



IAWL MAGAZINE

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50 WOMEN IN LAW WHO INSPIRE
Building the next generation of women leaders in law



FUNKE ADEKOYA, SAN

AÈLEX LAW (NIGERIA)

Funke Adekoya is the fifth woman to be elevated as a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). It took her eight attempts, and just when she decided to give up, she gave it one last try—and it happened!

She is the founding partner of one of the top law firms in Nigeria and has worked with international organizations including the World Bank.



ELIZABETH ADU

FORMER DEPUTY COUNSEL FOR
OPERATIONS, WORLD BANK
(GHANA)

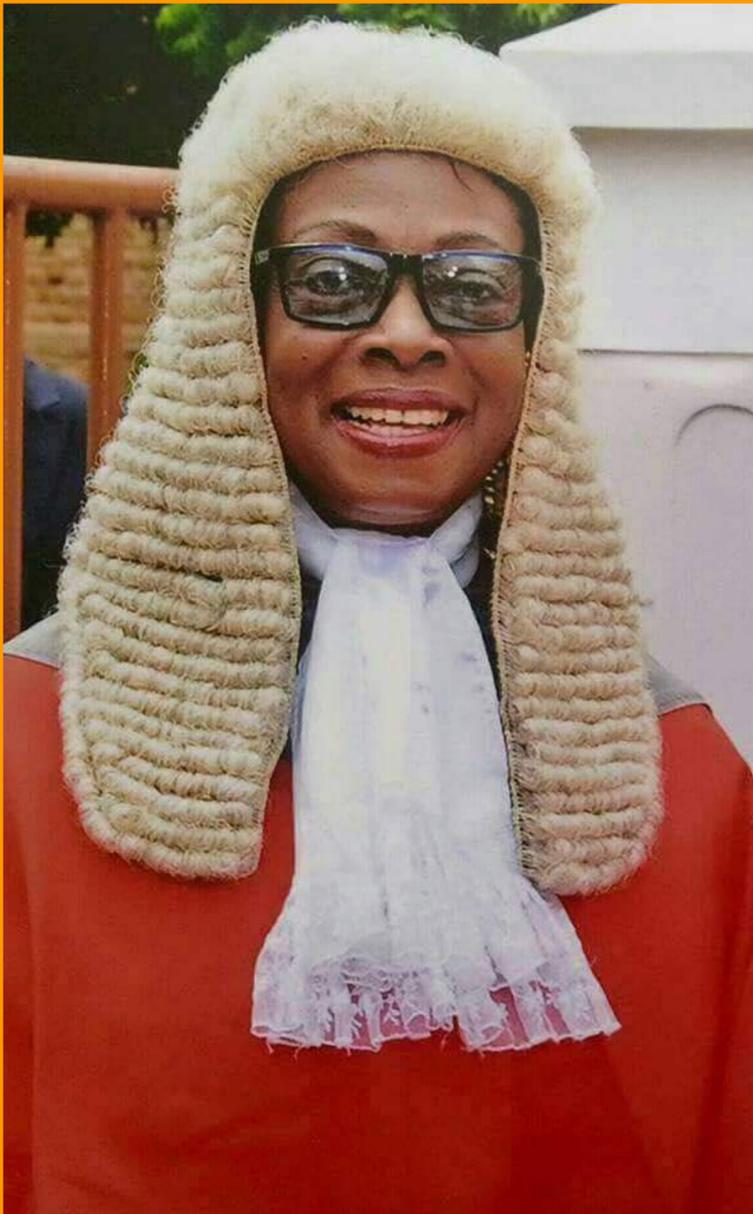
Elizabeth Adu is the first African Woman Deputy Counsel for Operations at the World Bank. She was a member of the team that secured the approval of the conditional transfer program in Brazil which is now a model for conditional cash transfer program in Latin America, Asia and Africa.



REINI ALAPINI-GANSOU

JUDGE, THE INTERNATIONAL
COURT OF JUSTICE (BENIN)

Reini Alapini-Gansou wears a coat of many colors. She is a Judge of the International Court of Justice where she brings to bear her rich knowledge and experience as a lawyer. She is a former Commissioner and Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. She has also left her footprints in academia as a former Professor of Law at the University of Benin.



SOPHIA AKUFFO

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE
(GHANA)

Akuffo is the second woman to become Chief Justice of Ghana. Akuffo was elected as one of the pioneering judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR). She further served as the Vice President of the Court for two consecutive terms. She became the first woman President of the African Court in 2012. She was the presiding judge for the Mensah v. Mensah case (2012) "which revolutionized the property rights of women in Ghana."



PENELOPE ANDREWS

FIRST BLACK DEAN AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
FACULTY OF LAW AND
ALBANY LAW SCHOOL
(SOUTH AFRICA)

Andrews is the First Black dean at the University of Cape Town Faculty of Law as well as Albany Law School. She is the author of the book "From Cape Town to Kabul: Rethinking Strategies for Pursuing Women's Human Rights". In 2015, the National Bar Association's International Award for her global human rights advocacy and the University of KwaZulu-Natal provides an annual award in her name.



MEAZA ASHENAFI

PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL
SUPREME COURT (ETHIOPIA)

Meaza Ashenafi is Ethiopia's first female President of the Federal Supreme Court. She is the founder of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association. She uses the organization to campaign for women's rights in Ethiopia, to contribute to legal reform, and to give legal aid to impoverished women. Ashenafi assisted with the founding of the first women's bank in Ethiopia and provides conceptual analysis of how to best protect women's rights throughout Africa.



HAIRAT BALOGUN, OON

FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL
OF LAGOS STATE (NIGERIA)

Hairat Balogun is an accomplished legal practitioner with an inspiring and fulfilling professional career. She is the first female Attorney General of Lagos State and the second woman Attorney General in the country. Hairat is the first woman to be made a Life Bencher, the highest and the most distinguished body in the legal profession in Nigeria. She also received the highest national honor in Nigeria.



JOYCE ADELINE BAMFORD-ADDO

FIRST WOMAN ON THE SUPREME COURT (GHANA)

Bamford-Addo was the first woman Justice to be appointed to the Supreme Court of Ghana. Bamford-Addo is a firm believer in the rule of law and the enforcement of all persons' fundamental human rights. She delivered seminal judgments that shaped Ghana's constitutional jurisprudence. She is also the first female to be appointed as Speaker of Ghana's Parliament and in the West African sub-region.



OLUYEMISI BAMGBOSE, SAN

CHAIRPERSON, NIGERIAN BAR
ASSOCIATION WOMEN FORUM
(NIGERIA)

Oluyemisi Bamgbose is the first woman academic to be appointed a Senior Advocate of Nigeria. She has a family full of lawyers, with her three daughters and her daughter-in-law being a lawyer. In 2021, she was appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Strategic Partnerships, University of Ibadan. She believed in herself, hence nothing was considered too difficult or out of reach!



NANCY BARAZA, PHD.

FORMER DEPUTY CHIEF
JUSTICE (KENYA)



Nancy Baraza was the first woman deputy Chief Justice and Vice President of the Supreme Court of Kenya. Although she resigned from this role under painful circumstance, she did not give up. She remained resilient and joined the University of Nairobi as a lecturer and soon thereafter earning a PHD in law, a rare feat in the University.



FATOU BENSOU DA

FIRST WOMAN PROSECUTOR,
ICC (THE GAMBIA)

Bensouda was the Minister of Justice in 1998, being only the second woman to hold the position. Bensouda earned the admiration of human rights groups, especially for her role in ensuring the speedy prosecution of offenses against women and children during her years of service to her nation. She assumed full-time duty as Chief Prosecutor of the ICC, the first woman and first African to occupy the position.



FATIMA MARIA DE CORONEL

PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME
COURT OF JUSTICE (CAPE VERDE)

Fatima Maria De Coronel is the President of the Supreme Court of Justice in Cape Verde, the first woman to occupy this office. She worked on the Supreme Court of Justice as an associate justice from 2000 until her appointment as President. Prior to her appointment she served as a prosecutor on behalf of the Republic of Cape Verde.



ALOYSIE CYANZAYIRE

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE
(RWANDA)

Aloysie Cyanzayire the first woman Chief Justice of Rwanda. She was elected as the head for the local-level system for the post-genocide reconciliation courts by the Parliament. She served as one of six Vice Presidents of the Supreme Court, deputy Chief Justice and ultimately Chief Justice. In 2011, she was appointed as the Chief Ombudsperson for Rwanda.



MEMOODA EBRAHIM-CARSTENS

FORMER JUSTICE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DISPUTE
TRIBUNAL (BOTSWANA)

Memooda Ebrahim-Carstens is a retired Justice of the United Nations Dispute Tribunal. As a judge, she perceives law as an instrument to effect positive change through creativity and judicial activism. She is a role model for many young people, guiding and nurturing the next generation of women leaders across Africa and the world.



FATOUMATA DEMBÉLÉ DIARRA

RETIRED JUDGE,
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL
COURT (MALI)

Diarra served as the First Vice-President of the ICC and former Justice at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). At 19, she coordinated various civil organizations during Traoré's repressive military dictatorship and fought for disenfranchised women and children. Diarra was appointed to the Constitutional Court in Mali. She was also the Vice President of the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers from 1994 to 1997, and Vice President of the Federation of African Lawyers since 1995.



DR. KALTHOUM MEZIOU DOURAÏ

FIRST WOMAN DEAN OF LAW
(TUNISIA)

Dr. Kalthoum Meziou Dourai is a Tunisian lawyer and the country's first woman Dean of Law. Dourai was involved in many projects and aspects of research; she was a member of the Reform Commission of the Tunisian Personal Status Code of 1981/1993 and the Preparation Committee for the Code of Private International Law of 1998, where she remains an added-value to her nation.



VERA DUARTE

FORMER COMMISSIONER OF
THE AFRICAN COMMISSION
ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES'
RIGHTS (CAPE VERDE)

Vera Duarte is a Former Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. She is the first woman Jurist and Attorney of the Republic in Cape Verde and the first woman to be elected Judge Counselor to the Supreme Court of Justice. As a Judge, Duarte was able to work actively in achieving a legal-institutional framework that protects women's rights.



DR. FATMA EL-RAZAZ

FIRST WOMAN DEAN OF LAW
(EGYPT)

Dr. El-Razaz is the first woman law professor who has occupied the Dean position for a law school in Egypt. She teaches at Helwan University. Although Egyptian women have studied law since the 1920s, it took about a century to reach such a milestone. Throughout her career, she has faced gender-based discrimination, which emboldened her to advocate for the women's rights. One of her areas of interest is women's representation in labor union as women union members who are represented, take roles, and are in charge at the syndicate board and committees are woefully low.



LIGIA DIAS FONSECA

FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE
CABO VERDEAN BAR
ASSOCIATION (CAPE VERDE)

The former first Lady of Cape Verde, Her Excellency Ligia Fonseca the first elected President of the Cabo Verdean Bar Association. She was instrumental in drafting legal documents and policies for the government of Cabo Verde. She is also a distinguished legal scholar, co-authoring "The Guide to Women's Rights", published by the Institute for the Condition of Women. In 2015, Fonseca received the Outstanding Leadership Award from the African Horizons Forum.



ELIZABETH IBANDA- NAHAMYA

JUDGE, RESIDUAL
MECHANISM FOR
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL
TRIBUNALS (UGANDA)

A major challenge in her career was the non-acceptability of her capability by male colleagues. She overcame this by believing in herself and thus advises women to focus on their goals and uplift other women as they.



NKEMDILIM IZUAKO

FORMER JUSTICE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS DISPUTE
TRIBUNAL (NIGERIA)

Nkemdilim Izuako is a bulwark of the rule of law who refused to succumb to pressure in a case which the governor of her state was interested. She left Nigeria after several attempts were made on her life. As a judge in the Gambian Court of Appeal, her contract was not renewed because she delivered a minority judgment which offended the government.



PATRICIA KAMERI-MBOTE, PHD

DIRECTOR OF LAW DIVISION,
UNITE NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME
(UNEP) - (KENYA)

Patricia Kameri-Mbote is a woman of many firsts. She was the second woman to join the teaching staff of the University of Nairobi and the first woman Professor and Dean at the University of Nairobi. She is also the first woman in Kenya and East Africa to be awarded a Higher Doctorate in Law. For over three decades, she has taught and mentored the next generation of legal scholars.



KUDIRAT KEKERE-EKUN

JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME
COURT (NIGERIA)

Kudirat Kekere-Ekun is the youngest female to be appointed as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria. She was a recipient of the Merit Awards of the Lagos State Judiciary and was twice awarded the Distinguished Trailblazers Awards by the Nigerian Bar Association Women.



JAMESINA ESSIE L. KING

COMMISSIONER OF THE
AFRICAN COMMISSION ON
HUMAN AND PEOPLES
RIGHTS (SIERRA LEONE)

King was the first Sierra Leonean to be sworn in as a Commissioner of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). King's work as an enforcer of the law has made her realize that every time litigants access the courts, it is one step to justice, sustainable peace and development. As a result, she is happy to see that more women are accessing the courts to enforce their rights.



QINISILE M. MABUZA

FIRST WOMAN LAWYER AND
JUDGE (ESWATINI)

Mabuza is Swaziland's first-ever female lawyer and the first woman to serve as a judge. Her most important leadership role to date is her appointment to the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ). In 2010, she changed the long-established precedent Deeds Registry Act, and finally made it legal for Swazi women to own and administrate property in their own names.



IRENE CHIRWA MAMBILIMA

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE
(ZAMBIA)

Irene Chirwa Mambilima is the first woman Chief Justice of the Republic of Zambia, having served earlier as the country's first female Deputy Chief Justice. She launched the first fast-track courts dedicated to hearing gender-based violence (GBV). These courts helped to raise awareness and boost confidence in women and girls to report and successfully prosecute GBV cases.



CONSTANCE BARATANG MOCUMIE

JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME
COURT OF APPEAL (SOUTH
AFRICA)

Constance Mocumie Baratang is an astute judge whose judgment displays admirable jurisprudential prowess. Her active involvement in the Liberation struggle propelled her to become a lawyer. Her commitment to attaining gender equality on the High Court bench has contributed to substantial subsequent appointments of women in the Judiciary. She is a firm believer of investing in future generations and makes a conscious effort to play her role in inspiring young girls and women in law.



SHEILA MINKAH-PREMO

APEX LAW CONSULT (GHANA)

Sheila Minkah-Premo is an astute lawyer, interested in law and development especially on women and children's rights. She took up the challenge and coordinated a research project perceived as a "male-led project" and members of the selection committee expressed misgivings about her capacity to lead. She aced the project and seven volumes of the findings were published.



DR. AMB.ATHALIAH MOLOKOMME

FIRST WOMAN ATTORNEY
GENERAL (BOTSWANA)

Molokomme was appointed to be a judge of the High Court of Botswana in 2003. Two years later, Molokomme was named the Attorney General of Botswana in 2005 and resigned from that position in December of 2016, where she left behind a better, fairer, and stronger system. She was later appointed Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Botswana to Switzerland and has participated in international events and like Assemblies of State Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, where she advocated for African nations' membership.



YVONNE MOKGORO

JUDGE (RTD),
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT
(SOUTH AFRICA)

Mokgoro is an honorary Professor of Law at the University of South Africa, University of Pennsylvania, University of the Western Cape, University of Cape Town, University of Pretoria, and the University of South Africa. In 2006, she was chosen to be an icon of the history of Women Lawyers in South Africa. She has received numerous awards such as the Human Rights Award by the Black Lawyers Association in 1995, the Oude Molen Reserve Order of Merit in 1995, and the Legal Profession's Woman Achiever Award by the Centre for Human Rights in 2001.



MARIA DO CEU SILVA MONTEIRO

FIRST WOMAN CHIEF JUSTICE
(GUINEA-BISSAU)

Judge Maria Do Ceu Silva Monteiro is a woman of many firsts. The first woman Chief Justice of Guinea-Bissau. She recognizes herself as resilient and independent. To think, act and decide on her own, and to make her voice heard. Her advice for other women in law, is that women must work collaboratively.



ALOMA MARIAM MUKHTAR

FIRST WOMAN CHIEF JUSTICE
(NIGERIA)

Mukhtar is the third woman to serve as a judge in the history of Nigeria, the first woman to serve as a judge in the Northern part of Nigeria and the first female Justice of the Court of Appeal. She was sworn in as the first woman Chief Justice of Nigeria. She was inducted into the Nigerian Hall of fame, received, the National honor of the Grand Commander of the Order of Niger and the Gold Merit Award for her contributions to the development of law in Kano State in 2016.



MONICA MUGENYI

JUDGE OF THE COURT OF
APPEAL (UGANDA)

Justice Monica Mugenyi is a judge of the Ugandan Court of Appeal. Mugenyi has developed a rich portfolio in her service in the judiciary. She was the first woman appointed as 'Principal Judge' of the Court and Administrative Head of the First Instance Division. Mugenyi decided high-profile cases that placed her in the limelight. Mugenyi's story is one of perseverance and determination to get the job done.



FLORENCE NDEPELE MWACHANDE MUMBA

JUDGE, EXTRAORDINARY
CHAMBERS OF THE COURTS
OF CAMBODIA (ZAMBIA)

Florence Ndepele Mumba is the first woman to be appointed High Court Judge in Zambia and a former Justice of the Supreme Court. Judge Mumba is recognized for playing an active role as a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in introducing rape as a war crime as well as a crime against humanity in the statute of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) which is linked to the first trial she presided over – The Furundžija case.



EUSEBIA NICHOLAS MUNUO

FIRST WOMAN JUDGE
(TANZANIA)

Munuo is a Tanzanian lawyer and a retired Justice of Appeal. She is the first woman resident magistrate in Tanzania. Eusebia has many awards to her name including the order of the United Republic of Second Class Medal, the award of Determined Women in Law , and Tanzania Women Lawyers Association Compassionate Humanitarian, Philosopher and Human Rights Award.



AMB. DR. NAMIRA NEGM

FIRST WOMAN LEGAL
COUNSEL OF THE AFRICAN
UNION (EGYPT)

Amb. Dr. Namira Negm is a seasoned diplomat, writer and expert in International Law. Amb. Dr. Negm is the first woman to be Legal Counsel of the African Union and the first person to submit on the African Union's behalf before the International Court of Justice. She is a trailblazer with a portfolio that resonates with dedication, hard work, and resilience.



DR. JACQUELINE OBLE

FIRST WOMAN PROFESSOR
IN PRIVATE LAW (IVORY
COAST)

Oble is an Ivorian lawyer and the first female candidate to run for President in the history of Cote d'Ivoire. In 2005, she became the only woman on the list of the sixteen -member-cabinet of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire. Oble is considered to be the first female in Francophone Sub - Saharan Africa to pass the Private Law examinations "aggregation competition". She was described by the then President, Mamadou Koné, as an Iron Lady in Africa, and a true "model of success for all women."



EFFIE OWUOR

FORMER JUDGE, COURT OF
APPEAL (KENYA)

Owuor is a trailblazer par excellence. She is the first Kenyan woman to receive a law degree ; first woman prosecutor; first woman to become a magistrate and a senior resident magistrate; first woman judge in Kenya; first woman judge on the Court of Appeal of Kenya; and first woman to sit on a Commission of Inquiry of monumental historical significance in Kenya's political history.



CATHERINE "KATE" O'REGAN

FORMER JUDGE OF THE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT
(SOUTH AFRICA)

Kate O'regan is a bulwark in the fields of labor law and land rights. She served as legal counsel for black workers and trade unions in South Africa as well as for black South Africans facing evictions under the apartheid laws. She was appointed as a judge to the newly formed Constitutional Court in South Africa; a position she used to fight against unjust laws.



NAVANETHEM (NAVI) PILLAY

FORMER UNITED NATIONS
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS (SOUTH
AFRICA)

Navanethem Pillay was the first woman to start a law practice in Natal Province, South Africa and the first black woman to serve as a judge on the High Court appointed by President Mandela. She spent over thirty years of her career defending anti-apartheid activists. She also contributed to jurisprudence on rape as genocide.



ADEDOYIN O. RHODES-VIVOUR, SAN

MANAGING PARTNER, DOYIN
RHODES-VIVOUR & CO.
(NIGERIA)

Adedoyin O. Rhodes-Vivour SAN is a Managing Partner at Doyin Rhodes-Vivour & Co (Legal Practitioners and Arbitrators). She is also a Chartered Arbitrator and Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (UK) and a CEDR UK Accredited Mediator. She credits all her success to her focus, determination, setting clear goals and always striving for excellence.



MIATTA SAMBA

JUDGE, INTERNATIONAL
CRIMINAL COURT (SIERRA
LEONE)

Miatta Samba is a judge at the International Criminal Court (ICC). She was a member of a sub-committee of the Sierra Leone Law Reform Commission and Senior Prosecutor at the Anti-Corruption Commission. Judge Samba is a lecturer at the University of Sierra Leone. She is recognized for rendering judgments that have significantly contributed to accountability for sexual and gender-based violence.



JULIA SEBUTINDE

JUDGE OF THE
INTERNATIONAL COURT OF
JUSTICE (UGANDA)

Julia Sebutinde is the first African woman to be appointed to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In 2001 Julia Sebutinde was given a Special Award by the Ugandan Law Society in recognition of her work towards justice in Uganda. She also received the "Good Samaritan Award" at the Congress of Advocates International in 2004.



OLUFOLAKE (FOLAKE) SOLANKE

FIRST WOMAN SENIOR ADVOCATE
OF NIGERIA (SAN) – (NIGERIA)

Solanke is the first female Senior Advocate of Nigeria. She is the recipient of the national honor of the Commander of the Order of the Niger (CON). She is the first African, and non-white to be presidente of Zonta International Organization. In 2012, she was awarded the International Bar Association's Outstanding International Female Lawyer Award . Folake is a Life Patron of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (Ibadan branch) and has received the honor of Fellow of The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies.



ELISABETH DIOR FALL SOW

JURIST AND LEGAL SCHOLAR
(SENEGAL)

Elisabeth Dior Fall Sow is the first female prosecutor in Senegal. She headed a team that drafted Senegal's 1999 law, outlawing female genital mutilation. She was a leading figure in establishing the bill to criminalize rape and pedophilia in Senegal. In recognition of her contribution to the legal industry, she was appointed as a Knight and Officer of the National Order of Merit of Senegal.



CHRISTIANA TAH

FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL
(LIBERIA)

Tah was appointed as Attorney General of Liberia in 2009, and she served this role for five years until 2014. The Liberian Civil War that broke out in 1990 caused major shifts. Most families lost everything, were displaced, and forced to start their lives over — more often than not, the woman in the family is the one expected to sacrifice her career to help build back the family. When Tah was appointed as Attorney General however, her husband volunteered to take full charge of family matters so she could serve her country to the best of her abilities.



SYLVIA TAMALE PHD.

LEADING AFRICAN FEMINIST,
LAWYER AND SCHOLAR
(UGANDA)

Sylvia Tamale was the first woman to be Elected Dean of a Law School in Uganda. She is an accomplished academic, author, and human rights activist. Her advocacy for LGBTQ+ citizens in Uganda was met with severe backlash. However she was relentless in steering the process that saw the repeal of the law the proposed the death penalty for homosexual acts.



UMU HAWA TEJAN-JALLOH

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE
(SIERRA LEONE)

Umu Hawa Tejan-Jalloh was the first woman appointed Chief Justice of the Republic of Sierra Leone. In this position, she realised the challenges in a male dominated society and judicial system, but she navigated this with mentors, a very good team of colleagues, as well as patience, hard work and perseverance.



MATHILDA TWOMEY

FIRST WOMAN CHIEF
JUSTICE (SEYCHELLES)

Twomey is a woman of firsts in her island nation of Seychelles. In 2011, she was the first woman judge appointed to the Court of Appeals in Seychelles and, in 2015, she became the first woman to be sworn in as the Chief Justice of the Seychelles Supreme Court. Her appointment as the Chief Justice came with some opposition but she forged forward, stating that "I, as chief justice, had to choose whether to ignore unacceptable behaviour from a [fellow] judge...It would have been easier, but it would also have been wrong."



GEORGINA THEODORA WOOD

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE
(GHANA)

Georgina Theodora Wood was the first woman Chief Justice of Ghana and a former Justice of the Supreme Court of the Gambia. She served as a Public Prosecutor and Deputy Superintendent in the Police Service before ascending to the bench. Wood received the Order of the Star of Ghana, Ghana's highest National Award, for her public service in addition to receiving an honorary degree (LLD) from the University of Ghana.



INSTITUTE FOR AFRICAN WOMEN IN LAW **(IAWL)**

The Institute for African Women in Law is a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to supporting the formidable works of women in law across the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. Our mission is to be a focal point for addressing issues across the legal and judicial professions.

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