



Enhancing Women's Access to Justice in Asia Pacific WA2J Quarterly Brief, Jan – Mar 2021

Photo: UN Women/The Wahid Foundation

INTRODUCTION

The year 2021 started as we ended 2020, with the COVID-19 pandemic raging across the region, deepening existing gender disparities. Women have roughly the same number of unmet justice needs as men, but the nature of these needs reflect women's experience of disadvantage, exclusion, discrimination, and violence. However, while the COVID crisis intensified challenges for women it also showcased the outstanding resilience and leadership skills of women human rights defenders, advocates and civil society organizations (CSOs) across the region.

In this issue of the WA2J Quarterly Brief, we highlight the project initiatives in the first quarter of 2021 under the project titled Enhancing Access to Justice for Women in Asia and the Pacific: Bridging the gap between formal and informal systems through women's empowerment. Globally, 4.5 billion people are excluded from the social, economic and political opportunities that the law provides.¹ The common goal of the project partners is to create an enabling environment for women to realize their

rights through meaningful access to justice, that is gender-responsive, affordable, comprehensible and without fear of negative consequences.

By the end of 2021, 435 million women and girls are predicted to be living on less than US\$1.90 per day including 47 million specifically impoverished by COVID-19.² Accordingly, the project has increased its focus on socio-economic rights and provides additional support to struggling women's grassroot organizations. Learn more about our thematic focus areas for 2021 through the different sections of the quarterly brief.

We have also launched [our new webpage](#), which provides more background and insight about our impact and strategic direction.

Doreen Buettner, Programme Specialist
Access to Justice, UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific

If you would like further background to initiatives highlighted in this newsletter or would like to explore opportunities for collaboration, please reach out via: doreen.buettner@unwomen.org

1. Justice for All, The Task Force on Justice <https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/report>
2. <https://data.unwomen.org/features/covid-19-boomerang-effect-new-forecasts-predict-sharp-increases-female-poverty>



An initiative under the joint UN Women, ICJ and OHCHR programme and generously supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency SIDA.

COMMUNICATION & ADVOCACY



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021

To mark International Women's Day on 8 March, and celebrate women's leadership in a COVID world, the programme partners launched a video with seven impact stories from across the region. Leaders in the judiciary, communities and the women's rights movement shared their achievements during the pandemic. This video was designed to celebrate their work to sustain and improve women's access to justice. The video is available in English, with subtitles in Bahasa Indonesia, Nepali, Tagalog, Tetum and iTaukei

[Watch the video here >](#)



Photo: UN Women

VIRTUAL EXHIBITION: "WE FOR US"

UN Women Nepal under the Access to Justice programme and in collaboration with Srijanalya, a Nepalese NGO with a focus on self-development through art, is developing a curated virtual art exhibition to present stories of women's roles in enabling access to justice. The virtual exhibition will be launched in July this year.

[Watch the Teaser video >](#)

WOMEN'S ROLE AND LEADERSHIP IN DECISION MAKING DURING COVID IN TIMOR-LESTE

UN Women Timor-Leste worked with government agencies to develop a video to highlight women's role and leadership in policy formulation and decision-making during the COVID crisis in Timor-Leste. The project was carried out in close collaboration with the Secretary of State for Equality and Inclusion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, and the Secretary of State for Communication. Beyond women's active citizenship at the community level, this video shows the influence and importance of women's voice in decision-making areas at the national level during times of crisis. [The video is only available in Tetum and can be found here >](#)

STRENGTHENING OF FORMAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS



NATIONAL JUDICIAL DIALOGUE SRI LANKA

In collaboration with the Sri Lanka Judges' Institute (SLJI), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) co-hosted the National Judicial Dialogue on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and Enhancing Women's Access to Justice on 6 and 13 March. Twenty magistrates and District Court judges from around Sri Lanka, with judicial and legal experts from other countries, participated in this judicial dialogue, which was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [Read more >](#)



CEDAW EDUCATIONAL VIDEO FOR FRONTLINE JUSTICE ACTORS

The ICJ concluded the development and translation of their educational video on CEDAW principles, a visual tool to raise awareness among frontline justice actors of the persistent barriers for women and of the means of redress for rights violations. The video is available in four languages.

- [English >](#)
- [Bahasa Indonesia >](#)
- [Tetum >](#)
- [Nepali >](#)

COMMUNITY-BASED MECHANISMS

LEGAL LITERACY TRAINING FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS IN THE PEACE VILLAGES

In collaboration with local partner The Wahid Foundation a series of legal literacy trainings were organized across East, Central and West Java in Indonesia (26-28 February, 12-14 March and 26-28 March). The training series aims to improve practical skills of the Peace Village Working group in responding to social conflicts, extremism and cases of violence against women. An important aspect of the training series is to increase the knowledge and awareness of the leaders in the Peace Villages on the legal framework for preventing violent extremism and promoting women's rights. This ensures they are able to adopt and adhere to national and international legal frameworks in their communal approach to conflict solving in a way that is gender-responsive.



Photo: UN Women/The Wahid Foundation

[More about the Peace Villages >](#)

ENGAGEMENT WITH UN HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

LAUNCH OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS COURSE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC

On 24 February, the Regional Office for the Pacific of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (OHCHR Pacific) in collaboration with the University of the South Pacific launched the Human Rights Defenders course as part of the Leadership, Governance and Human Rights (DLGHR) Diploma programme, to improve understanding of human rights in the Pacific islands. [Read more >](#)

CONSIDERATION OF INDONESIA'S STATE REPORT FOR CEDAW – WHAT ISSUES NEED TO BE RAISED IN THE SHADOW REPORT?

The ICJ and OHCHR in collaboration with the National Commission on Violence Against Women in Indonesia (Komnas Perempuan) co-hosted a webinar on 6 April to raise awareness on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The webinar provided a platform to discuss issues, challenges, and strategies towards the CEDAW Committee's consideration of the State report later this year. Participants, together with a panel of justice experts, identified advocacy strategies towards strengthening Indonesia's compliance with its international legal obligations under the Convention. The webinar was broadcast live on Facebook and showcased the Bahasa Indonesia version of the recently developed CEDAW video. It was attended by more than 50 women human rights defenders. [Read more >](#)



[Link to publication >](#)



[Link to publication >](#)

WOMEN JOURNALIST COURSE ON PROTECTION, SAFETY AND GENDER IN JOURNALISM IN ASIA

In collaboration between UN Women and OHCHR and in partnership with UNESCO, the six-month course for selected journalists across the Asia Pacific region was launched in December last year. Since then, around 40 journalists from across the region have joined the monthly webinar sessions and participated in online learning modules. Themes from this quarter's sessions were: the narrowing democratic space; digital and online security; CEDAW and gender-responsive journalism; media and journalism in context; and online hate speech and misogyny.

WOMEN'S ACCESS TO JUSTICE IN PRISON TRAINING FOR DETAINED WOMEN AND JAIL PERSONNEL

The COVID-19 pandemic poses unique challenges for legal representation and access to services in prisons, leaving the distinct needs of women in prison unmet. In March, UN Women in collaboration with local partner StreetLawPh kicked off a trainings programme for women in prison and jail personnel in the Philippine cities of Cebu, Mandaue and Lapu-Lapu. The focus of the trainings is to raise awareness among both groups of gender-responsive and humane treatment of women in prison, as well as increasing their knowledge of women's rights and international standards that apply to them. The programme will run for five months, followed by continuing education sessions for another five months, to support practical application of the training. Amid COVID-19 containment measures, the programme delivery has been adapted to take place virtually. Following social distancing protocols and wearing masks, the detained women are seated in one room while they attend the trainings. The women attend the training with the expert facilitators conducting the session through an online platform. Through this modality, the participants are able to interact with the facilitators in real time. Participation in the training allows the women to gain points for Good Conduct Time Allowance - a points-based system to qualify for early release.

DIALOGUE PLATFORMS



Webinar Series
Human Rights and Access to Justice Issues of Women in Conflict with the Law

Live Webinar 1 March 2021
Women's Issues during Imprisonment

Register to join:
bit.ly/UPLawWICLImprioment
1 March 2:00 – 4:00 PM (Manilla, PH)

UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES LAW CENTER
FOUNDATION FOR INITIATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, INC.
UN WOMEN

WEBINAR SERIES: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE ISSUES FOR WOMEN BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER IMPRISONMENT

UN Women Philippines in collaboration with The University of the Philippines - Institute of Human Rights, co-hosted a series of six webinars on the justice-related issues encountered by young women in conflict with the law on 25 January, 2, 9 and 22 February, and 1st of March. The webinar series for women in conflict with the law tackled issues they face throughout the criminal justice process: before, during, and after detention or imprisonment. Women in conflict with the law is an emerging field of interest in the Philippines. The topic drew interest and participation from different sectors, including government, non-government organizations and civil society organizations working with young women and women in conflict with the law, legal professionals and students, media personnel, academia, and youth groups. The series was very well received with on average of around 400 listeners tuning in for each webinar session.

Listen to the recorded webinars here:

- [Human Rights and Access to Justice Issues of Women in Conflict with the Law: Pre-Trial Phase](#)
- [Human Rights and Access to Justice Issues of Women in Conflict with the Law: During Imprisonment Phase](#)
- [Human Rights and Access to Justice Issues of Women in Conflict with the Law: Post-Detention Phase](#)

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE

APPLYING A GENDER LENS IN TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: NEPAL'S EXPERIENCE

In April 2021, the ICJ published a briefing paper analysing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Act and the Commission on Investigation of Disappeared Persons (CoID) regulations from a gender perspective, with a view to promoting holistic and effective transitional justice measures that are responsive to the needs of all victims, in particular women, seeking justice and reparation. The publication was launched at the webinar on Transitional Justice and Gender on 12 May. [Link to publication >](#)



Applying a Gender Lens in Transitional Justice: Nepal's Experience
Report Launch and Webinar
Wednesday, 12 May 2021
17:00 - 18:30 Kathmandu
18:15 - 19:45 Bangkok

SPEAKERS

Mr. Fabian Salvioli
UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence

Ms. Bandana Rana
UN CEDAW Committee Member

Justice Kalyan Shrestha
ICJ Commissioner and Former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Nepal

Ms. Laxmi Pokharel
ICJ Legal Adviser: Nepal

MODERATOR Ms. Boram Jang, ICJ Legal Adviser

Register here: bit.ly/TJGender
English-Nepali interpretation is available via Zoom





INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE MEDIATION GUIDELINES IN TIMOR-LESTE

UN Women concluded a comprehensive capacity-building programme for gender-responsive mediation in the last quarter of 2020. To further embed and institutionalize the Gender Responsive Mediation guidelines, over the past months technical assistance has been provided to the line ministries to support the roll-out of the guidelines as well as adoption of the new case management system. The institutionalization of the guidelines marks a significant shift from gender-specific to gender-responsive guidance for all mediation services at all levels: community-based, at district and national levels, and ethno-religious mediation. In addition, talks have started to establish the Timor-Leste Mediation Network, a forum to bring together all mediators across the country.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE MEDIATION RAPID ADOPTION OF NEW LEGISLATION IN TIMOR-LESTE

Approval of the Gender-Responsive Conflict Prevention and Resolution decree in October 2020 has already demonstrated success in its implementation. Twenty-one out of the 40 government-appointed mediators are women. Overall, women mediators are increasingly leading the mediation process. Since the instigation of the decree, as per data from the newly implemented case management system, more than 100 cases have been resolved by applying the implemented gender-responsive mediation processes. The decree also has a ripple effect on other service areas. For example, the same gender-responsive conflict prevention and dialogue processes are being applied to support people living in evacuation and reintegration centres amid the humanitarian crisis from flooding on 4 April 2021. Communities under pressure by COVID-19 containment measures have also benefitted from the approach, supporting effective conflict prevention and resolution during the pandemic.



WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT

FINANCIAL LITERACY TRAINING FOR GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS IN NEPAL

UN Women in collaboration with local partner Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre (LACC) along with its three district-based consortium NGO partners, the Dalit Women's Rights Forum, the Equality Development Centre, and the Village Community Development Centre, have provided financial literacy training to 51 members across 10 grassroots women's organizations (GWOs). The one-day orientation focused on effective management of the institutional support fund and ideas on resource mobilization. The institutional support fund was designed in response to the COVID-19 context. As GWOs faced more economic hardship amid COVID-19, the initiative supported by the Access to Justice project aims to provide technical and financial support to small-scale GWOs to sustain their advocacy. An additional focus of the institutional support



fund was to support the GWOs to formally register with local bodies to strengthen their ability to mobilize resources for their advocacy. Demonstrating the practical and direct applicability of the training and technical support, a GWO in Doti was able to secure a fund of US\$5300 from the Ministry of Social Development of the provincial government.