

African Judiciaries Research Network (AJRN) newsletter, no. 20,
March 2025



INVITATION

WOMEN IN AFRICAN JUDICIARIES

The Africa Judiciaries Research Network (AJRN), the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and the School of Law, University of the Witwatersrand invite you to a two-day conference celebrating women in African judiciaries.

Day one (Monday 17 March 2025) is an in-person only event aiming to bring together women judges from across Africa, ICJ commissioners, state officials, civil society leaders, and academics to discuss women's experiences on the bench and to celebrate the life and work of the late Justice Yvonne Mokgoro (South Africa's first black woman judge and an ICJ Commissioner) and appointment of Justice Mandisa Maya as South Africa's first female Chief Justice. CJ Maya will also present the keynote address.

Day two (Tuesday 18 March 2025) is a hybrid academic workshop on women in African judiciaries in which academics, researchers and civil society actors will present and discuss papers on women in African judiciaries.



17-18 March 2025



08h30-16h30



Chalsty Teaching and Conference Centre, School of Law,
Wits University, Braamfontein Campus West

Enquiries may be directed to:
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[CLICK HERE TO RSVP](#)

Law in Development workshop, British Institute in Eastern Africa, Laikipia Road, Kileleshwa, Nairobi, 1-2 April 2025

Law in Development workshop, 1 April 2025

9.00: Introductions

9.30 – 11.00: Conceptualising and teaching law in development

Abdul Paliwala (University of Warwick), Law Beyond Development: Visions from the South

Wambua Kituku (University of Nairobi), From law and development movement to environmental rule of law

Christine M. Olando (University of Warwick), Legal education for development: A façade or truth

Ben Sihanya, Njaramba Gichuki and Agnes Meroka-Mutua (University of Nairobi), Contemporary law and development teaching at the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Law: Integrating theory and practice

11-11.30: Coffee

11.30-13.15: Law and development

Niringiyimana Julius (Makerere University), African Continental Free Trade Area and Dispute Settlement Mechanisms: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects

Linda C. Kitur (Advocate), Judicial Oversight and Socio-Economic Justice: The Role of Kenya's Courts in Shaping Socio-Economic Development Trajectories

Cecilia Edward Ngaiza (University of Dar es Salaam), Revisiting implementation of the right to development with respect to indigenous peoples in Tanzania

Yasin Maoni (Lilongwe City Council), Legislation for subsidiarity and local economic development: A tool for aspired economic development in Malawi

Moses Washington Mkandawire (*Nyika Institute*), The Principle of 'Locus Standi' and its Impact on the Operations of Civil Society in Malawi

13.15-14.15: Lunch

14.15-16.00: Gender and Children

Ibrahim Nsereko and Moses Mulumba (Afya na Haki), Digital Health Activism as Resistance in the Global South: Lessons from the Stop Maternal Mortality Campaign in Uganda

Belinda Chepchumba Rop (University of Dar es Salaam), The Intersection of Gender and Child Welfare in East Africa: Critiquing Marriage Laws in Tanzania and Lessons Learned from Kenya's Progressive Reforms

Ruth Mchizi (University of Malawi), Rethinking Child Maintenance Laws: A Pathway to Population Control and Sustainable Growth in Malawi

Bernard Koomson (University of Warwick), From Palermo Protocol to the Human Trafficking Act: Contextual experiences from child trafficking intervention in Ghana

Frank George Mgungwe (Mzuzu University, University of Livingstonia), “Navigating Hard Times”: Analysing Enforcement Mechanisms in Protection of Senior Citizens and Children in Witchcraft Accusations in Contemporary Africa

16.00-16.30: Coffee

16.30-18.00: Roundtable with Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote (University of Nairobi), Hon. Justice Prof. Joel Ngugi (Court of Appeal, Kenya), and Dr Jeremy Okonjo (University of Warwick) facilitated by Ambreena Manji (Cardiff University). Followed by a drinks reception.

To register to join the workshop and/or roundtable online or in person please go to <https://warwick.ac.uk/global/africa/lawindevelopment/>

The second day (2 April) will consist of a writing workshop for early career researchers.

Thanks to Peter Brett for organising a workshop on African Judges Preventing and Responding to Political Attacks at Queen Mary University of London on 26 February 2024

Speakers included Dr Peter Brett, Dr Karen Brewer, Lady Justice Dorothy DeGabriele, Dr Pilar Domingo, Dr Thalia Gerso, Dr Justice Alfred Mavedzenge, Duncan Okello, Dr Ronald Allamano Ong’udi, Prof. Elin Skaar, Dr Chiedza Simbo, and Dr Marianne Tøraasen.

Recent publications by network members

Ndlebe, Z. and M. Benjamin (17 February 2025) Judicial tribunals show an urgent need for dealing with sexual harassment. *Judges Matter*.

<https://www.judgesmatter.co.za/opinions/judicial-tribunals-sexual-harassment/>

Awards

Thalia Gerzso and Gabrielle Lynch have been awarded a British Academy Small Grant for a project on "Judicial Activism and Off-Bench Behaviour: The Role of Legal Traditions", which will investigate the impact of common and civil law traditions on judges' networks.

Opportunities to write opinion pieces/blogs on African judiciaries

AJRN has teamed up with [Democracy in Africa](http://democracyin africa.org) to launch a series of opinion pieces on African judiciaries and democracy. For details on how to write an article for **Democracy in Africa** go to <http://democracyin africa.org/join-the-new-african-judiciaries-research-network-ajrn-today/>.

The AJRN has also been in touch with **The Conversation Africa** and **The Elephant** and is happy to report that:

The Conversation Africa welcomes articles on African judiciaries that are based on research. These can be republished anywhere in the world under a Creative Commons licence, giving

your work a wider reach and introducing it to new audiences. You can pitch your idea for an article [here](#). You can subscribe to the Conversation Africa newsletter [here](#).

The Elephant welcomes articles of 1,500-3,500 words on African judiciaries. The Elephant is a popular online Kenyan news platform which seeks well researched, honest critiques, critical essays and sharp-eyed perspectives on a broad range of topics addressed from a Pan African lens. For details on how to submit a pitch and write for *The Elephant* see <https://www.theelephant.info/write-for-us/>.

AJRN member profile of the month



Dr. Chiedza Simbo is a distinguished constitutional law scholar, researcher, and human rights advocate with extensive expertise in constitutional interpretation, judicial reasoning, and socio-economic rights adjudication. She is currently a Senior Lecturer at the University of Venda, South Africa, where she specializes in constitutional law, human rights law, and judicial decision-making.

With a Ph.D. in Constitutional Law from the University of Zimbabwe and two LLMs (Social Justice and Commercial Law) from the University of Cape Town, Dr. Simbo's academic work critically examines the role of the judiciary in shaping constitutional jurisprudence in Africa. Her research explores the interpretation of constitutional provisions by judges, the justiciability of socio-economic rights, and the evolution of human rights frameworks in Southern Africa.

Judicial and Constitutional Research:

Dr. Simbo has conducted extensive research on how judges interpret constitutional provisions, particularly in relation to human rights and access to justice. Her work includes:

- Analysis of Judicial Precedents – Examining how courts in South Africa, Zimbabwe, and other SADC countries have interpreted socio-economic rights, particularly the right to basic education.
- Comparative Constitutional Law – Studying constitutional interpretation models across African jurisdictions to assess the evolving role of the judiciary.
- Judicial Oversight and Separation of Powers – Investigating the role of courts in upholding democratic governance and preventing executive overreach.
- Case Law Analysis on Fundamental Rights – Assessing landmark cases where courts have either expanded or limited constitutional rights through their decisions.

Her scholarship has been published in leading peer-reviewed law journals, including the *Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa*, *Speculum Juris*, and *Obiter*. One of her notable works, "The Scope and Content of Section 75(1)(a) of the Zimbabwean Constitution", explores the judicial interpretation of constitutional guarantees in Zimbabwe.

Professional and Legal Contributions

Beyond academia, Dr. Simbo has held advisory and research roles within the judiciary, including serving as a Research Assistant to Judge Oagile Bethuel Key Dingake of the High Court of Botswana. In this role, she contributed to legal opinions and judicial writings on critical constitutional issues such as the rule of law, election petitions, and judicial independence.

She has also worked with Lawyers for Human Rights in South Africa, where she engaged in strategic litigation and constitutional advocacy. Her experience includes drafting legal arguments for human rights cases, preparing court submissions, and analyzing judicial decisions impacting vulnerable groups.

Leadership and Impact in Legal Research

Dr. Simbo is an active member of the African Judiciary Research Network and the African Network of Constitutional Lawyers. She has been an invited speaker at judicial conferences, addressing topics such as:

- The role of judicial oversight in protecting constitutional democracy.
- The interpretation of socio-economic rights by courts in the SADC region.
- The impact of judicial decisions on education rights and migrant policies.

As a legal consultant, she has contributed to constitutional reform discussions and has provided expert opinions on legislative processes affecting judicial independence.

Commitment to Legal Scholarship and Advocacy

Dr. Simbo remains committed to promoting judicial integrity, constitutionalism, and human rights through research, litigation, and policy engagement. Her work bridges the gap between legal theory and judicial practice, ensuring that constitutional principles are effectively interpreted and applied in real-world contexts.

 Google Scholar: [Link](#)

 African Network of Constitutional Lawyers: [Link](#)

AJRN webpage

The AJRN has a webpage (<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/ajrn>) where you can find past newsletters as well as information on events, opinion pieces and members. **If you want to be included in the list of network members on the website and future newsletters, then please send a photograph and a bio in the standard format (see below)** with details of positions and institutional/organisational affiliation, up to 5 keywords on relevant research interests, and contact email/social media handle to g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk. E.g.

Prof. Gabrielle Lynch, Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Warwick, UK; judicial behaviour, election petitions, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia; g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk; @GabrielleLynch6.

If you have already sent a bio for the newsletter, then please do send a photo for inclusion on the webpage.

Network members

NB: If you want to be included in the list of network members in future newsletters and the website, please send a photo and bio in the standard format (see below) with details of positions and institutional/organisational affiliation, up to 5 keywords on relevant research interests, and contact email/social media handle to g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk.

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If anyone has any **information that they would like included in the next newsletter** (to be circulated the week of 7 April 2025) please email g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk. Similarly, if you have suggestions of people who we should contact about joining the network or would like to unsubscribe from the newsletter please email g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk.