legal experts?

provisions for perpetrators of grave human rights violations.[65] Gender impact assessments, laws for which budget lines have been allocated and post-enactment monitoring can help to ensure that legal changes advance substantive rather than merely formal equality.[66] Legislative audits also help in identifying and removing discriminatory laws.

38. Meaningful reform is also driven by how institutions work together to solve legal problems. Fragmentation across justice chains undermines outcomes for women and girls, who may have to navigate a number of poorly coordinated agencies,[67] which is an experience that often retraumatizes victim-survivors of violence. Whole-of-government, comprehensive justice strategies[68] that engage relevant ministries and bodies, national women's machineries, human rights commissions and the judiciary (while respecting their independence) can strengthen coherence and accountability across the system.

39. Although justice systems are often viewed as reactive,[69] their preventive and dissuasive effects are critical, but diminish where impunity prevails. Capacity strengthening along the justice chain and through early protective and procedural measures, for example, protocols for the handling of cases relating to violence, can support timely preventive interventions and reduce harmful gaps. Independent and accountable administrative justice mechanisms and mediation services, whether instituted by the Government or community-based, can resolve non-criminal disputes before they escalate, thereby alleviating pressure on courts while protecting rights. Prevention also depends on awareness. Through legal literacy initiatives,[70] school curricula and public information campaigns, women and girls, as well as men and boys, gain greater awareness of their rights and the confidence to claim them and overcome structural barriers, including harmful norms.

40. Adequate and sustained Government funding is an underlying driver of women's and girls' access to justice. The availability and level of public financing determines whether justice institutions and services can reach those most at risk of exclusion. Investment shortfalls often translate into weak protection of rights and limited accountability for discrimination. Laws, justice policies, institutions and budgets are interlinked, and advancing women's and girls' access to justice requires investing in those areas in a holistic manner.[71] Waiving fees and simplifying procedure where possible also helps to reduce costs for the user. Further, encouraging innovative approaches through dedicated funding, pilot initiatives and partnerships can identify scalable justice solutions.

[65] UN-Women, *Shaping the Law for Women and Girls: Experiences and Lessons from UN-Women's Interventions* (New York, 2022).
[66] UN-Women and Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Gender-Responsive Law Making: Handbook for Parliamentarians No. 33* (2021).
[67] Patsili Toledo Vsasquez, "Femicide/feminicide and access to justice for women and girls: a contribution to CSW70", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Deliberations of the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[70] OHCHR, "Applying the human rights framework to address women's access to justice", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[71] UN-Women and others, *Financing Women's Justice Needs*.

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 37

A gender impact assessment examines whether a proposed law might affect women and men differently, even if it applies equally to everyone. For example, a new court filing fee might prevent a low-income woman from seeking child support if she cannot afford the fee, especially if she has no independent income. Before adopting the law, officials could examine who would have difficulty paying and consider waiving the fee for people who cannot afford it.

Definition 37

Post enactment monitoring examines how a law functions after it has been adopted which helps determine whether it produces its intended results or creates unintended consequences.

Something to Think About 37

After a legal-aid reform, ministries could compare waiting times, rural coverage, case outcomes and complaints before and after implementation. Which indicators would show whether women can actually use the new right, rather than merely whether a law exists?

Something to Think About 38

A survivor may need to interact separately with police, prosecutors, hospitals, courts, shelters and legal aid providers. How can states coordinate these institutions without compromising their independence or confidentiality?

Interesting Facts 39

Justice institutions can also have a preventive function. Effective enforcement, early protective measures and credible accountability may deter violations before they occur.

Something to Think About 40

When government funding is limited, should priority be given to hiring more lawyers who provide free legal assistance, making courts easier to reach for women living in rural areas, or helping women who have experienced violence obtain legal advice, medical treatment, counselling and safe shelter? What information would help governments determine which of these measures would enable the greatest number of women to obtain justice?

Interesting Facts 40

Procedural reform can sometimes improve access without creating entirely new institutions. Court fees, complicated paperwork and lengthy procedures can themselves become barriers to justice.

B. Autonomous feminist movements and civil society

41. Autonomous and broad-based feminist movements are an important driver of progress in the area of women's and girls' access to justice. According to independent research, strong, independent women's movements are statistically the most consistent predictor of Government action to address violence against women.[72] Such movements not only encourage States to adopt laws and other reforms of the judicial sector, but also broaden the meaning of justice by shaping public agendas and demanding institutional accountability.[73] Their work can positively contribute to invalidating harmful narratives that sustain discriminatory social norms, thereby strengthening collective agency for justice reform. In politically and socially sensitive legal-religious contexts, such movements have combined institutional engagement, attention to religious knowledge, strategic action and sustained advocacy in order to advance change.[74]

42. Strategic litigation has been used by autonomous feminist movements and civil society to drive legal redress and reform. In a context marked by an ever greater number of international, regional and arbitral forums,[75] strategic litigation can address individual and collective human rights violations, the latter being particularly key for climate justice. Such litigation can also mobilize public opinion and has advanced a broad range of rights for groups such as Indigenous Peoples, detained persons, persons with disabilities,[76] women human rights defenders and women seeking to fulfil sexual and reproductive health rights. Litigation can challenge harms tied to private sector corporations and land use, including those having gendered effects on local communities. Where the separation of powers is strong and courts remain independent, strategic litigation can act as a bulwark against a gender backlash. Litigators must, however, weigh risks such as regressive precedent, enforcement challenges, evidentiary constraints and the length and cost of proceedings.[77]

43. Feminist organizing also helps to ground international and regional standards within national contexts. Through civic contestation and mobilization campaigns, women's rights advocates play a critical role in translating international legal frameworks into locally resonant concepts,[78] undertaking what is described as the vernacularization of international law.[79] Regional agreements on access to justice, often advocated for by transnational feminist networks, have also been essential in diffusing model justice policies across borders.[80] Nevertheless, such groups face growing threats as a result of gender backlash dynamics and limited funding. Restrictions on civic space hinder the ability of feminist movements to mobilize and drive efforts to push for access to justice.

[72] Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice: State of Action on Women's Rights Around the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).
[73] Ibid.
[74] Deliberations of the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[75] Claudia Martin, "Strategic litigation and women's and girls' access to justice, particularly in the context of gender-based violence", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Deliberations of the CSW EGM (September 2025).
[78] Htun and Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice*.
[79] Sally Engle Merry, "Transnational human rights and local activism: mapping the middle", *American Anthropologist*, vol. 108, No. 1 (March 2006).
[80] Htun and Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice*.

Interesting Facts **41**

This finding highlights the role of organized civil society in influencing legal reform, public agendas and government accountability.

Definition **42**

Strategic litigation uses carefully selected court cases not only to obtain justice for an individual claimant but also to establish precedent, challenge discriminatory laws or produce broader social and legal change.

Something to Think About **42**

Strategic litigation can create major reforms, but an unsuccessful case can also establish a harmful precedent. When is litigation the best tool for social change, and when might political or legislative advocacy be more effective?

Definition **43**

Vernacularization means translating international legal principles into language, concepts and strategies that make sense within local cultural, political, and social contexts.

Something to Think About **43**

Women's rights organizations help turn international agreements on gender equality into changes that women can benefit from in their own countries. For example, they may campaign for national laws that give women equal inheritance rights, explain to communities how these rights work, or share successful approaches with women's organizations in other countries. How can women's rights organizations use international agreements to persuade governments to change discriminatory laws? How can organizations in different countries learn from one another's successes in improving women's access to justice?

C. Legal aid and legal empowerment

44. Around the world, legal aid has been shown to improve legal outcomes.[81] Grounded in international law and frameworks as well as regional agreements, legal aid for women and girls supports the substantive realization of their rights. In addition to its inherent value, there is also a strong business case for legal aid: research has shown that the absence of legal aid can lead to a "false economy",[82] resulting in the costs of unresolved problems shifting to other areas of government spending, such as healthcare, housing, child protection and incarceration.[83]

45. While the provision of legal aid is an obligation of States, the amount of government funding available for legal aid is often lacking and is sometimes limited to criminal matters. The unmet need for legal aid is commonly related to civil cases,[84] which includes a shortage of lawyers with specialized training in responding to gender-based violence.[85] At the policymaking level, there can also be a lack of systematic coordination and engagement with civil society organizations that deliver legal aid on the ground.[86]

46. Civil society organizations, and especially women's rights organizations, play an important role in increasing access to justice for women and girls by raising legal literacy, supporting health referrals and other socioeconomic services, conducting local oversight to improve judicial service provision and providing advice and representation, including for alternative dispute resolution. Rooted in communities, such organizations can identify at-risk groups of women and girls, such as women with disabilities, older women and girls, who may struggle to gain access to services.

47. Paralegals and community-based justice workers have been able to reach women and girls in rural or marginalized areas and in so doing, bridge justice gaps.[87] Legal empowerment initiatives, specifically, have been shown to expand women's knowledge of their rights and help them to shape justice service delivery through engagement.[88] A growing body of evidence shows that fairly resolving judicial problems does not always require a lawyer. A diverse and broader group of problem solvers who are focused on what works for the user, such as community-based workers, can make justice more accessible.[89] Formal recognition and safeguards would allow such initiatives to fill critical justice gaps.

D. Technology and digital innovation

48. Digital technology is reshaping judicial systems and access to justice. Technology can help women and girls, notably by facilitating their access to legal

[81] UNODC and UNDP, *Global Study on Legal Aid: Global Report* (2016).
[82] World Bank and International Bar Association, *A Tool for Justice: The Cost Benefit Analysis* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2019).
[83] Ibid.
[84] UNDOC, OECD and UNDP, "From data to action: strengthening civil justice with SDG 16.3.3", January 2025.
[85] Salma Waheedi, "Justice for survivors of gender-based violence in the Arab region: access to information and legal support networks", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Laura Goodwin and Vivek Maru, *What Do We Know about Legal Empowerment? Mapping the Evidence* (Namati, 2014).
[88] Ibid.
[89] Rebecca L. Sandefur, "Access to what?", *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 148, No. 1 (Winter 2019).

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Definition 44

Legal aid provides legal information, advice or representation to people who may otherwise be unable to afford or access legal services.

Definition 44

A false economy occurs when saving money in one area creates greater costs elsewhere. Underfunding legal aid may appear cheaper initially, but unresolved legal problems can later increase spending on housing, healthcare, child protection or incarceration.

Something to Think About 45

Many serious justice problems involve family law, housing, employment, property or discrimination rather than criminal cases. Should publicly funded legal aid extend equally to important civil matters?

Definition 47

These are trained non-lawyers who can help people understand rights, navigate procedures, prepare documents, access services or resolve certain legal problems, especially in underserved communities.

information, linking victim-survivors to services and streamlining reporting. Technology can enhance justice system efficiency and transparency by establishing digital footprints and enabling service delivery at scale to meet growing demand. Technological tools also allow women to access justice systems without being physically present in court, thereby overcoming geographic challenges and often, constraints relating to care responsibilities.[90] Those advantages notwithstanding, technology is not infallible: concerns remain regarding data privacy and security, and the increasing digitization of legal services can exacerbate information barriers for some, for example for older women, who have had less exposure to digital technology. The use of artificial intelligence tools to perform risk assessment for bail determinations, sentencing recommendations and case management decisions may rely on judicial algorithms that systematically reproduce existing discrimination on the basis of gender and other grounds, such as racial bias.[91] At the same time, countries and economies vary widely in their digital readiness and digital public infrastructure, shaping both the potential and risks of technology-enabled justice. Bridging these disparities – through investment, closing the digital gender gap, capacity-building, inclusive design and ensuring human rights-compliant solutions – is essential to ensuring that innovations in digital justice tools narrow, rather than widen, inequalities.

E. Research, evidence and data

49. Ethically collected research, evidence and data, from both the supply and demand sides, are critical for advancing women's and girls' access to justice and shaping narratives. Robust data and benchmarks supply the evidence needed to help to challenge the rollback of rights in connection with the gender backlash, including in such areas as sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.[92] Many countries, however, lack gender-disaggregated justice data, which limits their ability to identify inequities.[93] Promoting the uptake of evidence is similarly essential to improving justice outcomes for women and girls.[94]

50. Research can also serve as a bridge: the process of gathering data and evidence can be highly participatory, bringing together diverse stakeholders in the justice chain and enabling the co-creation of research agendas that are grounded in community realities and innovative approaches. The provision of funding and support to national bodies, universities and local organizations for such work remains essential, both for rigour and long-term capacity.

[90] Tania Sourdin, "Technology and innovation: supporting women and justice", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[91] Caitlin Kraft-Buchman, "Gender bias in judicial algorithms: a global analysis of algorithmic discrimination", expert paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[92] United Nations Population Fund, "From data to justice: the central role of legal data in strengthening justice for sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights", observer paper presented during the expert group meeting in preparation for the seventieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, September 2025.

[93] UN-Women, *Guidance Note: Framework for Measuring Access to Justice Including Specific Challenges Facing Women* (New York, 2016).

[94] Paris21 and UN-Women, *Gender Data Outlook 2024: Unlocking Capacity, Driving Change* (2024).

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

Something to Think About 48

Online filing and remote hearings can save travel time, but some women lack reliable internet, private devices or digital skills. Should governments retain in-person services alongside digital options, fund public access points or provide assisted filing? Who would protect confidentiality?

Something to Think About 48

AI systems have been found to amplify bias obtained from the Internet. Should courts require independent bias testing, explanations for automated recommendations and a right to human review before using such tools? Which decisions should never be automated?

Definition 48

The digital gender gap refers to inequalities between women and men in access to devices, internet connectivity, digital skills and participation in digital technologies.

Something to Think About 49

If a country does not measure who is accessing justice and who is being excluded, how can policymakers identify discrimination or determine whether reforms are working?

Definition 49

Gender-disaggregated data separates justice statistics by gender rather than reporting only overall totals, helping policymakers identify disparities in reporting, prosecution, legal outcomes and access to services.

Something to Think About 49

Without data on who files complaints, receives legal aid and obtains remedies, governments cannot easily identify exclusion. What information should justice agencies collect by sex, age, disability and location, and how can they protect the privacy of survivors?

Interesting Facts 49

Research does not have to treat communities only as subjects of study. Governments, academics and civil society can co-create research agendas so that justice policies reflect lived experiences.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

51. If power is understood as the ability to make choices, the inability of women and girls to realize their rights entrenches their disempowerment. Ensuring that women and girls can exercise their right to equal access to justice requires political will and implementing a comprehensive set of gender-responsive actions. Such an approach is anchored in the "Beijing+30 Action Agenda: for all women and girls", which is designed to fulfil the vision of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and accelerate the delivery of the Sustainable Development Goals.

52. The Commission may wish to urge Governments at all levels and other relevant stakeholders to take the following urgent actions to strengthen access to justice for all women and girls by 2030:

Institutional change in justice systems

Transformative law reform

(a) **Ratify or accede to, as soon as possible, all international human rights instruments and their optional protocols, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and review all reservations to those treaties with a view to withdrawing them or narrowing their scope;**

(b) **Accelerate compliance with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.1.1 by strengthening legal frameworks to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination, including by eliminating and replacing discriminatory nationality laws and addressing gaps in legislation regarding gender-based violence;**

(c) **Undertake comprehensive legislative reviews of national legal frameworks so as to identify and repeal gender-discriminatory provisions that are inconsistent with international legal norms and standards;**

(d) **Strengthen the capacity of relevant Government entities, including legislative bodies, to systematically integrate a gender equality approach across all stages of the legislative process;**

(e) **Institutionalize gender-impact assessments and post-enactment evaluations for all new laws and regulations;**

(f) **Ensure that all new laws related to the achievement of gender equality are costed and that sufficient resources are allocated to ensure their effective implementation;**

(g) **Ensure that legislative processes are participatory and inclusive by engaging civil society, including feminist groups and women's rights organizations;**

(h) **Adopt laws and other time-bound targeted policies in order to achieve gender parity in decision-making positions at all levels of public administration and the judiciary, including through temporary special measures, where appropriate;**

(i) **Ensure the meaningful and balanced participation of gender experts in national delegations to United Nations intergovernmental processes, including in the negotiations for a convention on crimes against humanity;**

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations
@GlobalModelUN
16

Coordination

(j) **Adopt accountable, whole-of-government justice strategies that integrate and coordinate all relevant ministries and entities involved in the administration of justice for women and girls;**

(k) **Establish effective pathways to link the police, courts, prosecution services, legal aid, child protection services, health and social service providers so as to enable timely and beneficial responses;**

(l) **Integrate justice and gender indicators into economic, peace and development frameworks at the global, regional and national levels in order to promote policy coherence and accountability;**

(m) **Enhance coordination with and strengthen regional and international human rights mechanisms, gender commissions and special procedure mandate holders;**

Prevention

(n) **Ensure that justice systems are guided by the lived realities, needs and rights of women and girls, by focusing on institutions that are accessible, timely, affordable and solution-oriented;**

(o) **Reaffirm Member State obligations in accordance with international law to exercise due diligence to prevent acts of violence against all women and girls, investigate such acts, prosecute perpetrators, punish those responsible and ensure victims' access to reparations;**

(p) **Ensure the accessibility of justice mechanisms to prevent and remedy violations of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;**

(q) **Ensure that administrative mechanisms and mediation services for justice delivery are gender-responsive and human rights-compliant;**

(r) **Reaffirm the role of national machineries for gender equality and national human rights institutions, where they exist, for addressing discrimination and preventing further violations;**

(s) **Ensure the provision of continuous professional development for justice system actors in order to close substantive knowledge gaps and mitigate gender bias, including on credibility assessments;**

(t) **Conduct continuous training and put in place oversight systems to ensure that officers and staff in the justice sector uphold gender equality standards and foster a culture of accountability;**

(u) **Integrate public legal education into national curricula and community learning programmes so as to promote awareness of human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination standards;**

Funding

(v) **Increase domestic allocations for a gender-responsive justice sector and strengthen systems to track and make public such allocations, in line with Sustainable Development Goal indicator 5.c.1;**

(w) **Provide resources to traditional justice mechanisms that are compliant with international human rights obligations and standards;**

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations
@GlobalModelUN

(x) **Provide resources to institutions that provide trauma-informed and survivor-centred justice and social services, including shelters for victim-survivors of violence;**

(y) **Establish funding mechanisms, such as a dedicated reparations fund for victim-survivors of violence, including targeted support for marginalized populations;**

(z) **Ensure the provision of funding for institutional facilities and services for women and girls with disabilities, such as universally accessible physical infrastructure and the removal of language barriers;**

(aa) **Integrate dedicated funding for women's and girls' access to justice through gender-responsive foreign policy frameworks;**

Transitional justice mechanisms

(bb) **Ensure that transitional justice mechanisms are gender-responsive in their design and implementation, including through the provision of adequate resources to comprehensively address gender-based violations and crimes, including sexual and reproductive violence, in a survivor-centred manner;**

(cc) **Institute gender-responsive administrative reparations programmes to address the volume of need, without prejudicing avenues for judicial remedy;**

(dd) **Guarantee the meaningful participation of women, including women's organizations and organizations of victim-survivors, in all stages of transitional justice processes, including in leadership positions;**

Autonomous feminist movements and civil society

(ee) **Recognize and engage with broad-based and intergenerational feminist groups, women's rights organizations and civil society organizations as essential partners in advancing access to justice as part of a whole-of-society approach to tackling structural barriers;**

(ff) **Ensure an enabling environment for the work of women's rights organizations, including the protection of civic space and women human rights defenders;**

(gg) **Sustain core, predictable, flexible and multi-year funding for feminist groups, women's rights organizations and civil society organizations engaged in access to justice initiatives for women and girls;**

Legal aid and legal empowerment

(hh) **Ensure that effective legal aid services are accessible for all women and girls, including the availability of specialized lawyers and staff for responding to violence against women, as well as legal aid provision for marginalized groups, such as women in detention;**

(ii) **Waive fees to facilitate women's access to the formal justice system and simplify legal procedures, where possible;**

(jj) **Formally recognize, within national frameworks, non-lawyer community justice workers or paralegals, and ensure that they are subject to professional oversight and safeguards, in order to reach women and girls seeking to resolve justice problems;**

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations
@GlobalModelUN

Technology and digital innovations

(kk) **Harness technology to scale-up access to justice for women and girls, while maintaining offline alternatives;**

(ll) **Address the gender digital divide by investing in connectivity, digital literacy and access to devices;**

(mm) **Develop and enforce human rights-based frameworks for digital justice, including with respect to data protection, transparency and algorithmic accountability;**

(nn) **Encourage collaboration between Governments, technology providers and civil society to promote responsible innovation in the justice field and intentional design that enhances fairness and inclusion and that includes diverse teams to develop justice-related artificial intelligence tools;**

Research, data and evidence

(oo) **Invest in national statistical systems and justice sector data collection, ensuring that data are disaggregated by gender and by other characteristics that are relevant in national contexts for comprehensive metrics;**

(pp) **Establish partnerships among Governments, national human rights institutions, where they exist, academia and civil society to understand how change happens and generate research for gender-responsive justice systems, inter alia, to co-create research agendas;**

(qq) **Institutionalize the use of evidence in policy formulation and invest in data systems as a bulwark against misinformation and to track the protection of rights, including on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights;**

(rr) **Expand global and regional repositories of gender justice data, including a focus on femicide, that are accessible to policymakers, researchers and advocates for comparative analysis and accountability.**

wfuna
World Federation of United Nations Associations

@GlobalModelUN

19