

A portrait of a Black woman with short, curly hair, wearing a black legal robe with a white ruffled collar. She is looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression.

# The WILL Media Toolkit

Amplifying visibility for women in  
Law and Justice



The African Women's  
Development and  
Communication Network

Co—  
Impact

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## About FEMNET

**F**EMNET is a membership network anchored on pan-African feminist principles and values. It is intentional in ensuring that African women and girls' diverse voices, perspectives, and priorities are heard in key decision-making policy processes, platforms, and strategic spaces.

As a feminist, pan-African women's rights organisation with over 800 individual and institutional members in 50 African countries and the diaspora, FEMNET continues to amplify African women's voices and advance women's rights in policy and practice. With her Secretariat based in Nairobi, Kenya, FEMNET was established in 1988 to strengthen African NGOS' role and contribution, focusing on women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

FEMNET's vision is for African women and girls to thrive in dignity and well-being, free from patriarchal and neoliberal oppression and injustices. In line with this, FEMNET's mission is to mobilise African women for the achievement of gender equality and the realization of women's and girls' rights at all levels. FEMNET exists to facilitate and coordinate the sharing of experiences, information, and strategies for human rights promotion among feminists, activists, and women's rights organisations as a strategy for collective organizing; policy influencing & advocacy; strategic communication; capacity strengthening as well as feminist solidarity and movement building.

FEMNET recognizes that the commitment to alter relations of power, structural injustices, and systemic oppression lies at the heart of feminism. We continue our push towards altering power structures that perpetuate gender inequality. We do this by nurturing the African women's movement to enable women and girls in their diversity to effectively claim, affirm, and use their power to end all forms of exclusion, oppression, exploitation, and injustices against them. We have adopted a multipronged strategy focused on disrupting patriarchal power orders in policy spaces; nurturing innovative and powerful feminist spaces; re-politicizing the women's rights agenda; and invigorating constituency-building engagement. This includes robustly growing women and girls' solidarity, voices, agency, and power to shape discourse while countering regressive forces against gender equality and women's empowerment.





## About Co-Impact

**C**o-Impact brings together local changemakers and funders from around the world to make health, education, and economic systems stronger and more inclusive – creating impact that lasts. Our commitment to advancing gender equality and women’s leadership is central to this goal.

By focusing on systems, we work at the scale of the problem – dismantling the root causes of inequality that disadvantage hundreds of millions of women, girls and marginalized communities. Spanning five continents, our team identifies partners that will create lasting progress when supported with the resources to work at scale.

Pooling funding allows us to provide large, flexible grants and strategic support to locally-rooted partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America who know their systems best.

Our partners’ initiatives will benefit more than 600 million people, and we can go even further together. We aim to deploy over \$1 billion by 2030 and achieve a world where everyone can lead fulfilling lives.



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This is more than a toolkit—it is a call to action, a resource for transformation, and a love letter to all women who dare to lead in the face of deeply patriarchal systems. We see you. We honour you. We stand with you.

The African Women's Development and Communications Network (FEMNET) is extremely appreciative of the partnership support of **Co-Impact's Women in Leadership in Law** partners in the success of the production of this Media Toolkit. FEMNET appreciates the collaboration with Co-Impact and other partners in actualizing the Women in Law project and in organizing a convening to facilitate collective analysis and dialogue among legal and justice professionals.







“Increasing the representation of women at the negotiating table, an important force in humanity’s pursuit of justice and equality, is a key aspect of women’s empowerment and, in my view, will greatly enhance the prospects of achieving these objectives. We have a collective responsibility to continuously raise gender awareness and advance gender parity. I’m delighted to join the International Gender Champion leadership network to contribute to our shared goals of breaking gender barriers.”

– **Fatou Bensouda**,  
Prosecutor, International criminal Court, ICC



## FOREWORD

### **There can be no liberation without the WILL (Women in Law Leadership)!!!**

**T**hroughout the substantive history of women's liberation and emancipation, the contributions of women in the legal profession have been nothing short of transformative. From Women in Law Leadership to Women in the Judiciary, Ministries of Justice, the community paralegal sector, and women lawyers everywhere, these trailblazers have been central to dismantling systems of oppression and advancing the cause of gender equality across all spheres of society.

FEMNET, in collaboration with Co-IMPACT and partners in Women in Law, affirms the unequivocal urgency of confronting and uprooting the deeply entrenched systems of discrimination that continue to block women in law from ascending to positions of power and influence.



In this struggle, the media emerges as a pivotal ally. Its role is not only to report violations and injustices faced by women and girls but also to amplify the voices of women in law leadership strategically, accurately, and proactively highlighting the systemic barriers, bottlenecks, and patriarchal structures that hinder their progress.

FEMNET underscores the power of the media to dismantle harmful narratives and myths that sustain gender inequality. Building a strong, ethical, and sustained collaboration between media actors and women in law is essential to reshaping public discourse and driving social transformation.

This toolkit reflects our commitment to ensuring that media practices uphold the highest standards of fairness, dignity, and ethical representation of women in law leadership. It is a call to action designed to ensure that media engagements and communications serve as catalysts for transformative change. Media and women in law must forge a partnership grounded in the shared, non-negotiable conviction that gender equality and women's liberation are fundamental and urgent.

Ultimately, the fight for gender equality and women's emancipation is inseparable from the visibility and influence of women in law. Their leadership is not optional; it is central to achieving meaningful and lasting liberation.

**Memory Kachambwa**

Executive Director – FEMNET







“

*"I'm not here because I'm a woman, I'm a worthy judge, I am a good woman judge."*

– **Justice Mandisa Maya (South Africa),**  
Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of South Africa





## CHAPTER 1

# What is the Role of the media in reporting Law and Justice?

### Why is this toolkit important for both media and legal practitioners?

The media plays a crucial role in reporting on law and justice, acting as a vital link between the judiciary and the public. It informs the public about court proceedings, legal issues, and the overall functioning of the justice system, thus shaping public perception and holding the system accountable. This toolkit stands on the timeless emphasis of the role of the media in reporting Law and order and specifically, reporting on women in Law and women in Law leadership. The media shapes public opinion, influences perceptions and ascends to the higher role of advocating rights, women's rights and human rights in general. The role of the media therefore remains sacrosanct in advancing the work of women in Law.

The toolkit opines that journalists of long standing and especially those who have specialized on reporting law, justice and order as well as reporting on the rights of women deserve to internalize the actual fabric of this special focus, hence the role of the media in reporting women in Law.

To unpack this further, we must go beyond the traditional role of the media unto the functions that qualify the media as a critical link to the full actualization of gender equality and women's rights.

In this regard therefore, the role of the media in reporting justice processes as well as covering legal practitioners calls for a deeper interrogation as to the substantive functions of this crucial platform.

*Here's a breakdown of the media's key functions:*

### 1. Informing the Public:

- The media disseminates information about court cases, judgments, and legal developments, making the justice system more transparent and accessible to the public.
- It helps citizens understand their rights and obligations under the law, fostering a more informed citizenry.
- By reporting on legal issues, the media can raise awareness about social problems and contribute to public discourse on justice and fairness.



## 2. Holding the Justice System Accountable:

Media scrutiny can expose corruption, misconduct, and inefficiencies within the justice system, promoting transparency and accountability.

By holding powerful actors accountable, the media can contribute to upholding the rule of law.

The media's role in reporting on high-profile cases can influence public opinion and potentially impact judicial decisions.

## 3. Shaping Public Perception:

- Media portrayals of law and justice can significantly influence public attitudes and beliefs about the legal system.
- Responsible and accurate reporting can foster public trust in the justice system, while biased or sensationalized reporting can erode that trust.
- The media also plays a role in shaping public understanding of crime and punishment, which can influence policy decisions

## 4. Supporting the Rule of Law:

- By reporting on judicial proceedings and legal developments, the media helps ensure that the justice system operates fairly and transparently.
- A free and independent media is essential for a healthy democracy and for upholding the rule of law.
- However, the media must also be mindful of its ethical responsibilities and avoid sensationalizing or prejudicing cases, [according to the Media Council of Kenya](#).

## 5. Protecting Witnesses:

The media has a responsibility to protect witnesses, especially in sensitive cases.

This includes avoiding the publication of information that could put witnesses at risk or compromise ongoing investigations.

Media outlets should adhere to guidelines for protecting the identity and safety of witnesses.

The media plays a multifaceted role in reporting on law and justice. It is a vital source of information, a mechanism for accountability, and a shaper of public perception. Responsible and ethical media reporting is crucial for a just and democratic society. This role becomes even more critical when the nuances of judicial processes touch on discriminative practices pegged social, cultural and institutional influences.



## Lawyers need the media, just as much as the media needs lawyers!

The idealistic symbiotic collaboration and relationship between lawyers and the media is often inevitable. Lawyers need the media just as much as the media needs the lawyers. Lawyers are the “newsmakers”; providing and creating content which the media needs for the execution of its work. The media therefore is the platform from which lawyers disseminate critical information and enhance the visibility of their work.

Legal practitioners and the media interact in a dynamic relationship laden with both opportunities and challenges. Lawyers can utilize media platforms, including social media, for public outreach, legal advocacy, and practice promotion. However, ethical considerations, confidentiality, and potential legal repercussions must be carefully navigated. Conversely, media coverage of legal proceedings can significantly impact public perception of the legal profession and individual lawyers.

### How the media impacts the work of Legal Practitioners:

#### *Public Perception:*

Media coverage of legal proceedings can significantly influence public perception of lawyers, the legal system, and individual cases.

- **Potential for Bias:**

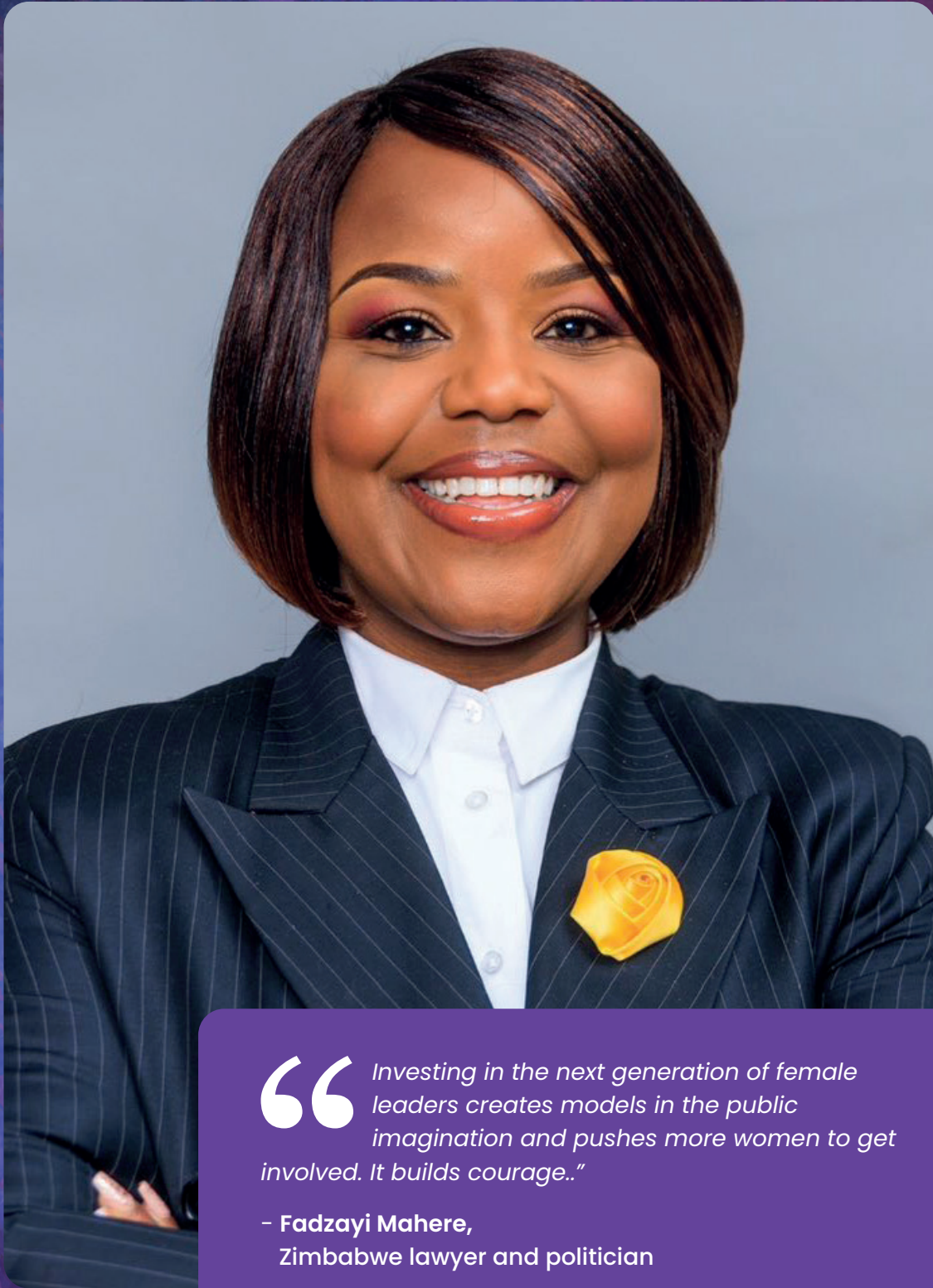
Media reports can sometimes present a biased or incomplete picture of legal matters, potentially eroding public trust in the legal profession.

- **Impact on Trials:**

Media coverage can potentially influence jurors, leading to concerns about fair trials and due process.







“Investing in the next generation of female leaders creates models in the public imagination and pushes more women to get involved. It builds courage..”

– **Fadzayi Mahere,**  
Zimbabwe lawyer and politician







## CHAPTER 2

# Where are the women in Law Leadership?

### Women's Leadership in Law in Africa: Key Data, Trends, and Graphical Analysis

Women's participation and leadership in the legal sector across Africa is marked by both significant progress and persistent disparities. While women are increasingly entering the legal profession, their ascent to leadership roles is hindered by a complex array of structural, cultural and political barriers.

This media toolkit reckons that it is important for the media to have a firm understanding of the rugged terrain that women in Law Leadership navigate in to get to the top. Moreso, the media must rightfully refer to the presiding status of women in Law Leadership to get a thorough understanding of the reality of the gender gaps within the profession.

### International and continental context of women in law

There has been a significant increase in the number of appointed female judges worldwide. Despite this stride, the ratio of women in senior judicial leadership positions such as Chief Justices, Presidents of Supreme Courts, or heads of constitutional courts remains relatively low. This trend applies to bar associations, legal societies, and law institution leadership. The tenacious under-representation is mostly characterized by entrenched patriarchal structures, unjust appointment processes, and biases that favor male candidates for leadership roles.

### African Women legal position

According to the UN Women data base, in a comparative study **"Women in justice in Africa: a comparative study of women judges in 14 countries (2024)"** Africa has **the world's largest number of women heading constitutional courts and acting as Chief Justices**. This finding is a representation of African women breaking the glass ceiling in the legal system. While the presence of women in these influential justice positions is a significant progress, as per the study, the number highlights very few of these women who make it to the top. The gap between those who make it and those who do not is quite wide. This is a stark reminder of the gender imbalance at the highest level.

Additionally, the study confirms that when these women do become judges, harassment, intimidation and breaches of privacy are common challenges they face that is a big threat to the delivery of their mandate.



## Underrepresentation in leadership

Despite women's increased engagement in public life, they remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making positions. Globally, a relatively small number of women have been, or are part of, the judiciary, particularly at senior judicial leadership positions. The UN Women (2024) study also reveals that women constitute only 43% of magistrates and judges in lower courts with an even smaller percentage in higher courts.

## Trends in Legal Profession Progression

Although the entry of women into the legal profession is now much more accessible, their progression into senior leadership and partnership roles remains much lower and is characterized by various obstacles.

## Progress in Entry and Junior Roles

A case in point that is seemingly replicated in many other African countries is that for example, women outnumber men at the Kenya school of law marking a significant milestone in gender representation in legal education and profession (**Business daily dated March 2025,**). However, this entry is marked by widespread stagnancy which means many women who venture into the profession remain stagnant at the lawyer level without opportunities for Ascension. Although there could be more women at the entry level, many more men progress to leadership and decision-making roles leaving behind the women. These barriers that bar women from advancing to the top must be interrogated.

## The inequalities in Law Firm Partnership

Women remain significantly underrepresented in partnerships (ResearchAndMarkets.com 2024) where only a minority of them reach partner status in law firms. The difference between junior-level representation and partner-level statistics creates a major gender imbalance in career progression.

## Increasing acknowledgment and visibility

More women are being recognized as top-tier practitioners in the legal field.

Chambers and Partners (2024) reported a 12% increase in female lawyers who received the highest recognition in their rankings. Specifically, the number of women recognized in the highly prestigious Band 1 category across African jurisdictions. An increase from 59 in 2023 to 66 in 2024.

## Female Ministers of Justice

It is notable that more women continue to pursue the highest Judicial offices in relation to law and justice in Africa. In Eritrea for example, **Honorable Fozia Hashim** has held the position of Minister of Justice since 1993 making her the first and only Minister of Justice in Africa to hold such a position for this long.



Currently in Africa, **only seven women** ministers occupy this position out of twenty countries surveyed.

**Table 1: African Countries with Female Ministers of Justice**

	Country	Name
1	Cape Verde	Hon. Joana Rosa
2	South Africa	Hon. Mmamoloko T Kubayi
3	Namibia	Hon. Yvonne Dausab
5	Eritrea	Hon. Fozia Hashim
6	Burundi	Hon. Domine Banyankimbona
7	Tunisia	Hon. Leïla Jaffel

## Women Leading African Judiciaries and Regional Courts

The visibility of women in the highest judicial offices and on the benches of regional courts is a critical indicator of progress in Law Leadership. These roles are pivotal in interpreting law, upholding justice, and shaping legal precedents across jurisdictions.

### Female Chief Justices in Africa

The appointment of women as Chief Justices in several African nations is a profound and a significant milestone in breaking the “glass ceiling” within national judiciaries. They not only administer the highest courts but also lead the entire judicial system of their respective countries.

**Table 2: Below are some examples of countries in Africa that have entrusted the Chief Justice positions to women**

Country	Name	Title	Year Appointed
<b>Kenya</b>	Justice Martha Koome (first female in the position)	Chief Justice	2021
<b>South Africa</b>	Justice Mandisa Maya (first female in the position)	Chief Justice	2024
<b>Ghana</b>	Justice Gertrude Araba Esqaba Sackey Torkornoo (first female in the position)	Chief Justice	2023
<b>Liberia</b>	Justice Sie-A-Nyene Gyapay Yuoh	Chief Justice	2022
<b>Rwanda</b>	Rt. Hon. Justice MUKANTAGANZWA Domitilla	Chief Justice	2024

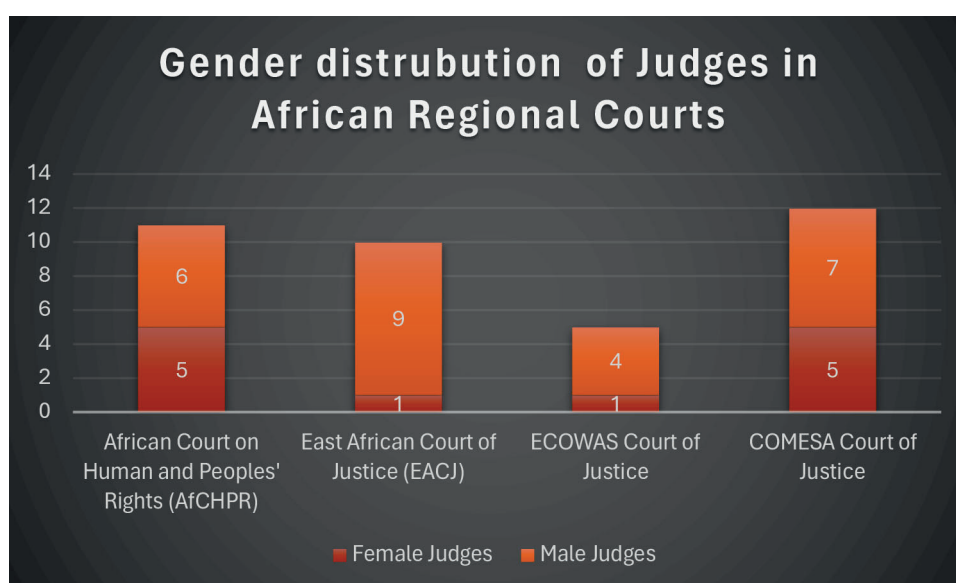
## Distribution of women judges in African Regional courts

The African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights (AfCHPR) demonstrates a commendable progress to gender balance, with five of its eleven judges being women (approximately 45%) and a female Vice President. Similarly, the COMESA Court of Justice has a strong female representation, with five women among twelve judges (approximately 41.7%), and is led by a woman, Judge **President Hon. Lady Justice Lombe P. Chibesakunda of Zambia**.



The East African Court of Justice (EACJ) reveals a significant gender imbalance, with only one female judge among ten, approximately 10% within the appellate and first division courts. However, it is noteworthy that this sole female judge, Hon. Lady Justice Anita Mugeni, holds the position of Vice President of the Court.

Similarly, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice reflects continued inequality, with just one female judge out of five, accounting for 20% female representation on the bench.



*Gender Distribution of judges in African Regional Courts; Data sourced from official Institutional websites*

## Leadership in Bar Associations/Law Societies

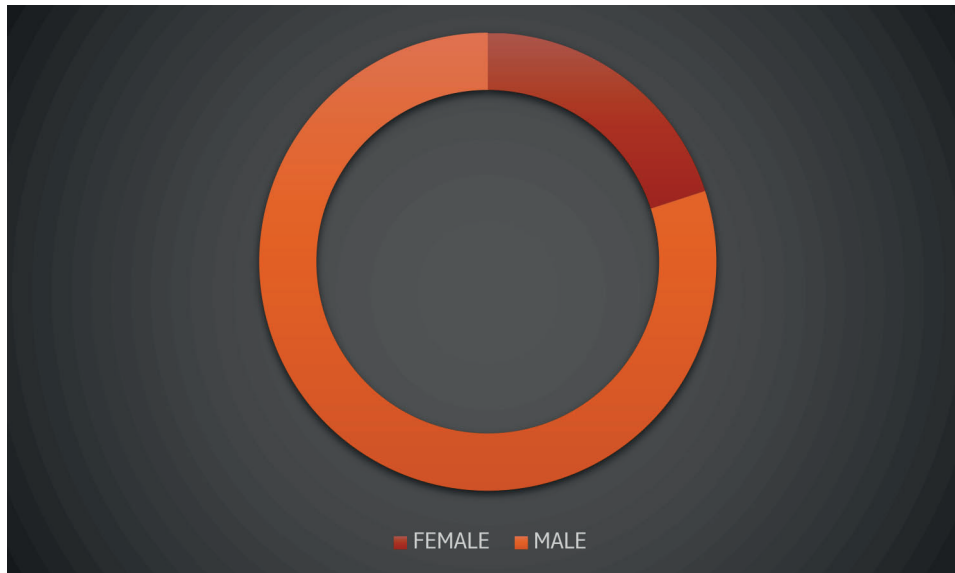
Bar associations and Law societies are responsible for regulating legal practice, upholding professional standards, advocating for lawyers' interests, and often influencing legal policy and reform. Therefore, the representation of women in the leadership of these bodies is a vital indicator of their influence and recognition within the broader legal community.

**Table 3: Female-led bar association and Law societies**

Country	Body	Leader	Source
Kenya	Law Society of Kenya	Faith Odhiambo	<a href="https://www.lsk.or.ke/">https://www.lsk.or.ke/</a>
Ghana	Ghana Bar Association	Efua Ghartey	<a href="https://www.ghanabar.org/">https://www.ghanabar.org/</a>
Ivory Coast	Bar Association of Ivory Coast	Florence Loan-Messan	<a href="https://web.ordredesavocats.ci/le-conseil-de-lordre/">https://web.ordredesavocats.ci/le-conseil-de-lordre/</a>

*Disclaimer; Statistics and data may not be conclusive as it is based on online reviews that might not be updated. Data as of July 2025 is based on publicly available information for the selected countries; bodies; websites*





### Leadership Gender Distribution in Bar association/ law societies

Among the 15 bar associations/societies surveyed (Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Rwanda, Zambia, Egypt, Namibia, Angola, Malawi, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ivory Coast, Cameroon, and Chad) only 3 are currently led by women equating to only **20%** female leadership. While this outcome indicates a growing acceptance of women's leadership within legal professional bodies, it also poses a continued need for strategies to foster gender parity at the highest levels of the legal profession.







“ It is important to have women in leadership positions as it affirms the equal worth and value of women in the society. We are coming from a past where women’s ability and capability was not recognized. This denied women an opportunity to pursue their dreams and achieve their potential. Having an increasing number of women ascend to leadership position reverses this legacy of discrimination and exclusion of women from decision-making spaces.”

– **The Honorable Justice Martha Koome,**  
Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court of Kenya





## CHAPTER 3

# Reporting Law & Justice – A guide for Journalists

**R**eporting on law and justice requires journalists to navigate ethical, professional, and legal complexities to ensure accuracy and fairness. This involves understanding court procedures, legal terminology, and the importance of protecting sources while upholding journalistic principles.

Journalists reporting on legal issues touching on gender issues like gender-based violence and violence against women and girls, require an even more sophisticated understanding of legal processes. This is essential for reporting with a gender lens that is progressive and empowering for women and girls.

### Here's a breakdown of key aspects:

#### 1. Understanding the Legal System:

##### ■ Court Procedures:

Journalists need to understand how courts operate, including different types of hearings, the role of judges and lawyers, and the process of presenting evidence.

##### ■ Legal Terminology:

Familiarity with legal jargon is crucial for accurate reporting. Journalists should strive to understand and correctly use legal terms in their reporting.

##### ■ Access to Information:

Understanding laws related to access to information, such as freedom of information acts, is essential for gathering information about legal cases.

#### 2. Ethical Considerations:

##### ■ Accuracy and Fairness:

Journalists must strive for accuracy in reporting legal proceedings, avoiding sensationalism and ensuring that all sides of a story are presented fairly.

##### ■ Objectivity:

Maintaining objectivity is crucial in legal reporting, avoiding personal biases or opinions that could influence the narrative.

##### ■ Confidentiality:

Protecting sources is paramount. Journalists should be prepared to protect the identity of sources who request anonymity, especially when dealing with sensitive legal matters.



- **Privacy:**

Balancing the public's right to know with the privacy rights of individuals involved in legal cases is a key ethical challenge.

- **Avoiding Prejudice:**

Journalists should avoid language that could be seen as prejudiced against or discriminatory towards any party involved in a legal case.

### 3. Safety and Security:

- **Physical Safety:**

Journalists covering legal proceedings, especially those involving sensitive or high-profile cases, may face threats to their safety. Taking necessary precautions and being aware of potential risks is key.

- **Digital Security:**

In the digital age, journalists need to be aware of potential cyber threats and take steps to protect their devices and online communications.

- **Legal Support:**

Journalists should be aware of the legal resources available to them, including organizations that provide support in cases of legal harassment or threats.

### 4. Specific Guidelines and Resources:

- **Court Reporting Guidelines:**

Many jurisdictions have developed specific guidelines for journalists covering courts. These guidelines may address issues such as access to courtrooms, reporting on specific types of cases, and interaction with court officials.

- **National Mechanisms for Safety:**

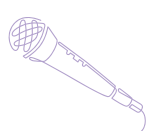
Some countries have established national mechanisms to ensure the safety and security of journalists. These mechanisms may include measures to prevent and respond to attacks on journalists.

- **Training and Education:**

Specialized training programs, such as the Judiciary's training for journalists on court reporting, can help journalists develop the skills and knowledge necessary for accurate and ethical legal reporting.

- **Legal Assistance:**

By adhering to ethical principles, understanding legal procedures, and prioritizing safety, journalists can effectively and responsibly report on law and justice.







“Any nation therefore that refuses the contributions or indeed does not actively work for and nurture the contribution of women in social, economic and national development is fighting, as it were, with one arm behind its back. To deny women the opportunities to thrive and offer their best to the nation is not only to weaken the attainment of their fundamental right to work... but also to deprive the nation of the talent, abilities and unique skills and values that women bring to the workplace.”

– **The Honorable Lady Chief Justice Gertrude Sackey Torkornoo,**  
Chief Justice of the Republic of Ghana





## CHAPTER 4

### The right narrative–framing matters!

#### Why Ethical Storytelling is important for the narrative framing of women in law leadership

*“Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispose and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.”*

– Chimamanda Ngozi adichie – *The danger of a single story*

In a world soaked in information overload devoid of ethical stopgaps and verification ethics, the role of journalists in their professional reportage is even much more dire. It is paramount that media practitioners rise above saturation of information overload and act as the sieve for truth, authenticity and achievable objectivity.

Authenticity and factual information flow are a mere mirage and thus the role of media is even more critical now than it was before.

In their story framing and narrative building, journalists must therefore, beyond their call to inform, educate and entertain the masses, seek to adopt very high standards of authenticity to safeguard their professionalism.

Journalists covering diverse platforms must therefore rise to the responsibility of ethical storytelling in their reportage

Storytelling is the art of conveying narratives, whether through words, visuals, or actions, to engage, inform, or entertain an audience. It involves crafting a story with a beginning, middle, and end, often evoking emotions and creating connections. Storytelling is a fundamental human activity used for cultural transmission, entertainment, and even persuasion.

To a larger extent, journalistic work encompasses extensive incidences of storytelling that can either build, shape or destroy a narrative. Pursuant to the intentional role to amplify the visibility of women in Law Leadership as espoused in this toolkit, it is therefore prudent for journalists to apply ethical story telling in their coverage in this regard.

#### Ethical Storytelling

Definition: [Ethical storytelling is described as an approach](#) and mindset honoring strong standards of consent, trust, sensitivity, and transparency as the guiding principles for sharing stories.





Ethical Story telling prioritizes the storytellers as the experts of their narratives and experiences and frames people by their aspirations and contributions rather than their challenges. This approach is conscious of power dynamics and actively pursues a deeper understanding and awareness of historical and cultural sensitivities to avoid harmful, stereotypical narratives.

The substantive tenets of ethical Storytelling for media practitioners to consider when reporting and/or telling a story should not be overlooked.

The principles capture the underlying basis of journalism in terms of truth and objectivity.

- Consent
- Honesty
- Trust
- Accuracy
- Transparency
- Empathy

### **Infusing Ethical Storytelling into our narratives and media reportage on women in Law Leadership**

Most media coverage on women in law leadership or in any leadership spectrum for that matter is often tinted in stereotypes, cultural and social perceptions and misguided notions that do little to expand the progression of women's emancipation. Media houses, just like any other branch of society are sometimes awash with both patriarchal and detrimental perception that often impacts negatively on the career progression of women in professions such Law.

In this regard, journalists are required to uphold the highest standards of professional analysis and understanding when executing their role especially in scenarios tinged with misogynistic patriarchal perceptions.

### **How media reports women in Law**

#### **Case study 1:**

A senior female Legal Counsel has been appointed by the government of the day to manage a critical docket on implementation of Law Reforms. She sets into the office rolling out the terms and conditions without applying a gender lens into the nuances of diverse case scenarios at play. Several women's rights organizations advocating gender equality and women's emancipation are up in arms against the senior counsel. They call her out on her lack of gender consciousness in her brazen approach to ensuring a balanced and gender conscious process.

As a journalist ascribed to reporting gender issues, what would be the framing of your special report coverage of the senior counsel?



### ***Toolkit discussion point:***

- Will you primarily focus on her credentials and professional expertise and achievements?
- Will you magnify her failings as a woman in Law and lack of a gender-lens approach to her work?

### ***Case Study 2***

2. A case of multiple failures of the government of the day to instill an Affirmative Action Law has landed on the judicial jurisdiction of three Supreme Court judges; Two of whom are women. The highly politicized case is not devoid of political infiltration and influences. The three judge panel is highly scrutinized especially by women's rights advocates and gender rights activists. You are a gender-Conscious journalists reporting on this court process asked to do a general round-up of the judges handling this important Court process. Outline your strategic critical path to take when planning this analysis as a journalist on this assignment.

### ***Toolkit discussion points:***

- Will you capitalize on the fact that the three-member bench is made up of two female judges?
- Will you push the Affirmative Action Agenda from the perspective of "women in Law Leadership" like the two supreme Court judges?
- Will you outline the political intrigues infiltrating the case without solely focusing on the gender of the three judges?





“ We must advocate for the dissolution of Parliament if it fails to address this glaring imbalance. Women deserve a seat at the table and an equal say in the laws that govern our nation” {...“I celebrate the Law Society of Kenya today because they saw me fit as a leader, not as a woman to get this position... We have capable, competent women out here...}”

– **Faith Odhiambo,**  
President, Law Society of Kenya







## CHAPTER 5

### Shifting the Language Narrative

In media coverage and reportage, language is everything. How the stories are woven, explained and presented is extremely important for the pursued purpose of media coverage. The progression of women in Law and in Law leadership is largely impacted by how they are presented in media and how that sustained presentation impacts on their reputation as substantive women leaders in Law.

When journalists desist from applying a gender-lens on their reportage and in turn get sucked-up in social and cultural perceptions that diminish and discriminate on women, the ripple effect is the systematic continuous oppression of one gender – women suffer. Language, therefore, and how it is used and how it is delivered becomes integral on how journalists report on women in Law.

Journalists must always strive for inclusivity in their reportage without getting caught up in social perceptions and patriarchal nuances that may perpetuate gender discrimination. In this regard, it is important for journalists to strive to re-write the gender-stereotyped language as often used and shift to more gender inclusive presentation. Gender conscious journalists will automatically detect exclusionary language and thus will strive to shift the narrative into more inclusive prose.

For example, ***“say Chairperson instead of Chairman ”***

#### Some Language Narrative Shifting Examples:

Gender Exclusionary Language	Gender Inclusive Language
1. Chairman	Chairperson
2. Policeman	Police
3. Watchman	Security Guard
4. Mankind	Humankind
5. Manpower	Personnel
6. Spokesman	Spokesperson
7. Middlemen	Broker/Mediator
8. Layman	Layperson
9. Man-made	Human-made/Artificial
10. Craftsman	Craftsperson
11. Handyman	Handyperson
12. Cameraman	Photographer/Videographer
13. Freshman	“Fresher”



Gender Exclusionary Language	Gender Inclusive Language
14. Clergyman	Clergy
15. Manhunt	"Search operation"
16. Headmaster	Principal / Head-teacher
17. Fireman	Firefighter
18.Right-Hand Man	Assistant/Aid
19. Wingman	Winger
20. King-Maker	Powerbroker
21. Ombudsman	Public Intermediary /defender
22. Mailman/ Postman	Mail carrier / Postal worker
23.Countrymen	Citizen
24. Gateman	Guard / Gatekeeper
25. Draftsman	Legal Drafter / Drafter
26.Statesman	Political Leader / Public Servant
27. Workman	Laborer
28. Salesman	Salesperson
29. Repairman	Technician
30. Barman	Bartender







“Go for it’. I get numerous emails and DMs on a daily from women either studying law, thinking of studying law or have studied it but feel stuck. My advice to them is to go for the job, go for that promotion, go for that company you have always wanted to start. With all of that, lets unite and be one and assist each other and those that are around us. You will be surprised at how much the little you do can mean to someone else.”

– **Sinenhlanhla Mthembu,**  
Attorney and the Founder & Director of Passcara and Partners Incorporated (South Africa)





## CHAPTER 6

### Understanding Challenges faced by women in Law for effective media coverage

This media toolkit advances the intentionality of the media and media practitioners to understand the persistent challenges faced by women in Law from a gender perspective that impacts negatively on women in Law Leadership.

Unless the media understands and appreciates the realities of inequalities even within the legal platforms, coverage of women in law and women in law leadership will remain significantly skewed.

This tool kit has established a wide range of challenges faced by women in law in Africa that ought to be understood and put into perspective. These include structural, cultural, and political barriers that obstruct their ascent into leadership spaces.

#### STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES:

This toolkit emphasizes the need for the media to understand that for as long as women in law face the following structural challenges, then the ascent into women in law leadership will remain minimal.

- **Limited Access to Resources and Opportunities:** Women mostly lack equitable access to important training, mentorship, and networking opportunities compared to men. Education opportunities are still largely unbalanced between men and women pursuing Law. Even though unsubstantiated data reveals that more women are enrolling into Law, the opportunities remain elusive for most women.
- **Discriminatory Practices:** Unfair selection processes, gender stereotyping, and unequal pay contribute immensely to the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and partnerships within law firms. The winding gender pay-gap even within the law firms is as wide as it is in other jurisdictions. Male lawyers are still much better remunerated than their female counterparts.
- **Lack of Family-Friendly Policies:** Factors like inadequate parental leave and childcare provisions, limits women in advancing their careers. Many women in Law practice have experienced delayed childbearing for fear of motherhood “interrupting” their career growth. Others have fizzled off from significant roles in Law firms when they opted to choose family life.
- **Underrepresentation in decision-making:** Exclusion of women from leadership spaces within legal institutions and professional bodies, obstruct their capacity to shape policies and practices crucial to them. It is important for media to



note that the data is improving gradually for women in Law Leadership albeit at a much slower pace. Much still needs to be done to bridge this leadership gap.

## CULTURAL CHALLENGES:

The media must be cognizant of the general as well as specific cultural implications that deter women in law from significantly attaining higher achievements and ascending into leadership roles. Culture across all African countries is one of the major drawbacks to women's empowerment and emancipation. While covering women in Law and in Law leadership, the media must always have the background reality of cultural dominance that may be a deterrent.

- **Traditional Gender Roles and Societal Expectations:** Prioritizes women's domestic responsibilities over their professional ambitions, hence coerced to choose between family and career. In this regard, the narrative framing by media while covering women in Law plays a major role.
- **Cultural Biases and Stereotypes:** Leadership is often associated with masculine traits, therefore perceiving women as less competent, irrespective of their qualifications and experience. A profession such as Law that has always been male-dominated will therefore be hostile towards women who break the ceiling to join in. Women in Law therefore must work twice as hard to attain "acceptance" in this male-dominated field.
- **Scarcity of Role Models and Mentors:** Underrepresentation of women in leadership positions can make it challenging for aspiring female lawyers to find mentors to guide them. This toolkit established the scarcity of verifiable data to outline the actual analysis of women in top law leadership positions. Lack of this data marks a lack of appreciation of the strides made by women in Law and will therefore negatively impact on mentorship and transition processes for women in Law Leadership.
- **Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Violence:** Women lawyers may face sexual harassment and gender-based violence in the workplace, which is a hindrance to pursue career advancement cases of sexual harassment and abuse on women in the legal profession continue to be reported by the media.

## POLITICAL CHALLENGES:

- **Lack of Political Will:** Governments and legal institutions may lack the political will to implement and enforce policies and initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality within the legal profession. While reporting on women in Law, it is important for media to apply this lens to appropriately direct responsibility as mandated.
- **Weak Enforcement of Laws and Policies:** Despite the existence of policies protecting women's rights, their effectiveness can be compromised by weak enforcement. This will impact on women in Law as well. When retrogressive





gender-discriminatory policies even in the court corridors are left unchecked, it is the women in Law who bear the brunt.

- **Limited Participation in Legal and Policy Reform:** This is because of limited access to decision-making platforms and political influence by female lawyers. The media must be alive to the fact that many of these decision-making positions and opportunities for women in Law have either never existed or have been minimal and out of reach for most women. This is the patriarchal design that has entrenched the discrimination of women in Law for eons.
- **Exclusion from Justice Sector Governance:** When women lawyers are absent from these important governance platforms and processes, it highly contributes to their inability in shaping legal frameworks and processes.

## How can the Media collaborate with Women in Law to strengthen opportunities for women's leadership in Law?

*The Media and women in Law must both be instrumental in advocating, amplifying and ensuring the following:-*

### 1. CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP SKILLS:

**Targeted Leadership Training Programs** designed for women in law, focusing on strategic thinking, negotiation, advocacy, and financial management to equip them for senior roles in legal spaces. *These training programs must also include media practitioners to ensure the building of rapport between the two professions.*

**Executive Coaching Initiatives** for emerging and established women leaders to refine their leadership style, navigate complex professional environments, enhance their public speaking and, decision-making capabilities. *The media shall in turn amplify the visibility of these women in Law with sustained meaningful coverage.*

**Strategic Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs** that pair aspiring women leaders with prominent mentors and sponsors who can offer career guidance, advocacy, and access to opportunities.

**Enhanced Networking Platforms** like events, associations, and online communities for women in law, fostering peer support, knowledge exchange, and collaborative avenues across different sectors and regions. *Here collaboration with media actors and platforms is key.*

### 2. DISMANTLING SYSTEMIC BARRIERS:

**Proactive Bias Mitigation Strategies** through data-driven methods to identify, measure, and combat biases in legal hiring, promotion, evaluations, and client allocation, ensuring merit-based advancement. *This data is instrumental for journalists to invoke and use substantively to back their coverage. Data-driven journalism drives credibility of coverage.*



**Progressive Work-Life Balance Policies** that promote flexible work arrangements, parental leave for both parents, and accessible childcare solutions within legal institutions, thereby retaining female talent and supporting their career progression while acknowledging family responsibilities.

**Strategic Stereotype Disruption through** campaigns and educational initiatives that challenge gender stereotypes within the legal fraternity and society, showcasing successful female legal leaders and promoting diverse role models. *This will be complete with media partnership that gives strategic coverage of the above initiatives.*

**Fostering Inclusive Cultures** within legal environments, where diversity is recognized, and women's input is consistently valued, respected, and given equal visibility. *This equal visibility becomes a reality with the constant collaboration between the media and the legal practitioners.*

### **3. ADVOCACY AND POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:**

**Catalyzing Legal and Regulatory Reforms:** Advocate, through media coverage, for legal frameworks and policies that promote gender equality within the legal profession, including fair access to justice and legal aid. *Media plays a major role in pushing these policies through.*

**Strategic Use of Gender Quotas and Targets** for judicial appointments, legal aid board memberships, and leadership positions within all legal bodies. *In her watchdog role, media can ensure that these gender quotas are met and there is reigning equality in judicial appointments*

**Driving Increased Representation by** identifying, nurturing, and promoting qualified women for leadership roles across all facets of the legal landscape. *This becomes even more impactful when the media steadily rises to the occasion to give equal coverage on this.*

### **4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE:**

**Public Awareness Campaigns that highlight** the vital role of women's leadership in strengthening the rule of law, improving access to justice, and fostering democratic governance across Africa.

**Strengthening Women's Legal Organizations** through collaboration and capacity building to empower them to be stronger advocates and support networks for female legal professionals.

**Community-Based Mentorship and Inspiration through** initiatives that connect established women in law with aspiring female students and young professionals.



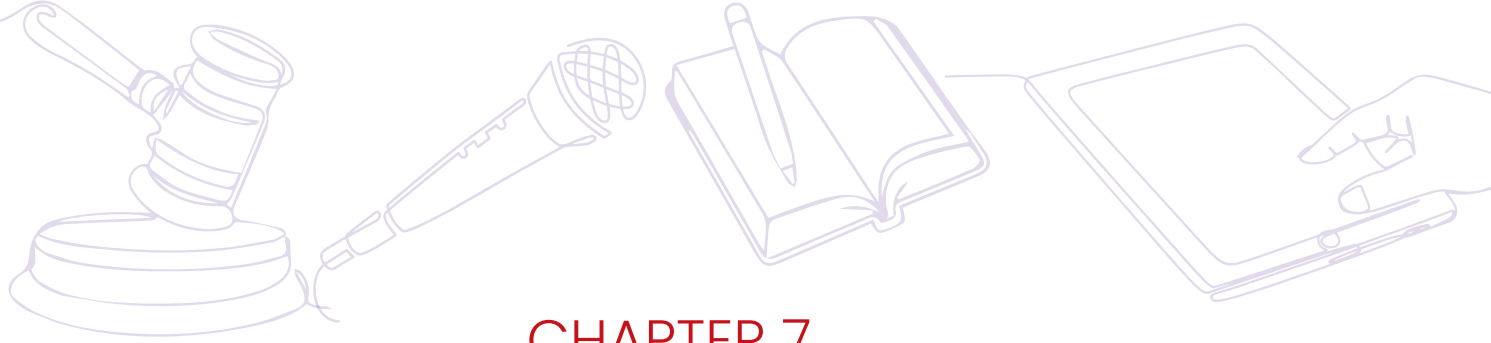


“ People who start law firms at a young age aim for small spaces in the city but I never believed in small things. I believe that if the mighty can achieve, why not me? They also have blood and I don't want to look at my limitations or history because I believe in the uniqueness of everyone's thumbprint.”

– Phiona Mirembe,  
Ugandan lawyer and founder of Mirembe and  
Company Advocates







## CHAPTER 7

### Gender-sensitive Reporting

#### Ten ways for the media to effectively cover Women in Law and women in Law Leadership:

What is Gender-Sensitive Reporting? *Gender-sensitive reporting* is the practice of producing media content in a way which is **sensitive to gender inequalities** and portrays women and men **fairly**.

Gender-sensitive reporting should be considered a key principle of professional media production, similar to values of accuracy and balance. Gender must be considered at all levels of news production: from the editorial department where decisions are made about what stories to cover, to the field where stories are gathered.

Gender-sensitive reporting aims to portray both women and men accurately and fairly, avoiding stereotypes and promoting parity in media representation. This involves using inclusive language, seeking diverse perspectives, and challenging gender norms that perpetuate inequality.

In the legal field, the very same patriarchal tendencies are perpetuated against women pegged on diverse, social, cultural and structural influences. *When media reneges on its role to watch-dog over discriminatory influences in its reportage, then the women in Law suffer these consequences of gender discrimination.*

#### The Media Shall therefore:-

##### 1. Ensure Fair Visibility for Women and Men:

- Go beyond featuring women in Law as mere “additions” to stories. Actively include their perspectives in decision-making processes and portray them as active agents in development. Women in Law have come a long way to actualization of their achievements in a profession that was largely male-dominated.
- Recognize that gender is a factor for both women and men, and that gender roles impact how both genders think, live, and act. This is a critical conscious understanding that shapes objectivity when covering women in Law.

##### 2. Challenge Gender Stereotypes:

- Actively avoid perpetuating harmful stereotypes about women and men. This goes into language and presentation of the nature and stature of women in Law.



- Use non-stereotypical colors and imagery to represent both genders.
- Portray men and women in a variety of roles and situations beyond traditional gender roles.

### 3. Use Gender-Responsive Language:

- Employ gender-inclusive language, including using singular “they” and gender-neutral job titles. Avoid gendered language:
- Use gender-neutral terms when possible. For example, instead of “chairman,” use “chairperson” or “chair”.
- Use inclusive pronouns: Instead of “he” as a generic pronoun, use “they” or rephrase the sentence for clarity.
- Be mindful of descriptions:
- Avoid using adjectives or descriptions that are gender-specific unless relevant to the context.
- Be mindful of the language used to describe women and men, ensuring it is respectful and avoids perpetuating stereotypes. \*Women In Law are sadly often presented as aggrieved and tough in that those without these characteristics are somehow belittled by media stereotypes.

### 4. Representation and Stereotypes:

- **Challenge stereotypes:**  
Avoid perpetuating harmful gender stereotypes in stories, images, and captions.
- **Seek diverse perspectives:**  
Include a range of voices and experiences from both women and men in your reporting.
- **Depict women in non-traditional roles:**  
Show women in leadership positions, professional settings, and other areas where they are traditionally underrepresented.
- **Balance representation:**  
Strive for equal representation of women and men in media coverage.
- **Portray Diversity:**  
Acknowledge the diverse experiences of women and men from different backgrounds.  
  
Recognize that gender intersects with other factors like race, class, and sexual orientation, and that these intersections shape individuals’ experiences.



## 5. Avoid victim-blaming:

- **Survivor-centered approach:**  
When reporting on violence against women and girls, prioritize the safety and well-being of survivors.
- **Avoid victim-blaming:**  
Focus on the actions of perpetrators and avoid language that places responsibility on survivors.
- **Respect privacy:**  
Protect the privacy of survivors and avoid sensationalizing or exploiting their stories.
- Focus on presenting women and men as active participants in development, rather than solely as victims. It is now evident that women in Law both regionally and globally have made notable strides and are claiming substantive decision-making roles. Their role therefore should not be underestimated in media coverage.
- When reporting on violence, be sensitive to the survivor and avoid language that could be interpreted as blaming them for the violence they experienced.

## 5. Portray Diversity:

- Acknowledge the diverse experiences of women and men from different backgrounds.
- Recognize that gender intersects with other factors like race, class, and sexual orientation, and that these intersections shape individuals' experiences.

## 6. Present Facts, Not Judgments:

- Focus on presenting factual information and avoid subjective opinions or judgments. Media often lapses into the persona and individual traits of a subject while covering women and in this regard women in Law Leadership. Attacking women's physiques, marital status, personality traits is common and quite retrogressive.
- Support claims with evidence and quotes from relevant sources.

## 7. Be Open to Feedback:

- Be willing to listen to feedback on your reporting and make adjustments as needed.
- Seek input from diverse sources, including women's organizations and gender experts.



## 8. Recognize Gender as an Important Factor:

- Understand that gender shapes the experiences of both women and men.
- Consider how gender dynamics influence the issues you are reporting on.

## 9. Go Beyond Individual Stories:

- When reporting on gender inequality, explore the systemic issues that contribute to it. Focusing solely on individual stories will veer into subjective traits that generalize and impact negatively on the emancipation of an entire gender.
- Analyze the role and impact of gender relations in the situations you are covering.

## 10. Ensure Equal Representation:

- Seek out diverse sources, including women, to ensure that a variety of perspectives are represented in your reporting.
- Challenge the tendency to rely on a limited range of voices and perspectives.  
*\*Remember, the dangers of a single story – Chimamanda Ngozi adichie*

Additionally, educate journalists and media professionals on gender equality and how to report on these issues effectively. Promote collaboration; Work with women's organizations and gender equality experts to improve reporting practices. Continuously evaluate and improve: Regularly review reporting practices and adapt guidelines to address evolving issues and challenges.

By adhering to these guidelines, media can play a vital role in promoting gender equality and challenging harmful stereotypes that deter the progression of women in Law and in Law Leadership.







“ I’ve sat in rooms where women were the minority and their voices the last to be heard Today, I sit here not just to be seen- but to make sure no woman in law ever feels invisible again.”

– Efua Gharthey,  
President of the Ghana Bar Association  
(GBA) in September 2024





## CHAPTER 8

# Misogynistic questions the media must avoid!

### Questions the media should avoid asking women in leadership roles or work-related interviews

Journalists have a peculiar line of thinking when conducting interviews. Gender dispensation does play a role, either knowingly or unknowingly that media often engenders its questioning streaking to a point of being detrimental to a particular gender.

Women in Law and in Law Leadership have not been spared this retrogressive interviewing process which more often than no

The toolkit opines that the substantive role of media to pursue objectivity and balanced coverage demands that both genders must enjoy fair and equal treatment even through interviewing sessions. Sadly though, most lawyers and legal practitioners just like women in other professions have had to deal with patriarchal misogynistic questions which are detrimental to our pursuit for gender equality.

When interviewing or reporting on women in leadership or professional roles, certain questions and topics can inadvertently sideline women's achievements, perpetuate harmful stereotypes, or imply that their gender is more relevant than their expertise.

### Here are categories of questions the media should avoid:

**Ps. note: Men are hardly ever asked these questions.**

#### 1. Questions about Appearance or Fashion:

- "Who are you wearing?" or "Tell us about your outfit."
- "How do you manage to look so good while leading a company?"
- *Why it is problematic: This trivializes their professional role by shifting focus from their intellect and accomplishments to their physical appearance, a standard rarely applied to men in similar positions.*

#### 2. Excessive focus on work-life balance or family life:

- "How do you balance your demanding career with your family responsibilities?"
- "Is it hard to be away from your children/husband while working?"
- "Do you plan to have children/more children?"





- *Why it is problematic: While work-life balance is a universal challenge (both men and women are parents and manage families), these questions are disproportionately directed at women, implying that family obligations are primarily a female burden or a potential conflict with their professional commitment. They can also be intrusive.*

### 3. Questions stereotyping leadership style or emotionality:

- "Are you too aggressive/emotional/soft in your leadership?"
- "How do you manage to be so assertive without being seen as 'bossy'?"
- *Why it is problematic: These questions often stem from gendered biases about how women "should" behave in power, scrutinizing their style in ways male leaders are not. They can force women to justify their natural leadership traits.*

### 4. Implying tokenism or diversity quotas:

- "Do you think you got this role because of diversity initiatives?"
- "How does it feel to be the 'first' or 'only' woman in this position?" (We must move on "beyond the firsts!")
- *Why it is problematic: These questions undermine a woman's merit and imply that her success is not solely due to her qualifications, but rather a result of a quota or a symbolic gesture.*

### 5. Questions about marital status or personal relationships:

- "Is your husband supportive of your career?"
- "How do you find time for a relationship?"
- *Why it's problematic: These are highly personal and irrelevant to their professional capacity. They are rarely, if ever, asked of male leaders, highlighting a double standard.*

### 6. Focusing on gender-specific challenges without broader context:

- "What unique challenges do you face as a woman in this industry?" (without acknowledging systemic issues or asking about general industry challenges first); Framing the content within the context is key here)
- *Why it is problematic: While discussing systemic barriers is important, framing every challenge through a gender lens can reduce their experiences to their gender, rather than their professional acumen in navigating complex environments. The focus should be on the systemic issue, not just the individual's gender.*



## 7. Subtly Challenging Authority or Decision-Making:

- “Did you have to work harder than your male colleagues to prove yourself?” (*Implying an inherent disadvantage that needs constant overcoming*)
- “How do you get men to listen to you?”
- *Why it is problematic: Whilst seen as presenting the reality of challenges faced by women in leadership positions, these questions can subtly question a woman’s inherent authority or competence, implying that her position is not naturally accepted or that she needs special strategies to command respect.*

## 8. “How does it feel to be a woman in X role?” (as the primary or leading question):

- *Why it is problematic: While sometimes well-intentioned, if this is the primary focus, it can reduce her identity to her gender rather than her extensive experience, skills, and vision for the role. It can be appropriate if it leads to a deeper discussion about systemic issues, but not as a standalone, leading question.*

## 9. Comparisons to male predecessors/Counterparts based on gender:

- “Are you going to bring a more ‘feminine’ touch to the leadership?”
- *Why it is problematic: This forces a gendered comparison rather than evaluating a leader on their individual merits, strategies, and performance.*

## 10. Any question that distracts from professional achievements, vision, or strategy:

- If a question doesn’t directly relate to their work, their industry, their vision, their challenges, or their strategic approach (in a gender-neutral way), it likely falls into the category of questions to avoid.

By avoiding these types of questions, the media can contribute to a more equitable representation of women in leadership, allowing their accomplishments and expertise to take center stage.



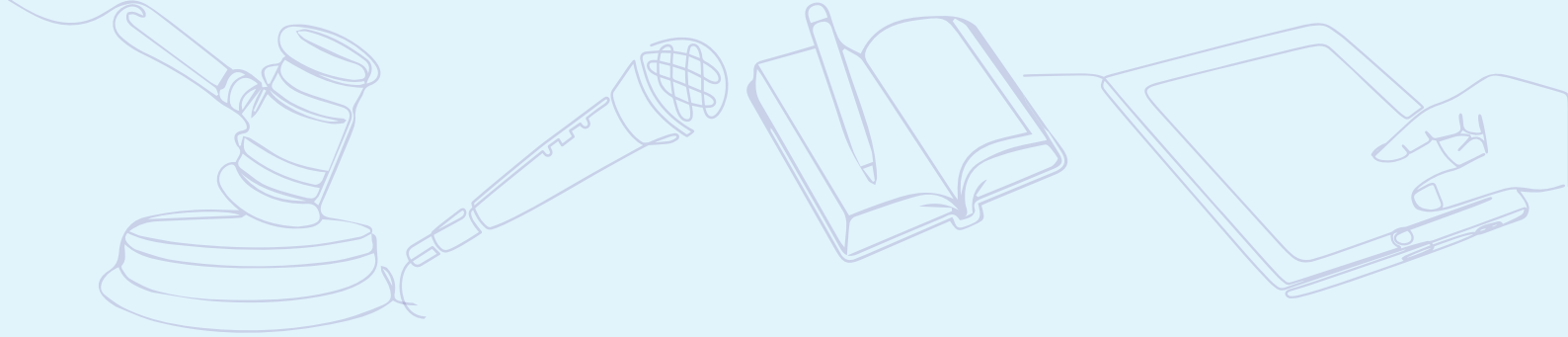




“ Don’t take a backward step. Don’t shy away from taking up space in the world. Don’t assume you are too junior or that people are too busy. Reach out and network.”

– Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala,  
Director, General of the World Trade Organization.  
An accomplished Economist & Lawyer.





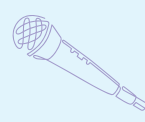
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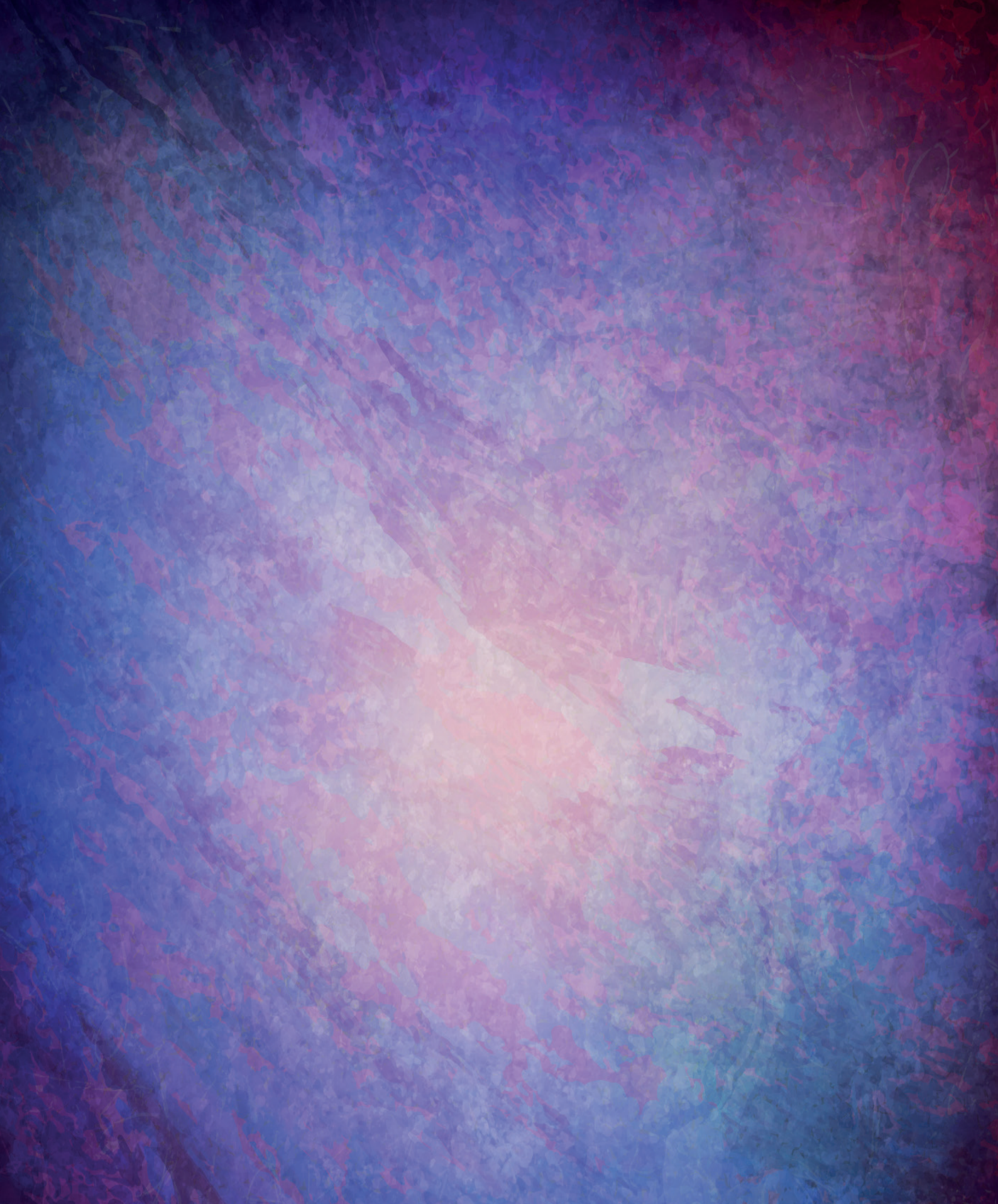


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