

HIGH-LEVEL GROUP ON JUSTICE FOR WOMEN



BACKGROUND PAPER

This paper has been prepared for the inaugural meeting of the High-level Group on Justice for Women (HLG), formed as part of the Task Force on Justice, an initiative of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. The paper provides a starting point for the discussion of the HLG as it begins its work on ensuring prioritization of women's justice concerns within the context of implementing and monitoring SDG 16.

Introduction

Justice for women and girls is at the heart of sustainable and inclusive patterns of development and is essential to the aspiration of the 2030 Agenda. The close link between SDG 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and SDG 16 on peaceful, just and inclusive societies is self-evident. Without equal and effective justice for women many of the other SDGs, including those related to education, health and decent work will not be achieved.

Accessing and securing justice – a critical component of SDG 16 – is not only a goal by itself but also a means to realizing the rights of women and girls. Effective justice systems based on the rule of law are central to enabling women to become equal partners in decision-making and development. At the same time, women and girls play a critical role in the emergence of equitable, inclusive and just institutions.

In September 2017, the Pathfinders launched the Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, as a 'first guide' for those working on the SDG targets for peace, justice and inclusion. The targets are collectively known as the SDG16+ targets and specified in the Roadmap. The Pathfinders have established a Task Force on Justice, chaired by ministers from Argentina, Netherlands, Sierra Leone and the Elders. The Task Force will identify the scale of the justice gap, make the case for investing in justice, identify what works and call those working for justice to action. Its approach is set out in the Challenge Paper on Justice.

In this context, a High-level Group on Justice for Women (HLG) has been established to advocate for the centrality of women's justice needs in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of SDG16. The High-Level Group on Justice for Women will develop concrete recommendations on justice for women and girls, with an emphasis on successful models and interventions, as an input to the work of the Task Force on Justice, ahead of the 2019 High Level Political Forum.

The Justice Gap for Women and Girls

There is a huge disparity between the promise of justice under SDG 16 and the lived realities of women and girls, between what women and girls need and want when they seek justice and the justice they receive. We can only understand this ‘justice gap’ when we put legal needs of women and girls at the center of our analysis and action.

Gaps in legal protection. Available evidence points to serious gaps in ensuring equal legal protections for women and girls in a range of fields.¹ Worldwide, 104 economies still have laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, such as mining (65 economies), manufacturing (47 economies), construction (37 economies), energy (29 economies), agriculture (27 economies), water (26 economies) and transportation (21 economies). Overall, in 2018, 2.7 billion women were legally restricted from having the same jobs as men.²

Only 40% of economies mandate equal remuneration for work of equal value. Forty-five economies do not have specific laws on domestic violence and 59 economies have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace. This means that, in 2017, more than one billion women lacked protection from sexual violence from an intimate partner or family member, while the number of women lacking legal protection against sexual harassment in employment, education and public places is estimated at 362 million, 1.5 billion, and 2.2 billion, respectively.³ Male dominance in family relations is also evident in data showing that a woman cannot: apply for a passport in 37 economies, be head of household in 31 economies, travel outside her home in 17 economies, confer citizenship to her children in 25 economies and confer citizenship to her spouse in 51 economies, in the same way as men.⁴

Implementation Gaps. Even in the presence of gender-responsive laws, implementation is often poor due to a variety of technical, financial and political factors. Often, implementation challenges result from failure to consider the interaction among laws, regulations and implementing institutions, and their collective impact on women’s rights.

For example, in the area of land rights, titling and registration regulations often require that a national identity card, marriage or birth certificate, or deeds from a land registry office or court be provided. These certificates and deeds are often inaccessible to rural or poor women who have limited time, money, access to facilities and networks. Land or commercial legislation, when applied alongside laws that recognize males as household heads or those requiring male spousal consent, may also deprive women of their rights to transfer or use land on an equal basis as men.

¹ World Bank Group. 2018. Women, Business and the Law 2018. Washington, DC: World Bank. The report reviewed 189 economies.

² Ibid.

³ Paula Tavares and Quentin Wodon, Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Global and Regional Trends in Women’s Legal Protection Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Harassment, World Bank, 2018.

⁴ World Bank Group. 2018. Women, Business and the Law 2018. Washington, DC: World Bank. p. 11. Data on women’s ability to confer citizenship is compiled by the Global Campaign on Equal Nationality Rights: <https://equalnationalityrights.org/the-issue/the-problem>, accessed on 24 May 2018.

Challenges to accessing justice institutions. Accessing justice remains an enormous challenge for women due to a host of obstacles. CEDAW's General Recommendation 33 on Women's Access to Justice highlights how structural discrimination and inequality impede women from realizing their rights. Ineffective and unresponsive judicial systems, compounded by gender stereotyping, discriminatory laws, intersecting discrimination and varying levels of socio-economic barriers, can become serious obstacles in the provision of justice for women.⁵ This in turn prevents women from claiming a whole range of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and in accessing support and redress. Women continue to have limited access to information, skills and support structures that enable them to seek justice and claim their rights. They also face discriminatory social and cultural norms, stigma and violence for coming forward as victims or survivors. Case attrition, in particular for gender-based violence (GBV), is a big challenge.

Unfortunately, 'conventional' justice reform programs have often been unresponsive to the justice needs of women. They have mostly ignored intra-household disputes, in particular domestic violence, as being 'private and outside the realms of public dispute resolution'. They have neglected to take into account discriminatory norms and gender bias, individual and organizational, that cut across multiple justice institutions, often leaving women without effective recourse or redress. Gender-based violence against women and girls continues to be among the most pervasive forms of discrimination against women, reinforcing women's disempowerment.

Tensions relating to customary and informal justice systems. Research shows that, in many countries, up to 80% of disputes are resolved in informal justice fora, signifying that a large proportion of women worldwide access justice through non-state settings.⁶ Informal systems adjudicate a variety of issues of high significance to women, such as inheritance, family formation, divorce, property, control and governance over land and natural resources, as well as violence against women and girls.

Customary or informal justice mechanisms are frequently biased against women, subject to elite capture, and they tend to exclude women from decision making processes. They are often criticized for applying practices that fail to uphold international human rights standards, CEDAW in particular.

As in the formal justice system, informal systems may also not consider gender-specific crimes as offences, including rape, (both within and outside marriage) and domestic violence, or may view such acts as only minor offences. Sometimes, the lack of written procedural and substantive rules in informal justice systems means that outcomes are determined on a case-by-case basis according to the power, status, wealth and relations between disputants, social norms, and perceptions of group cohesion.

⁵ CEDAW General Recommendation 33, para. 3.

⁶ IDLO. 2013. Accessing Justice: Models, Strategies and Best Practices on Women's Empowerment. Women's Access to Justice, p. 12.

Women's exclusion and under-representation, intersectionality issues. Women are largely excluded from justice delivery across community, national and international levels. In the judiciary, women are outnumbered by men in about half of the countries of the world, with declining proportions at higher levels of the judicial hierarchy.⁷ Women's underrepresentation is even more pronounced at the international level. Around 33 per cent of the 599 available positions in 91 international justice tribunals and monitoring bodies are held by women, a number which drops significantly if bodies dealing with women's and children's rights are excluded.⁸

Women's continuous underrepresentation in political spheres and decision-making bodies 'normalizes' the lack of gender representation and prevents the inclusion of a range of concerns that diversity brings. This is especially evident if we look at the intersection of gender and other forms of discrimination, resulting in the persistent exclusion of particular groups of women, including migrant, rural, poor, indigenous women or women with disabilities. Women are not a homogeneous group. Several personal characteristics (e.g. age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status) often overlap to deepen their exclusion and marginalization from seeking justice and from justice systems. For example, lack of accessible justice facilities and services for persons with diverse forms of disability (e.g., visual, physical, hearing, intellectual, mental) results in exclusion from protection and remedies. In yet another example, women living with HIV experience an ongoing continuum of human rights abuses within their families, communities and in legal and health-care settings that include the denial of health, property and inheritance rights.

It is also worth mentioning that several key areas have not yet received sufficient attention in efforts to address women's justice needs. They include marriage, family and property rights, the protection of women asylum seekers, those at the center of immigration disputes, the protection of victims of trafficking and labor exploitation, and women in conflict with the law. By being exposed to unequal power relations, and the curtailment of agency and autonomy, women are often denied the right to report crimes committed against them or to pursue civil claims. While women often relate to criminal justice systems as victims of crime, recent trends indicate that a growing number are featuring as suspects, accused and prisoners. The percentage of women in prison is growing globally and at a faster rate than the male prison population. While the global prison population grew by approximately 20 per cent from 2000 to 2015, that of imprisoned women and girls grew by 50 per cent during the same period.⁹

⁷ The latest available data is the UNODC crime statistics database 2015 and UNSD, *The World's Women 2015*, using the UNODC database. Both reports caution that cross-country comparisons are difficult. However, the latest available global comparative data estimates are that 27% of judges are women. (UN Women 2011, based on UNODC database).

⁸ *The Current Composition of International Tribunals and Monitoring Bodies*, GQUAL campaign. See at <http://www.gqualcampaign.org/1626-2/>.

⁹ UN Women, UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR. 2018. *A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice*, p.6, quoting Roy Walmsley, *World Female Imprisonment List, Women and girls in penal institutions, including pre-trial detainees/remand prisoners*, 3rd ed., p. 2, (London, World Prison Brief and Institute for Criminal Policy Research, 2015).

Challenges during situations of conflict and fragility. Although law and justice institutions are expected to play a role in preventing and addressing violations of women's human rights during conflict and fragile situations, they are often too weak, unable, or unwilling to address it. In some instances, law and justice institutions may not have the legitimacy to address rights violations. The erosion of societal networks, increased militarization, and breakdown of law and order can also lead to increased levels of impunity, especially in instances of GBV.¹⁰ Although it is often difficult to obtain reliable figures, a global study of 50 countries found that significant increases in GBV occur following major wars.¹¹ It is a well-established fact that GBV is often intentionally used as a strategy or weapon of war. Women's bodies are also seen as 'spoils of war'. Accountability for GBV during and after conflict therefore remains a major challenge for countries transitioning to peace.

Women and gender issues are largely absent in peace negotiations. Between 1992 and 2011, only 4 percent of signatories to peace agreements and less than 10 percent of negotiators were women.¹² Out of the 504 agreements signed since the adoption of resolution 1325, only 138 (27 per cent) included references to women.¹³ Women are also often excluded from post-conflict peace-building processes, including working with justice institutions, whether formal or informal. Yet including women is critical to addressing disputes and preventing cyclical violence.

Making the case for urgent action and investment

Accessing and securing justice for women is a human right, guaranteed by international and national legal and policy commitments. At the international level, human rights instruments provide for effective remedies and legal protection to be enjoyed without discrimination. The CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security, among others, provide targeted provisions to ensure justice for women and girls. They showcase women's access to justice as being not only a right in itself, but also an essential factor in the enjoyment of other rights, and a key feature in sustainable peace and development. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice (CEDAW GR 33) signals a paradigm shift in justice delivery for women. It emphasizes that justice delivery must traverse development, conflict, and other forms of crisis contexts, because women and girls are at risk of rights violations in all these settings.

Justice for women however, is also a requirement for and an enabler of development. It has implications for the achievement of all development goals set out in the 2030 Agenda. For example, ensuring gender equality has been shown to lead to economic development. There is increasing evidence that having assets in the hands of women leads to enhanced

¹⁰ [Wafas Ofosu-Amaah](#), et. al. Justice Sector Delivery of Services in the Context of Fragility and Conflict: What Is Being Done to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in The World Bank Legal Review Volume 6 Improving Delivery in Development: The Role of Voice, Social Contract, and Accountability, March 2015.

¹¹ World Bank, World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security and Development p. 16.

¹² Thania Paffenholz, et. al, "Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations," Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies), UN Women, April 2016

¹³ Ibid.. In 2015, 7 out of 10 peace agreements signed included gender specific provisions(Ibid.)

food security, child nutrition, education and women's wellbeing;¹⁴ eliminating barriers that prevent women from working in certain occupations or sectors would reduce the productivity gap;¹⁵ increasing the share of household income controlled by women, either through their income or cash transfers, changes spending in ways that benefit children; and when women have more influence over economic decisions their families allocate more income to food, health, education and children, bringing about improved child nutritional status, which in turn influences health outcomes and educational attainment.¹⁶ All these gains can only be sustained within a fair, functioning and effective justice system that guarantees fair justice outcomes for women – where women and girls are informed of their rights and can exercise and claim them.

Increasing justice for women provides important social, economic and environmental benefits and the injustices women face come at enormous costs in terms of increased poverty, reduced control over their lives, social exclusion, crime and violence, and negative health impacts. This supports the case for investing in justice for women. More knowledge is required of the financing need for priority interventions to increase justice for women in different country contexts, alongside questions of affordability, both for states and for women with unmet legal needs. Increasing justice for women is also an important aspect of prevention. The justice sector is critical to engage when laying foundations for prevention of GBV.¹⁷

In spite of growing data on the importance of gender equality, political commitments and resources to enable its realization have been scarce. Only two per cent of aid to fragile states and economies in 2012 and 2013 targeted gender equality as a principal objective, and only USD 130 million out of almost USD 32 billion of total aid went to women's equality organizations and institutions.¹⁸ In 2014, less than one per cent of aid to fragile states and economies targeted gender equality significantly.

National budgets also continue to lag behind in terms of prioritizing gender equality, despite initiatives such as gender-responsive budgeting. Women's access to justice may also be shaped by several national level policy strategies, including national development plans, national justice and security sector policies, national gender equality action plans and national action plans (NAPs) related to the implementation of UNSCR 1325. Sub-sector policies may also exist for institutions such as the police, prosecutorial services, the judiciary, prisons, immigration and social services. The design of such strategies represents an opportunity to plan and budget for coordinated interventions that support and strengthen women's access to justice and are responsive to women's justice needs.

¹⁴ World Bank. World Development Report 2012: Gender equality and Development.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid. Important studies include: Dollar and Gatti, 1999; Klasen, 2002; Knowles, Lorgelly and Owen, 2002; Kalaitzidakis, et. al, 2002; Lagerlof, 2003 and Klasen and Lamanna, 2009.

¹⁷ UN Women, 2015, A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence against Women.

¹⁸ Facts and Figures, Peace and Security. See at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/facts-and-figures>.

Understanding What Works

Securing justice for women and girls has centered broadly around these approaches:

Reforming the legal and policy framework. Gender-responsive law reform is seen as the foundation for enabling fair justice outcomes for women. With the law being an essential tool for advancing women's and girls' rights and equality, robust and effective legal systems based on the rule of law become central to gender equality.¹⁹ CEDAW specifically mandates that the principle of equality be embodied in constitutions and laws; the adoption of legislation to prohibit discrimination, whether by public or private entities; and the repeal or revision of discriminatory laws and regulations.

Available data shows that where good laws are in place, change can happen. For example, there is positive correlation between women having majority ownership in firms in economies where work place harassment laws exist.²⁰ Research also suggests that women who live in countries with domestic violence laws have seven percent lower odds of experiencing violence compared with women living in countries without such laws.²¹ Laws eliminating spousal authority over women's employment lead to an increase in women's labor force participation and work outside²². Laws also create frameworks for women's political participation, through reserved seats, quotas and other temporary special measures.

Reforming justice institutions. The full realization of women's rights depends upon the ability of women to exercise such rights and to obtain appropriate remedies through the rule of law and effective and accountable justice institutions. There are some promising approaches on making justice sector institutions more responsive to the justice needs of women and girls. Efforts to improve performance and accountability of justice actors, such as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, court officials and law enforcers, have been tried and tested, with varying levels of results. These include: providing technical guidance, such as developing bench books with court authorities and protocols for handling GBV cases; integrating women's justice concerns as a priority for access to justice initiatives, such as free legal aid, help desks and mobile courts; setting up women-friendly processes, including using gender-sensitive language in court documents and processes; supporting justice sector professionals to engage in dialogue with women and CSOs representing them; and ensuring institutional accountability, including through monitoring and evaluation strategies.²³

¹⁹ IDLO 2013. Accessing Justice: Models, Strategies and Best Practices on Women's Empowerment. Women's Access to Justice.

²⁰ World Bank Group. 2018. Women, Business and the Law 2018. Washington, DC: World Bank. p. 17

²¹ Klugman, Jeni, et al. 2014. Voice and agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity. World Bank Publications.

²² Women, Business and the Law, 21018, p. 17

²³ [Waafas Ofofu-Amaah](#), et. al. Justice Sector Delivery of Services in the Context of Fragility and Conflict: What Is Being Done to Address Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in The World Bank Legal Review Volume 6 Improving Delivery in Development: The Role of Voice, Social Contract, and Accountability, March 2015.

Promising results have also emerged through institutionalizing gender-sensitive processes into the justice chain. Some good-practice examples on making courtrooms friendlier to women, especially GBV survivors, include ensuring confidentiality and safety for survivors inside and outside the courtroom; in-camera trials; reducing unnecessary and repeated postponements; allowing a supporting person to be present; better interpretation and translation services; requiring court personnel to treat witnesses with respect and sensitivity; and prohibiting victim-blaming or gender-biased language in court.²⁴

To complement gender mainstreaming efforts, specialized mechanisms are also being set-up to help reduce attrition in the justice chain and provide a more supportive environment for survivors of violence and discrimination. One stop-centers bring together vital services under one roof to collect evidence, provide legal, health, psycho-social and other support services, and ensure survivor safety. The establishment of specialized police and prosecution units have shown increased reporting of GBV cases. At the local level, paralegal clinics run by and for women can provide solutions to legal and other problems that women and girls face. Investments in justice should also be targeted at the informal institutions and civil society organizations that interact with, support or provide access to the formal legal system.

Legally empowering women to access justice and claim rights. Legal empowerment approaches have been documented to lead to increased legal knowledge, agency, action, and access to remedies.²⁵ They have shown to improve women's representation and participation in justice processes, with the final aim to enhance their ability to uphold rights and obtain fair justice outcomes. Legal empowerment approaches target the provision of justice services usually at the local level, including in informal contexts, and they feature activities such as awareness campaigns, legal education, the provision of legal and paralegal aid services, support for non-discriminatory alternative dispute resolution fora and the training of legal and paralegal local counselors. Supporting women's self-organizing movements has been found to be one of the most important factors accounting for progressive policy change to address violence against women.²⁶

Empowering women should also include enhancing their active participation, not just as beneficiaries of justice, but also as providers of justice. Efforts toward building capacities and influence of women justice professionals, whether as judges, prosecutors, lawyers, and police officers, can open up spaces for prioritizing women's justice concerns as central to justice and legal reforms. To enable justice leadership by women, the number of women in powerful positions in the justice systems needs to be increased, through targeted training, career support, networking and active investment.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Laura Goodwin and Vivek Maru. What Do We Know About Legal Empowerment: Mapping the Evidence. Hague Journal Rule of Law. (February 2017). Based on a survey of more than 199 studies on legal empowerment programs.

²⁶ Htun, Mala, and S. Laurel Weldon. "The civic origins of progressive policy change: Combating violence against women in global perspective, 1975–2005." *American Political Science Review* 106.3 (2012): 548-569.

Addressing customary and informal justice. Promising rule of law programming recognizes the opportunities that exist outside the formal legal framework, including the potential for informal legal norms to be applied in ways that respect and protect women's equal rights. Efforts include: (a) exploring the interface between informal and formal justice norms and systems; (b) deconstructing template solutions that only seek to align customary practices with statutory law – such as codifying informal laws to comply with international human rights standards, outlawing harmful discriminatory practices, ensuring that informal justice systems are accountable to the state – which mostly reflects orthodox theories of reforms, are technocratic in nature, and raise a number of practical concerns when implemented in isolation; (c) working with customary justice actors on how to heighten gender-responsiveness of customary laws; (d) supporting women traditional leaders' inclusion in local dispute resolution processes; (e) community dialogues on the role and impact of customary justice on women.²⁷

Efforts to address what works are seen to be more effective when they are supplemented, complemented or reinforced by interventions that go 'beyond law'. Securing justice for women require a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach. Among the promising intersectoral efforts to consider are: (a) setting up inter-agency bodies to address specific gender justice concerns; (b) setting up of a referral network with clear mandates and responsibilities for coordinated support services; (c) developing capacity of service providers from all relevant sectors, especially for collecting and analyzing medico-legal and forensic evidence; (d) supporting new and ongoing work to identify and address social and cultural norms that perpetuate injustices and (e) identifying champions among customary and religious leaders to spearhead social norm change.

Despite some emerging good practices, broader challenges still exist, and the learning and knowledge gap remains. There is limited understanding of the context and drivers on why policies, approaches and interventions worked. There is limited evidence of the impact of interventions, including innovative approaches. There is also limited knowledge on how to replicate, scale up or operationalize good practice.

Call to action

Through the decades, there have been several calls to action to prioritize justice for women, among them:

CEDAW and its General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice. The Convention places an obligation on States parties to embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation, and places clear emphasis on state obligations to ensure women's access to information of their rights and remedies, and accessibility to competent systems to claim them.

General Recommendation no. 33 reinforces the vital importance of women's right to access justice as fundamental to rule of law and governance as well as to eliminating all

²⁷ IDLO 2013. Accessing Justice: Models, Strategies and Best Practices on Women's Empowerment. Women's Access to Justice.

forms of discrimination against women. It also highlights that justiciability, availability, accessibility, good-quality provision of remedies and accountability of justice systems are necessary to ensure women's access to justice. It calls for review of specific areas of law such as (i) Constitutional Law; (ii) Civil Law; (iii) Family Law; (iv) Criminal Law; and (v) Administrative, social and labour law. GR 33 also sets out recommendations directed towards specific mechanisms for improving accessibility of justice for women, such as (i) specialized judicial and quasi-judicial systems, and international and regional justice systems; (ii) alternative dispute resolution processes; (iii) national human rights institutions and ombuds offices; and (iv) plural justice systems. It also emphasizes the obligation to expose and remove the underlying social and cultural barriers, including gender stereotypes, that prevent women from exercising and claiming their rights and impede their access to effective remedies.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is a visionary agenda for the empowerment of women. As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern²⁸ - action to be taken includes ensuring legal protection, equality before the law, and provision of effective remedies. One of the key strategic objectives under the 'critical area of concern' relating to Human Rights of Women, is to "ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice" with actions to be taken including: "(a) provide constitutional guarantees and/or enact appropriate legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex for all women and girls of all ages and assure women of all ages equal rights and their full enjoyment; (b) embody the principle of the equality of men and women in their legislation and ensure, through law and other appropriate means, the practical realization of this principle; and (c) review national laws, including customary laws and legal practices in the areas of family, civil, penal, labor and commercial law in order to ensure the implementation of the principles and procedures of all relevant international human rights instruments by means of national legislation, revoke any remaining laws that discriminate on the basis of sex and remove gender bias in the administration of justice".

Agenda 2030 - Sustainable Development Goals

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 seeks to promote "peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels". Gender-specific indicators exist across the 17 Development Goals, and many of them require consideration in a call to action on justice for women.²⁹ In SDG 5 itself, indicators include: legal framework to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination based on sex (5.1.1); laws on equal access to reproductive health, information and education (5.6.2); laws that guarantee equal land rights (5.a.2), among others.

Today more than ever, urgent and sustained action is needed to transform the structures, institutions and norms - economic, political and social - that are holding back progress on gender equality. This requires: (a) building strong, determined leadership and commitment

²⁸ Pg. 31, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. See at http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/pfa_e_final_web.pdf?la=en&vs=800

²⁹ UN Women. 2018. Figure 2.1 Gender specific Indicators across the 17 SDGs. Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, p. 52.

to advance women's human rights; (b) reaching out to all women and girls, especially the most vulnerable by tackling stark and rising inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination; (c) enhancing accountability for violations; (d) supporting justice institutions and gender equality (specialized) mechanisms; (e) supporting women's movements to exert greater influence; and (f) exponentially increase investments in gender equality and women's rights.

There is a limited window of opportunities to strengthen and empower the movement for justice, and to demonstrate momentum for SDG16.3 that will support results in the 2020s. In July 2019, a ministerial High-level Political Forum will review SDG16, while in September, heads of state and government will gather in New York to review the first four years of the 2030 Agenda. They will provide "high-level political guidance on the agenda [...] and mobilize further actions to accelerate implementation".

While global commitments are a significant victory for the promotion and protection of women's rights, reviews of progress made under the Millennium Development Goals and the Beijing Platform for Action highlight that a lack of political will and investment stifled the creation, revision and implementation of national level laws in accordance with international instruments and agreements on women's rights.³⁰ Despite progress, change towards gender equality has not been deep enough, nor has it been irreversible.³¹

A movement of people, organizations and countries working for justice is building and is creating momentum for SDG16.3 and related targets. Various partnerships and synergies at the international, regional, national and local levels have been formed, with linkages across thematic areas and focus. A call to action must build on these efforts to catapult justice for women as a central agenda for development.

³⁰ UN Women (2015), The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20: Summary Report.

³¹ <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>