

Statement CSW70

In many countries around the world, women do not have equal rights under the law. Many have no or little access to legal institutions, legal services, and the justice sector in general. Where there is access to justice for women, often financial barriers hinder them from taking legal action in court cases because austerity measures restrict fundings for that. Facing court cases without legal assistance and advice often results in losing the case or having an unsatisfactory result, and many women experience discriminatory treatment. This means that, in cases of violence, rape or sexual assault, for instance, they do not report to the authorities or go to court. In some countries discriminatory laws against women also hinder women from going to court because they do not believe that they will be treated fairly.

The Annual Report 2024 of the Gender Justice Platform mentions that women and marginalized groups continue to face discriminatory laws, underfunded justice institutions, and shrinking civic space, especially in conflict and crisis settings. The 2024 Financing Women's Justice Needs Report confirmed that underfunding remains a major barrier. It states that advancing women's leadership within the justice sector is a catalytic entry point for embedding gender equality across legal systems. Dedicated training, peer learning, and strategic partnerships with institutions such as associations of women judges proved essential to equip women with the tools to lead, influence institutional reform, and drive inclusive development in justice delivery. But main challenges are structural and geographic barriers that hinder women's full participation, particularly young women in rural areas.

The Gender Snapshot Report 2025 mentions that lower courts have realized parity in women's representations, but the ratio of women in constitutional and supreme courts, relative to the female population share, is only 0.75.

According to the Gender Snapshot Report 2025, there will be in 2025, under the worst-case climate-scenario, up to 158.3 million more women and girls living in extreme poverty. The number is even 300 to 400 million if higher international poverty thresholds are considered, surpassing the number of men and boys impacted by 16.1 million.

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna is convinced that this requires immediate action at all levels to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, and practices addressing and removing structural barriers and ensuring access to justice for all women and girls. Education of women and girls, the need for more and better trained teachers, particularly women, and great improvements in legal literacy training are crucial to these efforts.

One of the most significant barriers to accessing justice and education is violence against women and girls, which is a global issue.

At the policy level, UNDP in partnership with UN Women, International Development Law Organization, the World Bank, and the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, launched a strategic research initiative on Financing Women's Justice Needs: Global Perspectives on Violence Against Women, and a Case Study on Uganda. Presented during the 68th Commission on the Status of Women, this research underscores the urgency of increasing public financing for justice systems responsive to women's justice needs, particularly in addressing violence against women. The research analysis brings sharp focus, especially on violence against women, aiming to understand the existing funding gaps that must be addressed to achieve access to justice for women and girls globally and to fulfil the commitment of the 2030 Agenda.

The research emphasizes that effective justice systems based on the rule of law are central to women's ability to become equal partners in decision-making in equitable, inclusive, and just institutions.

The conclusion of the research is that most countries have laws in place that address Violence against Women, although the scope of legislation varies. There is extensive evidence of justice gaps faced by women experiencing violence, especially considering the low percentage of women reporting violence to the police. Also very few countries publish data that enable public spending on justice for women experiencing violence. Currently, only one in four governments meet the obligations under Sustainable Development Goal Target 5.c.

In those countries where quantification is possible, the amounts being spent are small – typically far below one per cent of the budget, and a tiny share of national income. The result is that women survivors face major justice gaps, across a range of areas – from non-reporting to police to delayed responses and lack of legal assistance – which means they are unable to access the allocated resources.

This shows that Gender Justice, elimination of Violence against women, women's participation in decision making and women's full participation in public life needs a strong Gender Equality Initiative which will then enable gender equality. This initiative should include a renewed commitment to education for women and girls. The role of women teachers as catalysts for equality and changemakers for future generations is crucial in advancing inclusive and equitable education. When women teachers thrive, girls are more likely to complete school, see themselves as leaders, break cycles of inequality, and ensure their access to justice.

The Gender Snapshot Report 2025 stated that by 1 January 2025 women held 27.2% of seats in national parliaments, up 4.9% percentage points from 2015. 102 countries have never had a Woman Head of State or Government, and women's representation in governments stagnated at 35.5% in 2023 and 2024. Globally women occupy 30% of managerial positions. It is expected by 2050 to reach only 32%. At the current pace of process achieving gender parity in management will take nearly a century.

The report further stated that in 2024, only 26% of 121 countries and territories had comprehensive systems to track resource allocation for gender equality, a share unchanged from 2021. It mentions that despite progress on Sustainable Development Goal 5, achieving gender equality for all women and girls, remains off track, protecting and advancing gains demand bold instruments, collective action, and better data.

This shows that a strong collective effort from all of us is needed to ensure and strengthen access to justice for all women, to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, practices, to eliminate violence against women, and to achieve gender equality,

The undersigned members of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women Vienna, all in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council call upon all United Nations Member States to:

Ensure that all women have equal access to justice and all legal services they need;

Member States must step up their efforts to establish efficient, robust and complete networks of victim support organizations to ensure that every victim of violence has access to appropriate support services, in line with the Victims' Rights Directive.

Ensure that governments provide financial support to women to have legal assistance in court cases;

Reinforce efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4, ensuring equitable access to education for women and girls. Ensure funding for the provision of more and better trained teachers, particularly women. Improve legal literacy by ensuring that the rights of women and girls are included in educational curricula.

The United Nations Member States publish fiscal data that enable public spending on justice for women experiencing violence;

To take measures to advance women's leadership within the justice sector, to support dedicated training, peer learning, and strategic partnerships with institutions such as associations of women judges and to equip women with the tools to lead, influence institutional reform, and drive inclusive development in justice delivery and to ensure that particularly young women in rural areas are included; Governments must adopt normative and legislative reforms aimed at climate justice, including by accelerating women's participation at all levels of decision-making and securing equal rights to land, resources and tenure security.

Take comprehensive measures to eliminate violence against women;

Take comprehensive measures to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices on women;

Ensure that there is gender parity in decision making;

Provide all tools and give full support to achieve Gender Equality;

Integrate legal literacy and legal empowerment programmes into a multifaceted strategy to facilitate access to justice.