

Working title: Towards a holistic understanding of Access to Justice for women: Some Reflections from the ground

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Outline: This paper seeks to reflect upon the intersectionality of the concept of access to justice and the status of women in the family, society and communities. It advances the view that in order to understand and fully appreciate this as a resource for women, a contextual and holistic understanding of the concept needs to be adopted. Placing access to justice within the broader framework of governance, societies and communities presents a deeper and nuanced understanding of the complexities and challenges for women and in general for vulnerable and marginalised groups. In particular, this presentation attempts to highlight challenges for an effective and robust structure of access to justice for women in post-conflict situations.

Following are some of the issues for discussion:

- Conflict and post-conflict situations within states as well as communities under internal and/or external threats and pressures lead to securitization of state and society. Impact on women and access to justice?
 - Examples of post-conflict situations, including Iraq, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Palestine and others demonstrate tight public/private dichotomy and ‘masculinization’ of the public sphere. Implications for access to justice for women?
 - Unstable public sphere in post-conflict environments tend to seek security, safety and stability in more positivist and conservative expressions of law and rulings. Rights of women in the family and the public sphere are compromised;
 - Governance structures, institutions and those responsible for implementation on the ground need to co-ordinate efforts to concretise abstract policy statements and legal norms by translating these into doable acts for achieving access to justice for women.
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