



Country/Organisation: Austria – Zonta International

What are the primary challenges your country faces in ensuring equal access to justice within your criminal justice system? How do these challenges impact groups in vulnerable situation in your society? Please provide a thorough and detailed response.

Zonta International is an organization pledged to empowering women at global and local levels, and to promoting justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

A crucial part of this is access to justice, explicitly gender-just when targeting women, as set out in various international key documents.

Ensuring access to justice even starts with access to education.

It is crucial to provide access to quality education and training for women and girls, as education is fundamental to women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life.

But girls are still given second class status in homes, schools, communities and workspaces due to cultural attitudes and ongoing discrimination, thus limiting their access to justice and information, and participation in activities and opportunities.

There are many reasons for a lack of access to justice, participation and decision-making for women, including cultural norms, but also increased workloads as a result of more natural disasters and extreme weather conditions caused by climate change.

Climate change increases domestic and subsistence workloads, therefore primarily impacting women and girls.

At the same time, persistent gender discrimination in accessing education, training, material and financial resources, technology, and land property hinders women's and girls' opportunities.

Access to justice is a particular challenge in the context of migration.

When migrating through regular or irregular migration channels, women migrants often face the risk of economic exploitation, as well as physical and sexual violence from intermediaries and employers, with little access to legal protection or justice.

A major gap in low-income-countries is the lack of personal ID for every second women.

As the ownership of official personal documents is crucial for legal, voluntary migration, the lack of personal documents forces people ready to move into illegal migration.

A great number of female migrants are likely to be pregnant or to become pregnant, and if the births are not officially recorded, the children are deprived of a proof of legal identity crucial for the protection of their rights and for access to justice and social services.

Women and girls as refugees and migrants are disproportionately impacted by trafficking in persons.

In the crowded camps where refugees and migrant people live, women and girls face greater challenges and risks including gender-based violence, physical harm and injury, including sexual exploitation, trafficking and violence.

Violence against women undermines women's core fundamental rights such as dignity, access to justice and gender equality.

If it happened in childhood, seeking access to justice as adult may be prevented by time limits existing in some countries, so it is suggested that justification of time limits is reassessed to not let perpetrators go unpunished.

Women lack access to justice when their rights and safety are violated and even face mocking and re-victimization by institutions that are supposed to support them.

Still the police downgrades violence occurring in the private sphere to a mere private dispute and family affair. They fail to recognize the victim as a person entitled to the respect of her dignity and rights, including by her partner.

Health professionals involved in treating victims sometimes do not acknowledge or respond appropriately to indications of partner violence, they fail to refer the victim to a support organization and report to the police or the public prosecutor's office.

Can you provide examples of initiatives or policies that have been successful in addressing access to justice issues in your country? What key lessons have been learned from these initiatives or policies? Please provide a thorough and detailed response.

Member States and the United Nations are called to provide educational and leadership opportunities to women and girls to ensure that there is equal access to positions of power and influence.

Policies should aim to impact positively on victims of crime, including ensuring that all victims of crime have access to support services, protecting particularly vulnerable victims, and preventing secondary victimisation of victims with respect to their treatment by the criminal justice system.

There is an essential role for specialist victim support services in this process to ensure that any intervention works effectively for victims in practice.

Women and men, girls and boys, should work together in intergenerational partnerships for human rights, equality, justice, peace and a sustainable environment.

It is crucial to ensure that climate adaptation and mitigation plans address the unique needs of women and the barriers to women's full participation in the economy and access to justice. In addition to gender justice, ZONTA International promotes climate justice, and ZONTIANS work to raise awareness that gender equality is a prerequisite, comprising gender-responsive access to education, health, protection and resources.

To promote justice and universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms during increasing global migration, governments are called on to address the threats to the human rights of women migrants and to involve civil society actors in their protection.

ZONTA International calls on governments in countries of origin to take measures to follow SDG 16.9:

“By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration and provide easy access to personal IDs, visas and documents for women and girls without consent of male family members” and ensure that migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women have access to justice and human and social rights, and get informed about their rights.

Social stigma and a loss of trust in any state institution often prevent the survivors of trafficking from bringing their cases to court. The installation of institutional protection of victims, female prosecutors and investigators, as well as testimonies in a safe surrounding, often in presence of a therapist, and granted legal support open the way for prosecution of the perpetrators.

Justice is essential for victims and a future life of dignity.

Full participation requires politically supporting and fully resourcing inclusion of women at all levels and stages of decision-making, in all contexts, from beginning to end.

Women's independent selection and views have to be fully respected, and, most importantly, their recommendations acted upon.

In addition, direct participation of women must be a standard requirement in all UN-supported peace processes, so that the UN truly leads by example.

Meanwhile the credibility of the UN and the Security Council to protect and uphold these rights has been fundamentally shaken by growing geopolitical divides.

Women's participation in peace processes remains unacceptably low, and is even decreasing in UN-supported peace processes.

Risks and protection must not be used as excuses to limit women's participation, it is crucial to mobilize resources and explicit political support for their work to enable them to participate safely.

This requires enforcing a zero-tolerance approach to any form of attack, intimidation, retaliation or reprisal against women for their political participation, human rights and humanitarian work, peacebuilding activities or cooperation with UN mechanisms, including the Security Council.

What are the best practices currently being implemented in your criminal justice system to enhance access to legal aid and fair trials? How do these best practices improve outcomes for individuals involved in the criminal justice system? Please provide a thorough and detailed response.

As part of the ZONTA activities,

- the project "Prevention of Cross-Border Regional Trafficking" in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro focused on cross-border cooperation to prevent trafficking in women, fostering joint work by governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- the project "Preventing Trafficking in Women in Thailand by Addressing the Normative Dimension of Demand" targeted high school students and teachers, male and youth groups as well as media, governments and communities by addressing socio-cultural norms, values and behaviors that are the basis of the demand, leading to exploitation of trafficked persons and gender-based violence.
- the project "Prevention of Gender-Based Violence among Sudanese Refugees" in Chad worked to prevent sexual and gender-based violence in Oure Cassoni Camp, the second largest of the Sudanese refugee camps in eastern Chad, raising awareness on the issue of

gender-based violence and the health impact of GBV and focusing on preventive measures to ensure recognition of rights and protection through international, statutory and traditional laws and policies

- All three projects worked towards joint work by government and NGOs, information and raising of awareness and addressing security and legal justice needs.

What factors have been crucial in enabling successful reforms or improvements in your criminal justice system? How can these enabling factors be replicated or adapted in other contexts or regions to ensure equal access to justice for all? Please provide a thorough and detailed response.

As part of the ZONTA activities,

- “Ending Child Marriage” project improves education access and supports interventions that encourage girls, strengthens education systems and supports interventions that keep girls in school and provides out-of-school girls with alternative learning opportunities.
- “Let Us Learn Madagascar”, an integrated education program, addressed education and gender inequity in Madagascar through approaches targeted toward adolescent girls.
- “Laaha”, digital platform created by UNICEF with women and girls, increases knowledge on women’s rights, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) by providing quality and accurate information, and reduces isolation by building safe spheres of support for girls and women.
- during the 16 Days of Activism, 25 November-10 December, ZONTIANS take part in the “Zonta Says NO to Violence Against Women” campaign and take local, national and international actions to influence laws and change gender-based attitudes and behaviors to end violence against women.
- “Adolescent Girls’ Health and Protection” project in Peru contributed to guaranteeing the rights of indigenous and rural girls, and responded to their needs by preventing pregnancy, addressing mental health concerns and providing a protective environment by providing quality, gender-sensitive, and culturally adapted health, education and protection services.
- “Her Health and Dignity, Our Priority” in Papua New Guinea/Timor-Leste addressed gender-based violence through instructing health-care services on a survivor-centered approach and providing quality case management to authorities to identify survivors of violence and ensure essential services in healthcare, recovery and access to justice.
- “Engaging Girls on Climate Change” in Madagascar enabled girls, to learn in a safe environment and take actions to build climate-resilient communities, implementing school health and environmental action plans. In Madagascar, Mozambique and South Sudan, women and girls are encouraged to act as social norms champions to shift paradigm to the effect of climate change on GBV and harmful practices and as leaders in promoting climate change resilient community actions. By integrating their perspectives, solutions are better tailored to address the intersection of climate stressors and GBV and ensure access to participation and justice.
- ZONTIANS take advocacy actions that work to promote the human rights of women and the Beijing Declaration, CEDAW and Agenda 2030’s Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 to achieve gender-just access to justice.

- on 8 March, International Women’s Day, marked as “Zonta Rose Day”, ZONTIANS reflect on achievements, advocacy and awareness efforts on equal pay, closing the gender gap in male-dominated fields and more.
- “Ending Child Marriage” Project, teaches marginalized adolescent girls enhanced knowledge and skills on matters such as rights and financial literacy and develop more gender-equitable attitudes and support for girls’ rights.