



International Conference



Ensuring Equal Access to Justice for Victims of Violence and Abuse - Rule of Law in Action

27 – 29 November 2019

Cape Town

South Africa

WELCOME TO CAPE TOWN



It is our sincere pleasure to invite you to Ilitha Labantu International conference theme of "ensuring equal access to justice for victims of violence against women and girls - rule of law in action" underpins the need for collaboration to improve justice services and end violence against women. The Conference will inspire you with new knowledge in social work, advocacy, gender empowerment, judges, magistrate, police and policy formation. We are looking forward to seeing you in Cape Town, South Africa!!

Introduction

Access to justice is a fundamental principle of the rule of law. Yet, studies have shown that a higher proportion of women in rural areas and some urban areas do not have access to justice through the regular courts. We conceptualize "access to justice" in two ways; first, is the issue of accessibility to adjudicatory institutions such as statutory courts, house of chiefs, and traditional or religious courts. Second, the existence of rules, norms and laws that protect women's substantive rights. In legal pluralistic societies across the continent, customary courts operate side by side statutory courts, providing different opportunities and constraints for litigants who access these institutions. Access to these institutions are gendered to the extent that some existing rules, laws and policies restrict women's rights and deprive many of their right to fundamental human rights and dignities.

Existing evidence suggest that efforts being made to improve women's access to justice across the world are often biased towards the formal means the statutory courts. However, there exists a large sphere of informal means of accessing justice which is prevalent especially in the rural parts (deprived urban communities) and which is more easily accessed by the urban poor as well. These spaces are the traditional courts, chief courts and some religious courts where most matters arising within local communities often find redress and where women often find themselves seeking justice.

On the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of Ilitha Labantu together with the African Women Independent Forum, we will be hosting an international conference on "**Ensuring Equal Access to Justice for Victims of Violence against Women and Girls - Rule of Law in Action**" 27-29 November 2019, Cape Town, This conference will bring together prosecutors, Judges, police, the field's leading to domestic violence experts from across and chart the way forward for accelerating progress towards ending violence against women with the goal of highlight achievements in advancing women's access to justice, gender equality and women's empowerment by investing in rule of law and access to justice to survivors of abuse.

2019 marks Ilitha Labantu 30 years of addressing different forms of violence against women, through measures aimed at preventing violence, protecting victims, and prosecuting the perpetrators. Looking back at three decades of ground-breaking work to end violence against women and children. As an organisation we are proud to embark on its next 30 years and beyond. We have developed innovative ways to end violence against women, children, and families at home and communities. As an organisation that has been working for 30 years to combat violence against women and girls locally and provincially. We realized that women often find it more difficult than men to access the justice system. This may be the result of discriminatory norms and practices within the justice sector and society as a whole; or it may reflect inadequate training and/or a lack of awareness by actors within the justice sector.

Background

The United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development emphasizes the importance of access to justice for women and girls in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG, or Goal) on gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as Goal 16 on peace, justice and the rule of law. Despite important progress in some areas, realizing access to justice for women and girls is fraught with challenges.

Legal and policy frameworks continue to underpin discrimination against women and girls. For example, more than 150 countries have legal provisions that discriminate against women. Legal and policy frameworks too often fail to provide adequate provisions to prevent and address sexual and violence against women and children (VAWC) and stop impunity for violations. Some customary laws continue to have serious repercussions on women's rights, including discrimination and violence against women and girls.

Justice sector institutions frequently lack the capacity and orientation to deliver fair justice outcomes for women and girls, particularly victims of violence. Justice institutions may be unresponsive or geographically inaccessible, thus deterring women from seeking to claim their rights. Under-reporting and case attrition is particularly problematic in cases of violence against women. Judicial institutions that matter most to women such as family courts, specialized VAWC mechanisms, and small claims tribunals – may be under-resourced or even non-existent. The special challenges faced by women and girls in access to justice are further exacerbated in conflict and crisis situations.

In the area of governance and justice, the representation of women is low in the judiciary and other justice institutions in both the public and private sectors in every region. Behind the institutionalisation of the fight against violence against women, in addition to civil society's engagement international organisations, particularly the United Nations, and international involvement also had a significant role in developing legal and policy mechanisms to prevent violence against women and to protect victims. As a country, South Africa has ratified the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), SADC Declaration on Gender and Development and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international instruments. Since the ratification of these international instruments we have seen the passing of progressive legislations in line with our constitution and international and regional commitments.

Despite South Africa's remarkable political and social transformation and development gains since 1994, women still face many challenges in access justice systems. Although it is not possible to know the exact extent of the prevalence and occurrence patterns of violence against women in children in South Africa on the basis of official statistics, many academic studies, several reports and various researches conducted by state agencies, NGOs, experts and international agencies provide a general picture of the different types of violence to which South African women are subjected.

In these sources, while domestic violence and wife battering appear to be the most common forms of violence against women in general, femicide, standing at the intersection of multiple political and social dynamics, have

come to attract much attention in recent years. Young women's subjection to virginity checks has been identified as a form of gender based violence. Forced and early marriage is also more and more, considered under this caption rather than simply as tradition.

The rights of all people of South Africa are enshrined in the Constitution (Act No 108 of 1996), particularly Chapter 2 (the Bill of Rights). These rights affirm the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. The state and all its organs must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights. It protects in specific the rights of women and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex (LGBTQI) communities against all forms of GBV and discrimination.

It is therefore; on this basis that Ilitha Labantu was formed 30 years ago to eliminate the scourge of violence against women and girls in the townships and in rural areas. This year Ilitha Labantu is marking the 30 years of addressing different forms of violence against women, through measures aimed at preventing violence, protecting victims, and prosecuting the perpetrators. Looking back at three decades of ground-breaking work to end violence against women and children, Ilitha Labantu is proud to embark on its next 30 years and beyond.

The Conference will highlight the promising practices and policies to protect and prevent domestic and sexual violence, bringing together prosecutors, Judges, police, the field's leading to domestic violence experts from across and chart the way forward for accelerating progress towards ending violence against women. It will also serve to generate renewed political commitment from Government to combat all forms of violence against women and girls.

The event will re-energized the commitment of all participants to combat gender inequality and scale up prevention and response to VAWC, always taking a survivor-centred approach. It will give visibility and recognition to the key role of international, national and local organizations, including local women's organizations. It will also include Gala Dinner in celebration of the 30th anniversary of Ilitha Labantu.

This is therefore an opportune moment to build on the momentum of these national efforts and give them an impetus through regional collaboration and standard-setting. Strong national measures will require

- 1) Comprehensive legislation and legal provisions aligned with international commitments;
- 2) Specific policies and provisions on violence against women in criminal justice
- 3) Efficient responses by key institutions (courts, prosecutor's offices, the police, health services, social services), that comprise standard operating procedures and multi-sectoral frameworks across key institutions;
- 4) Promote gender transformation in the judiciary and in the broader legal profession to end VAW
- 5) Empower civil society organizations, especially women's networks; and
- 6) Efforts to eliminate harmful social norms.

The conference will focus on:

1. Understanding domestic violence

- Studying various forms of violence and abuse, including physical, sexual, psychological, economic and material violence, in a wide range of intimate/close relationships
- Exploring the gendered nature of domestic violence
- Improving our understanding of how power structures and social inequalities shape the nature and dynamics of domestic violence

- Understanding the intersection of domestic violence with other forms of harm
- Investigating, legal protection and support in human rights contexts
- Share best practices of constitutional law and administrative reform that promote non-discrimination, substantive fairness, and access to justice for women and girls;

2. Policy

- Improving multi-agency approaches to violence against women
- Explore and explain factors that contribute to both success and failure in increasing the representation of women in the justice sector, including high courts and the judiciary at large, government legal professions, as well as in academia and the private sector.
- Exploring the national and transnational policy frameworks for addressing the structural nature of violence in intimate relationships in society
- Improving the ability to understand the nature of and responses to violence against women through international collaborations
- Investigating the impact of political engagement in combatting domestic violence
- Approaches for improving the enforcement of protection orders

3. Prevention and interventions

- Identifying remaining gaps and areas where further efforts and commitments are required, including raise awareness of persistent barriers faced by women to access justice and the negative stereotypes in the justice system;
- Addressing the challenges of multiple discrimination in relation to women's access to justice;
- Exchanging good practices and lessons learned from government as well as civil society on combating gender-based violence;
- Promoting existing standards, Facilitate partnerships and networks among officials, professionals and civil society.
- Providing a forum for an exchange of experiences in legal and policy responses to violence against women and girls
- To strengthen the capacity of justice sector institutions – appellate tribunals and courts of first instance; ministries of justice, attorneys general and prosecutors' offices; and legal aid organizations – to help prevent and respond to cases of sexual and gender-based violence, to provide support to victims, and to end impunity for violators;

Outputs

- Experts identified on matters related to preventing and combating gender-based violence;
- Improved regional exchange of knowledge and practices related to holistic responses to gender-based violence;
- Enhanced knowledge of the regional practitioners on international and legal policy standards.

Participants

The conference will bring international organisations, civil society actors and activists, parliamentarians, and representatives of key line ministries leading on coordination and implementation of national legal and policy frameworks and national human rights bodies. Donor / funders.

Regional and international experts, representatives of UN and other global and regional organizations will also be invited to advice on targeted interventions and approaches to efficiently prevent and combat gender-based violence.

The conference venue is Cape Town Convention and the dates are 27-29 November 2019. The envisaged number of participants will be approximately 100-150 people. The working languages of the conference will be English. **Logistics note will be shared.**

We welcome individual paper presentations, panel sessions, round table discussions, performances, short films and posters. Your participation in ensuring equal access to justice for victims of violence against women and girls - rule of law in action conference may be under Oral, Poster & Virtual categories. The scope of the conference includes, but is not restricted to the following themes and subthemes:

- Improving the criminal justice response to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking
- Successful approaches for improving the enforcement of protection orders
- Strengthening international and regional legal frameworks to address violence against women to close the gap between legal frameworks and their implementation
- Legislation against violence against women and women's human rights
- Strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of victims and survivors ,
- Systematic integration of a gender perspective in the judiciary, as well as national human rights institutions
- Accessing Justice: Models, Approaches and Best Practices on women's legal empowerment
- Tackling the gaps in research and the lack of disaggregated data concerning women's equal access to justice
- Strengthened legal and policy frameworks on access to justice
- Innovative approaches for using State VAWA or funding to reach underserved communities
- Improved national and local capacities to deliver justice to women and girls through Innovative partnerships and society mobilization
- Enhanced evidence based on data collection in effectively fighting violence against women and girls
- Using technology to improve criminal justice responses

ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS

Ilitha Labantu works to prevent and respond to violence, to increase access to services for survivors and to make private and public spaces safer for women and girls. We provide counselling to survivors of VAW, improving knowledge and evidence, advocacy and lobbying education on preventing violence against women and girls with a focus on changing the attitudes and behaviour which tolerate such violence and perpetuate gender inequality. We also provide support to innovative approaches.

At the global level we work to advance international policies providing support to the Commission on the Status of Women, and ensuring that the post-2015 development agenda includes specific targets to end violence against women and girls. To do this, we partner with civil society organisations, Governments, UN Women Multi Country Office and others institutions to build capacity to prevent and respond to violence and to raise awareness of its causes and consequences.

The organization uses the power of the law to promote social change that advances the human rights of women and girls, especially those facing multiple inequalities. We work to uphold women's and girls' rights through the recognition of women's experiences of violence and injustice in and at the international and regional human rights systems.

Abstract Submission and Deadlines

Registration for Ilitha Labantu 2019 International Conference is open from July 31 to August 30, 2019@ 11:59pm Pacific Time. Please note that late registrations are not permitted due to administrative issues. Reviewed papers and accepted will be notified by September 19, 2019. Please note that panellists are responsible for their own travel expenses and accommodation. The conference will be in English.

Please note that late registrations are not permitted due to administrative issues. Please follow the instructions given on the abstract guidelines page, when writing and submitting you're abstract.

Guidance form for registration

The conference is open to all the participants from 27 -29 of November 2019. To facilitate widespread public exchange and dialogue. Conference Registration Fee in USD (Includes admission to all conference sessions, conference pack, 3 lunches and refreshment breaks) **\$546.00**. Advanced registration is required. (With vegan options available) for all conference dates. Conference Gala Dinner held on Wednesday 28 November 2019 (The dinner cost does not include alcohol but a cash bar will be available) USD \$100.00. If you register for the conference, your registration fee must be paid in full before the conference begins.

If full payment is not received, you will be required to provide your payment (cash, check, credit card) when you check-in at the conference. You may provide a purchase order as a promise to pay. Because of the costs associated with every individual who attends the conference (e.g., food and beverage, notebooks, name badges, tote bags), we cannot guarantee that an individual will be able to attend if you show up on site without having registered in advance

Registration

All participants shall register using Ilitha Labantu conference registration form.

Funding

Please note that financial support (for transport and accommodation costs is not available)

Cancellation of registration

- Is possible until the 20th of October 2019
- In case of prior cancellation, Ilitha Labantu reserves the right to refund the registration fee up until 15 working days after the conference.

Travel arrangements and costs

In the interest of convenience and efficiency for all involved parties, conference participants are asked to make their own travel arrangements.

If you have any questions, please contact:

Please contact Ilitha Labantu: admin@ilithalabantu.org

Abstract Guidelines

If you wish to present your paper in the thematic sessions, we invite you to submit an abstract. The length of the abstract should not exceed 250 words.

It should be written in English, in format Times New Roman, 12 and submitted through the E-mail: abstract@ilithalabantu.org

In the abstract header it is necessary to specify:

- The title of the paper
- Name and surname of the author
- Organization/institution and contact details (address, phone, e-mail) of the author
- The abstract must contain the following elements:
- The subject of the paper
- The aim of the paper
- Basic themes that would be covered by the paper
- In case of empirical research, it is necessary to provide information about the method, sample, who and when has carried out the research

Selection Criteria

- Presentation proposals will be evaluated, based on the following selection criteria:
- Concrete and innovative recommendations for best practices
- Quality and clarity of written materials
- Relevance to the field and multiple disciplines
- Timeliness with respect to current and emerging issues in the field
- Practical and empirical basis, bridging research and practice

Parallel working groups

Breakout workshops will provide multiple platforms for exchanges of ideas, and informed discussions between practitioners, policy-makers, academics and survivors on innovative solutions to the epidemic of violence against women. Workshops and mini-seminars will take place concurrently after each of the five plenary sessions and on emerging Issues.

Applicants have the option of applying to facilitate a 90-minute or 180-minute workshop, or giving a short presentation with other speakers in a mini-seminar facilitated by an independent moderator. To avoid topic-overlap and to promote networking, we encourage workshop presenters to be open to the idea of allowing us to combine your session with another facilitator.

The official conference language is English. In the breakout sessions you can present a workshop or paper in any language, but please note there will be no translation service. For non-English applicants, please provide your own translation or feel free to apply to give a workshop in your language of choice - though this may limit your audience.

All rooms are equipped with audio-visual equipment. Most rooms also have a whiteboard. Seating arrangements are flexible - we ask that you arrive early to set up your room. Please bring your own laptop, laser pointer, adapter

or other equipment. If you have special technical requirements please indicate so on your application and we will try to accommodate you.

Travel

The Conference Organiser in conjunction with Tripos Travels have secured a block allotment at the Cape Sun Hotel for conference participants. Ilitha Labantu have negotiated rates on behalf of the event, the rates include breakfast, VAT at 14% and Tourism Levy of 1%. Alternate accommodation can be provided on request, please email zoliswa@ilithalabantu.org or phelisa@ilithalabantu.org

In addition to the list of available pre-reserved rooms are offering all delegates who reserve their accommodation through complimentary airport transfers. We strongly advise all participants travelling to South Africa to check the relevant visa requirements and to apply for their visa at least 2 months in advance of the conference. Participants travelling to South Africa should contact the South African Embassy in their country for information on visa requirements. Confirmed participants will receive an invitation letter to be used in all visa applications once the payment for registration has been received.

International delegates

It is the delegate's responsibility to obtain the appropriate visa and the conference is unable to intervene in the process. We would also like to encourage delegates to arrange their own health and travel insurance in advance of their journey to South Africa and ensure that they have the appropriate documentation with them at the conference.

If you are interested in attending our International Conference on "ensuring equal access to justice for victims of violence against women and girls - rule of law in action" and need a letter of invitation for your embassy appointment, please complete the following steps:

- 1) Complete the International Registration Application and email it to admin@ilithalabantu.org by September 30, 2019.
- 2) If your application is approved, a letter of invitation will be emailed to you along with instructions to complete the registration process. If your application is denied, you will be notified by email.
- 3) Upon receiving your letter of invitation, schedule your appointment with the South African Embassy or Consulate to obtain your visa.

Please note all travel and accommodation shall be paid by each representative or their respective organisations, we can provide contact and information for best travel and accommodation packages depending on country/area of residence.

Ilitha Labantu cannot contact or intervene with any South African Embassy or Consulate office on your behalf. We suggest you begin your visa application process as soon as possible as processing time can be very lengthy. All nationals countries who plan to travel to South Africa for temporary business or pleasure for 90 days or less are required by law to obtain travel authorization prior to initiating travel to South Africa.

To be eligible for a partial fee waiver for the Conference

- Local NPO that struggling with funding

- Applicant is a local delegate or regional partner.
- Applicant is able to attend the entire conference.