

## CONCEPT NOTE:

### Expert Group Meeting - CSW 70

### Virtual Meeting convened by UN-Women

8-10 September 2025

“The right to access to justice for women is essential to the realization of all the rights protected under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.” – CEDAW Committee, General Recommendations No.33 (2015)

“Justice should not be a privilege – it is a right regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, physical ability or economic status”<sup>1</sup> – An Afghan woman, Helmand Province, Afghanistan

## I. Background

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission applies a thematic approach to its work and considers one priority theme each year. In accordance with its Multi-Year Programme of Work (2026-2029), the 70th session of the CSW will be held March 9-20, 2026, with the priority theme of “[e]nsuring 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.”

CSW 70 will convene amidst a complex and shifting landscape for women’s and girls’ access to justice, shaped by intersecting global trends. Conflict, rising authoritarianism, shrinking civic space, widening income inequality, climate change and disparate digital transformation contribute to a “deep, pervasive and relentless”<sup>2</sup> gender pushback. The right to access justice for women and girls faces threats precisely when it is most needed to advance equality.

There has also been important progress. In 2024, Member States reported ensuring women’s equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice as one of their top priorities in the past five years.<sup>3</sup> Ninety percent reported strengthening laws, implementation, and enforcement measures to combat violence against women during the same period—an increase from 83% in 2019.<sup>4</sup> Since 1995, the number of countries with laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination in employment has also increased from 58 to 162<sup>5</sup>. Research shows that civil society, particularly

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<sup>1</sup> “Access to justice and protection for women and girls and the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination - Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan”, June 11, 2025, [A/78/94](#) (advance unedited version)

<sup>2</sup> Remarks at the opening of the 63rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Antonio Guterres, (11 March 2019) <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2019-03-11/csw-remarks-opening-of-63rd-session>

<sup>3</sup> Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General, December 2024, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2025/3>

<sup>4</sup> Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General, December 2024, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2025/3>

<sup>5</sup> UN Women - Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing (2025), [womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf](#)

women’s rights groups, have been important actors for advancing legal reforms around the world.<sup>6</sup> The United Nations Working Group on discrimination against women and girls notes that more than forty countries have amended and rewritten their constitutions to incorporate provisions advancing women and girls’ rights in the last decade.<sup>7</sup> These facts are heartening and provide entry points for engagement.

At the same time, the Commission chose this theme because more work needs to be done. Women and girls still struggle to access justice after decades of commitments. According to the World Justice Project, women face greater barriers to justice than men in 70% of surveyed countries.<sup>8</sup> A 2025 UN-Women report notes that women only have 64% of the legal rights of men.<sup>9</sup> Discriminatory legal frameworks prevail in many parts of the world, including 54% of countries without laws that legally define rape by the lack of freely given consent.<sup>10</sup> Even when progressive language to advance women’s and girls’ rights is introduced into national constitutions and legislation, implementation often remains a challenge: women’s and girls’ issues continue to be sidelined or minimized, and the social transformation required to remedy gender inequalities is frequently met with strong resistance.<sup>11</sup> “Sticky social norms”<sup>12</sup> uphold power hierarchies and inequality among groups and individuals, reducing actual compliance with equal rights laws. A multidimensional understanding of justice—one that sees justice as constitutive of the dignity, freedom, voice, and agency of women and girls—exposes persistent barriers to its realization.

CSW 70 will occur after recent commemorations of Beijing+30 and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of SCR 1325.<sup>13</sup> Our Common Agenda, the UN Secretary-General’s vision for revitalizing global cooperation through inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism, places justice and human rights at its core with a centering of women’s and girls’ rights.<sup>14</sup> CSW 70 will also occur as the 2030 Agenda begins to sunset and a year after the SG’s announcement of the UN80 Initiative for major UN reform, an opportunity to reassert human rights and gender equality at the heart of multilateral cooperation.

In this wider context, CSW 70 offers an important opportunity to center the lived realities of women and girls and their access to justice, within the UN’s second-largest annual gathering—a key platform for setting gender equality norms, fostering dialogue, tracking global progress, and

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<sup>6</sup> Empowering Change Assessing the Role of Democracy, Civil Society, and Women’s Rights Groups in Advancing Legal Gender Equality (2024) <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c766915c-4f4b-4a12-a405-559ba5c8289e/content>

<sup>7</sup> Escalating backlash against gender equality and urgency of reaffirming substantive equality and the human rights of women and girls (2024), Report of the UN WGDAGW, A/HRC/56/51

<sup>8</sup> WJP – Justice Data Graphical Report – Part 2 (2023), [https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJPJusticeDataGraphicalReport-Part2\\_0.pdf](https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJPJusticeDataGraphicalReport-Part2_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> UN Women - Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing (2025), [womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024-en.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Progress on the SDGS – The Gender Snapshot 2024 (2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024-en.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women’s Access to Justice, [General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/pdf/33en.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Mala Htun and Francesca R Jensenius, “Expressive Power of Anti-Violence Legislation: Changes in Social Norms on Violence Against Women in Mexico”, *World Politics* (January 2022), [https://malahtun.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/htun\\_jensenius\\_wp\\_2022.pdf](https://malahtun.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/htun_jensenius_wp_2022.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Also of note: the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Financing for Development, the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Summit for Social Development, COP 2025, as well as a heightened focus on the CSW mechanism itself with the CSW revitalization strategy

<sup>14</sup> UN, “Our Common Agenda”, [https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda?utm\\_source](https://www.un.org/en/common-agenda?utm_source)

mobilizing commitment. As part of this process, UN-Women will convene a virtual Expert Group Meeting (EGM) from September 8-10<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

## II. Expert Group Meeting Objectives

In line with its mandate, UN-Women will support the substantive preparations for CSW 70, including convening an Expert Group Meeting on the priority theme. The objectives of the EGM will be the following:

- Convene leading experts and organizations carrying out research and analysis on aspects related to the priority theme to gather the best expertise and knowledge globally;
- Provide an opportunity to take stock of the latest research globally on the priority theme, including key trends, data availability, needs, best practices, and gaps in policy responses;
- Develop informed, practical and action-oriented recommendations to inform the drafting of the Secretary General's report on the priority theme and to influence and expand the global normative frameworks on women's and girls' access to justice. UN-Women prepares the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme, including recommendations for further action, as part of supporting consideration of the priority theme. Recommendations will inform the draft 'Agreed Conclusions' of the Commission, which will be further negotiated and ultimately, adopted by Member States in the March session.

The EGM will center on the following overall questions (specific questions are noted per thematic section):

- How formal legal systems, traditional justice mechanisms, and justice service delivery shape women's and girls' access to justice, including conflict/crisis contexts and connections to peace? What factors determine whether interactions among these three areas are enabling or constraining?
- How can understanding the interplay of structural barriers, including social norms and intersectional discrimination, inform more inclusive and effective justice interventions for women and girls?
- Assess what are the drivers for change to increase women and girls' access to justice. What is the role of autonomous feminist movements, legal support (understood broadly), technology, and evidence-based research in shaping equitable access to justice for women and girls?

## III. Critical EGM Areas of Focus

### ***Framing: International Law, Policies, Guidance***

CSW 70's theme presents key concepts and fundamental questions.

Access to justice is deeply rooted in international human rights law and the right to non-discrimination. Beginning with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (especially articles 6-8, 10) and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>15</sup> (articles 2, 14 and 26) and most notably for CSW 70, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Articles 2, 15 and 16<sup>16</sup> of CEDAW speak to the legal protection of women on an equal basis with men, legal identity, capacity, equal access and non-discrimination in personal status areas. Article 5(a) specifically addresses discriminatory practices based on gendered stereotypes. In 2015, partly due to the CEDAW Committee's review of States' reports and inquiries under the CEDAW Optional Protocol, the CEDAW Committee issued General Recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice.<sup>17</sup>

General Recommendation 33 explicitly defines 'access to justice' as "a fundamental element of the rule of law and good governance...The right to access to justice is multidimensional. It encompasses justiciability, availability, accessibility, good quality, the provision of remedies for victims and the accountability of justice systems."<sup>18</sup> It also speaks to the need to read all CEDAW provisions jointly, such as Article 5(a) on gendered stereotypes, to fully combat discrimination per Article 1's guiding definition of discrimination.<sup>19</sup> The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action<sup>20</sup>, the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women<sup>21</sup>, and regional treaties and instruments<sup>22</sup> informed General Recommendation 33, all of which emphasize the obligation of Member States to combat discrimination against women and girls in the pursuit of justice. The 2030 Agenda via SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 16 (access to justice for all) further uphold women's access to justice as both a right and a necessity for achieving gender equality and inclusive societies.

More recent Agreed Conclusions of CSWs 63 and 65-69 have widened the justice aperture further: framing access to justice as a critical enabler for gender equality, a necessity for women's full participation in society, a protective mechanism and a component of broader social services, including legal assistance, psychosocial support and dispute resolution mechanisms.<sup>23</sup> Under global normative frameworks and processes, access to justice for women and girls has come to be understood as an inherent right, multidimensional and integral to the rule of law.

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<sup>15</sup> While the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) does not use the word "justice" explicitly in the main text of the treaty, it emphasizes equality, non-discrimination including on the basis of sex. (Art 2(2)).

<sup>16</sup> Articles 3 (non-discrimination in all fields and referencing legislation) is also pertinent.

<sup>17</sup> CEDAW Committee Issues Key General Recommendation on Women's Access to Justice, Northeastern University School of Law, [CEDAW Committee Issues Key General Recommendation on Women's Access to Justice - Center for Global Law and Justice | Resource Hub](#)

<sup>18</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice, [General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice](#)

<sup>19</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice, [General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice](#); see also footnote 11.

<sup>20</sup> See particularly 'Section I - Human Rights of Women'

<sup>21</sup> See specifically Article 4(d).

<sup>22</sup> Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) 2003, Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem do Para) 1994, The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) 2011, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the ASEAN Region, 2004. The African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls was adopted in February 2025.

<sup>23</sup> See Agreed Conclusions of CSW 63, 65-69.

The CSW 70 theme specifically highlights the need for “*eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices*”. Drawing and expanding upon UN Women’s *Equality in Law for Women and Girls by 2030: A Multistakeholder Strategy for Accelerated Action*, discriminatory laws, policies and practices are understood as directly or indirectly excluding or restricting women and girls’ rights, including making the exercise of their rights more burdensome. While discriminatory laws and policies are inherent rights violations, they are also seen as lost opportunities to incentivize women’s full and equal participation in public and private life, sustainable development and peaceful societies.<sup>24</sup> Past CSW Agreed Conclusions have found discriminatory laws to perpetuate gender inequality and often reinforcing negative social norms and stereotypes.<sup>25</sup>

The theme also foregrounds a critical aspect to understanding the lived realities of women and girls and their realization of justice: structural barriers. Structural barriers can be defined as patterns of exclusion, constraints and unequal power relations that produce and reproduce inequalities over generations, leading to formal and substantive inequality for groups within society.<sup>26</sup> These barriers are systemic, embedded in institutions and affect different people differently (*i.e.* requiring an intersectional lens). For women and girls accessing justice, structural barriers reflect and reinforce gender-based discrimination and are critical to understanding challenges that go beyond individual cases. CSW Agreed Conclusions 63, 65-69 echo this understanding, finding structural barriers as the root causes of gender inequality including legal, institutional, economic, social and cultural obstacles that hinder women’s participation.<sup>27</sup>

Combined these three key terms point to a priority theme focused on access to substantive and participatory justice outcomes for women and girls, couched in an understanding of systemic exclusion and power asymmetries. It is normatively driven by a right to non-discrimination (*i.e.* equal access), further emphasized by the theme’s specific mention of “*promoting inclusive and equitable legal systems*”. Non-discrimination and the rule of law are understood as mutually enforcing principles, ensuring that justice systems are indeed just. The laws, policies, practices and structural barriers referenced by the theme are part of a larger structural landscape of society and institutions that either drive or inhibit women and girls’ access to justice.

### **Issues: Challenges and Change**

**Legal Frameworks, Justice Structures and Delivery:** Women’s and girls’ access to justice is profoundly shaped by the legal frameworks and justice structures that govern their rights and the delivery of justice services. Discriminatory legal systems – state, non-state and hybrid – are one form of a structural barrier.

Around the world, legal frameworks directly or indirectly discriminate against women and girls in areas spanning public and private law: criminal, family, property, employment and labor, administrative, citizenship and health law are often sites of concern that can overlap. As many as 22 national constitutions still include claw-back clauses which exclude the application of the non-discrimination principle in matters of personal and/or customary law, including marriage, divorce

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/03/equality-in-law-for-women-and-girls-by-2030#:~:text=Between%202019%20and%202023%2C%20the,countries%20and%20is%20expected%20to>

<sup>25</sup> See Agreed Conclusions of CSW 63, 65-69.

<sup>26</sup> Operationalizing LNOB, UNSDG, <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/leaving-no-one-behind-unsdg-operational-guide-un-country-teams>

<sup>27</sup> See Agreed Conclusions of CSW 63, 65-69.

and inheritance.<sup>28</sup> Emerging areas like technology-facilitated gender-based violence, with rapidly evolving digital harms, present law makers with new challenges. The specific denial of socio-economic rights leaves women more vulnerable and less resilient to shocks and circumscribes their participation and contribution to sustainable development. SDG Indicator 5.1.1., which measures whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor gender equality, has shown that no reporting countries in 2023 have plugged legal gaps in its four designated areas,<sup>29</sup> with 54% of countries having legal gaps in all four.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time, efforts to reverse rights gains appear to be part of a larger global gender pushback. In UN Women's *Women's Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing (2025)*, it was found that almost one quarter of countries reported that a backlash on gender equality is hampering implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.<sup>31</sup> The UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls has noted that in some cases "resistance has fueled attempts to withdraw existing guarantees, including the prohibition of harmful practices."<sup>32</sup> The bidirectional relationship between law and society<sup>33</sup> has meant that discriminatory laws undergird social acceptance for these violations and vice versa. If the law tells a story "about who we are, where we came from, and where we are going"<sup>34</sup>, discriminatory laws support a narrative of exclusion and act as an inhibitor. The "expressive power"<sup>35</sup> of the law – how law affects society not just through coercion but by communicating new norms – are also lost opportunities to drive change.

International and regional legal frameworks, the results of extensive negotiation and advocacy, also contribute to advancing women's and girls' access to justice by establishing binding standards, monitoring mechanisms, and accountability processes that transcend national legal recourse. Through the efforts of feminist organizations, regional courts, including the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, have handed down binding legal rulings that are de facto precedent setting and advance gender equality. Instruments like CEDAW and regional agreements such as the Maputo Protocol, the Istanbul Convention, and the Convention of Belém do Pará articulate specific obligations on states to eliminate gender-based discrimination. The groundbreaking CEDAW – with the second highest number of reservations among human rights treaties<sup>36</sup>— continues to face significant implementation challenges, particularly in ensuring

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<sup>28</sup> Bahamas (Art. 26), Barbados (Sec. 23), Belize (Sec. 16), Botswana (Sec. 15: High Court has ruled that Sec. 3 right to equality prevails), Dominica (Sec. 13), Fiji (Sec. 26), The Gambia (Sec. 33), Ghana (Art. 17), Guyana (Art. 14), Kiribati (Sec. 15), Lesotho (Sec. 18), Malaysia (Art. 8), Malta (Art. 45), Mauritius (Sec. 16), Sierra Leone (Sec. 27), Singapore (Art. 12), Solomon Islands (Sec. 15), St. Kitts and Nevis (Sec. 15), St. Lucia (Sec. 13), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (Sec. 13), Tuvalu (Sec. 27), Zambia (Art. 23): see <http://constitutions.unwomen.org>

<sup>29</sup> The four indicator areas are the following: 1. overarching legal frameworks and public life, 2. violence against women, 3. employment and economic benefits and 4. marriage and family ([infographic-the-crucial-role-of-legal-frameworks-in-advancing-gender-equality-en.pdf](#))

<sup>30</sup> UN Women, *The Crucial Role of Legal Frameworks in Advancing Gender Equality (2024)*, [infographic-the-crucial-role-of-legal-frameworks-in-advancing-gender-equality-en.pdf](#)

<sup>31</sup> UN Women - *Women's Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing (2025)*, [womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf](#)

<sup>32</sup> Escalating backlash against gender equality and urgency of reaffirming substantive equality and the human rights of women and girls (2024), Report of the WGDWG, A/HRC/56/51

<sup>33</sup> Reza Banakar and Max Travers (ed) *Law and Social Theory*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (UK: Hart Publishing, 2014), p.4.

<sup>34</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.255

<sup>35</sup> Mala Htun and Francesca R Jensenius, "Expressive Power of Anti-Violence Legislation: Changes in Social Norms on Violence Against Women in Mexico", *World Politics* (January 2022), [https://malahtun.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/htun\\_jensenius\\_wp\\_2022.pdf](https://malahtun.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/htun_jensenius_wp_2022.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Ellinore Ahlgren, *Ratification, Reservations, and Review: Exploring the Role of the CEDAW Compliance Mechanisms in*

accessibility for the most marginalized. Regional instruments have been lauded for their roots in shared cultural and historical experiences and the advantages that come with geographic proximity,<sup>37</sup> but also face structural challenges.

While non-discriminatory formal laws are a crucial element in the equation for women's and girls' justice access, the full sum also depends on effective justice service delivery (among other factors). Women and girls are challenged around the world trying to access formal institutions to enforce their rights, including the police, courts, other state redress mechanisms, government legal aid provision, medico-legal services and care. They are often confronted by financially under-resourced legal systems that may not prioritize their issues and sector actors with limited capabilities, leading to low success rates and eroding trust in justice institutions.

Processes can be complex, costly and burdened by patriarchal norms, resulting in significant attrition along the justice chain and low reporting by women and girls in criminal cases.<sup>38</sup> Common challenges for both men and women – long waiting periods, repeated appearances, travel costs, court fees, language barriers – affect the ability to sustain legal action but particularly tip the scales against women and girls who bear added care responsibilities, social sanctions and economic restraints. The justice sector also remains largely male-dominated at decision-making levels, often affecting women's willingness to engage and, per some evidence, impacting outcomes as well<sup>39</sup> (bearing in mind justice actors operate within a wider structural context).

Targeted approaches – by mechanism and area — have gained more traction recently. Specialized gender justice mechanisms can help bridge critical gaps, but their impact can be limited when they are not fully integrated into broader justice systems and risk underfunding if they are treated as supplementary rather than central to justice delivery. Limited legal literacy about rights and process further hinder the ability of women and girls to navigate legal systems and make informed choices (especially acute for incarcerated women and girls). Ensuring age-appropriate services for girls, tailored to their developmental needs, remains critical to safeguarding their rights and ensuring meaningful justice access. Access to justice may also include greater dependencies on bureaucracies than judicial processes<sup>40</sup> that are especially challenging for women and girls: for example, navigating social services to realize socio-economic rights. The imperative remains to ensure that justice service delivery is “physically, economically, socially, and culturally accessible to all women.”<sup>41</sup>

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Women's Rights, *Journal of Public and International Affairs* (May 2021), [https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/ratification-reservations-and-review-exploring-role-cedaw-compliance-mechanisms-womens-rights#:~:text=After%20the%20Convention%20of%20the%20Rights%20of,non%2Dtechnical%20reservations%20to%20the%20CEDAW%20\(Cho%202013\).](https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/ratification-reservations-and-review-exploring-role-cedaw-compliance-mechanisms-womens-rights#:~:text=After%20the%20Convention%20of%20the%20Rights%20of,non%2Dtechnical%20reservations%20to%20the%20CEDAW%20(Cho%202013).)

<sup>37</sup> Flávia Saldanha Kroetz, Between global consensus and local deviation: A critical approach on the universality of human rights, regional human rights systems and cultural diversity. *Revista de Investigações Constitucionais* vol. 3, n. 1, p. 43-58, jan./abr. 2016, p.50.

<sup>38</sup> Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly Report of the Secretary-General, December 2024, <https://docs.un.org/en/E/CN.6/2025/3>

<sup>39</sup> See as examples, Helena Laneville & Vitor Possebom, 2024. "Fight like a Woman: Domestic Violence and Female Judges in Brazil," *Papers* 2405.07240, arXiv.org, revised Jul 2024; Gunderson, Anna, and Laura Huber. "Blue First and Foremost: Female Descriptive Representation, Rape, and the Justice Gap." *Perspectives on Politics* 22, no. 1 (2024): 28–43. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592722000974>.

<sup>40</sup> Yash Ghai and Jill Cottrell, 'The Rule of Law and Access to Justice: Findings of an ABA Project on Access to Justice' paper prepared for World Justice Forum (2008), [https://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/pdf/20080924042712\\_large.pdf](https://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/pdf/20080924042712_large.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to

Access to justice, of course, goes beyond purely formal state justice systems. Legal pluralism is the norm rather than the exception for many, with an estimated 80% of the population of developing countries<sup>42</sup> using traditional justice systems.<sup>43</sup> Local justice structures are part of the lived realities of many women and girls, whether formally recognized by the state, incorporated or not. Such mechanisms can have a symbiotic relationship with the national formal legal system<sup>45</sup> or be in tension, both necessitating deeply context-specific engagement. Traditional justice often exists where the formal system lacks the resources for a physical presence, or as part of broader political arrangement (including colonial legacies). In conflict contexts, traditional justice mechanisms may be used more as trust declines in the State, formal institutions cease operation, or security conditions limit movement.

Having been described as “pathways or fences,”<sup>46</sup> traditional justice mechanisms can be more accessible (physically and culturally), cheaper, faster and hold the potential of granting local recognition of harms suffered; conversely, these systems can suffer from entrenched patriarchal norms, gendered power relations and discriminatory practices that fail to align with international, regional and domestic rights frameworks. Within local justice mechanisms family, marriage, violence, property, inheritance and access to resources can be sites of discrimination against women and girls, with both substantive and procedural bias (including low numbers of female decision-makers) reproducing exclusion. Different women in the community may also experience traditional justice mechanisms differently based on other social markers, e.g. class, ethnicity, age. Recognizing that “local custom is in constant motion”<sup>47</sup> can offer pathways for engagement, while also acknowledging that efforts to promote change may be perceived as interference—especially as anti-gender equality actors gain influence.

Crisis/conflict/post-conflict contexts magnify and expand the existing gender-based discrimination and challenges faced by women and girls to access justice. Both formal and traditional justice systems may be weakened, non-existent and/or affected by conflict politics and biases. Physical justice access is limited while risks of retaliation rise as systems breakdown and countries become more politically polarized. Women and girls also disproportionately experience sexual and gender-based violence in conflict, sometimes rising to the level of war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide. Harmful and illegal coping mechanisms (e.g. child or forced marriage) and legal needs linked to displacement and heightened insecurity may rise precisely as accountability via justice

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Justice, General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice

<sup>42</sup> Please see the work of Brian Z. Tamanaha on how legal pluralism also exists in the North American and European contexts: The Ubiquity of Legal Pluralism and Its Consequences, Victoria University of Wellington Law Review, 54 VUWLR, 2023

<sup>43</sup> Per CEDAW GR 33, we use “traditional justice systems” to refer to religious, customary, indigenous and community justice systems. - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice, General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/thematic-areas/access-to-justice-and-rule-of-law-institutions/informal-justice/#:~:text=%5Bpara.,identifying%20programming%20opportunities%20and%20challenges>.

<sup>45</sup> 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), (UK: Zed Books, 2002) p.129.

<sup>46</sup> 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), (UK: Zed Books, 2002) pp.132-143

<sup>47</sup> 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), (UK: Zed Books, 2002) p.127.

mechanisms falls. Transitional justice processes are important avenues for women and girls to secure meaningful access to justice by addressing conflict-related gender-specific harms, systemic inequalities that perpetuate exclusion, and embedding women's rights and participation at the core of post-conflict legal and institutional reform. With approximately 612 million women and girls in 2023 living within 50 kilometers of at least one of 170 armed conflicts, an increase of 41% since 2015,<sup>48</sup> more and more women and girls are being left with limited access.

Specific questions to possibly consider:

- What institutional safeguards are most effective at insulating women's rights from rollback during periods of gender backlash?
- Given that discriminatory provisions cut across criminal, family, property, and employment law, what integrated reform strategies can ensure coherence across these domains rather than piecemeal approaches? Is it realistic?
- What are the most critical reforms needed to make justice services "physically, economically, socially, and culturally accessible"<sup>49</sup> for women and girls?
- What legal design approaches (e.g., supremacy clauses, harmonization mechanisms, hybrid adjudication models) have proven most effective in reconciling constitutional guarantees with customary or religious law?
- How can international and regional treaties overcome the 'implementation gap' to better reach marginalized groups of women and girls?
- How can socio-economic rights be more firmly embedded in justice frameworks to strengthen resilience for women and girls? What justice interventions best operationalize socio-economic rights in ways that increase women's resilience to economic, conflict and climate shocks?

**Structural Barriers, Social Norms and Intersectional Discrimination:** Structural barriers, including systemic patterns of exclusion, are rooted in power asymmetries affecting women and girls' access to justice. If power is understood as the ability to make choices,<sup>50</sup> the inability of women and girls to choose a justice path and realize their rights entrenches their disempowerment.

As discussed earlier, structural barriers are part of a larger societal landscape and its institutions that either drive or inhibit women and girls' access to justice. The institutions of state, market, community, family and religion organize society<sup>51</sup> and fulfill certain roles for its functioning. Past CSW Agreed Conclusions found legal, economic, social and cultural obstacles – encompassed by many of these institutions – affect the ability of women and girls to realize their rights. Legal systems can be one such barrier, as discussed in the preceding section.

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<sup>48</sup> Progress on the SDGS – The Gender Snapshot 2024 (2024), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2024-en.pdf>

<sup>49</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women's Access to Justice, General recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice

<sup>50</sup> Naila Kabeer, *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment*, Gender and Development Vol. 13, No. 1, March 2005, p 13.

<sup>51</sup> UN-Women (forthcoming 2025): *Ideologies, Institutions and Power: A framework for addressing discriminatory social norms implicated in gender equality and women's empowerment*

Structural barriers go beyond individual cases or laws and reflect deep-rooted social, political and economic inequalities that shape whether justice is truly accessible, responsive and fair. Research and experience shows that social norms play an important role in upholding power hierarchies and inequality among groups and individuals, reducing compliance with equal rights laws for example and creating a “large gap between the letter of the law and behavior on the ground.”<sup>52</sup> As noted by the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, “(n)o 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.”<sup>53</sup>

Per UN-Women’s forthcoming framework, social norms are “embedded rules, standards or practices that structure relationships between people and social institutions – namely the state, market, community, family and religion – based on intersecting social hierarchies, including patriarchy.”<sup>54</sup> Social norms influence how people are treated in and by institutions and serve to reinforce social hierarchies,<sup>55</sup> including in the area of justice.

Accessing justice and, in essence, change, requires transforming social norms that reinforce and perpetuate discrimination and a whole-of-society approach. This applies to how gender roles are defined, priorities are set and resources allocated within governing institutions. Embedded norms can fundamentally affect the deliberation of facts, central to the realization of justice<sup>56</sup>. It also requires not only a macro but also a micro approach to gender justice, recognizing the need for changes in the “interstices of daily life.”<sup>57</sup> Such a view resonates with the efforts of women’s rights organizations like Musawah, working on family law in Muslim contexts, who speak of the need for private change in family norms to achieve public change.<sup>58</sup> As discussed earlier, it also goes to how law affects society and society affects the law, leading to implementation gaps or unlocking the “emancipatory and transformative potential of the law”<sup>59</sup> which can positively affect social norms, e.g. women realizing property rights leading to an enhancement of their economic and social status within the community.

Social norms can cause or legitimize intersectional discrimination by institutional structures, as well. Structural discrimination compounds the access to justice barriers faced by women and girls who belong to other marginalized groups: people in poverty, racial and religious/belief minorities, Indigenous Peoples, LGBTIQ+ communities, persons with disabilities, refugees and migrant populations, among others. The overlapping identities of these groups increase their vulnerability to

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<sup>52</sup> Mala Htun and Francesca R Jensenius, “Expressive Power of Anti-Violence Legislation: Changes in Social Norms on Violence Against Women in Mexico”, *World Politics* (January 2022), [https://malahtun.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/htun\\_jensenius\\_wp\\_2022.pdf](https://malahtun.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/htun_jensenius_wp_2022.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> Report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, Human Rights Council Thirty-fifth session 6-23 June 2017, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g17/095/46/pdf/g1709546.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> UN-Women (forthcoming 2025): Ideologies, Institutions and Power: A framework for addressing discriminatory social norms implicated in gender equality and women’s empowerment

<sup>55</sup> UN-Women (forthcoming 2025): Ideologies, Institutions and Power: A framework for addressing discriminatory social norms implicated in gender equality and women’s empowerment

<sup>56</sup> 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), (UK: Zed Books, 2002) p.128.

<sup>57</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Musawah, Webinar: Muslim Women Creating New Futures – The Campaign for Justice in Muslim Family Laws, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1DKgX44c10>

<sup>59</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, General Recommendation No. 33 on Women’s Access to Justice, General recommendation No. 33 on women’s access to justice

harm, creating potentially greater needs for justice system protection. Systemic inequalities in education, employment, health, and political participation, also leave these groups with fewer resources and weaker institutional support to assert their rights. Fear of retaliation or further marginalization deter many from even approaching justice actors. For those who do seek redress, entrenched stereotypes and unequal power dynamics may mean they are less likely to be believed or protected in addition to gendered discrimination. Further, what justice might substantively mean for some members of these different groups may differ from dominant understandings; for example, access to collective justice versus solely individual.<sup>60</sup>

Specific questions to possibly consider:

- How can reformers work with community and customary leaders to build ownership of gender-equal interpretations of personal law, minimizing resistance while dismantling discriminatory practices? Especially in contexts where social norms consistently override formal legal protections?
- Given that institutions can reinforce each other's discriminatory practices, what integrated strategies have succeeded in disrupting these reinforcing cycles?
- How can reforms in one institution (e.g., family law reform) be leveraged to catalyze parallel shifts in others (labor markets or community dispute resolution)?
- What does 'justice' substantively mean for different people within marginalized groups (e.g., Indigenous Peoples, refugees, racial minorities, LGBTIQ+ communities, persons living in poverty), and how can justice systems adapt to reflect collective as well as individual needs?

**Drivers for Change:** Given the multi-layered factors affecting women's and girls' access to justice, securing substantive justice also cannot have a single-variable approach. A whole-of-society perspective which encompasses feminist movements, legal aid and community-based justice workers, together with research, innovation and technology are all part of women and girls having choice and power in the realization of their rights.

Autonomous feminist movements are an important driver for advancing women's and girls' access to justice. Evidence shows, for example, that strong, independent women's movements are statistically the most consistent predictor of government action to address violence against women.<sup>61</sup> These movements do not only push states to adopt laws and justice sector reforms—they also broaden the meaning of justice by shaping public agendas, demanding institutional accountability<sup>62</sup>, and insisting that women's lived experiences be recognized in law and policy. Their strategies include lobbying, litigation, and direct engagement with state institutions, but also civic protest, grassroots contestation of exclusionary norms, and the creation of feminist spaces that respond to justice gaps.

Feminist organizing is also vital for embedding international and regional standards into national justice contexts. Civil society actors play a critical role in taking up the normative meanings offered by international legal frameworks and making them their own<sup>63</sup>, also known as the

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<sup>60</sup> UN Women, 'Access to justice is key to advancing individual and collective human rights for indigenous women' and girls (2014), <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/10/indigenous-women-side-event>

<sup>61</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.255

<sup>62</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.56.

<sup>63</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.56.

'vernacularization of international law' which comes with challenges.<sup>64</sup> Through civic contestation and mobilization, they translate commitments into lived realities, advancing justice in ways that resonate locally (which considers variation not only between but within countries as well<sup>65</sup>) and the knowledge that local justice institutions and structures can undermine goals if not sufficiently engaged<sup>66</sup>. Regional agreements on access to justice discussed earlier, often pressed by transnational feminist networks, have also been essential to diffusing model justice policies across borders, as prominently seen in Latin America and then other regions.<sup>67</sup> However the power of these movements is increasingly under threat, with linkages to gender backlash dynamics. Inadequate protections for civic space intermingle with deliberate restrictions, making it harder for feminist movements to mobilize and to push forward the structural transformations needed to secure women's and girls' equal access to justice. This is especially critical as several countries have defunded or undermined national gender equality institutions, weakening their ability to mainstream gender in justice systems and to act on women's demands.<sup>68</sup> The erosion of civic space inhibits efforts to channel demands into meaningful systemic change.

Legal aid and community-based justice workers are an important part of accessing justice. Grounded in international law and frameworks<sup>69</sup>, meaningful legal aid for women and girls fundamentally goes to the realization of their rights under the law. In addition to its inherent value, others have also argued for its strong business case: the World Bank and International Bar Association notes how the absence of legal aid can lead to a "false economy"<sup>70</sup>, with the costs of unresolved problems shifting to other areas of government spending such as health care, housing, child protection, and incarceration as well as socioeconomic "victimization costs."<sup>71</sup> Around the world, legal aid has been shown to improve legal outcomes.<sup>72</sup> Government funding for legal aid provision, however, remains a challenge. Non-criminal areas often lag for support, which is consequential as a majority of legal needs are civil in nature.<sup>73</sup> Since a single legal matter can span multiple areas of law—such as

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<sup>64</sup> Sally Engle Merry, *Transnational Human Rights and Local Activism: Mapping the Middle*, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 108, Issue 1, p. 39

<sup>65</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.246.

<sup>66</sup> 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), (UK: Zed Books, 2002) p.144.

<sup>67</sup> Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, *The Logics of Gender Justice* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p.244.

<sup>68</sup> UN Women - *Women's Rights in Review 30 Years after Beijing (2025)*, [womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf](https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/04/womens-rights-in-review-30-years-after-beijing-en.pdf)

<sup>69</sup> See ICCPR Art. 14(3)(d) for criminal defense and likewise UDHR Art (11)(1) as well as regional treaties (ECHR, ACHR, ACHPR); as well as human rights instruments such as UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems (2012), Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990), CEDAW General Recommendation No. 33 on women's access to justice (2015), Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power (1985), Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention (1988)

<sup>70</sup> World Bank and IBA, *A Tool for Justice: The Cost Benefit Analysis* (2019), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/592901569218028553/pdf/A-Tool-for-Justice-The-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-of-Legal-Aid.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> "Victimization costs" are referred to as "pain, suffering, trauma, fear, reduced quality of life, damaged reputation, lost dignity, and reduced life chances." World Bank and IBA, *A Tool for Justice: The Cost Benefit Analysis* (2019), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/592901569218028553/pdf/A-Tool-for-Justice-The-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-of-Legal-Aid.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> World Bank and IBA, *A Tool for Justice: The Cost Benefit Analysis* (2019), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/592901569218028553/pdf/A-Tool-for-Justice-The-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-of-Legal-Aid.pdf>

<sup>73</sup> World Bank and IBA, *A Tool for Justice: The Cost Benefit Analysis* (2019), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/592901569218028553/pdf/A-Tool-for-Justice-The-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-of-Legal-Aid.pdf>

gender-based violence involving both criminal and family law—comprehensive legal support remains essential.”<sup>74</sup> Different countries have been shown to use different approaches to legal aid, including the use of civil society actors.

Civil society have played an important role in increasing access to justice for women and girls — raising legal awareness, supporting a holistic approach to support (e.g. including psycho-social care), providing local oversight and pressures to improve, offering advice and critical representation, including strategic litigation efforts. Paralegals and community-based justice workers have been able to reach women and girls in rural or marginalized areas, offering direct assistance and bridging gaps between communities and formal systems.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, as a growing body of evidence shows, resolving justice problems lawfully does not always require a lawyer but the need for a broader group of problem-solvers coming from different backgrounds<sup>76</sup>, such as community-based workers, with safeguards in place.

Legal empowerment initiatives have been shown to expand women’s knowledge of rights, increase their agency, and shape justice service delivery through engagement.<sup>77</sup> There has also been the rise of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) mechanisms to resolve conflicts, both formal and hybrid, particularly where state capacity is weak or overburdened. While providing faster and easier access to justice and lightening the formal court case backlog, overarching power dynamics remain and the need for protective measures.

Increasingly, the use of technology for improving women and girls’ access to justice has gained traction. Technology has enabled greater access for women and girls to the legal system through offering tools to provide legal information, connect survivors to services, and streamline reporting and case management. It is also seen as a means to increase efficiency and transparency.<sup>78</sup> Some have noted that the presence of technology-facilitated justice access has put potential abusers on alert that they may face consequences for women they otherwise perceived as vulnerable.<sup>79</sup> In situations of conflict or crisis, it may be one of few paths available to women and girls.

The use of technology to increase women and girls’ access to justice was probably most intensely at display globally during the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing its advantages and disadvantages. One of the most pressing issues remains the digital gap for women and girls. For example, in the Asia-Pacific region, 58 per cent of women do not have access to the internet, with South Asia leading the world’s widest digital gender gap.<sup>80</sup> Even when internet access exists, lower digital literacy and patriarchal

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<sup>74</sup> UN Women, *Progress of the World’s Women Report: In Pursuit of Justice* (2011), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2011/ProgressOfTheWorldsWomen-2011-en.pdf>

<sup>75</sup> Namati, *What do we Know about Legal Empowerment: Mapping the Evidence* (2014), <https://namati.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Namati-What-do-we-know-about-legal-empowerment-May-2014.pdf>

<sup>76</sup> Rebecca L. Sandefur, *Access to What?*, *Daedalus* (2019) 148 (1): 49–55.

<sup>77</sup> Namati, *What do we Know about Legal Empowerment: Mapping the Evidence* (2014), <https://namati.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Namati-What-do-we-know-about-legal-empowerment-May-2014.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> UN Women, *What are the digital dividends for women seeking e-Justice? Access to Justice for Women in Asia and the Pacific* (2021), <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/05/ap-WA2J-op-ed-eJustice.pdf>

<sup>79</sup> R. Okello, *Rural Women’s Legal Empowerment Through Digital Technology* (Leiden: ACSL, 2023), p.55.

<sup>80</sup> UN Women, *What are the digital dividends for women seeking e-Justice? Access to Justice for Women in Asia and the Pacific* (2021), <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/05/ap-WA2J-op-ed-eJustice.pdf>

norms prevent women and girls from accessing the necessary technology to pursue justice. As with offline experiences, language can also be barrier online, with many applications in English.<sup>81</sup> Remote hearings were criticized for undermining fair trial principles, resulting in weak victim and witness statements. Algorithms trained on historical and biased crime data can amplify and perpetuate embedded biases, leading to discrimination or gaps.<sup>82</sup> Implementation windows for tech-facilitated justice services are often short, constrained by funding cycles or political timelines. Concurrently, innovative approaches are sometimes deemed too risky in environments with limited resources.

More broadly, critics have viewed technological interventions as paying insufficient attention to the context-specific power dynamics that shape how change occurs. One observer found that the “introduction of digital technology to access justice is putting the cart before the horse”<sup>83</sup> at times. At the same time, it can be considered alongside strengthening referral pathways with other legal institutions to provide a holistic package of support as women and girls seek to resolve their justice needs.<sup>84</sup>

Research and evidence gathering is also a driver for women’s and girls’ access to justice. Understanding how to fund and support what helps women and girls to substantively realize access to justice includes evidence-based analysis, monitoring and holding systems accountable – bearing in mind that “accountability requires information”.<sup>85</sup> Research can also function as a bridge: data and evidence have the potential to convene diverse justice stakeholders with deep knowledge and facilitate co-creation of solutions that are grounded in community realities, including innovative approaches. Numerical data remains important as well as a need for qualitative insights that dive deeply into the broader social structures that sustain inequality and denial of justice access.

Possible questions to consider:

- How can justice sector actors be held accountable not only for implementing laws but also for measurable outcomes in women’s empowerment and societal transformation?
- How can transnational feminist networks strengthen cross-border learning while adapting approaches to local cultural and political contexts?
- What institutional safeguards or accountability mechanisms can protect feminist organizations from gender backlash, and ensure their strategies translate into durable systemic change?
- What models of legal aid provision have proven most effective at ensuring women’s substantive access to justice in both criminal and civil matters, and how can these be scaled sustainably?
- Beyond addressing the digital divide, how can justice technologies be designed to disrupt entrenched gender inequalities rather than reinforce them?
- What mechanisms can ensure women’s and girls’ lived experiences are systematically captured and drive the co-creation of justice solutions?

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<sup>81</sup> R. Okello, *Rural Women’s Legal Empowerment Through Digital Technology* (Leiden: ACSL, 2023), p.57

<sup>82</sup> UN Women, What are the digital dividends for women seeking e-Justice? Access to Justice for Women in Asia and the Pacific (2021), <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2021/05/ap-WA2J-op-ed-eJustice.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> R. Okello, *Rural Women’s Legal Empowerment Through Digital Technology* (Leiden: ACSL, 2023), p.56.

<sup>84</sup> R. Okello, *Rural Women’s Legal Empowerment Through Digital Technology* (Leiden, ACSL, 2023), p.57.

<sup>85</sup> Sally Engle Merry, *The Seductions of Quantification: Measuring Human Rights, Gender Violence and Sex Trafficking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), p.3

## IV. Profile of participants

The EGM will be attended by global experts invited by the Executive Director of UN-Women. In selecting the experts, criteria of regional diversity will be taken into consideration. Experts will include academics and practitioners with strong track records on the given themes, in accordance with the objectives identified above. Select UN-Women staff, as well as staff from other United Nations entities will attend the EGM as observers.

## V. Documentation

The documentation for the meeting will include a number of short written inputs based on participants' relevant areas of expertise circulated to participants. Papers will also be made available on the UN-Women website. Informational papers from observer organizations, usually UN agencies, focusing on key issues of relevance to their mandate and expertise will also be circulated.

## VI. Organization

The EGM will be convened by UN-Women on 8-10 September from 8am to approximately 12:30 pm (EST) and will be virtual. It will be conducted in English with interpretation available in French and Spanish.

## VII. Expected outcomes

The outcome of the EGM will be a report, containing a summary of the discussion and recommendations directed at Member States and other stakeholders.

## VIII. Agenda

Provided separately.