



GELC

GENDER EQUALITY IN LAW CAMPAIGN

THE GENDER EQUALITY IN LAW CAMPAIGN OF THE INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN LAW

Keynote Speech

By Chief Justice of The Republic of Ghana,
Justice Gertrude Sackey Torkornoo

Preface

The Gender Equality in Law Campaign (GELC) is a Pan-African initiative by the Institute for African Women in Law (IAWL) to raise awareness about the challenges women in the legal profession face. The Campaign uses evidence-based research, stakeholder engagement and public advocacy to ignite policy reforms for equitable and women-inclusive institutional practices and policies that support women's career development and leadership.

This brochure includes an excerpt from the speech delivered by Her Ladyship, the Chief Justice of the Republic of Ghana, Justice Gertrude Sackey Torkornoo, who officially launched the campaign in Accra, Ghana. Her words offer a compelling call to action, urging all stakeholders to engage actively in this mission for justice and equality.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.africanwomeninlaw.com/gelc>



Thank you very much for the honor of inviting me to open the Gender Equality in Law Campaign here in Accra. I deeply appreciate the Institute for African Women in Law, its work, objectives, projects and achievement and so I am delighted to be part of what is commencing in Ghana today. I salute all the lady lawyers and Judges and male champions who have lent not only their hearts, like me, to this campaign, but also their hands to support Professor Jarpa Dawuni's team in IAWL to bring today's event into fruition. Thank you, one and all.

A campaign is an organized course of action to achieve a goal. It demands that its activators work in an organized way, introducing several necessary interventions that are framed towards the objective and goals of the campaign. And the issues of achieving a fair and healthy work place for both women and men are foundational and critical to achieving all the objectives of our constitutional democracy.

the campaign to be launched today must never be perceived as one that seeks to bolster the needs of the female gender. It is one that can only assist to strengthen the pillars of justice and the rule of law.

I recall with appreciation the strong voice introduced by the IAWL into the discourses of the Ghanaian judiciary from 2018 about the need to make more deliberate room for gender parity in the appointment of Judges, and Chief Justices.

That discourse continues to bear fruit, and I daresay that the voice of IAWL contributed to the destruction of barriers against the appointment of women Chief Justices in Ghana.

As should be well known, the first Chief Justice of the Gold Coast was Sir David Patrick Chambers, appointed in 1876. It took more than one hundred and thirty years of male Chief Justices for the first female Chief Justice of Ghana to be appointed in 2007.

As disturbingly long as this was, it is important to clarify that the slow march of women's involvement in the law only started from the early years of the march towards independence. Justice Annie Jiagge, who is quoted as saying "*Injustice eats me internally. I get very restless when I come in touch with it*", was the first Ghanaian woman to become a judge in Ghana, and the first female president of the Ghanaian Court of Appeal.

She joined the Ghanaian Bench as a Magistrate in 1953 and retired in 1983 as a Justice of the Court of Appeal. This was more than a century after Sir Chambers became Chief Justice in the Gold Coast. Another icon of this journey is Her Ladyship Justice Bamford-Addo who was the first female Justice of the Supreme Court of Ghana and served on the apex court from 1991 until 2004, when she retired voluntarily. Five years later, she was elected unopposed as the Speaker of the Fourth Parliament of the Fourth Republic of Ghana.

Two years prior to Her Ladyship Bamford Addo making history as the first woman speaker of Parliament, and fifteen years after she had shattered the glass ceiling of becoming the first woman on the Supreme Court of Ghana, Her Ladyship Georgina Theodora Wood, had been installed as the first woman Chief Justice of the Republic, in 2007. Over these years, the numbers of women in the Judiciary grew slowly but steadily.

Seemingly imperceptibly but clearly, the tipping point on the end of the phenomenon of unequal gender representation in the legal and judicial sector of Ghana is happening. In less than twenty years after the appointment of Chief Justice Wood, my presence as the third woman Chief Justice signifies a nation that has made room for women at the head of the administration of law in the nation. Equally worthy of relating is the presence of Mrs Betty Mould Iddrisu and Mrs Marietta Brew Appiah Oppong at the head of the Ministry of Justice from the years 2010.

From this modest history of women's involvement in the formal legal system, and although it would seem that it took a time coming, Ghana now seems to be heading steadily towards a no holds barred journey when it comes to the contribution of women in the administration of law and justice.

There is a significantly increasing representation of women in Ghana's Judiciary. The past four years have seen a very definite shift in the number of Judges/Magistrates in the Judiciary.

In 2019, the numbers of women Judges stood at 138. This number had increased to more than a hundred more by the 2022/2023 Legal Year. In that year, the Judiciary recorded a total of 218 females signifying an increase of approximately 58% in the numbers of women who joined the Judiciary within the four year period.

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Ghana's Judiciary is fast and strongly getting feminized and more and more women are driving the administration of justice.

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Clearly, the strong gains made in the presence of women in the administration of law and justice in the nations must invite campaigns as is being launched today.

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Achieving gender parity and fairness in the work place is a goal deserving of sustained campaigns, and the surge of women in the work space of the law must be enabled and guided to provide a stronger, healthier, and more beneficial legal and judicial sector that realizes the rule of law for the entire community.

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The work model of IAWL in activating evidence-based research to identify the points of weakness in institutional practices and policies that challenge the positive development of the careers of women in the legal space, as well as the actualization of their leadership potential is the critical tool needed by policy makers, the nation that the sector serves, and the legal community itself to shape the best trajectories for administration of justice.

With the evidence realized, stakeholder engagement and public advocacy to ignite needed policy reforms are also the very tools required for compelling needed change. Stake holder engagements assist to bring out all the variants of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that can drive or stultify needed change. Knowing them, and addressing them with critical initiatives and interventions are the required actions that will produce change.

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Organizations such as the IAWL who are committed and focused on driving the agenda of gender equality and seeking the best interests of women in law therefore provide the most critical partnerships that leadership need and I unhesitatingly lend my heart and hand to your work in Ghana.

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Should gender parity in the administration of law and justice in the nation make a difference in the quality of justice delivery for Ghana. I unreservedly believe so. The reasons are simple.

First, women undeniably make up half of humanity. The fifth out of seventeen goals settled as the Sustainable Development Goals of our world, launched in 2015 by the United Nation is the goal of gender equality.

If work places are to express the natural order of human living, where both men and women have the same opportunities, there will no doubt be the maximum productivity required to produce the peaceful and sustainable development envisaged by the United Nations in crafting the Sustainable Development Goals.

The SDG Goal number 16 of achieving Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and the African Union Agenda 2063 Goal # 17 of Gender Equality express the same objectives.

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.

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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 supported by article 24 of the 1992 Constitution, but also to deprive the nation of the talent, abilities and unique skills and values that women bring to the work place.

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Two months ago, on April 8th, I had the privilege of launching my vision for my tenure as leader of the Judiciary, Judicial Service of Ghana and justice sector of the nation. I captioned it ‘LEADing Justice, a Strategic Framework For Increasing legality, ethics, assets, digitalization and due process’ in justice delivery.

My intention and work focus is to assiduously incorporate in institutional decision making, operational planning and delivery, deliberate steps to incorporate these five critical elements of law, ethical content, asset management, and digitalization for efficient justice delivery in our current times.

These deliberately set goals will not only help to guide work, but also measure progress in the achievement of the desired changes for intellectual depth in work, skill guidance towards diligence and integrity, and use of available tools for efficient and effective justice delivery, instead of outdated manual models of work.

My hope is that as justice delivery becomes guided with greater efficiency, women will feel enabled to give their best, despite the peculiar challenges that we face in our roles as child bearers and primary care givers of the human race.

It must be recognized that women in law and leadership continue to face unnecessary and daunting challenges on account of their gender. Gender bias, toxic approaches to competition in the social and work space often cause women to recoil from striving.

Negative comments and stereotypes can take a toll on mental health and self-esteem. Deliberate distortion of altruistic intentions when a leader proposes change can all affect the desire to persist in putting out our best. Nevertheless, we must remain steadfast in the commitment to law and justice, undeterred by external pressures.

The inescapable reality is that the current workplace, particularly in the context of the Judiciary, was primarily conceived and constructed without an awareness of the needs of working women. It is therefore incumbent upon women leaders to shape working spaces to better reflect the diverse needs of both gender.

Robust strategies must be formulated for resilience that allow the female presence to endure and give of its best to the judicial system and the legal profession.

The commitment to transforming the workplace into a more inclusive and equitable environment extends beyond any generation. Our current generation bears a profound responsibility to the younger generations of women who are watching and learning from our example,

just as the Annie Jiagge's, Joyce Bamford Addo's and Georgina Wood's have caused us to see that there is always room to excel, and sit at the top.

The obligation is not only to pave the way for the next generation, but also to make that path smoother and more accessible by breaking down the barriers, biases and outdated structures hindering prosperous working spaces by deliberate campaigns such as the work of IAWL expresses.

I must heartily commend the IAWL for setting itself up to support the work of formidable women in law across Africa and the African diaspora, and staying true and committed to its goal of becoming the focal point for addressing their challenges and issues.

On this note, it is my greatest honour and pleasure to declare the Gender Equality in Law Campaign duly open. Thank you very much.

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