

Seminar on Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Access to Justice for Women in Africa

Concept Note

Title:

Strengthening Legal Frameworks and Access to Justice for Women in Africa

Date:

24–28 November 2025

Context and Justification

The African Institute of International Law (AIIL) was established to serve as a continental hub for the study, teaching, and dissemination of international law with a view to strengthening the rule of law in Africa. Guided by its mission to advance legal education, capacity-building, and research, the Institute has consistently prioritized issues of human rights and justice as central to Africa's sustainable development and peace.

One of AIIL's core concerns is the promotion and protection of women's rights, particularly in light of the persistence of violence, discrimination, and systemic barriers that undermine women's dignity and equality. Despite the existence of robust international and regional instruments—such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol)—the practical realization of women's rights across the continent remains uneven. Legal gaps, weak enforcement mechanisms, and challenges of access to justice continue to hinder progress.

To address these pressing issues, the AIIL has in recent years convened capacity-building workshops that brought together judges, lawyers, policymakers, and civil society actors. In 2023, the Institute organized a Workshop on Women's Rights in Africa, focusing on raising awareness and deepening understanding of the legal protections available to women under African and international law. In 2024, AIIL convened a Workshop on Combating Violence Against Women in Africa, which emphasized prevention strategies, institutional responses, and the strengthening of accountability mechanisms.

These initiatives laid the groundwork for a progressive and cumulative approach to capacity-building on women's rights. They have demonstrated both the urgency of the challenges and the importance of sustained dialogue, training, and legal reform. Building on this foundation, the 2025 seminar seeks to further consolidate these efforts by addressing critical gaps in legal protection and judicial response, while reinforcing the commitment of African legal systems to ensure justice, equality, and dignity for all women.

Objective:

The seminar aims to strengthen the capacity of key stakeholders to consolidate women's legal protections, improve justice delivery, and promote gender-sensitive legal reforms. By bringing together legal professionals, policymakers, and community leaders, the event will facilitate dialogue and encourage collaboration to ensure the full implementation of women's legal protections.

Specific Objectives:

- Assess the effectiveness of existing legal frameworks in protecting women's rights.
- Train judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers on best practices for handling gender-based violence cases.
- Strengthen coordination between formal justice systems and customary legal structures.
- Promote the provision of legal aid and support services for women seeking justice.
- Advocate for necessary legislative reforms to strengthen protections for women.

Methodology:

The seminar will be designed to foster active learning and meaningful participation. The methodology will include:

- Interactive Sessions: Group discussions, case studies, and practical simulations enabling participants to apply concepts and share experiences.
- Expert Presentations: Contributions from jurists, judges, and women's rights specialists providing theoretical insights and practical examples.
- Roundtables and Debates: Opportunities for dialogue on challenges and solutions related to the enforcement of legal protections.
- Practical Workshops: Skill-building exercises on access to justice, handling GBV cases, and inter-institutional coordination.
- Experience Sharing Sessions: Testimonies of survivors, case studies, and presentations of best practices to enrich understanding of realities on the ground.

Target Audience:

- Judges and Magistrates
- Prosecutors and Legal Practitioners
- Law Enforcement Officers
- Government Officials and Policymakers
- Traditional and Religious Leaders
- Civil Society Organizations and NGOs
- Academics and Researchers
- Media Professionals

Expected Outcomes:

- Strengthened capacity of legal and judicial actors to handle GBV cases.
- Improved legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms to protect women's rights.

- Enhanced collaboration between formal and informal justice systems.
- Increased advocacy and awareness for gender-sensitive legal reforms.
- Better access to legal aid and justice for survivors of GBV.

Conclusion:

A strong legal framework is essential to protect women's rights and ensure justice for survivors of GBV. This seminar will play a crucial role in promoting legal reforms, strengthening institutional capacities, and fostering collaboration among key stakeholders. With partner and donor support, this initiative will contribute significantly to improving women's access to justice and the enforcement of their fundamental rights.

Application Submission:

Applications should be submitted by email to programs@aiil-iadi.org no later than Tuesday, 30 September 2025, and must include the following documents:

- A **motivation letter** outlining the applicant's interest in the seminar and the relevance of their participation;
- An **updated curriculum vitae (CV)**;
- A **letter of recommendation** from a reputable referee (e.g., employer, supervisor, academic mentor, or recognized human rights defender).