

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT FOR WOMEN IN LAW

March 2021

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1 Foreword



David Greene, President of the Law Society of England and Wales

The Law Society is delighted to be co-authoring this report on international women in the law with Bates Wells.

The report provides an important insight into the experiences of women in the law and what needs to be done to achieve greater equality of opportunity and of representation, particularly at the senior levels.

Many of the report's findings reflect previous research that we have undertaken in this area to identify some of the key challenges to progression and opportunity for women in law, and we hear again about issues such as unconscious bias and equal pay for equal work.

The impacts of the unprecedented circumstances and ways of working created by the COVID-19 pandemic can also be seen in the report's findings. Although there have been some welcome changes in areas such as flexible and agile working, in many cases the virus has also brought additional challenges, with caring responsibilities falling more heavily on women.

More widely, although many of the concerns of women in law around the world are shared, the report also highlights the need to understand the differing socio-economic environments across different regions that impact the types of support and work undertaken by and for women lawyers in different countries.

The report underscores the vital leadership and responsibility of law societies and bar associations in achieving gender equality within the legal profession. By embracing diversity and inclusion, we will be able to increase representation, retain talent and be more representative of the society we live in. The legal profession must lead by example, taking serious steps to generate these transformative changes.

This report clearly shows that although progress has been made, there is still much more to be done to achieve great equality in the profession, and the need to collect important data such as this to inform our strategic approach to achieve meaningful change.

We all have a part to play in furthering this important work and this report sets out some practical and effective ways in which we can do this.

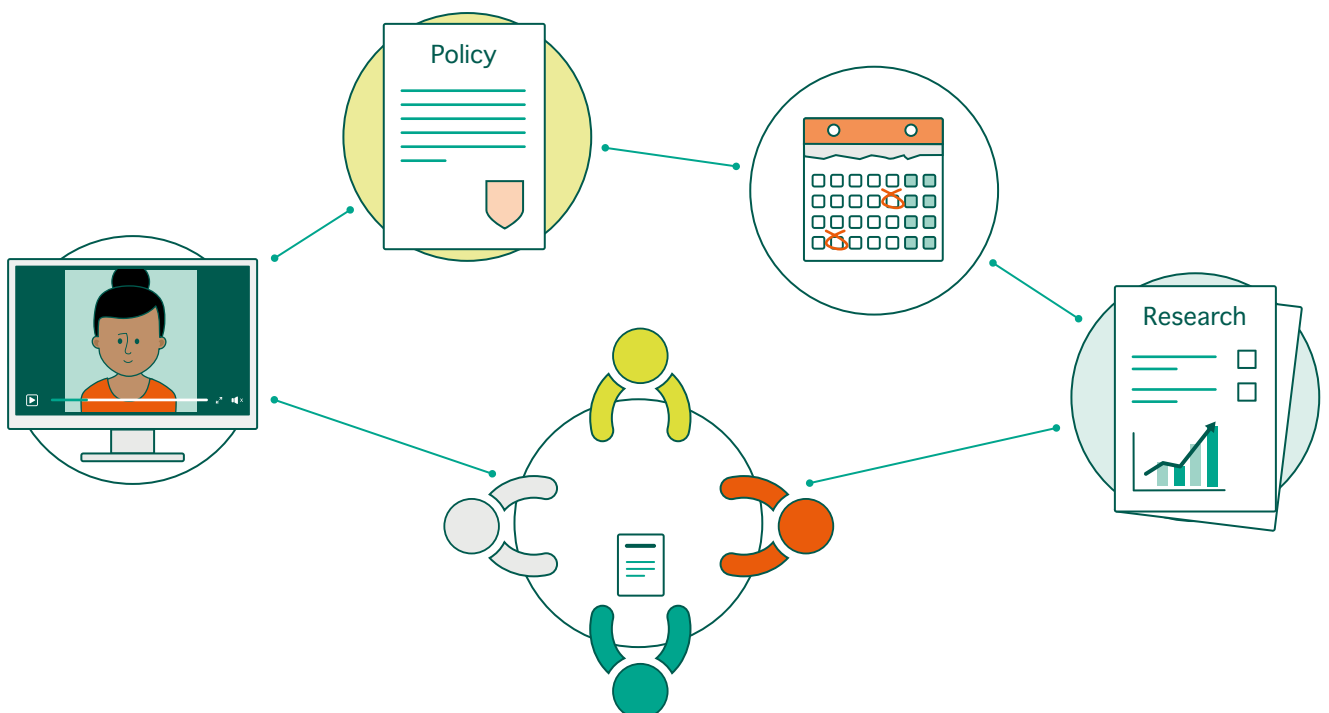
David Greene
176th President
The Law Society of England and Wales

2 About the Law Society and Bates Wells

The Law Society of England and Wales (‘the Law Society’) is the professional body representing over 180,000 lawyers in England and Wales. Its aims include upholding the independence of the legal profession, the rule of law and human rights in the UK and around the world. The Law Society was established by Royal Charter (the ‘Charter of the Society’) in 1845. It has had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations since 2014. Its activities are established by statute: The Solicitors Act 1974, The Courts and Legal Services Act 1990, The Access to Justice Act 1999, and The Legal Services Act 2007.

The Law Society launched its International Women in Law (IWIL) programme in December 2017 and aims to increase gender equality in the legal sector globally. By combining activities such as events, policy and research reports, roundtables, and training, the Law Society continues supporting efforts for transformative change. In addition, the IWIL programme advocates before the United Nations and other international bodies.

Bates Wells is a UK Top 100 legal practice. Bates Wells recognises the benefits of having a dedicated forum within the firm to assist it in developing proposals and policies that further drive diversity and inclusion. It has actively engaged in the Law Society’s gender-based initiatives.



3 Acknowledgements

The Law Society and Bates Wells owe a debt of gratitude to Bates Wells staff (past and present), who directly contributed with many hours of pro bono time collecting the data used in this report. The team was led by Melanie Carter and included Barbara Eze, Francesca Gage, Natalie Ali, Eloise Pollard, Georgina Berriman, Sung-Hyui Park, Maisie Ireland and Jennifer Chong. Thanks also to Veronica Carter and Julia Karstegl for their assistance and to Jane Lanigan from editors4change Ltd.

The Law Society is also indebted to more than 300 respondents of the questionnaire, conducted between November 2019 and January 2020, for sharing their views. Their input provided significant insights into the legal sector across the globe. We also greatly appreciate the time given by our interviewees, who selflessly shared with us their time, expertise and experience, from which we gathered a significant wealth of qualitative material. In addition, we are also very grateful to the Law Society’s international team and members

of the Law Society’s international women in law (IWIL) core group, who were instrumental in sharing the survey among their contacts and for identifying potential interviewees. We took careful consideration of all the comments received from Christina Blacklaws (the Law Society’s former president and IWIL core group member), Joanna Weller (Lexis Nexis Global Compliance Counsel and IWIL core group member), Sally Brett (Law Society Head of Diversity and Inclusion) and Joanne Cox (Law Society Research Manager). We also note the contribution from Evelyn Chijarira, Programme Manager (African International Law) and Human Rights Lawyer at the Pan-African Lawyers Union (PALU), who disseminated the questionnaire among its membership.

Finally, we extend our appreciation to Lizzette Robleto de Howarth, the Law Society’s International Programmes Manager, and Melanie Carter, Senior Partner at Bates Wells, for co-authoring this report.



4 Executive summary

In June 2019, the Law Society launched its global report on gender equality in the legal profession, *Advocating for Change: Transforming the Future of the Legal Profession through Greater Gender Equality*. One of the key findings was the importance of the significant role of law societies and bar associations in supporting women in law and transformative change within their own jurisdictions. This joint report, researched and written in conjunction with Bates Wells, reinforces the findings of the 2019 report¹ that there are still considerable challenges for women's progression in the legal profession and suggests a series of activities that can help strengthen the work of organisations to support women in the law.

The present report has been researched and was written under extraordinary circumstances created by the global COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the struggle to achieve greater gender equality, women around the world are currently facing an unparalleled set of challenges. While there has been greater flexibility and more agile working resulting from the 'working from home' policy, which has contributed to changing attitudes towards working from home that has been made feasible and manageable due to technology, this has also led to an increase in home-based burdens. Therefore, it is important to establish boundaries between home and work, which have become more blurred; so, a careful approach is needed. We are hopeful that the shelf life of this report will endure and be long lasting, taking us well beyond the end of this testing period.

This report highlights that, while some countries have a rich and varied set of initiatives striving to achieve gender equality in the legal sector, in other jurisdictions, these either do not exist or there are too few women lawyers practising to merit setting up support mechanisms. In those jurisdictions where there is no support at all, the first step is to set up an organisation; in others, the challenge is to scale up existing ones. The report canvasses the

range of types of organisations available, including specific women lawyers' organisations, in-house groups in firms, and chapters within national or international law societies or bar associations.

A key initial finding is that the approach becomes differentiated depending on the relative wealth and civil and political freedoms of a country. In some countries, women lawyers mainly focus their groups on campaigning and providing services around gender-based violence, family and access to justice issues for women due to the absence of those provisions. At the other end of the spectrum, there is a plethora of organisations solely focused on the issues facing women lawyers in the profession. The report also reflects that, in some jurisdictions, women lawyers' organisations tend to gear their activities towards professional survival – for example, facilitating business development opportunities over those addressing, for instance, career development.

The report confirms the findings of the Law Society's *Advocating for Change* report, concerning the challenges that prevent women lawyers from achieving positions of leadership in the legal sector. Unconscious bias was most commonly cited as the key reason why few women reach senior positions. Equal pay for equal work and the gender pay gap remain global concerns across the profession. Respondents also asserted that, although there are a good number of women leaders, they have remained largely invisible and/or are not given enough recognition. Respondents also said that sexual harassment continues to be a stubborn scourge in many workplaces, but that most women avoid talking about this issue due to the stigma attached and for fear that they will not be believed or will suffer a backlash for speaking out. Many spoke of the urgent need to share strategies and practical steps for handling sexual harassment.

Respondents concurred that returning to work after maternity leave or a career break was one of the

¹ *Advocating for Change: Transforming the Future of the Legal Profession through greater Gender Equality* (June 2019) <https://communities.lawsociety.org.uk/download?ac=36000>

biggest issues facing women lawyers. Prominent also in the responses were discussions about the ‘double burden’: unpaid labour in the domestic sphere and paid labour in the workplace. Many noted how the legal profession is geared towards a long-hours culture, with many events being held at the end of the day, making it often unsuitable for women with caring responsibilities. Participants also reported that, with the double burden, there is the guilt about spending time on professional development.

Respondents noted that it was not only gender discrimination within the profession, but also other types of discrimination that compounded their difficulties. They mentioned absence of support for minority ethnic groups and for those with a disability and long-term ill health. Similarly, some acknowledged that there are challenges in addressing intersectionality when setting up organisations for women lawyers. The report also found many positive examples of groups addressing intersectionality, with specific groups or activities.

Given the hierarchical nature of the legal profession, all respondents concurred that the role of the leadership within organisations and firms is an essential element for achieving gender equality – be that senior members of law firms, bar or law societies. Furthermore, by common agreement, respondents concurred that the engagement of men in supporting women lawyers is critical for progressing this agenda. Many organisations are already taking active steps to ensure that men are involved. Some have male associate members and mentors.

The importance of addressing the needs of the new generation of lawyers and law students comes out very strongly in the report. It was clear that young lawyers preferred to participate in tailored networking opportunities, as well as attending accessible and affordable events. Initiatives included speaking at law schools, linking law students with junior lawyers, mentoring and coaching.

Digital and technical advances are set to continue having a significant impact on women lawyers. Some respondents outlined that the use of technology has been greatly welcomed, especially for those women lawyers with caring responsibilities and/or other constraints. Some organisations have created ‘apps’ as a way of connecting and encouraging volunteering. Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and WeChat are also proving extremely useful tools for sharing information, job posts and news piece discussions, and for celebrating achievements (professional and personal), advertising conferences and reports. Some organisations have created portal databases to keep track of their resources and for easy access, as well as to promote women lawyers (for example, ‘find a female lawyer’).

Some respondents said that, in their jurisdictions, some male lawyers viewed ‘women only’ groups with suspicion and as a threat and, in extreme cases, had tried to shut groups down. In certain countries, many respondents felt that their national law society or bar association did not give enough support to women lawyers and were often run and led by men who did not take gender equality seriously. As a result, these women lawyers did not feel represented and had been compelled to form their own groups. It can be noted that this was not the norm, and in many other countries, the support of their national law society was a crucial aspect of support for women lawyers.

The report also provides practical advice, including making a modest start, drawing from the experiences of other women’s groups or chapters within bar associations, using free resources, finding champions, and thinking long term. Potential funding sources include grant funding, donations, crowdfunding, business sponsorship, and membership and event fees. Many interviewees spoke of the difficulty of gearing up from being a voluntary organisation to an incorporated body, with some preferring the informality and lesser administrative, financial and regulatory burdens of not incorporating and not requiring membership

fees. However, running an unincorporated entity can pose its own problems, including (in many jurisdictions) the inability to hold assets/sums of money and a reliance on volunteers, rather than paid employees, which can slow progress as many women cannot dedicate their expertise on a full-time basis.

The types of suggested activities described in the report range from events aimed at women returners to networking events through to mentoring. Some organisations have focused their activities to support returning women lawyers, such as providing spaces for nursing mothers and childcare facilities, as well as ‘return to work’ courses including mentoring and shadowing. Networking is a critical initiative for professional women, covering specific actions that consider the time constraints faced by women lawyers.

A significant finding of the report is the value of mentoring programmes to women lawyers and it includes many tips on how best to run these. Other initiatives involve responding to national consultations, including on legislative reform, providing support tools online, and campaigning generally (be it around women’s issues or those facing women lawyers).

Finally, the report lists a range of organisations, both national and international, from around the world, including a summary of their activities. The annexes provide ‘how to’ resources, which give information on setting up a chapter within a large law firm (including a draft questionnaire); advise on how to run an effective roundtable; and provide a template ‘Women in Law Pledge’, for amendment to fit particular jurisdictions.



5 Introduction and methodology

Context

In June 2019, the Law Society launched its global report on gender equality in the legal profession, *Advocating for Change: Transforming the Future of the Legal Profession through greater Gender Equality*. It reflected the diversity of views of more than 700 female lawyers, collected between July 2018 and April 2019, from 34 international roundtables held in 21 cities, across 18 jurisdictions in five continents. The report was additional to the largest global survey and two pieces of research in the legal sector, which included a literature review.

One of the key findings was the role of law societies and bar associations in supporting transformative changes within their own jurisdictions. These institutions can play a significant role in encouraging their members to adopt and implement policies that tackle gender inequality, address unconscious and conscious bias, promote flexible working, and improve work–life balance. With this report and other initiatives, the Law Society continues to play a leadership role by working with its members, other law societies and bar associations, as well as local firms, to continue increasing gender equality in the legal profession.

As policy makers work to protect and rebuild economies, their response must account for the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women – and the unique roles women will have to play in mitigating the pandemic’s harm.² UN Women has also reported that women who are poor and marginalised face an even higher risk of COVID-19 transmission and fatalities, loss of livelihood, and increased violence. Globally, **70% of health workers and first responders are women**, and yet, they are not at par with their male counterparts. At 28 per cent, the gender pay gap in the health sector is higher than the **overall gender pay gap (16%)**.³

We are also witnessing a significant backlash against women’s rights and the rise of ‘anti-gender movements’, confirming the endemic and widespread nature of violence against women, its power base, and the normalisation and tolerance of such violence in all areas of public and private life.

Dubravka Šimonović, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women.⁴

For the legal profession, COVID-19 has meant that there has been an increase in lawyers working from home, which has contributed to changing attitudes towards working from home that has been made feasible and manageable due to technology. People transitioning from fully office based to regularly working from home has demonstrated that flexible working and agile working are possible. Remote working, if done correctly, has been shown to boost productivity, help companies attract top talent and offer more options for clients to interact beyond the firm’s office. However, it is important to establish boundaries between home and work, which have become more blurred; so, a careful approach is needed. Flexible working policies are of real significance for working parents to balance commitments at home, eliminating lengthy commutes and giving greater time management and control. The use of cloud-based platforms underpins these benefits, allowing employees to work wherever they are based.

2 Melinda Gates, *The Pandemic’s Toll on Women – COVID-19 Is Gender-Blind, But Not Gender-Neutral*, 15 July 2020 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2020-07-15/melinda-gates-pandemics-toll-women>

3 UN Women, *Covid-19 and its economic toll on women: The story behind the numbers*, 16 September 2020

https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2020/9/feature-covid-19-economic-impacts-on-women?utm_source=divr.it&utm_medium=facebook

4 Dubravka Šimonović is United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences <https://www.un.org/en/un-chronicle/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-progress-and-remaining-challenges>

This joint Law Society and Bates Wells report intends to continue increasing understanding of the global barriers limiting the career progression of women in the legal sector. It also endeavours to provide a menu of practical examples from around the world.

Research

Questionnaire (quantitative data)

From November 2019 to January 2020, the Law Society and Bates Wells undertook a survey, obtaining more than 300 responses from six regions, representing all six continents. Countries included: Argentina, Canada, France, Finland, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States and Zambia. Insights for the data were used to identify themes, case studies, best practices and activities.

The questionnaire gathered information relating to location (for example, jurisdiction, regions); size of the organisation; years of practice; level and type of support received by their own organisations (if any); supporting mechanisms available and/or accessibility (either in their organisations and/or jurisdiction); positive and negative experiences in their practice as lawyers; and examples of good and bad leadership in these regions.

Interviews and desk research (qualitative data)

A sample of 19 female lawyers was identified and interviewed from across 12 countries, which covered all the regions identified at the outset: the Americas, Australasia, Asia, Africa and Europe. Interviewees were asked a series of questions concerning their background; their involvement in actions to increase gender equality in the legal sector; why and how organisations were set up; tips for setting these up; any hurdles they had to overcome, and lessons learned.

In addition to conducting the interviews, the group of Bates Wells lawyers researched the availability of women's legal networks in those jurisdictions, including:

- Date the network was established.
- Whether it was aimed at a specific subsector (for example, length of practice, geographically, field of law).
- Structure (for example, federated).
- Location.
- Size.
- Associated costs.
- Events/services available and their frequency.
- Nature of support offered.
- Online resources provided.
- Awards/recognition.
- Endorsement/connection with other representative bodies or law firms.

In some instances, no clear networks were identified, either because they were not available or because they were not accessible due to language barriers, lack of technological reach and the non-existence of websites. In some jurisdictions, women's legal associations focused their work on tackling gender-based violence and access to justice for women. In certain countries, the lack of female practitioners was evident; for example, one country researched on the national bar webpage had an allocated women's section simply listing the 25+ female lawyers in that country. Another finding was that, while in some parts of the world there were efforts to put in place support for women lawyers, in other regions, there were no provisions or even discussions on the subject. The 'cultural' dimension was raised in some jurisdictions; however, respondents stated that culture evolves

and should not be used as a justification for gender inequality or discrimination. In certain countries, there was only a handful of women practising law. In some countries, there was not a law society and/or bar association, so the first step is to establish one.

Practice definitions

Unconscious bias

‘Unconscious bias’ refers to both positive and negative attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, decisions or actions concerning an individual or group in an unconscious manner. All human beings are biased, and we are hardwired to make implicit associations, which may result in quick thinking, but also causes stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. In the Law Society’s 2017–18 global survey, the presence of perceived unconscious bias in the legal profession was the most commonly cited reason why so few women reach senior positions.



In my professional experience, I have seen many men – with far less work experience and lower academic grades – getting the jobs. During interviews, I have been repeatedly asked about my family situation and about my children, despite that it is prohibited to ask those sorts of questions. In my view, those firms that did not hire me did it out of fear of having a potential maternity leave or the responsibility of having small children. I needed both men and women supporting me to show that it is possible to get a top job and to have a family.

(Questionnaire respondent, Norway)

I am subject to the billable hour and, as a woman, I am already unintentionally asked to do more non-billable work than the men, which affects my bottom line and inability to make partnership despite being 15+ years qualified and working like a Trojan throughout.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Equal pay and the gender pay gap

Article 1 of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) recommendation No.100 states that the term 'equal remuneration' for men and women workers for work of equal value refers to rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex.⁵ In the UK, 'equal pay' means that men and women in the same employment performing equal work must receive equal pay, as set out in the Equality Act 2010. This applies not only to salary, but to all contractual terms and conditions of employment, such as holiday entitlement, bonuses, pay and reward schemes, pension payments, and other benefits.

However, the Law Society's research suggests that equitable remuneration is a concern across the profession, not only in the UK but globally. The global survey showed that:

- Over 60% of respondents, based on their knowledge and experience, were aware of a gender pay gap within their organisation.
- Only 16% reported visible steps being taken to address the issue. A smaller proportion of women (15%) reported steps had been taken compared to that of men (32%).

The gender pay gap is a measure of the difference between men and women's average earnings across an organisation or across the labour market. It is expressed as a percentage of men's earnings. According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission in Britain, there is an overall gender pay gap of 18.1%.

Equality was part of the idea of the communist regime, so pay gap is not an issue. But this is the only advantage of the communist regime. Beyond that, equality does not exist.

(Questionnaire respondent, Bulgaria)

Flexible working and agile working

'Flexible working' often means that while the number of hours remain the same, there is flexibility in the start and finish times and the ability to work remotely. 'Agile working' is slightly different and gives more autonomy to the individual, allowing people to work where, when and how they choose, with maximum flexibility and minimum constraints to optimise performance.

The Law Society 2018 survey evidenced that 91% of respondents felt that a flexible working culture was critical to improving diversity in the legal profession, compared to 86% in 2012. Our survey also found that:

- 52% of respondents said that they worked in organisations where a flexible working policy was consistently applied.
- 37% said that they worked in organisations where there was provision for flexible working, but it was not consistently applied.
- 11% said that they worked in organisations with no provision for flexible working.

⁵ C100 – Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No.100)
https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C100

The Law Society’s 2019 PC Holder survey also found that 83% of solicitors had access to flexible working and 58% made use of flexible working opportunities (55% of men/61% of women).

The law profession is inherently set up to favour a full-time and long-hours culture. Until this very structure is resolved, groups and networks will have limited effect on the lives of working parents.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

*In 2019, we produced a report promoting flexible and agile working in Hong Kong’s legal industry (**‘Making the case for flexible and agile working in Hong Kong’s legal industry’**). We saw this as a critical step toward enhancing retention within the profession and avoiding the loss of tomorrow’s talent to new law start-ups or a different industry altogether. Since the report was published, the Committee has been invited to consult with various stakeholders on how firms can work smarter to implement flexible and agile working, and to promote its uptake.*

(Interviewee Brooke Holden, Co-Chair, Women in Law Hong Kong)



6 Issues

Background information

The Law Society’s International Women in Law report, entitled *Advocating for Change: Transforming the Legal Profession through Greater Gender Equality* found that gender equality within the legal profession remains an unfulfilled aspiration for women lawyers. It identified that professional bodies around the world have a key role in achieving global gender equality in the law. Furthermore, the legal profession has yet to undertake a coordinated and transformative response that tackles head-on the problem of gender inequality globally. Until then, equal opportunities will continue to be unrealised for both men and women, but particularly for women, who are directly affected from this imbalance. Interventions need to be more strategic to shift the dial towards greater gender equality; therefore, structured and consistent approaches are essential for success.

This joint report reinforces the findings of the 2019 Law Society *Advocating for Change* report, that there are still considerable challenges for women’s progression in the legal profession.

Women lawyers and leadership

Respondents asserted that there are plenty of women leaders, but they remain invisible and/or are not given enough opportunities to succeed.

Some respondents noted the benefits of seeking the support of senior women, which can be problematic if there is a gender disparity in the upper echelons of an organisation.

In my law firm, there are no female figures. When I discussed my future professional career with a partner, it appeared as if my gender was not an issue. In practice, however, no woman has been named partner for a long time. Moreover, there are no women currently in a decision-making position.

(Questionnaire respondent, Argentina)

As I rise up the ranks, I have noticed that there are less women in leadership positions. I have yet to break the partnership glass ceiling myself as well. But I do my best to try and assist those below me.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Our Leadership Alliance for Women (LAW) was established to provide mentoring, skills training and networking opportunities, to help retain women lawyers so they develop them into future leaders. It has been beneficial for women participants to access the experience of more senior people, to get better understanding of what skills they need to progress in their careers. They also have the opportunity to develop their own networks, both internally and externally.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Women and innovation

Women should seek ways to innovate. Sharing success stories and drawbacks increases our learning and experience. In addition, thinking creatively and breaking the mould can lead to new opportunities to grow as professionals and as individuals. For example, projects may work differently due to external variables and contexts.

Respondents also noted the benefits of building relationships with senior professionals outside of the legal world, to grow their networks, develop new ideas, get some inspiration and boost confidence.

AMIGA is a Facebook group for female immigration attorneys, sharing successes and failures. Women get to be themselves. My favourite thing is the Friday ‘success’ post where each Friday someone posts a success thread of the week. All forms of success are welcome – legal victories, self-care, personal high points, parenting achievements and even just applauding those who made it through the week.

(Questionnaire respondent, USA)

Several research studies indicate that women are good at cultivating a personal network and an operations network, but don’t focus a lot of time on a strategic network as we are time poor and it’s harder to build up – we don’t have as many opportunities to go out and cultivate it.

(She Breaks the Law)

Widening the net while building a support system

Gender equality is a social issue and a business imperative. Achieving gender equality will require ‘preaching to the unconvinced’, so having a good support system is vital to feel supported, especially in jurisdictions resistant to change.

There is a small local group in my community known as ‘Lady Bag’, which centres mostly on empowering women economically. Women from various professions and businesses come together, share ideas on how to grow financially, and support each other.

(Questionnaire respondent, Zambia)

Where there is no support available, the first step is to build a supportive network with a community spirit and a common purpose for mutual support and for business development. In challenging jurisdictions, this network is even more important to prevent feeling isolated.

I have recently attended an event organised by the ‘Lionesses of Africa’ and it is amazing how their network connects women from around the world. It was also very useful to meet women with their own business and meet new clients.

(Questionnaire respondent, Angola)

The key is to have a safe space to talk, a forum where they can get to know each other and discuss strategies to influence male colleagues in positions of authority about gender equality.

It is not popular in Ukraine to talk about gender in the local community.
(Questionnaire respondent, Ukraine)

Some respondents asserted that women lawyers work in very different contexts and this has an impact on what they can achieve. For example, if a country is still struggling with civil and political rights, women lawyers have a tendency to focus their support groups on gender-based violence and family issues. Enabling more women lawyers to achieve influential roles in the profession can push other stakeholders to work on gender-based violence and family issues, so that women lawyers can concentrate on continuing professional development.

We have monthly meetings where we have speakers, giving us tips in legal developments. We also have organised a forum where we come together to discuss the rights of women and children.
(Questionnaire respondent, Kenya)

However, some organisations, like Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL), based in Australia, have successfully combined both by creating two strands:

- 1 Assisting female lawyers and women working in the law to have a fulfilling career through continuing professional development initiatives, mentoring programmes, networking, training, lectures, advocating for diversity and inclusion and the importance of wellbeing and balance in law.
- 2 Access to justice and opening gender equality spaces through law reforms, focusing on women affected by gender inequality such as the gender pay gap, gender-based violence, homelessness and financial security. Some of these events are undertaken with charity organisations.

Sexual harassment in the legal profession

Respondents said that most women avoid talking about sexual harassment because there is stigma attached to it. They fear they will not be believed, and there is also a backlash for speaking out. A **new study** by Harvard Business Review, published in the journal *Organizational Dynamics* in October 2019, found that, following the #MeToo movement, men are significantly more reluctant to interact with their female colleagues. A few highlights from the research include:

- 27% of men avoid one-on-one meetings with female co-workers.
- 21% of men said they would be reluctant to hire women for a job that would require close interaction (such as business travel).

Unfortunately, the legal profession has yet to come up with a comprehensive solution to the problem of sexual harassment. Until this is achieved, some respondents suggested sharing strategies and practical steps for handling sexual harassment and unwanted advances.

Many firms congratulate themselves for hiring a female lawyer, without analysing the reasons why women leave. There are situations when it is an open secret that a client or a partner is a creep and the firm is not doing anything about it.

(Questionnaire respondent, USA)

I would have found it useful to have more discussions on sexual harassment and practical ways of dealing with it. Most women in the legal profession shun this topic, particularly because the legal profession is dominated by male attorneys. Though the subject is sometimes lightly discussed, no comprehensive solutions have been devised.

(Questionnaire respondent, Zimbabwe)

Most female lawyers work in male-dominated law firms, where they have to put up with discrimination and sexual harassment from their male principals. It is an uphill task practising as a female private solo practitioner. The discrimination based on gender is equally experienced from litigants. They believe a female lawyer cannot perform, that our places are in the kitchen.

(Questionnaire respondent, Nigeria)

Role of national law societies and bar associations

Many respondents felt that their national law society or bar association did not give enough support to women lawyers and tended to focus on lawyers who were already successful in their careers. Some respondents were very critical of their local bars and national bars, especially because it was usually run and led by men and did not take gender equality seriously. As a result, women lawyers do not feel represented and have been compelled to form their own groups.

The national law association is particularly unhelpful and ignorant on gender issues, on law developments and the workplace. The organisation has always been run by men and they do not seem to take women very seriously.

(Questionnaire respondent)

Some respondents suggested the need to have a more holistic approach to improving the profession. Moreover, according to respondents, these organisations tend to be highly politicised, which discourages many women lawyers from participating. To increase representation, law societies and bar associations must show leadership, embrace gender equality and respect for all their members. Others welcomed the work of their national law society and saw this as a crucial aspect of support for women lawyers.

The Nigerian Bar Association is a major platform for connecting. We attend seminars, workshops and symposiums during the annual conference. This helps a lot in building and learning more skills. It also helps with networking.

(Questionnaire respondent, Nigeria)

It was difficult even to set up a women's division of the National Bar Association because we were not given permission initially.

(Questionnaire respondent, Poland)

Return to work initiatives

Respondents concurred that returning to work after maternity leave or a career break could be one of the biggest decisions a woman makes, and confidence can be a considerable part in the decision-making process. Law firms, law societies, bar associations or institutions can support returning women lawyers by creating workspaces that cater to women's needs, such as providing spaces for nursing mothers and childcare facilities. These provisions will make working mothers feel welcome and valued. It is also important to offer 'return to work' courses, including mentoring and shadowing, which can be very helpful for receiving legislative updates and familiarising with the workplace.

I completed a 'maternity coaching' course, which included back to work training and was provided by the Executive Coaching Consultancy. I found these sessions immensely valuable in the transition from maternity back to work. I believe that without them, I may have left the law entirely. Help from coaching and internal policies at my firm, such as a 'staged return', are also invaluable in helping women to remain in the profession.

(Questionnaire respondent, Hong Kong)

The women's groups helped build confidence and broaden my network when I returned to law after a career break. Getting involved in running the groups and interacting with others at conferences helped me gain confidence and understand that I was not alone.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Some respondents also noted that pre-departure initiatives would be helpful to prepare for the return to work.

Women supporting other women

A respondent stated: "It is a well-known fact that a woman alone has power; but collectively we have impact". Another respondent asserted that women have been traditionally taught to be competitive with one another, because the 'labour pool' and opportunities for women can be limited and are even more scarce at the top. The same respondent argued that women not supporting other women was only replicating an outmoded strategy, which simply had not worked and was detrimental to individuals and the profession.

Respondents expressed that they had sought the support from senior women, but women were not always supportive of other women. Senior women lawyers often have had to endure serious challenges in reaching senior levels, so they may feel resentment (for example, "if I can do it without help, why can't you?"). There is also the potential concern that, in the legal sector, everyone is protecting their own individual interests. Respondents acknowledged that it was important that women lawyers learned to understand the points of view of other women, to generate greater solidarity.

It is important to recognise that women are not always the best sources of support. Women have often had to endure real difficulties to reach senior levels of the profession and support from women in these circumstances can be complex, with a mix of jealousies and resentment, unconscious undermining, in addition to shared experiences.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Need to engage men in gender equality discussions

Respondents reiterated that gender equality concerns women and men. There are many men that recognise the value of women, but there are also men with highly conservative and traditionally minded views of women. Many scholarly studies assert that, for gender equality to be achieved, involving men can make a significant difference and contribution, since most of the structures in the legal sector were developed by men, with men in mind. A respondent outlined that traditional roles and stereotypes, as well as conscious and unconscious bias, remained large issues that held women back. The legal profession is still male oriented, with women having limited autonomy or power. We need to disrupt that model, so that it works for everyone.

Not everyone who would benefit from a women's network chooses to join it and while we work hard at emphasising that it's open to all and encouraging senior men to participate, that remains an uphill struggle. Everything offered by the network would be equally beneficial to all employees. I have a vision of the future where law firms are so inclusive that affinity groups are no longer necessary, but we're not there yet.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

In the UK, as only 29% of **senior leadership roles** in the workplace are held by women, the leadership ranks are still dominated by men. But men can also be part of the solution. Many respondents expressed their frustration that, in male-dominated law firms, they were still struggling with discrimination, sexual harassment, undermining and stereotyping, which had compelled women lawyers to set up their own firms or work on their own. In many jurisdictions, several legal practices have sole female private practitioners who continue to experience discrimination from those who hold very traditional views of women: for example, women lawyers cannot perform as well as men and that 'a woman's place is in the kitchen'. Only a few respondents said that they were not facing any professional issues resulting from their gender and that their organisation had been helpful in allowing them to get advice and learn from more senior practitioners.

I miss the male partners and male firm leaders engaging in this issue. They tend to say what is politically correct when 'forced' to, but I do not really feel that they care or genuinely think that lack of female partners and leaders is a problem.

(Questionnaire respondent, Norway)

Gender inequality is experienced by men and women in different ways, given the power imbalance between the genders. Some respondents said that, in their jurisdictions, many male lawyers viewed their 'women only' group with suspicion and as a threat and tried to shut the group down.

Sometimes female only groups can come across as a little anti-man, which is unhelpful. It should be inclusive and show the benefit to all and not marginalise people through gender. Males have issues also with caring responsibilities and suffer also from mental health issues.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

There seems to be a trend that more boards are making active efforts to ensure that men are invited and encouraged to attend events, whenever this is appropriate. At Victorian Women Lawyers, for example, its mooted event is for women to specifically target the lack of women in speaking roles at hearings, but men are encouraged to participate. Indeed, men participate in nearly all of Victorian Women Lawyers' other events

and projects. However, certain topics are just for women (for example, menopause, menstrual health). The organisation also shared that half of the event-sponsor firms with male managing partners were highly supportive of their approach. Men are also encouraged to participate as mentors in the Victorian Women Lawyers’ mentoring program and mentees can choose to have either male or female mentors.

At Linklaters, the women’s group persuaded a male partner to sponsor the firm to join the ‘HeForShe’ campaign run by UN Women. The Tasmanian Women Lawyers Association recently changed its constitution to allow men to become associate members. At the beginning, the organisation needed to be exclusively female but, after 40 years of existence, they felt more confident in their approach and purpose. There has been an enthusiastic uptake; men can attend free events and can benefit from the member’s price for paid social events.

The Male Champions of Change (MCC) Institute works with influential leaders to encourage men to act in support of gender inequality. It activates peer groups of influential male leaders, supports them to step up beside women, and drives the adoption of actions across the private sector and government.

<https://malechampionsofchange.com/about-us/>

Robust and visible leadership is key to strongly position gender equality

Different jurisdictions are at different stages in their diversity and inclusion journeys, but it is also evident that there are strong similarities in how gender inequality is expressed across the globe. Therefore, every leader has a responsibility to take action towards gender equality. Leadership starts at the top of organisations and senior leaders play a critical role in setting up priorities and being role models. If senior staff are seen taking a strong stance in addressing discriminatory behaviours, sexual harassment or (conscious and unconscious) bias, it increases the credibility, commitment

and impact. The political will to change means that leaders must examine their organisations’ results, acknowledge that certain behaviours are unacceptable and do something about it, openly and publicly.

The Gender Representation Network at my previous firm was a helpful resource to work on schemes promoting the representation of women in law. It was mainly led by partners and the diversity and inclusion team, which sent a helpful message that the senior staff at the firm were prioritising good gender representation.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Respondents underscored that staff commitment and loyalty would increase if the organisation invested in and supported its staff, with the benefit of attracting talent and increasing reputation. Hiring female lawyers, combined with retention strategies, will ensure that the existing gap will be reduced and will show a long-term vision for achieving the change.

We need more support groups in Mexico, because participation is subject to paying for a membership and many law firms and companies are not willing to pay for such memberships.

(Questionnaire respondent, Mexico)

Supporting the new generation of lawyers

Building and maintaining relationships is important, especially when you are starting out in a profession as demanding as law. Networking opportunities for junior lawyers must be accessible and affordable, so differentiated memberships and reduced fees can support young lawyers. As the profession becomes more diverse in terms of socio-economic background, this is likely to become increasingly important.

As a young lawyer, it would be useful to have events and conferences geared towards young women lawyers and the challenges that we go through, through either employment or through starting out in a law firm of your own. Mentorship programmes for both would really be beneficial.

(Questionnaire respondent, Kenya)

The International Federation of Women Lawyers [FIDA] provides informal mentoring for younger members by linking them to more senior lawyers. In this way, these young lawyers can benefit from the knowledge, experience, counselling, and other opportunities that may include referrals.

(Questionnaire respondent, Nigeria)

Young lawyers can be catalysts, pushing for transformational changes in the legal profession, so it is important to nurture them from the start. Whether you are speaking at a school of law, linking law students with junior lawyers, mentoring and coaching, this investment will be reflected in the ethical stance and practice of the future generation and can create the conditions for greater gender equality.

The problems experienced by senior and junior female lawyers are also very similar – sexual harassment, bias and stereotypes, lack of promotion and recognition, among others. Forming inter-generational spaces for dialogue can help to bridge the gap between senior and young female lawyers, so that there is a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities.

Capitalising on the Digital Age

We live in the Digital Age, with technology increasing the speed and breadth of sharing information and knowledge. Whether you have a video chat with a family member or attend online conferences for your work, technology has improved how people communicate, with them being able to share information more quickly and reducing the impact of distance. Time and money can be saved using technology, while also reaching a wider audience. Therefore, understanding the potential pitfalls in technology and communication can help you communicate more effectively.

Potential misunderstandings can arise via email, text messaging or chat apps. This can lead to arguments and confusion, where one person misinterprets another's words because of typos, language barriers and assumptions about the other person's intent. Translation tools can add to the confusion, due to translation mistakes of informal language that the tool cannot interpret correctly. Less personal interaction can also increase the sense of isolation and some people still prefer face-to-face communication, because it brings about stronger connections and allows for interpretation of body language.

Some respondents outlined that the use of technology had been highly productive, especially for those women lawyers with caring responsibilities and/or other constraints. Some organisations have created ‘apps’, as a way of connecting and rewarding volunteering with points, which they can exchange against the costs of events, courses, mentoring, and/or tokens. Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and WeChat are also proving useful tools for sharing information and reports, job postings, asking about other people’s experience in interviews or tests, news piece discussions, celebrating achievements, advertising conferences and events. Some organisations have created portal databases to keep track of their resources and for easy access, as well as to promote women’s lawyers (for example, ‘find a female lawyer’).

Speaking about the double burden

Respondents asserted that many working women spent their days performing double shifts: unpaid labour in the domestic sphere and paid labour in the workplace. There is still a stubborn expectation that women and girls should primarily be undertaking household chores. Most ‘working women’ face a double burden, as opposed to ‘working men’. Respondents acknowledged that this is not only an issue for the legal profession, but also a societal one. Support groups and continuing professional development courses should be accessible to both men and women, but the absence of childcare support makes this more difficult for women.

Due to a combination of workload and lack of childcare support, I was unable to access and/or meet any formally organised support networks; rather, I formed my own support network of female colleagues and friends working in the law, who are able to provide support and hugs on an ad hoc basis when required.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Women in Poland have to balance their family life with work and advocates cannot very often afford to have more than one child; women do not have help from the state. A problem is that business meetings centre around dinner – this is still the way of doing business and this excludes women with family responsibilities.

(Interviewee from Poland)

Many respondents noted how the legal profession was geared towards a long-hours culture, with many events being at the end of the day. This is often unsuitable for women with caring responsibilities. Respondents also felt guilty about spending additional time on professional development.

Network events often take place at the beginning/end of the day – this automatically places them out of reach for parents.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Intersectionality

Respondents noted that it was not only gender discrimination within the profession, but also other types of discrimination that compounded their difficulties. Respondents mentioned an absence of support to minority ethnic groups and to those with a disability and/or long-term ill health. Similarly, some respondents acknowledged that there were challenges in addressing intersectionality when setting up organisations for women lawyers.

However, many respondents also noted the positive strides women’s organisations were making to be more diverse, through diversifying their leadership to represent the needs of the community or by partnering with other groups (for example, LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans] or minority ethnic groups).

Oregon Women Lawyers provides a supportive community for women and people of colour and leadership opportunities to develop practical skills, as well as a membership directory to promote business development among members.

(Questionnaire respondent, USA)

In-house and sole practitioners

Many respondents noted the disparity between private practice and in-house legal work, as the latter often meant fewer women’s networks and events. Other respondents noted that in-house was a popular career for women, due to the shorter hours requirement. This resulted in a lack of support for the few who chose to go into private practice.

Some respondents noted that working on their own was more desirable in male-dominated law firms, where they faced discrimination and sexual harassment. However, practising as a female sole practitioner has its own difficulties, as clients can often be discriminatory, preferring firms with male practitioners. Sole practitioners may not have access to support, because groups do not cater to their needs and they have less time to seek out help.

Taking action on gender equality

Through the interviews and the surveys, we noted some common tips:

- Start out modestly. 
- Draw from other experiences (or organisations in other jurisdictions).
- Be creative and try new things.
- Make use of free resources.
- Get high profile and/or established stakeholders to champion your initiative. 
- Prioritise key issues and initiatives. 
- Identify resources that you need and set up a budget (and don’t be afraid to ask). 
- Be consistent and structured.
- Think long term.

Raising funds for your activities with sustainability in mind

To survive and thrive in a changing world, any not-for-profit organisation must develop a fundraising plan that includes a combination of:

- 1 Grants funding (for example, <https://www.grantsonline.org.uk/>; <https://www.globalgiving.org/fundraisers/>; <https://resource-alliance.org/2020-global-fundraising-awards/>).
- 2 Donations (for example, [https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/code/all-fundraising/processing-donations](https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/code/all-fundraising/processing-donations;); <https://www.cafonline.org/>; <https://www.dsc.org.uk/category/fundraising/trusts-and-foundations/>).
- 3 Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising small amounts of money from many people, via the internet. There are several platforms for this, including Crowdfunder, GoFundMe, JustGiving, Facebook Fundraising and Kickstarter, to name a few.
- 4 Membership and/or alumni schemes.
- 5 Events.
- 6 Sales/earned income.
- 7 Community-business partnerships (sponsorships).

In addition, you can conduct market research with members, friends and colleagues, collecting their good ideas and examples of what has worked to raise money. Each method of fundraising brings its own challenges:

- **Grantmakers** will each have a specific goal that they want to achieve through their grants. They will want you to demonstrate how you can help them achieve those goals.
- **Donors** generally want to contribute to specific projects or activities, rather than the organisation.
- **Crowdfunding supporters** will want to be coached in how to reach out to their own network to support your organisation.
- **Members** want something in return for their fees – information, special access, etc.
- People attending a **special event** will be paying for entertainment: they will expect to be entertained.
- **Businesses** generally enter into partnerships with not-for-profits to ‘do the right thing’, but they also may want to be *seen* to be doing the right thing. There may be other drivers (for example, access to markets, reputation and profile). In addition, involving clients can increase the likelihood of receiving funding from private sector firms.



7 Types of activities

Recording and highlighting women's history and contribution

Despite the vast contribution to every aspect of society, women's history and contribution still remains invisible. According to award-winning historian, author and broadcaster, Dr Bettany Hughes, women have always been 50% of the population, but only occupy around 0.5% of recorded history. Furthermore, in her new book, *Invisible Women*, award-winning campaigner and writer, Caroline Criado Perez, shows us how, in a world largely built for and by men, we are systematically ignoring half the population. She exposes the gender data gap – a gap in our knowledge that is at the root of perpetual, systemic discrimination against women, and that has created a pervasive but invisible bias with a profound effect on women's lives.

Sadly, throughout the globe, the *Advocating for Change* report also found that the history of women lawyers remains invisible. Therefore, we must redress this imbalance, to ensure that women's stories are recorded, to build our collective historical memory and to publicise these to break myths and stereotypes.

You can start by researching and compiling stories of women in the legal profession. This could eventually develop into a database, which you can use in your talks, publications and articles.

For further information on how to go about this, you can refer to the Law Society's *Women in Leadership in Law: Roundtable Toolkit*, the section on 'The History of Women in Law' (2018).

Women's networking opportunities

Networking gives the opportunity to exchange information and ideas among people with a common professional or special interest, at the professional or personal level, in either a formal or informal

social setting. Professional networking is commonly used by professionals to expand their business circles, to increase business opportunities, and to become aware of innovation, news and trends in their fields.

Harvard Business Review suggests that there are three types of networks: operational, developmental and strategic. The *operational network* is all those people who you work with and depend on for your day-to-day work – this can be either internally (within your company) or externally. Your *developmental network* is the collection of individuals whom you trust and to whom you can turn for a sympathetic ear, advice (depending on their experience), and a place to discuss and explore professional options. Your *strategic network* comprises those who can help you do two critical tasks: (i) define what the future will bring; and (ii) prepare for and succeed in that future. There will be some overlap between this network and your operational network, but the differences are likely to be significant.

Research indicates that women are good at cultivating a '*personal network*' and an '*operations network*'. However, they are unable to invest the time to build a 'strategic network', given time constraints – for example, caring responsibilities; this network is also harder to build. Networking can be time consuming and hard work. However, it is important to build a good networking support system. So, when designing new networking opportunities for women, these should be '*purpose driven*' to ensure that their time is capitalised. Many respondents valued networking and had made many lifelong friends and colleagues in this manner, even obtaining new jobs, internships and mentoring opportunities through these connections. Developing networks is a good way of connecting both men and women. For example, some respondents argued that it could be difficult to seek out other women lawyers without appearing to be in '*sales mode*'.

Some networking tips:

- Striking a good balance between participants (for example, senior versus junior lawyers) and between activities (for example, formal versus informal; social versus legal practice) is very important to ensure that participants benefit from the event.
- Make some events financially accessible to women lawyers.
- It is not the quantity but the quality of networking that matters.
- It is difficult to develop meaningful contacts at large events, so smaller events and roundtables might be preferable.
- Set up a clear purpose for the event to invite the right people (for example, business development, referral opportunities, analysis of new trends versus chatting in women-only spaces).
- Consider the location and timing carefully to ensure that the event is accessible to women lawyers with caring responsibilities.
- These events are non-billable time and thus subject to billing pressure.
- Think about the non-career benefits, as well as helping to build personal connections.

Networking events can be very successful if carefully planned. Ensure that there are clearly identifiable hosts available that can introduce participants to each other – for some women, it can be a daunting experience to ‘walk the room’.

Some women’s networks could focus on social activities and mental health in order to promote more opportunities to interact, especially around

wellbeing initiatives to prevent burn out, which can force women to leave the profession or prevent them from returning to work. Partnering with other like-minded associations is also important to avoid duplication and share resources, best practices and innovation. Certain networking events can be sponsored and/or implemented in collaboration with local businesses, so be open to establishing partnerships with others.

She Breaks the Law

She Breaks the Law is a global community of women change makers who are passionate about the power of innovation and collaboration. It was founded in 2019 on International Women's Day with the aim of supporting and empowering women of all backgrounds and disciplines in their strive for change and a progressive, inclusive and collaborative legal industry. Its mission is to accelerate transformation in the legal profession by bringing together and empowering women leaders across the entire ecosystem and to create the go-to platform for #lawbreakers to progress their change journey.

Since its foundation, She Breaks the Law has attracted thousands of women from more than 50 different countries in the world. The foundation provides a safe space where lawbreakers and organisations from around the globe can connect, share, develop and create. It is driven by the power of the community.

She Breaks the Law – interview with Priya Lele

Two of the co-founders of She Breaks the Law are Nicky Leijtsens and Priya Lele. They have been joined by Chief Marketing Officer Helen Burness and Legal Operations expert Cindy de la Fuente. Together, the team looks to grow and empower the community, with the support of a growing number of lead lawbreakers across the globe.

“Let me tell you how She Breaks the Law came to be. Nicky and I had known each other for a while but had not had the chance to even go out for a coffee! In 2018, we attended a conference and afterwards we were all invited for dinner by a vendor and we happened to sit next to each other. We had both worked in ‘innovation’ roles for over a decade in several industries, so we were looking at legal tech and new ways of working. What we found hilarious was that we had never connected with each other to share our experiences. We thought that was because there was no natural place for us to come together and talk about our challenges as women who want to change the legal industry.

“We discussed creating something for women like us who want to drive change in the legal industry, because there seemed to be a lot of them. The idea started as a forum where women came together and talked. This then morphed into this idea of connecting women deeply and giving them a platform to share stories and a safe space to share ideas and give opportunities to develop their skills. Our initial launch on International Women's Day went viral – something we were not expecting! Now there are lawbreakers in over 50 different countries in the world and we continue to meet regularly, even in lockdown via digital events, to discuss important topics, connect with each other, create and share.”

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/she-breaks-the-law/>

Women's Returners

Women's Returners (WR) provides a voice, advocates for and supports professional women returning to paid work after an extended (2–15+ year) hiatus. Although it mainly focuses in the UK and Ireland, anyone interested can join for free. Benefits include a monthly newsletter and updates with information, advice and inspiration. Some events are free (including webinars), while others are paid – but members get a discount.

<http://wrpn.womenreturners.com/events/>

Women in IP

Women in IP (intellectual property) is a big annual event that takes place in February. It is hosted by large law firms with 100–150 participants that come along to share best practices and network. During the event there are a lot of panels, so participants can benefit from input from senior practitioners, present their ideas or get support from the IP community. Women in IP also runs webinars (for example, on inclusive leadership, managing a non-linear career), organises social media campaigns (for example, International Women's Day), and works towards increasing diversity in IP. Women in IP participates in government and sector consultations, specific to their profession.

Women in IP has set up a newsletter to update and give ideas about what people can do. Other activities include coffee mornings, drop-in events and a mentoring programme. One of the lessons learned is that there are a lot of issues in IP that are specific to women. In addition, women tend to be more open to other women. The network is trying to be as inclusive as they can in terms of including men but acknowledges that this requires a careful balance.

Aside from more technical aspects of IP, the network invests time in discussions that are not legal and/or professional related, for example, post-natal depression and the menopause, because these are issues that affect women and, in many instances, firms have not made any provisions in these areas.

<https://ipinclusive.org.uk/community/women-in-ip/>

Early risers (breakfast) networking

'Early risers' breakfast networking events work best for those with caring responsibilities, those who love early mornings or those who have very limited time for networking. You also get to interact before a potentially stressful workday hit!

In October 2017, hosted by Rwanda Bridges for Justice (RBJ), the first 'Women Lawyers Network Coffee Meetings' took place. These led to the setting up of the Rwanda Women Lawyers Network. RBJ now hosts these monthly meetings, with the aim of providing a forum where female lawyers can come together to informally discuss the challenges identified and formulate the most effective approaches to those particular challenges.

During the 'Women Lawyers Network Coffee Meetings', female lawyers discuss the challenges faced by women in the criminal justice system, thus highlighting the need for mentoring and networking opportunities dedicated to female lawyers in Rwanda. This project aims to support female defenders in their daily work and improve gender-sensitive criminal defence available for female defendants within Rwanda's criminal justice system.

<https://www.ibj.org/2017/10/female-leadership-in-the-legal-profession-rwanda-women-lawyers-network/>

My office hosts a monthly women's breakfast, during which we discuss various issues important to women's advancement within the firm.

(Questionnaire respondent, USA)

Let's do lunch networking

The key to hosting a successful lunch lies in the selection of the restaurant and the attendees. Select a restaurant that can accommodate paying separately and has a private dining room. When inviting guests, focus on professionals who have similar roles and are working in complementary industries. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to introduce their business, current areas of focus and anything they could use help with. At a minimum, each of your guests will leave with new contacts and a desire to keep these connections flourishing. Lunches can be formal and themed, with a keynote speaker, or informal.

Women in Law Hong Kong: Women@lunch

Brooke Holden, Co-Chair of WILHK, was aware of 'male lunch clubs' operating throughout the city and had the idea of establishing a monthly networking lunch for WILHK members.

The idea was to make it an '*institutional lunch club*', so that it became a key date in people's monthly calendar. The intimate setting provided a perfect opportunity for members to expand their network in an informal relaxed environment, where relationships could develop to a greater depth than in the usual cocktail setting. In this environment, network expansion may happen at a slower pace, but the relationships formed are meaningful and, therefore, sustainable long-term.

The 'Women@Lunch' monthly event started out as a small initiative in private rooms with handpicked attendees (to promote an optimal networking environment for attendees), but quickly became an oversubscribed event, with seats being highly sought after. The concept has since expanded, so that more people can take advantage. Pre-COVID, WILHK was booking whole restaurants to host each monthly lunch, with 30-40 attendees. Biographies are circulated prior to each event to promote and facilitate targeted networking.

Virtual networking

Managing conversations digitally can be complex, but networking online can work given the right approach. For example, putting a twist on the traditional format of speed networking, each attendee can be given two minutes to speak. Everyone then receives each other’s details after the session to follow up on leads they are interested in. You can also have a chatroom, where people can either talk to an entire group (and share things such as links to websites and email addresses) or with one person should they wish to take a business discussion further.

Monthly podcasts

Monthly podcasts can be industry specific, on issues affecting women in law or on business development, for example. You can research other organisations involved in similar activities and learn from their tips for developing a successful podcast.

<https://www.womeninthelawuk.com/podcasts-women-in-the-law-uk/>

Client-focused or industry-specific networking events

You can set up a *Legal Professional Expo*, for example, aimed at exposing small and medium female-owned law firms to resources that can contribute to the firm’s development. In some jurisdictions, *career fairs* or *business fairs*, events in which employers, recruiters and schools give information to potential employees, can also help to advertise your business, develop networks and create innovative ideas.

Film screenings

Films can spark ideas, break down barriers, and generate discussions and interest. A film screening can be a good networking event and a fantastic way to get people with a shared interest together, opening a host of possibilities for adjoining events. Depending on the film you are screening, you may want to consider organising a speaker or panel of speakers to lead a discussion after the film. Film screenings can be a great way to raise awareness on issues and to get people involved in a wider

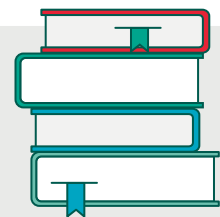
social movement. They can also be a powerful and engaging educational tool. A film can be a good fundraising tool, raising money for your campaign and/or organisation.

Women’s Book Club

Women’s Book Club is a community of women who support each other on the journey to being more empowered, authentic and confident through intentional discussions, meaningful connections and by engaging resources and inspiring each other to act. The book club could operate on a monthly basis, to talk about a selected book (as well as general chit-chat!). Each meetup takes place in a selected location, including online.

Tips for setting up a book club:

- Determine what type of book club you want to host.



- Figure out who you want to invite.

- Decide where your book club will meet.



- Rotate your host, to give each member an opportunity to lead.

- Decide how you’ll choose books.

- Think about how members will access the books.



- Set up the discussion.



- Don’t forget the logistics.

Conferences

A **conference** is a **meeting**, often lasting a few days, organised on a subject or to bring together people who have a common interest in a more formal setting. At a conference, innovative ideas are thrown about and new information is exchanged among experts. The most relevant for this toolkit are as follows:

- An **academic conference** is a gathering of legal academics, where research findings are presented, or a workshop is conducted.
- A **business conference** is held to discuss new trends and opportunities pertaining to the business.
- An **unconference** differs from the traditional conference, since it avoids the high costs, top-down organisational hierarchy and sponsored presentations. All attendees are equally knowledgeable about the topic and the discussion follows an open mode – usually without a single speaker addressing the gathering.

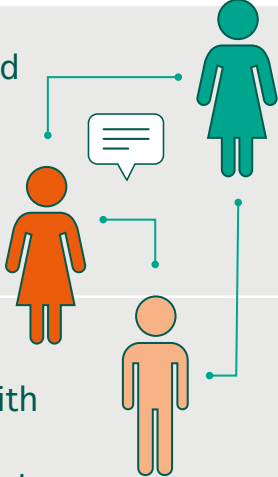
Most conferences have one or more keynote speakers, who are eminent personalities in their field. Their presence is meant to attract more people to attend the conference. This arrangement is common at academic and business conferences. There are various types of conferences:

- A **symposium** is a casual gathering and includes refreshments and entertainment.
- A **seminar** is organised to discuss a topic. It is usually educational in nature and attendees are expected to gain new knowledge or skills by the end of the seminar.
- A **workshop** is more of a hands-on experience for the participants, with demonstrations and activities. The amount of time one speaker addresses the group is limited.

- A **roundtable** conference is a getting together of peers to exchange thoughts and opinions on a certain topic, usually political or commercial. The number of participants who sit at a roundtable is limited, so that each one can face all the others.

This could be your flagship event of the year for your members or it could be ad hoc. You could request your law society and/or bar association to grant you continuing professional development (CPD) points. You can also livestream your event, so others can access it.

Tips for setting up a conference:



- Provide structured opportunities for networking/meeting new people.
- Try to have a good database with a combination of committed supporters as well as new people for your events. It is always useful to get in front of those people who otherwise wouldn't be hearing your message.
- Make sure there is meaningful time set aside to meet people if the number of attendees is large.

For further information about how to run effective roundtables, you can go to Annex 3 and/or review the Law Society's *Women in Leadership in Law: Roundtable Guidance* (2018).

Students' aimed activities

Victorian Women Lawyers has a *law student mentoring programme*, which is offered annually and is open to law students in their penultimate or final year of law school. The organisation generally matches 150 mentees with people in the profession, based on interest and background. It is backed by the Victorian judiciary and supported by a Supreme Court Judge who delivers a speech for these law students every year. The Victorian Women Lawyers also offers a bi-annual professional mentoring programme to junior lawyers in the early years of practice who do not have access to formal mentoring programmes with their employers and who are seeking mentorship from more senior practitioners.

The **Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association ('JurFem')** offers two week-long summer schools for female law students. These focus on developing soft skills, leadership and creativity for building successful practices in the legal field, as well as discussions and workshops on a range of topics impacting female lawyers. The summer schools are offered to female law students, from second to fourth year, from all regions of Ukraine. Students are selected (30 students) based on their level of motivation, regional representation and readiness for further cooperation with JurFem.

Women in the Law UK promotes an annual essay competition for UK students, aspiring student lawyers seeking to enter the legal profession. Legal Professional Course (LPC) graduates, trainee solicitors and solicitors can participate in this competition. The 2020 topic selected was: 'What are the remaining barriers existing for women and BAME [black, Asian and minority ethnic] women entering the legal profession, and what steps can be taken to see more senior women leaders in senior roles in the law, in firms and courts?'

Tasmanian Women Lawyers actively engages with university students with law society, association of corporate counsel, and young lawyers' association events. Events are run jointly with students' law societies to promote early associations and connections between students, the judiciary and legal profession before joining the profession. It connects with law students because there are parallels between sexual harassment and inequalities encountered in the workplace and on campus.

The Edinburgh University Women in Leadership has been extremely useful in reinforcing that view that there are women out there driving change and our ability to link in with students to detail our experiences and share views.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Mooting

A **moot court** competition simulates a **court** hearing (usually an appeal against a final decision), in which participants analyse a problem, research the relevant **law**, prepare written submissions and present oral argument.

Victorian Women's Lawyers has a mooting programme annually, exclusively open to women, to promote more women lawyers taking up speaking roles or going to the bar. This project is well supported by the judiciary – judges of the Supreme Court, County Court and Magistrate Courts adjudicate their moots at every round, providing valuable feedback. The grand final is held in the Supreme Court room and is judged by the Victorian Women Lawyers' patron, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, the Honourable Marilyn Warren QC AC.

Mentoring programmes

Mentoring is a relationship between two people with the goal of professional and personal development. The 'mentor' is commonly an experienced individual, sharing his/her knowledge, experience and advice with a less experienced person, or 'mentee'. Mentors become trusted advisers and role models so, for the mentorship to work, there should be respect, commitment and trust between the mentor and the mentee. Mentors support and encourage their mentees by offering suggestions and knowledge, both general and specific. The goal is to help mentees improve their skills and, hopefully, advance their careers.

I was a mentor for the Law Society's Women's mentoring group. Although I was on the 'giving' rather than the 'receiving' end of the mentoring, I still found this a valuable experience to meet with someone bi-monthly and to discuss career progression and personal brand with a more junior female lawyer.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Mentoring should not be confined to just junior lawyers. It could be set up for all levels, have a broader thematic remit (e.g. beyond the legal profession) or specific (e.g. focusing on specific legal issues), and could be law related (e.g. senior lawyer to junior lawyer); interdisciplinary (senior business lawyer); and/or multisectoral (senior tech lawyer), depending on the interests of both parties.

Respondents mentioned that a formal mentoring programme, with clear guidelines, timeframes and milestones, worked best because both parties could manage their own expectations as well as plan and prepare. Informal mentoring may lead to a non-commitment set up where it is more difficult

to track progress. Although setting up a mentoring project can take time, the rewards are plentiful and there are several initiatives that can offer guidance. Mentoring also provides a positive opportunity to expand your network and meet other professionals, inside or outside the legal profession, which can lead to business development, new career opportunities, and innovation.

Women from various professions and business come together, share ideas on how to grow economically and support each other's business. The group also centres on some charity work and offers moral support to those in need. This group has been useful to me because it has helped me, and many others, to network, which I consider as very important because 'no man is an island'. We need people to grow and what better than creating connections with various people gifted in different disciplines and talents.

(Questionnaire respondent, Zambia)

Mentoring programmes take time to match pairs (mentors and mentees), so a set of criteria should be developed to ensure that the pairing is successful. When setting up a mentoring project, you should take into consideration whether or not to add a fee. This will depend on the income of your target audience; for example, in some jurisdictions, paying a deposit meant greater commitment but, in others, this meant that some women lawyers were excluded because they could not afford to pay. You can also partner with a business and/or other enterprises as a way of obtaining sponsorship, apply for government funding (where available), or partner with your local/national law society or bar association.

Women in Law Hong Kong's mentoring programme

As part of Women in Law Hong Kong's commitment to enhancing the profiles, skills and networking opportunities of women in the legal field, they have been running an annual mentoring programme. They continue building on the learnings and successes of previous programmes, focusing on empowering participants with confidence, a network of support and key skills to navigate and grow their careers.

<https://www.wilhk.com/mentoring-programme>

There are benefits of mixed pairing; however, this will depend on the purpose, the subject matter and the possible benefits – for example, is the mentoring for personal and/or professional development?

Women in LawTech mentoring scheme – interview with Ivy Wong

After changing career, Ivy Wong, a former lawyer and the founder of this group, had wanted to increase her contacts and find a mentor. She connected with *Legal Geek* through its *Women in LawTech* group [Legal Geek is an events organisation and its flagship event is a big conference in London]. She pitched the idea of a mentoring scheme to Legal Geek back in 2017, and they have worked together ever since.

She says: "When I moved into lawtech, I wanted to quickly meet others in the field as it was still a less developed industry. I got involved with Legal Geek's Women in LawTech group, which had been running a number of meet ups in London. Having benefited from career coaching earlier in my career, I began thinking about how to support others. I felt that others would also benefit from mentorship, so I pitched the idea of a mentoring scheme to Legal Geek. I decided at the start to focus on full time professionals.

The initial two cohorts focussed on women in lawtech around the world. In 2018, when the first cohort started, all mentees and mentors were women. In the second cohort, we opened it up to men (to be mentors) and this was very well received – I am glad I did because some of the best pairs were male and female mixes. In the third and fourth cohort, we broadened our support to mentees from all underrepresented groups in the legal industry, including women, people from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, people with disabilities, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

Continued overleaf

I have had situations where I have matched people and the mentee is not committed or decides that the programme is not right for them. This can be disappointing for everyone involved, so to prevent this from happening, I introduced the concept of a ‘swap window’ in the third cohort where mentees and mentors can request a different pairing within one month of the match.

I also did not realise the difficulty of having mentees and mentors in different time zones, which added complexity in pairing. But it did work – there was a pair in Italy and the UK that had a video-conference every week and use WhatsApp to catch up regularly.

The scheme reminds people to reach out and ensure that they seek the support they need to prosper in their career paths. In earlier cohorts, I sent out a monthly newsletter with suggestions and topics, which also serves as a reminder to set up their next mentoring session and people have found this useful. At the end of the mentoring relationship, I suggest questions that they can use to review and reflect on what they have learned. I also send out a survey to find out about the experience of the scheme generally. Across the first three cohorts, we matched over 270 mentors and mentees across 27 countries, with 92% of participants finding the experience valuable. It’s been a really rewarding experience.”

<https://www.legalgeek.co/news/ivy-wong-wins-award-for-work-in-women-in-lawtech/>



Brazilian Mentoring Group

The **Brazilian Mentoring Group** is a mentoring programme for attorneys up to five years after graduation. It targets lawyers early in their careers to pave the way for future leaders. It has a unique mentoring programme for both private counsel and in-house lawyers. It has grown into an association with 200 members, which holds one or two events a month on various issues – both legal and career and soft skills orientated, as well as a biannual forum that gathers more than 250 attendees. The Brazilian Mentoring Group is considered both a network and an association. Its mentoring programme is run annually, with a public call for mentees, who must provide both a recommendation and an expression of interest letter. The mentors are by invitation only and need to be selected with at least ten years of practice and must lead a team of two people or more. The mentees must be currently employed when starting the programme.

Brazilian Mentoring Group – interview with Rachel Stein

“When we started, there were no similar organisations... there should be a book with information about how to do this kind of thing because we took a lot of hard falls since we had no guidance. Guidance that would have made our lives so much easier. However, the mistakes we made were important, as they were all learning curves. So, don’t be afraid to make mistakes.

“We have issues even now: the readiness of people to become mentors, on the commitment of the mentees. But if you commit yourself to a long process like a mentoring scheme and put all your energy into that, then it is likely that it will work.... You need people to be ready and open to new experiences.”

Women in IP

Women in IP is intending to set up a mentoring programme but has recognised that it is hard to be a mentor; it is difficult to find a good mentor; and/or it is challenging to be a mentee, particularly for those women with small children. The group is planning to launch ‘*mentor pods*’, where women share mentoring between a group to take off pressure. ‘*Remote pods*’ can also help solve a problem of poor time availability.

Victorian Women Lawyers

Victorian Women Lawyers has set up two mentoring projects:

- The **Law Student Mentoring Programme**, which is a joint initiative run by Victorian Women Lawyers and the Women Barristers’ Association. The programme is an opportunity for female law students to gain insight into working in the law, develop valuable networks and share ideas with mentors in the legal profession. For mentors, there is the satisfaction that comes from helping to shape the career of a female law student. Each year, VWL receives expressions of interest in the mentoring programme from students of several Victorian universities and tertiary institutions, including: The University of Melbourne, Monash University, LaTrobe University, Deakin University, Victoria University, RMIT University (formerly known as Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and Melbourne Technical College) and Swinburne University. VWL seeks to match these students with interested legal professionals, to undertake a formal mentoring relationship of at least 12 months. At the time of writing, VWL had matched more than 1,500 pairs in mentoring relationships since the programme’s inception.

- The **Professional Mentoring Programme**, which is an opportunity for female lawyers to develop their personal and professional skills by engaging with a more senior and established practitioner. VWL will pair mentors and mentees and successful applicants based on their professional and personal interests. Participants in the programme are expected to provide formal feedback throughout the mentoring programme, to enable VWL to continue to improve the programme over the coming years.

Legal and Businesswomen for Africa (LABFA) offers mentoring for professional women living on the continent to help them achieve their development goals by providing them with tailored advice and nominating them for capacity building programmes. Some of the former LABFA alumni are leaders in their fields.

Nusula Nassuna, one of the LABFA Ugandan leaders, was chosen by the highly selective Commonwealth programme to spend three months in a top international law firm in London.

Raqiya Yusuf Ibrahim, the LABFA Somali leader, was selected by the prestigious Archbishop Desmond Tutu Leadership Institute to attend its leadership course in Johannesburg and London.

Marina Bwile from Ethiopia was selected by the International Lawyers for Africa programme and spent three months on secondment in London.

Abogadas MX Mentoring Programme

In 2015, Abogadas MX launched a mentoring programme for women lawyers aimed at developing the mentees’ professional careers by:

- Identifying career goals, challenges and opportunities by listening attentively.
- Sharing relevant knowledge and experience to provide perspectives.
- Suggesting strategies to advance the mentees’ professional careers (that is, by focusing on developing skills such as networking, leadership, business acumen, effective communication, etc).

<https://www.abogadasmx.org.mx/programa-de-mentoriam-2019/>

I had a mentor who was not a lawyer. I got a nice perspective from outside the field of law. She was referred to me from a local organisation of young women’s jurists with an easy-going and unofficial mentoring programme.

(Questionnaire respondent, Finland)

Having a mentor would have been inspirational. After having my children, having return to work support would have made the return less daunting and more manageable. Having women groups at work would have been a way to include all women and maybe make us feel like we are not all alone.

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

Rewards and awards initiatives

The Brazilian Mentoring Group (BMG) has implemented a 'rewards programme': if you help them at an event and/or with sponsorship, you get points for volunteering and you can build up points. These points are included in an app, which was developed for that purpose; it has a ranking system integrated and offers free tickets, books and courses, among others, to reward participants. The app was developed by a company that saw the value of the initiative and offered BMG a substantial discount rate for developing the app. One of its members was part of a technology association and this company had made a similar app. Aside from the points/ranking system, the app also has a calendar of events (integrated with social media for sharing), job openings, a library of past newsletters and recorded online events.

Brazilian Mentoring Group – interview with Raquel Stein

“The app has been very useful in gathering information and encouraging people to volunteer. For example, we wanted data about women in the profession because there is none and we needed people and law firms to give us information. So, the people who gave us data were rewarded with points that they can redeem.”

“Another example was a legal innovation course and one of our members organised the event – one of the prizes was a full scholarship to this event.

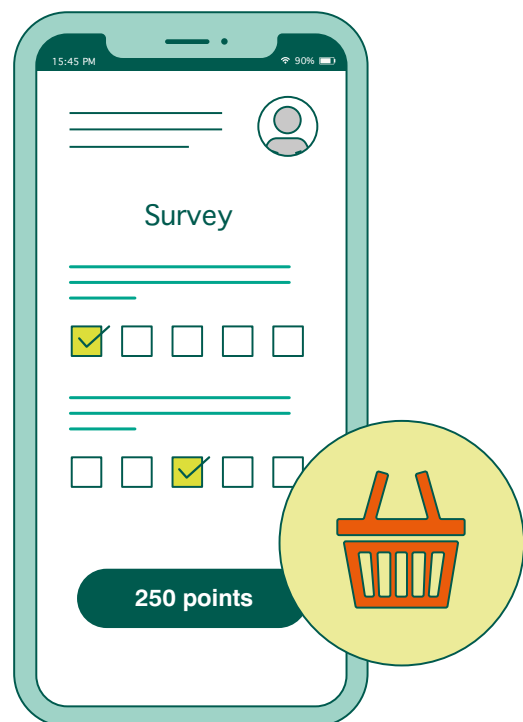
“The opportunities are infinite.”

The WOZA South African Women in Law Awards is presented annually to women lawyers in recognition of their outstanding dedication, achievements and contribution to the profession, whether it be services, legal education, human rights or the pro bono sector. Nominations are open to all women lawyers, legal practitioners, in-house counsel, candidate attorneys, final-year law students, academia, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), legal advisers in business and law firms practising in South Africa. The awards are sponsored by several law firms.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/woza-women-in-law-and-leadership-59313a1a1/?originalSubdomain=za>

Victoria Women Lawyers organises the Dame Roman Mitchell Memorial Luncheon. The event is held annually, with about 250 guests from all parts of the profession. The funds raised go to a community legal centre that helps aboriginal women who have experienced domestic violence. A quarter of attendees tend to be men, who are very supportive of this initiative.

<https://www.vicbar.com.au/news-events/dame-roma-mitchell-memorial-lunch>



The **Fiona Woolf DBE Annual Lecture** is organised by the Women Lawyers Division of the Law Society of England and Wales to honour the achievements of Fiona Woolf DBE, a former president of the Law Society, with an annual lecture by a prestigious figure. She was only the second woman to become Major of the City of London.

<https://events.lawsociety.org.uk/ClientApps/Silverbear.Web.EDMS/public/default.aspx?tabId=37&id=2427&orgId=1&guid=5281f1f5-52e7-4c14-b512-fd0c230a3198>

The **Women in Law Initiative and the Justitia Awards** was founded in 2018 and is based in Central Europe. It is organised through an Austrian NGO called Women in Law – Frauen im Recht. The Justitia Awards honours outstanding female laureates in the legal profession in one of three categories:

- **International Leaders/Lifetime Awards:** this category celebrates the most talented and impactful women in the legal profession, recognising their achievements and their contribution to society. The nominee is “the” outstanding woman of the year who demonstrates excellence as the most innovative and ground-breaking lifetime achiever.
- **Academia:** the nominee should have made a significant impact, delivered qualitatively and/or quantitatively measurable tangible results relative to the invested resources, and influenced demonstrable changes in attitudes, beliefs, and practices towards gender equality.
- **Game-Changers/Pioneers/Young Achievers:** the nominee is a game-changer who has made an impact in the promotion of innovative approaches that have resulted in opportunities for women in law – a pioneer who has shattered the glass ceiling in her field or a young legal professional achieving extraordinary success.

<https://www.womeninlaw.info/justitia-awards/>

Help with finding work

Tasmanian Women’s Lawyers developed a ‘*find a female lawyer*’ initiative, which was taken from an initiative by South Australian female lawyers. Maintaining a good relationship with the national law society also helps with the success, since the law society can give support by providing details of female lawyers.

Campaigning and responding to consultations

Public consultation (Commonwealth countries and the European Union), **public comment** (the United States) or simply **consultation**, is a regulatory process by which the **public has opportunity to** input on matters affecting them – for example, if there is to be a change of regulations, there will be a formal notice of proposed rulemaking. A response to a consultation may also extend to the drafting of a **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, which is a unique process which involves a **review** of the human rights records of all UN member states. As one of the main features of the UN Council, the UPR is designed to ensure equal treatment for every country when their human rights situations are assessed. Consultations might be in relation to diversity in the legal sector; for example, in relation to women in the legal profession and the gender pay gap, or in relation to wider societal issues (nationally, regionally or globally).

The **Malawi Women's Lawyers Association (MWLA)** has compiled a repository of legal resources to assist women, children and vulnerable populations in Malawi. This is not an exhaustive collection, but a means of sharing some critical documents and current legal materials, which also feature publications and research by MWLA members. The MWLA successfully applied to be admitted as *amicus curiae* to the electoral case before the Constitutional Court and has asked the Malawian Constitutional Court to recommend changes in electoral laws. It has also petitioned the President of Malawi concerning the reduction of women in cabinet from four to three in a 20-member team and campaigned for the removal of a cabinet member for using derogatory language against women.

<https://womenlawyersmalawi.com/contact/wla-legal-assistance/legal-resources/>

Legal and Businesswomen for Africa circulates technical notes and papers informing women about key developments and has created some basic precedent templates, which are freely available. For two consecutive years, it has also participated in the organisation of an arbitration course in Kenya and Tanzania.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/labfa-legal-and-businesswomen-for-africa-5677739a/>

The **European Women Lawyers Association (EWLA)** is invited to public consultations and consultation hearings to give comments on certain legislative initiatives that focus on gender and gender mainstreaming. The EWLA has a wealth of knowledge and expertise among its membership, including professors, academics, law firms and practitioners. It has been successful in various legislative reforms, providing expert opinion and advice on a pro bono basis. There have been some successes and failures – for example, *the Directive on Women in Company Boards* has been sitting on shelves of European Commission for years because it has been blocked. But the association went to the French Senate when it introduced the French quota law into commercial law, a law for which EWLA had worked hard.

<https://www.ewla.org/>

Project and/or sponsorship funding

Some organisations may apply for additional public funding and respond to 'Calls for Proposals' issued by international institutions (for example, the European Commission), embassies and foreign ministries, among others. Some organisations have been actively asked to apply for funding. However, most organisations are made up of volunteers and drafting funding applications requires specialist knowledge, as well as a level of management, reporting and administration of project funds for which you need a secretariat. Some organisations have sought to give internships, so that these tasks are fulfilled until they employ someone.

Some organisations have also obtained corporate sponsorships for funding some of their events. In-kind contributions can be another way of setting new projects and initiatives; for example, members can provide venues, catering, pro bono legal work (legal clinics), technical services (digital platforms, e-invitations) and so on.

The annual forum organised by the **Ukrainian Women Lawyers' Association**, for example, has received funding from the USAID New Justice Program. Its summer schools have been implemented with the Canadian Bureau for International Education, in partnership with the Coordination Center for Legal Aid Provision and funded by the Government of Canada.

Building a consultancy business

In 2019, **Women in Law Hong Kong (WILHK)** issued a report, **‘Making the case for flexible and agile working in Hong Kong’s legal industry’** a first-of-its-kind study of the individual attitudes and structural biases preventing Hong Kong’s legal industry from adopting a better flexible and agile working model. Since the report was published, the Committee has been invited to consult with various stakeholders on how firms can work smarter to implement flexible and agile working, and to promote its uptake. Demand for assistance has been strong, which is extremely encouraging.

<https://www.wilhk.com/>

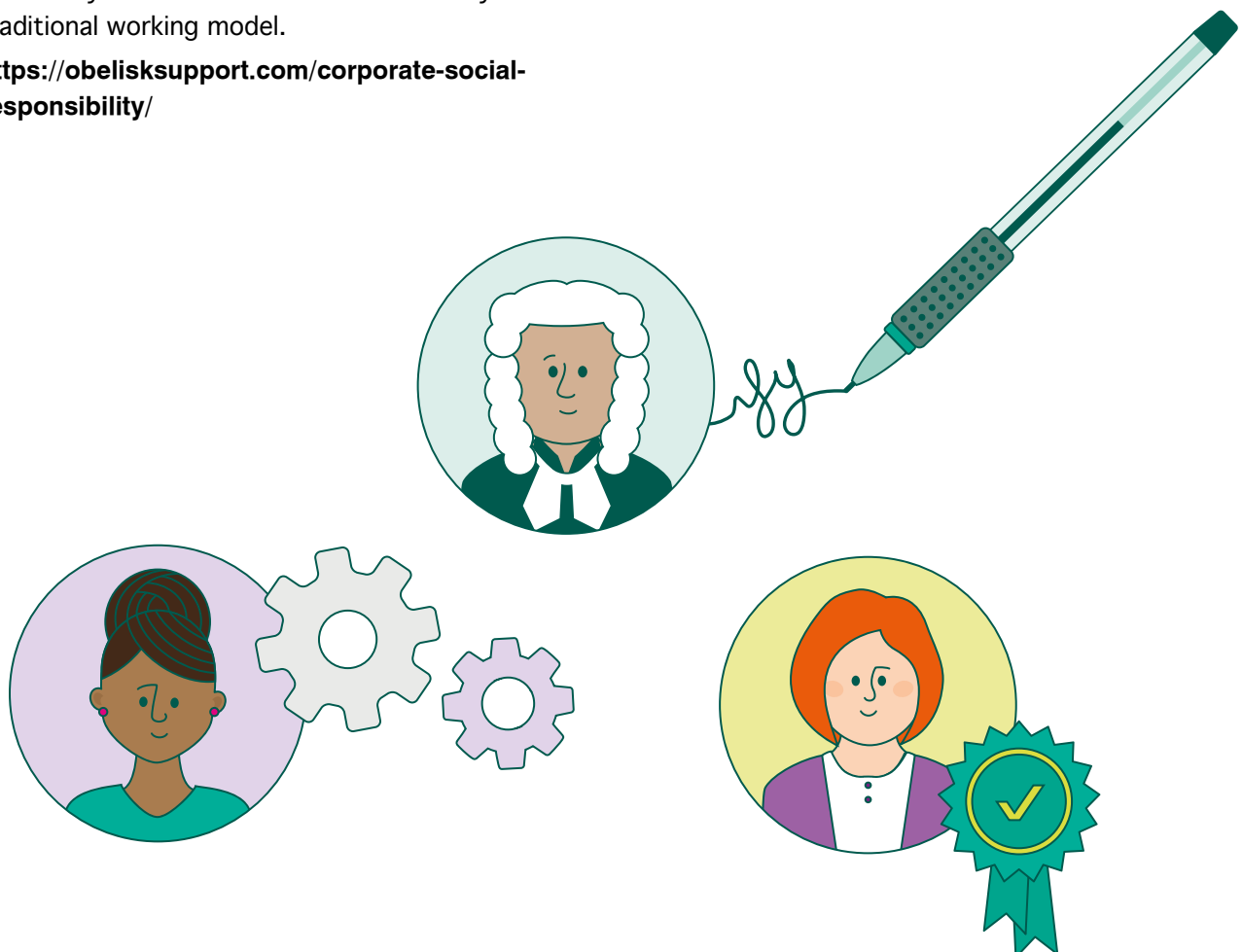
Obelisk support was founded to create opportunities for professionals to flourish by delivering flexible legal services, powered by a community of legal professionals who want to work differently and/or have been left behind by the traditional working model.

<https://obelisksupport.com/corporate-social-responsibility/>

Designing a women’s pledge

The Women’s Lawyers Division of the Law Society, the Bar Council of England and Wales and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEX) launched a joint ‘Women in Law Pledge’ in June 2019. Law firms, local law societies, barristers’ chambers and organisations outside the legal sector are invited to sign their name to the pledge, which is supported by the UK government. The Women in Law Pledge can be found at Annex 4; groups are encouraged to customise this for their own jurisdictions and/or regions.

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/press-releases/legal-profession-launches-women-in-law-pledge/>



8 Types of organisations

Many interviewees spoke of the difficulty of gearing up from being a voluntary organisation to an incorporated body, some preferring the informality and lesser administrative, financial and regulatory burdens of not incorporating and not requiring membership fees. However, running an unincorporated entity can pose its own problems, including (in many jurisdictions) an inability to hold assets/sums of money and a reliance on volunteers rather than paid employees. This can slow progress, as many women are unable to dedicate their expertise on a full-time basis. Moreover, the drive that often goes with the founding of an organisation is at risk of dissipation, with 'burn out' and/or time passing and not recruiting fresh volunteers with new ideas and energy. Certain interviewees made the positive recommendation of always seeking to bring on new people, to allow for turnover and thereby continued efforts.

Some organisations choosing to transition were able to successfully achieve more with reliable funding, through membership and sponsorship. They were then able to expand their ambitions significantly, mostly through the reliable support of having employees. Those that made the transition to an incorporated body often sourced pro bono help from their legal connections to lessen the set-up costs (for example, the legal work of incorporation and in one case, an interviewee mentioned a strategy/transition set up session that was funded by a university partner). They timed their transition carefully, after some degree of success and sometimes when recurring revenue gave them the confidence to do so (for example, from a paid for mentoring programme) and to ensure the organisation continued to grow. International organisations needed paid staff to organise global chapters.

Some women lawyers did not feel represented and felt let down by their law societies or bar associations. They also considered these too political, detracting from the 'real' work and, for that reason, they separated from them. In

certain jurisdictions, some national law societies or bar associations did not even have a women's division and did not see women as a priority, even though there were women lawyers practising and registered. In some countries, the top leadership of the law societies or bar association was constituted by men, who might be unwilling to step down.

Some women lawyers were frustrated that their law societies and bar associations did not understand their challenges, especially in terms of career paths. In several instances, discussing women's issues was perceived to be a 'feminist' threat and even rude, which alienated women and prevented them from raising their concerns. Some jurisdictions had chosen to set up specific women's associations to avoid losing focus and to have a more targeted approach to gender equality, which moved them beyond the internal politics of their own national law societies. Some of these associations were born inside their local and/or national law societies or bar associations and had retained their voting rights – this allowed them to continue influencing on gender equality and other related policies. Some women lawyers had decided to establish a local, national or regional network to support each other professionally and/or at a personal level.

Whether you want to set up a specific women's lawyers association; a division and/or committee within your national law society and/or bar association; and/or an informal networking group, any support to female lawyers will ensure that this issue continues to be positioned strongly within the legal sector's agenda.

Some women's organisations are set up as membership associations with a fee, open to those in private practice and in-house and all seniority levels and all functions. Some are legally incorporated as charity entities, foundations or non-governmental organisations. **She Breaks the Law** was set up as a not-for-profit Dutch foundation and its incorporation was sponsored by one of the cofounders who undertook all the legal work in the

Netherlands. Some are loosely run as a voluntary organisation, with no membership fees to avoid the administrative burden. **Women in Law Japan (WiLJ)**, for example, asks firms to provide a venue for free, while WiLJ pays for outside catering, asking people to pay a nominal fee at the door for events. Some organisations have been so successful and their events of such a high standard that people assume they are a large entity with lots of funding and with paid staff. **Victoria Women Lawyers**, for example, is a voluntary organisation, only engaging an outside company to carry out administrative tasks such as accounting.

There was consensus among respondents that women lawyers’ associations or groups provide practical help and support on issues as varied as entering the labour market to mentoring, responding to government’s consultations, and updates on legal developments. Setting up a group brings energy, enthusiasm and momentum. However, a careful balance must be struck between growing the association and maintaining a meaningful engagement with members – for example, helping to set up smaller groupings for niche areas like tech, property, etc. as a way of bringing women practitioners together.

There is also a difference in purpose between the role of lawyers’ associations and those that represent women clients who have been subject to gender-based violence and family law issues. However, these two objectives are not exclusive and are part of the whole of women’s history in society. It is important to capture these two trajectories to reflect women’s struggles.

Women lawyers’ associations are advised to avoid perpetuating the same hierarchal and competitive approach and come up with new models that break the barriers of ‘mainstream’ institutions. Replicating the same mistakes will not help ‘break the mould’, so we must learn to give others an opportunity to have a voice without being judged. Women lawyers’ associations can also increase the visibility and celebrate the achievements and difference made by women lawyers, including women’s history in the legal profession and promoting women’s rights. Changing the narrative also means that

women lawyers are not being told that they have a problem and must act more like a man; it is by changing those attitudes and stereotypes that transformational changes in mindsets will take place. Women lawyers do not want special treatment; rather they want to be recognised on their own merits and for the legal profession to take serious steps in retaining its female talent. Making a conscious effort to include women on the list of potential speakers and on the schedule of programmes can be a powerful step in changing the narrative on women’s participation.

Women lawyers’ associations must not come across as anti-male; this is not only unhelpful, but we are unconsciously replicating biases we are trying to break away from. Women lawyers must learn to advertise and communicate their existence to reach a wider number of women, which will prevent duplication, maximise existing resources and help to establish partnerships. Women’s organisations must strive to work with each other, rather than seeing themselves as competitors.

Some tips:



- Do not use knowledge and power, instead share knowledge and information.
- Be consistently positive and encouraging – life is tough for women already.
- Be prepared to make introductions and work collaboratively.

The following list of organisations is not intended to be exhaustive, but illustrative of organisations that provide support for women – their size and scope varies and there are certain advantages to each.

International

ATLAS

Initially set up in 2012, **ATLAS** is an active global community of female lawyers, activists and jurists with expertise in various facets of public international law. ATLAS was born out of a need to combat an entrenched ‘old boys’ network’ that provided more opportunities to men at all levels, while under-valuing female contributions. In many instances, these male-centred structures continue to undermine women’s confidence to demand proper acknowledgement and remuneration for their contribution, limit their ability and willingness to remain in the profession, and exact high personal costs.

The ATLAS group creates a space where women in the legal field can reach out to each other for information, career advice, mentoring and more general support. ATLAS supports women as they work to reach their full potential and, in so doing, aims to rebuild the cultural architecture of professional spaces to better accommodate and support female ambition and success.

<https://www.atlaswomen.org/our-story>

The International Bar Association

Established in 1947, **the International Bar Association (IBA)** is a global organisation with 196 bar associations and law societies registered as members and approximately 100,000 members through group firms or as individual members from almost every country and in all legal areas. The IBA staff organises the annual conference and other networking activities to link lawyers together and facilitate work across different legal fields. Grouped into two divisions – the **Legal Practice Division** and the **Public and Professional Interest Division** – the IBA covers all practice areas and professional interests, providing members with access to experts and up-to-date information.

Through the various **committees** of the divisions, the IBA enables an interchange of information and views among its members as to laws, practices and professional responsibilities relating to the practice of business law around the globe. There is a team of lawyers, which undertakes legal projects of global relevance, and these projects must be applicable to as many lawyers as possible – for example, there is dedicated work on business and human rights and also on technology. The rest of the work is broader, including the climate crisis, modern day slavery and gender – the latter is part of the new diversity and inclusion council (made up of IBA officers). Officers act like quality controllers, ensuring, for example, that there are women represented in panels. The IBA is currently undertaking a global research on women in the legal profession, which focuses on the levels of seniority reached, not only looking at law firms, but taking a historical approach. It will look at success at each level of seniority in the judiciary and/or public sector. This research will take place over a period of nine or ten years (at three-year intervals).

<https://www.ibanet.org/>

The International Federation of Women Lawyers

Set up in 1944, **the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)** is now an NGO involved in the promotion, protection and preservation of the rights of women and children. Their aim is to organise women lawyers nationally, regionally and internationally, promoting the study of comparative law and advancing the opportunities available to the women. These include their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Since 1954, FIDA has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

FIDA has grown to have members in 72 countries all over the world. In an umbrella organisation like FIDA, there is always a challenge to find common ground, so the global chapter struggles with organisation and consistency. The global chapter is mostly relevant at FIDA’s annual general

meetings and at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. There are also logistical challenges in coordinating chapters.

FIDA's activities at the national level vary from country to country; for example, some countries do not have a coordinated and/or dedicated secretariat, although many activities are delivered at that level.

<https://fidafederation.org/en/>

FIDA Nigeria

FIDA Nigeria, in collaboration with like-minded organisations, has come together to ensure the successful execution of standout activities. Some of these include:

- Women Mandate Protection Project (2011)
- Popularization of Commonwealth Handbook on Women's Land Rights in Nigeria
- Access to Justice for Women Living With/Affected by HIV (2014)
- Legal Aid/Pro Bono Support Grant (2012)
- World Bank Project (Gender Policy Dialogue) (2012)
- The Campaign for the Passage of Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Bill (2015)

Transforming Women's Leadership in the Law

The Transforming Women's Leadership in the Law project highlights organisations' successes in removing barriers to the advancement of women. It spotlights some of the most powerful women in law, business, government and academia, who share their experience of their rise to the top. The goals of the initiative are:

- 1 To curate conversations between law firms and general counsels to discuss the barriers that hinder women's advancement.
- 2 To enhance connections between senior women in law firms and corporate counsel offices.
- 3 To enable law firms and businesses to explore, identify and implement solutions to remove structural and organisational obstacles that impede women's advancement.

<https://www.legalexecutiveinstitute.com/transforming-womens-leadership-in-law/>

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women

The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women uses technology to help women connect, learn and reach more people. It also opens doors to finance, markets and networks, as well as influencing change that breaks down the barriers faced by entrepreneurs.

<https://cherieblairfoundation.org/>

Regional

AFRICA

The Law Society of South Africa

The Law Society of South Africa has a Leadership Programme for Women Lawyers (SLPWL), which is aimed at female legal practitioners with at least three years post-admission practical experience as an attorney, advocate or legal adviser in a corporate or government entity. The SLPWL is a three-day programme aiming to cover: “Grow your law firm or further your career in the legal profession; identify niche leadership qualities by completing the Belbin report; and use professional strengths to achieve better results in career growth and development”. Specific programme topics include:

- Identify and apply your unique leadership style.
- Effectively manage your professional power.
- Understand how to use emotional intelligence to deal with business relationships and organisational politics.
- Powerful thinking: how to think and act strategically.
- How to write persuasively.
- Smart finances: growing and sustaining your practice.

<https://www.lssa.org.za/>

The Institute for African Women in Law

The Institute for African Women in Law is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation committed to supporting the works of women in law across the continent of Africa and the Diaspora. It relies on the skills and expertise of qualified lawyers, judges and law professors as forerunners in the development of best practices, skill sets and innovative programming for women across the various fields of law. Their work includes training, mentoring, research, advisory and advocacy.

<https://www.africanwomeninlaw.com/what-we-do>

Legal and Businesswomen for Africa

Legal and Businesswomen for Africa (LABFA) is a non-profit association that all professional women can join, provided they adhere to the LABFA charter. It is a multi-jurisdictional network of women transactional lawyers and corporate leaders in Africa, bringing together women corporate professionals, financial experts, lawyers and policy makers to share knowledge, educate and mentor one another. It publishes an annual report on the economic and political prospects for Africa, looking at factors that may impact investment and trade in the continent. The network relies on country representatives, women’s voices who are all lawyers and businesswomen. Together with the leadership of the executive, regional and advisory committees and mentors, it hopes to make investments in Africa easier through transparency and clear advice.

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/labfa-legal-and-businesswomen-for-africa-5677739a/?originalSubdomain=uk>

The East Africa Law Society Women Lawyers Forum

The East Africa Law Society (EALS) Women Lawyers Forum hosts women lawyers from across the East African region, aiming to support them in the workplace and in society through interactive dialogue hosted by the forum. The forum holds annual and regular events aimed at empowering women lawyers to increase leadership and to position themselves for better opportunities in the legal profession. EALS has four categories of membership:

- Bar association membership.
- Legal professionals and jurists' membership.
- Affiliate membership.
- Honorary membership.

<https://ealawsociety.org/women-lawyers-forum/>

The African Women Lawyers Association

The Nigerian branch of **The African Women Lawyers Association (AWLA)** is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-sectarian, professional organisation of women lawyers. It promotes, preserves, protects and enhances the rights, interests and welfare of women and children to see a society free from abuse and indignity for women and children.

AWLA also promotes the principles and aims of the African Union, the United Nations, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. It strives at increasing the legal status of women and children; shares information; increases capacity of female lawyers, and lobbies for greater gender equality through legislative reforms, public education and advocacy. It also seeks to strengthen existing legal frameworks, as well as creating networking opportunities for African women lawyers, to increase their involvement in policy and decision making.

Some key milestones include the promulgation of laws against domestic violence, sexual harassment and child abuse, the creation of help centres, pro bono services, and raising confident and bold children.

<http://awlanigeria.org/about/>

The Malawi Women's Lawyers Association

Formally launched in 1998, **the Malawi Women's Lawyers Association (MWLA)** has been operational since 1993, originally under the umbrella of the Malawi Law Society as a permanent Committee on Women and Children's Affairs. MWLA has since de-linked from the Malawi Law Society in order to focus on its objectives. It has four chapters: Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba. It is open to all women lawyers working in the public sector; private practice; commercial and non-governmental organizations; law students; and paralegals, professional and lay magistrates. MWLA also has honorary male lawyers. It works mainly on gender-based violence (GBV) and other women-related issues. It also provides legal assistance to women on low incomes; drafts submissions to government consultations; and carries out strategic litigation on gender equality matters. It also organises webinars, conferences and social networking events.

<https://womenlawyersmalawi.com/>



The South African Women's Lawyers Association

Established in 2006, the **South African Women's Lawyers Association (SAWLA)** has branches in all nine provinces in the country and has provincial executive committees. Its establishment was facilitated by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) in response to an identified gap in women's participation in decision making and policy dialogues in the sector. The decision to form SAWLA was taken at a National Indaba on South African Women in Law, attended by no less than 1,000 women lawyers and paralegals from all over South Africa. The National Indaba was coordinated by a multi-stakeholder committee comprising organisations such as the National Association of Democratic Lawyers (NADEL), the Black Lawyers Association (BLA), Advocates for Transformation (AFT), the Law Society of South Africa (LSSA) and the Black Women Lawyers Organisation (BWLO), and was convened by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD). SAWLA has the following aims:

- Economic empowerment of women lawyers.
- Participation in decision making and policy dialogues.
- Representation in leadership positions in the profession.
- Building capacity to research and write law.
- Interaction and networking with each other and other entities and institutions in business and other disciplines.
- Access to justice for all South Africans.
- Celebrating and exhibiting women who have contributed to the entrenchment of human rights-based government in South Africa.

<https://www.facebook.com/SAWLAGP/>

The Women Leading in Law, Women Lawyers Network

The Women Leading in Law, Women Lawyers Network (WOLELA) was a national organisation based in South Africa. Although no longer active, it had an interesting angle, providing emotional and psychological support and viewing law as a 'healing profession'. It provided quarterly personal and professional development sessions and was free for members, with a small fee to non-members. Mothers in Law is a support group for mothers who are also lawyers, which is currently run through a WhatsApp group. This was part of WOLELA. The WOLELA Student Mentorship Programme is currently run in collaboration with the Democratic Governance and Rights Unit (DGRU) and the South Africa-International Association of Women Judges (SA-IAWJ). Students are paired with mentors from eight different magistrate courts in the province.

Law Society of South Africa

- **The Significant Leadership Programme for Women Lawyers**

This programme is aimed at female legal practitioners with at least three years post-admission practical experience as an attorney, advocate or legal adviser in a corporate or government entity. It is a three-day programme aiming to help women further their careers, identify their niche leadership qualities and grow their law firms.

- **Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers**

The Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers is a registered NGO with the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity (#3236). It has the mission of activating women's political participation and supporting women's legal and political rights, as approved by national law and international conventions. The Egyptian Women Lawyers Initiative (Advocates for Justice for Women) is a voluntary women's youth initiative that supports women and promotes their political and social participation and access to decision-making positions. The initiative also analyses and criticises unfair legislation for women

and presses for change. It was initially linked to the Egyptian Bar Association.

<https://www.aeflwomen.com/en/>

AMERICAS

The Brazilian Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados)

Founded in 1930, the **Order of Attorneys of Brazil (OAB)** is the Brazilian Bar Association. It is an organisation of lawyers and is responsible for the regulation of the legal profession in the country. Its national headquarters are in Brasília, Federal District. At the time of writing, the OAB had 1,065,304 lawyers. The OAB has a women's group and its focus is on violence against women and rape. It organises its own events.

<https://www.oab.org.br/>

The National Conference of Women's Bar Associations

The National Conference of Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA) was constituted to leverage training in women's bar associations into broader leadership positions and to capitalise on the numbers and talents in women's bar associations that were going unheralded. Other goals were to support other women in their practice of law; to break the 'glass ceiling' of partnerships and judgeships; and to share information and successful projects. The American Bar Association (ABA) helped in this organisational effort by providing a room for the 1981 meeting and by later granting the NCWBA a seat in the ABA House of Delegates. The NCWBA is an ABA affiliate organisation, which means that members can go along and have access to the ABA's resources when the ABA has its annual and mid-year meetings. The NCWBA is still in the house of delegates, which means it has a vote and has some influence in the ABA. The ABA is a voluntary bar association, which means that not every lawyer is a member.

The NCWBA is planning to set up and run a US charitable foundation that would run alongside the NCWBA, to raise funds for its projects. The NCWBA currently funds its activities by charging membership fees and fees for events to cover costs.

<https://ncwba.org/>

The Vance Center Women in the Profession

The Vance Center Women in the Profession (WIP) programme promotes the advancement of women in the legal profession, with an emphasis on individual leadership and leadership within the legal profession. It works to use the practice of law to enhance the status of women in general and to ensure women equal protection under the law.

WIP's general membership includes women attorneys throughout the Americas, sharing best practices, professional development training and enhanced networking opportunities. WIP is managed through an International Steering Committee ('the ISC'), which includes two representatives from each local chapter and is led by the Vance Center and nine members of the Vance Center Committee.

The Vance Center actively promotes diversity in the legal profession, and the WIP programme is one example of such commitment, encouraging pro bono work, professional development and greater inclusion in the global legal community. For many participants, WIP is their first local opportunity to meet a committed network of women attorneys, who are as intent on changing the legal profession as they are about succeeding within it.

<https://www.vancecenter.org/our-programs/women-in-the-profession/>

Abogadas MX

Abogadas MX is a non-profit association that seeks to influence the professional journey of women lawyers in Mexico, through a service model based on the principles of diversity and inclusion. Its mission is to work so that each lawyer in Mexico develops in an inclusive professional environment and has the necessary tools to enhance their development and be an agent of change.

<https://www.abogadasmx.org.mx/incidencia/>

The International Action Network for Gender Equity and Law (IANGEL)

The International Action Network for Gender Equity and Law (IANGEL) is a US-based international network of lawyers dedicated to gender equity and justice. It harnesses the power of pro bono legal assistance, connecting it to the cause of women's rights locally, nationally and around the world. IANGEL undertakes advocacy work in the US, implements capacity-building projects and facilitate networks among women lawyers.

<https://www.iangel.org/>

The Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession (IILP)

The Institute for Inclusion in the Legal Profession (IILP) is a US-based organisation, working to increase inclusion in the legal profession. It undertakes activities such as training, research projects and outreach.

<http://www.theilp.com/about#Role>

ASIA and AUSTRALASIA

Australian Women Lawyers

Set up in 1997, **Australian Women Lawyers (AWL)** is an umbrella organisation made up of volunteer female lawyers. It aims:

- To acknowledge that women lawyers are different and to assert their right to be different.
- To demand that the legal profession take stock of itself and its practices, which result in the under-representation of women in important positions of legal practice and in the judiciary.
- To question assumptions in the law and in the administration of the law that work injustice against women.
- To question the way in which legal practice is organised.
- To draw attention to the way in which the law fails to protect women and fails to respect their equality and denies them equal justice.
- To draw attention to and articulate areas of the law's bias.

Some activities include legal submissions on matters relating to national legislation, e.g. human rights, harassment in the workplace, etc.; campaigning on legal issues for women (for example, federal court reform); and support for female legal professionals (for example, 'find a female lawyer'). It obtains its funding through membership fees and through a biannual conference (through corporate sponsorships).

AWL believes that a good relationship with its national and local law society helps to increase its success – the law society provides support, for example, helping with providing details on female lawyers. In addition, although the Australia Law Society has a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Committee, it does not have a specific women’s society; so, AWL has a representative on this committee.

Australian Women Lawyers is made up of constituent organisations, with any member of those constituent organisations automatically a member. The constituent organisations are:

- Women Lawyers Association Queensland (WLAQ)
- Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales (WLA NSW)
- Women Lawyers Association Australian Capital Territory (WLA ACT)
- Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL)
- Women Barristers Association Victoria (WBA)
- Tasmanian Women Lawyers (TWL)
- Women Lawyers Association of South Australia (WLASA)
- Northern Territory Women Lawyers Association (NTWLA)
- Women Lawyers Western Australia (WLWA)

<https://australianwomenlawyers.com.au/>

The Association of Asian Women Lawyers

Set up in 2001, **the Association of Asian Women Lawyers (AAWL)** aims to promote diversity, particularly in relation to the promotion of Asian women in the law. Its objectives include:

- To promote equality and diversity in the legal profession.
- To encourage new entrants into the legal profession drawn from all social backgrounds.
- To offer support, guidance and assistance to those wishing to embark upon a legal career.
- To hold regular seminars and social functions to facilitate opportunities to network and draw upon the knowledge of experienced practitioners, judges and QCs.

Examples of past events include:

- Diversity within the judiciary.
- Celebrating Diwali.
- Social networking events, for example, gin tasting evenings.

<http://www.aawl.org.uk/>

Women in Law in Hong Kong

In 2015, **Women in Law in Hong Kong (WILHK)** began operating with meetings between members of large law firms based in Hong Kong, including Magic Circle lawyers. Nothing had been done in the legal profession in Hong Kong to widen opportunities for women, so founding members initially wanted a *think tank* organisation for female lawyers. Around the same time, Women in Law UK was created, which gave them the idea to set up an organisation and for the name. They then started to build structure around that.

<https://www.wilhk.com/>

Tasmanian Women Lawyers

Tasmanian Women Lawyers is an organisation committed to women in all aspects of the legal profession. This includes judicial officers, professionals, academics, graduates and students. Its objectives include:

- Advancing and encouraging equality for women in the legal profession.
- Creating and enhancing awareness of contribution to the practice and development of the law by women.
- Providing support and mentoring opportunities for women in the legal profession.
- Providing a forum for the exchange of information and opinions on aspects of the law relating to women.
- Providing a professional and social network for women lawyers.

It obtains its funding mostly through membership fees and some project grants. Activities include:

- At least six CPD events a year.
- Regular capacity-building events.
- Engaging university students with the law society, association of corporate counsel and young lawyers' association. Events are run with the student law society to promote early associations and connections between students, the judiciary and legal profession before joining the workforce.
- Social networking events, which include dinners with the judiciary and the legal profession.

<https://tasmanianwomenlawyers.org.au/about-us/>

Victorian Women Lawyers

Victorian Women Lawyers (VWL) aims to promote the understanding and support of women's legal and human rights. It works to fulfil that objective through a variety of means, including by identifying, highlighting and eradicating discrimination against women in law and in the legal system, as well as by seeking to achieve justice and equality for all women.

VWL's other key objectives are to remove barriers and increase opportunities for participation by, and advancement of, women in the legal profession in Victoria. Its objectives include:

- Providing a common meeting ground for women lawyers.
- Fostering the continuing education and development of women lawyers in all matters of legal interest.
- Encouraging and providing for the entry, retention and advancement of women in the legal profession.

- Participating as a body in matters of interest to the legal profession.
- Advancing equality for women in the legal profession.
- Creating and enhancing awareness of women's contribution to the practice and development of the law.
- Providing a professional and social network for women lawyers.

VWL is a signatory to the Diversity and Equality Charter.

<https://vwl.asn.au/about/>

EUROPE

The European Women's Lawyers Association

The European Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA) is registered in Belgium as an international non-governmental, non-profit, association (*Association Internationale Sans But Lucratif*). It is a federation of national women lawyers' associations from among the European Union countries and those of European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries. Members of EWLA are also individual women lawyers and academics from these countries. EWLA pursues the cooperation of European women lawyers to combine their specific expertise in monitoring law and politics from the angle of fundamental rights and gender equality.

As an umbrella organisation, EWLA concentrates on professional issues, which gives a greater chance of systematising and collecting information on the legal profession at the regional level. Although EWLA is predominantly a European woman lawyers' network, it also establishes partnerships with women lawyers outside of the European Union (EU).

EWLA aims to actively engage in discussions at EU level and become a negotiating and consulting partner for EU institutions; for example, being invited and actively participating in public consultations and hearings; giving input on legislative initiatives affecting female lawyers; and pushing for gender equality. EWLA also works with other like-minded organisations.

<https://www.ewla.org/>

The Federation of European Bars and Law Societies

Founded in Barcelona in 1992, **the Federation of European Bars and Law Societies (FBE)** is the successor to the Conference of Major European Bars, with its headquarters in Strasbourg. The membership of FBE is open to all national and local bars and to the law societies within the Council of Europe. FBE has 250 member bars, representing more than 1,000,000 lawyers. It promotes the rule of law, the supremacy of the law, the independence of justice and the right to a fair trial, safeguarding human rights in Europe and in the world.

FBE is organised with standing committees and ad hoc commissions. The former are dedicated to universal and basic aspects, while the latter focus on contingent or local needs. FBE has a Commission on Promotion and Equalities and is active in the area of gender equality in the profession.

<http://www.fbe.org/who-are-we/>

The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation

The Euro-Mediterranean Women's Foundation is a non-profit independent organisation that aims to advance the equal rights of women and men to participate in political, economic, civil and social life. It also aims to eradicate all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, while encouraging changes in attitudes and behaviour in favour of gender equality.

<https://www.euromedwomen.foundation/pg/en/content/view/4206/about-us>

The Portugal Women's Lawyers Association

The Portugal Women's Lawyers Association (APMJ) is a non-governmental organisation of lawyers, founded in 1988, with the aim of contributing to the critical study of law from the perspective of defending the human rights of women. Its objectives are to:

- Carry out studies on matters that, in the field of law, are relevant for the realisation of equal rights and opportunities legally enshrined.
- Propose to the competent bodies the elaboration, alteration or revocation of any diplomas in order to obtain full equality of rights and opportunities.
- Promote clarification and debate on the situation of women, publicise their rights and denounce, by all means, forms of discrimination.
- Promote the exchange of knowledge and experiences with other organisations at the national and international levels, and collaborate with them on initiatives that can contribute to the pursuit of the Association's goals.

<https://apmj.pt/>

The Law Society of England and Wales

The Law Society of England and Wales is the professional organisation of more than 180,000 solicitors. It is fully committed to gender equality in the legal profession and promotes this via the following means.

- **The International Women in Law programme**

Set up in 2017, the Law Society's **International Women in Law programme (IWIL)** is a programme aimed to increase gender equality within the legal profession in a consistent, systematic and structured way, by creating solidarity linkages and collaborative projects globally. It also aims to promote greater participation and leadership of women in the sector and generate best practices, which in turn can be shared with other sectors that share similar challenges. It intends to support bar associations, law societies, women's associations and women lawyers internationally. The IWIL programme also strives at stimulating debate among the legal profession, attracting attention to the issue of gender equality among in-house counsels, senior and junior lawyers, barristers, academics and members of the judiciary. The IWIL programme is supporting other jurisdictions through joint research projects that continue building the business case for women in the legal profession.

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/campaigns/international-rule-of-law/whats-changing/international-women-in-law>

- **Diversity and Inclusion Team and Committee**

The Law Society has made a commitment to eradicate unlawful discrimination and promote equality, diversity and inclusion. It is an equal opportunity employer, and it is its policy to treat all employees and job applicants fairly and equally. This commitment is overseen by the Diversity and Inclusion Committee and led by the Diversity and Inclusion team.

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/en/about-us/work-at-the-law-society/diversity-and-inclusion>

Aspiring Solicitors

In 2013, **Aspiring Solicitors** was set up with the primary aim of increasing diversity in the legal profession. It works with law firms and legal teams to provide events, mentoring, competitions, employability assistance and access to the legal profession. By working with its members, and its supporting firms and legal teams, Aspiring Solicitors:

- Provides a free service to members.
- Assists aspiring solicitors to achieve their potential (while managing expectations).
- Shares knowledge.
- Collaborates positively (with universities and professionals).
- Develops the positive reputation of the legal profession.
- Improve the understanding of national and international legislation on equal rights and opportunities for women and men among the legal community, to effectively protect women's rights and opportunities in all spheres of public and political life in Ukraine.
- Uphold the rights and interests of women lawyers.
- Uphold the rights and interests of women, including those who have been abused and discriminated against or are in other crisis situations.
- Monitor and investigate the protection of women's rights in Ukraine, including women lawyers, as well as the principle of gender equality and non-discrimination in Ukraine.

<https://www.aspiringsolicitors.co.uk/about-as/>

The Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association 'JurFem'

Registered in September 2017, the **Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association**, 'JurFem', is one of the first Ukrainian associations of women lawyers. The aim of the organisation is to become a platform for the exchange of experience, development and support of women in the legal profession. It aims to:

- Promote the professional capacity of women lawyers and their representation, including strengthening their leadership in professional associations and in other organisations.
- Promote the development of effective cooperation and understanding between women lawyers, national and international professional organisations of women lawyers, scientific and other legal communities.

<http://jurfem.com.ua/en/about-us-eng/>

Croatian Association of Women in Legal Profession

The **Croatian Association of Women in Legal Profession's** primary goal is to promote, improve and affirm the status of women in the legal profession, working as attorneys, in the judiciary, as in-house counsels in the corporate world, and in the legal system.

Groups within law societies and/or bar associations

The Law Society of England and Wales

- Local law societies

Local law societies are run independently of the national society and vary in size and resources. Some have a highly active engagement programme of activities, including exchanges, gender equality panels and other professional development initiatives. Smaller societies seek support from the national law society. These local law societies can be boosted to continue pushing for gender equality in the areas where they are based.

- The Women Lawyers' Division

The Women Lawyers' Division (WLD) provides comprehensive access to networks and support resources, including research publications. The Women Lawyers' Division supports and advises all women solicitors and aspiring women solicitors, from trainees to retirees – this includes those working in private practice and those who are in-house within corporate, public sector and not-for-profit organisations. WLD engages in active domestic and international collaborations, including events and an annual conference. It has voting rights for division seats on the Law Society's governing council.

<https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/support-services/practice-management/diversity-inclusion/women-lawyers-division/useful-resources/>

The Association of Women Solicitors

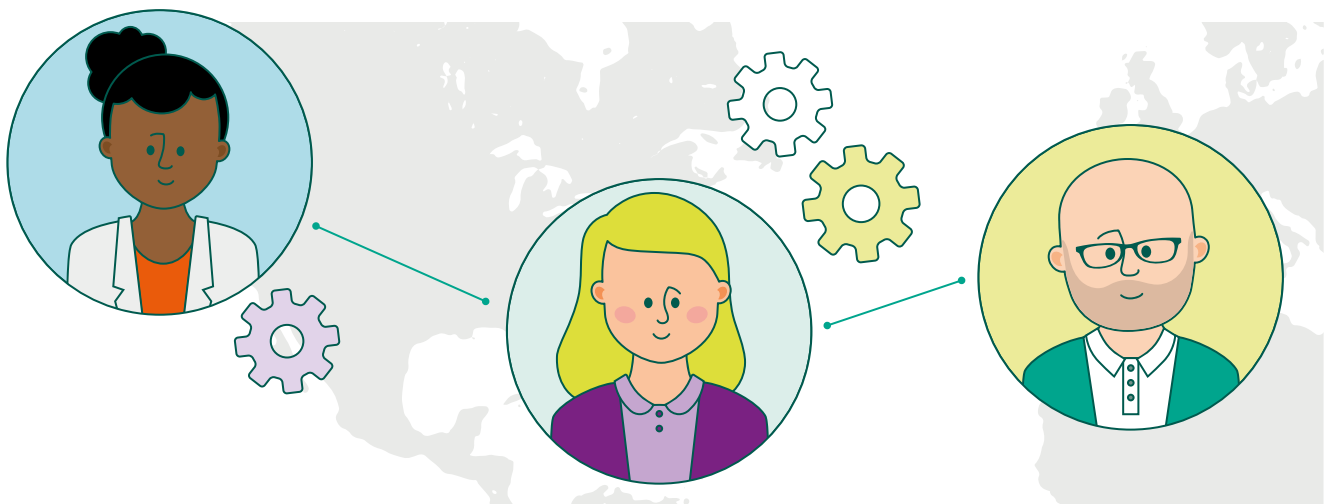
The Association of Women Solicitors (AWS) is a community for women lawyers, established so that they can support each other in their careers with an independent voice. AWS is recognised by major government and regulatory bodies, and liaises with the Solicitors' Regulation Authority, the Judicial Appointments' Commission and the Law Society. It promotes and supports women's interests in the legal profession; facilitates a forum for members' achievements on its website and newsletters; and enables professional development through educational events, networking, and social and mentoring opportunities.

<https://awslondon.co.uk/about-us/>

Local groups

USA

In the USA, there are a lot of smaller groups at state level, at county level and at city level, where women lawyers get together to support each other. Some examples include Arizona Women's Lawyer Association, the Black Women Law Association of Los Angeles, the Asian Pacific American Women Lawyers Alliance, Santa Barbara Women Lawyers, Larimer County Women's Bar, the Central Florida Association for Women Lawyers, the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan, the Maine Bar Association Women's Law Section and Oregon Women Lawyers.



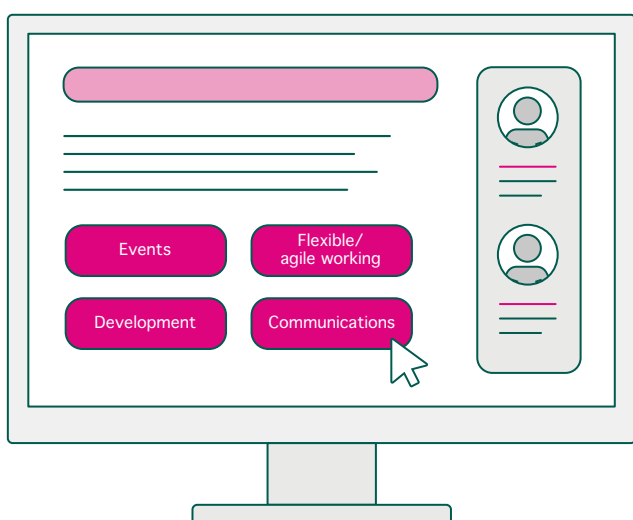
Online support and social media groups

AMIGA lawyers

One of the advantages of online groupings such as **AMIGA lawyers** is that they provide a safe place, as there are barriers to entry (for example, bar licence details required), and a woman-only space for lawyers. Such groups are easy to access and engagement can be undertaken in your own time, which is helpful because many women have time constraints. They focus on different areas, with participants posing legal questions to one another relating to complex and substantive areas of law; business development (for example, how to run a business); how to deal with operational issues (for example, managing personnel); and life advice (for example, how to deal with teenagers, the emotional impact of being an immigration practitioner, establishing a better work-life balance, etc). AMIGA lawyers began as a network for mothers working in the immigration sphere, but it has now grown beyond.

The group operates through Facebook, with facilitated free-flowing conversation, with people posting questions and others responding, all on one platform. AMIGA has a moderator.

<http://www.amigalawyers.com/>



Groups within law firms

Having shared goals is the foundation for building a high-performance group and having active engagement within the group. Many global and large law firms may already have women’s or diversity and inclusion (D&I) networks and/or D&I functions with allocated budgets. If a network does not exist, you may have to start by building support around this initiative. For more information about how to set up a chapter within a global or large law firm, please refer to Annex 1.


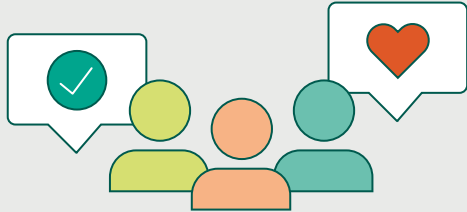


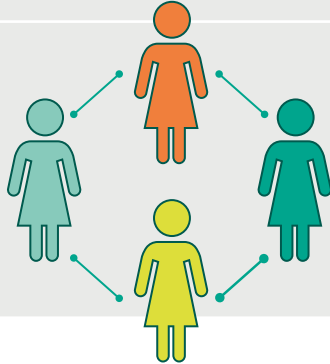
Women@Linklaters network

This was set up as a formal women’s grassroots network to help women achieve their potential in the firm, covering both fee earners and business teams. It is co-chaired by one fee earner and one person from the business services, which provides a good set of mixed skills and diversity in perspective. Members choose to ‘opt out’, instead of ‘opt in’, so if you are registered by human resources as being female, then you are automatically part of the network.

The network is constituted by a steering committee, which comprises individuals committed for 12 months, leading on a project – this is to ensure regular changes in the committee. There are also four workstreams:

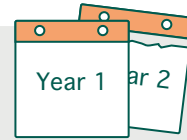
- 1 Events
- 2 Flexible/agile working
- 3 Development
- 4 Communications

The network has learned some lessons from their experience:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senior leaders in the firm were interested to input strategically, but didn't have time for more operational matters.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You need senior leadership support (for example, a partner advisory board) to be taken seriously and to have proper firm 'buy-in'.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have to be willing to experiment. Not everything will work, and it doesn't have to!	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There should be strong individual commitment, since any activity undertaken by the network is in addition to your normal job.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Success depends on the firm's culture towards the women's network – for example, fully supportive or resentful. So you may need to position the network as 'non-threatening'.	

Examples of initiatives delivered by the network:

- Biannual surveys: these are conducted to review and assess what people want from the network.



- Smart Works suit drive: clothing drive donations of high-quality and interview-appropriate clothing on behalf of Smart Works. These clothes are shared by Smart Works with unemployed women in need of additional support.



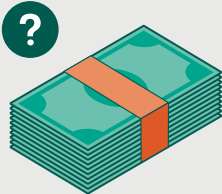

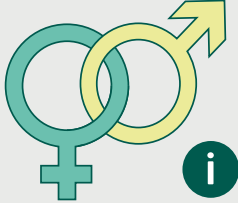

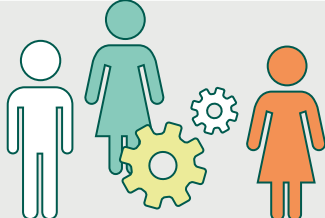


- Engaging and inspiring women internally and externally, via:

- internal TED Talks;
- external speakers;
- connecting with pro bono group – to see what they were doing in terms of the gender diversity space;
- internal events to celebrate and raise awareness for International Women’s Day, International Day of the Girl (IDG), Linklaters diversity week;
- celebrating achievements – profiling achievements;
- posts on the intranet;
- ‘60 seconds with’ – six-question interviews with people in the firm (not just partners), highlighting outside achievements;
- professional development sessions, including internal training;
- mentoring – a coffee club (similar to Bates Wells ‘Coffee with a Colleague’); this was not branded as a women’s network initiative; and
- men’s involvement – joining UN Women, so the network could start the ‘HeForShe’ campaign; this brought more success with male colleagues with a male partner sponsoring this initiative.



Some tips for setting up groups within your firm:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't try to be overly ambitious if budget/resources are tight.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make use of free resources and be creative; for example, LinkedIn, Ted Talks, podcasts.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget – don't be afraid to ask. Client involvement will increase the likelihood of having a budget. You will be able to focus on key issues and initiatives with a small budget.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Co-lead initiatives and have a group of volunteers to alleviate the work required to start and maintain your network.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work out the reality on the ground in terms of gender support before starting/deciding how to pitch an initiative; for example, the situation in practice versus firm policies/theories.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set clear boundaries. For example, will the network engage in human resources-type issues/discussions (such as sexual harassment)?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think what the best way is to achieve aims in a positive and collaborative way. For example, how to brand the initiatives to complement the existing culture of the firm.	

<https://www.linklaters.com/en/about-us/news-and-deals/news/2019/april/linklaters-named-in-the-times-top-50-employers-for-women-2019>

A group within my firm was established so women can learn from those who have been through the same process at the same firm, help show the ropes to others, say what worked and what didn't, deal with issues that women in the firm have. Maybe develop an equivalent of the 'boys' clubs' (for example, places on the firm's football and cricket teams do not get extended to women).

(Questionnaire respondent, UK)

After five years, our alumni business club has changed its programme to have some meetings in the evening, which has increased the number of women on the planning committee, and has made a conscious effort to include women on the list of potential speakers and on the schedule of programmes. Those efforts have already proven to be much more effective at improving the attendance of women and the retention of potential new members regardless of gender.

(Questionnaire respondent, USA)

DLA Piper – Global Leadership Alliance for Women (Global LAW)

Launched in 2006, **DLA Piper's Leadership Alliance for Women (LAW)** supports women lawyers in developing leadership skills and creating business development opportunities. LAW advances DLA Piper's global competitive edge by developing and promoting women lawyers to maximise their opportunities for business development and leadership. LAW fosters networking; facilitates the flow of information; and provides support for women lawyers to better navigate the challenges presented by a large law firm practice. Activities generated by this initiative include:

- DLA Piper's Leadership Alliance for Women's Global Women's Leadership Summit: This award-winning continuing legal education (CLE) event is held every two years for women general counsel, deputy general counsel and other high-level in-house women lawyers.
- Women supporting women – Leadership Alliance for Women.

<https://www.dlapiperwomenssummit.com/about-law.html>

'Project Sky' at Pinsent Masons

International law firm Pinsent Masons has launched 'Project Sky', a programme aimed at achieving an improved gender balance in the firm's partnership and senior leadership team by removing any barriers to the progression of women to the highest levels within the business.

<https://www.pinsentmasons.com/about-us/announcements/pinsent-masons-launches-project-sky-to-address-gender-balance-at-senior-levels>

Practice area groups

A practice area group should be a safe space to debate, exchange, connect and develop, with the practitioner at the centre. This will allow creativity to flow, from which best practices evolve.

Women in Criminal Law

Women in Criminal Law is an organisation setting out to connect and promote professional women across the criminal justice sector. It supports and inspires, mentors and socialises, empowers and encourages prosecutors or defenders, working privately or publicly funded.

<https://womenincrimlaw.wixsite.com/wicl>

The Female Fraud Forum

The Female Fraud Forum (FFF) is an association aimed at solicitors, barristers and accountants who work in financial regulation and the criminal and civil fraud sector.

Its purpose is to promote and encourage the advancement of women of all levels of expertise, through shared ideas, knowledge and experiences. The FFF runs both legal and personal development-focused educational events and innovative networking and social events.

<http://www.femalefraudforum.com/>

The Association of Women in Property

The Association of Women in Property creates opportunities, expands knowledge and inspires change for women working in the property and construction industry. It believes that success and its rewards should be founded on merit and expertise, rather than gender. It actively seeks an industry that is balanced, diverse and inclusive. Its **network** links members to fellow professionals across sectors and across the UK. The organisation is multidisciplinary, encouraging an exchange of ideas and sharing of expertise, often through its extensive schedule of best practice workshops, site visits, keynote talks and social events.

<http://www.womeninproperty.org.uk/>

Women in IP

The Women in IP Community provides support and networking that focuses on issues that can predominantly affect women working in the intellectual property (IP) professions. The community and its events are open to people of all genders who are interested in these issues and how they can be addressed. It seeks to support women already working within the IP professions and to encourage the next generation of female IP practitioners to join the profession and climb through its ranks. Women in IP aims to host several events each year. Its events are a mixture of talks and panel discussions, as well as more informal social events. There are also BAME and LGBT groups that are part of the IP inclusive project, which the Women in IP group frequently partners with.

<https://ipinclusive.org.uk/community/women-in-ip/>

Annex 1: How to set up a chapter within a global or large law firm

Preliminary considerations

- 1 In the first instance, you may wish to run a survey of all staff to ask what areas they think the network should focus on.
- 2 Do you intend the network to represent the interests of legal and business services staff?
- 3 What are the aims and objectives of the network? For instance:
 - to attract, develop, inspire and retain female talent at all levels;
 - to support all women within the firm by encouraging inclusive behaviours and culture change;
 - to assist in the development of internal policies;
 - to provide a forum to raise issues; and
 - to organise events to facilitate networking, business development and learning.
- 4 How is membership of the group going to be determined? Are you going to encourage men to join as well as women, or can you look at setting up an allies group?
- 5 Where will you get a budget from?
- 6 Who will you report to and is there anyone who can provide support, for example, from human resources/a diversity and inclusion professional?

Set out a formal charter (it doesn't have to be too formal, for example, PowerPoint slides)

- 1 Draft a Mission Statement.
- 2 Develop an organisational structure. For instance:
 - one representative from each office to make up a steering committee;
 - a lead and additional volunteers for:
 - i. events
 - ii. business development
 - iii. administration/portal.
 - leadership selection – who is going to chair, and what is the term of any chair?
- 3 How is membership to be arranged? Send an email and ask for people to express an interest in membership and volunteering. Encourage membership from all levels of seniority and try to represent legal and business services staff.
- 4 Funding. Establish what budget you will need. Set out a business plan indicating the activities you are planning, the benefits of the events and an indicative cost. Some considerations:
 - In multi-office regions – should each office have a budget with an additional budget for multi-office events?
 - Can you ask for contributions to the budget from practice groups for a one-off event where there is a clear business development opportunity?

Communications

- 1 Compile a distribution list for the core committee.
- 2 Decide how you are going to communicate more widely in relation to events. Are you going to have a newsletter?
- 3 Set up a local portal page which can link into the global portal page.
- 4 Set up a calendar which links in with any other group events. Do you also want to put external events of interest in the calendar?
- 5 Do you want to encourage people to share links to articles or other items of interest?
- 6 Do you want to use a closed LinkedIn group for communications?
- 7 How often are you going to have committee meetings? Monthly is recommended.
- 8 Complete an annual report every year summarising activities.

Launch

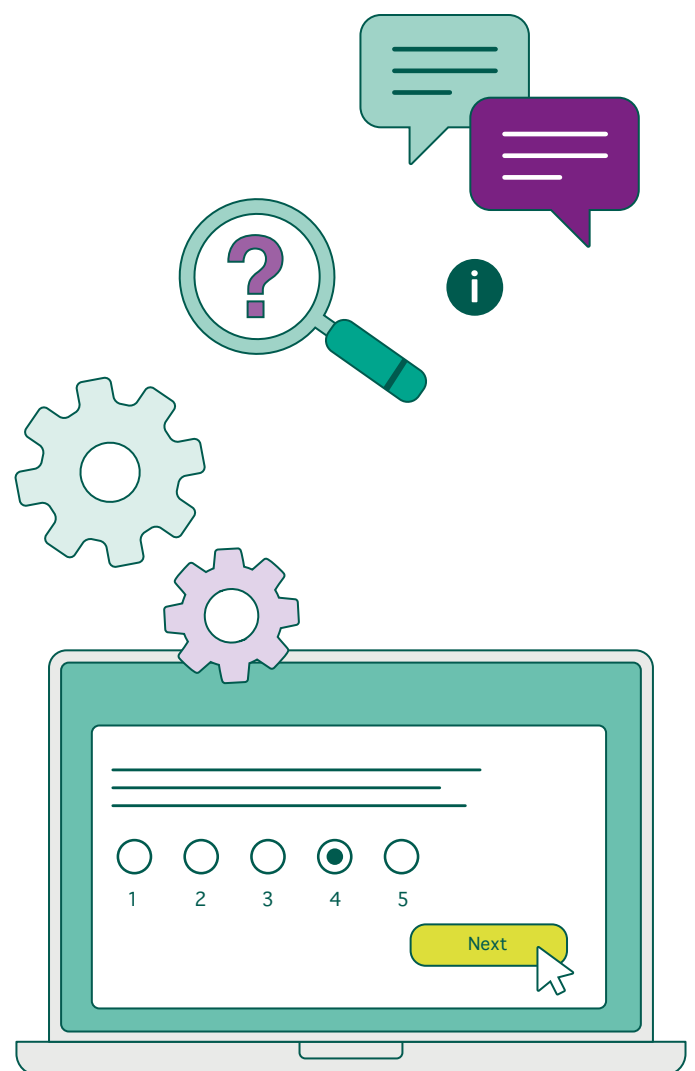
- Have a launch event, setting out what the strategic vision is, who is sponsoring the network (preferably someone at Board level) and how people can get involved.
- You could introduce a survey at this point – asking what sort of events people would like, what sort of time they would like these events to take place (early morning, lunch or evening), what issues they think should be a priority. (A draft can be provided if useful).

Suggested events

- 1 Ted Talks over lunch with a discussion.
- 2 Cereal breakfasts: ask a partner (ask questions of female partners regarding how they got to partner etc.).
- 3 Women you should meet lunches: client and staff events with a Q&A with a ‘personality’, followed by networking.
- 4 Show a film – for example, Ruth Bader Ginsburg documentary (<https://www.netflix.com/gb/title/80240086>).
- 5 Speed dating: staff members are given the opportunity to ask questions of partners or senior business services staff in an informal setting.
- 6 More formal talks with high-profile speakers.
- 7 Personal brand events.
- 8 Joint events with clients or other affinity groups – for example, GLOW (a campaigning organisation), Black Professionals Network.
- 9 Informal mentoring and/or networking events.

Annex 2: Draft questions for a survey

- 1 Are you currently involved in a Women’s Network?
- 2 Do you think a Women’s Network would be of benefit for advancing gender balance in the office/country/region?
- 3 What do you think the role of the Women’s Network should be?
- 4 What activities would be of most interest to you as part of the Network?
 - Influencing firm policies and change
 - Career development opportunities
 - Access to female role models
 - Mentoring
 - Lunch and learn seminars
 - Client networking events
 - Sponsorship
 - Networking with other departments
 - Networking with other offices
 - Supporting return to work
 - Social events and activities
- 5 Would you be interested in getting involved with Network activities (for example, event organisation, portal updates, communications)
- 6 Any other comments



Annex 3: How to run an effective roundtable

You can organise a roundtable following these tips:

Basic ground rules

We recommend preparing these rules and handing them out at the beginning of the session. You can also write them on a flipchart:

- No mobile phones
- No external interruptions
- Open, frank and fruitful discussions in a polite manner
- Listen to others, no interruption of speeches
- No peer-to-peer discussions whilst someone is talking
- Respect the agreed time schedule and speaking time
- Consensus-oriented meeting (no domination)
- Active participation of everyone
- Differences in opinions will not be taken personally
- Voluntary participation

Effective roundtables

For the facilitator at the session

- To keep the discussion moving using time limits
- To give plenty of time for discussions
- To ensure that people are comfortable to ask questions, challenge issues and adopt a non-judgmental approach to participants' viewpoints
- To make sure that everyone has a chance to speak and that no one person dominates the discussions
- To end at the high point of the discussion

After the session

- To circulate notes to the participants and agree amendments
- To share these notes with the Law Society

For the notetaker

- To record accurate, typed notes on behalf of the roundtable group
- To ensure notes are clear and comprehensive
- To complete and return relevant paperwork accurately and promptly
- To ensure that the notes are circulated to the group

Optimum time: 2 hours with a 10-minute break in the middle. Allow at least 10 minutes for consolidation of main points at the end of the session.

Equipment needed

- A room set up as a roundtable
- Whiteboard or flipchart
- Markers
- Pen & paper for all
- Post its (optional)

Before the roundtable

- Depending on your experience, limit numbers to a small number of participants.
- Share relevant documents for discussion.
- Introduce the project's overall goals, as well as the specific objectives of the roundtable event.
- Allow at least 3-4 weeks in advance to give your chosen participants enough notice to prepare, ask for confirmation and send regular reminders. Set up a system to collect confirmations.

During the roundtable

- Make sure you arrive 30 minutes before the event to check you have everything.
- Introduce yourself and your role as facilitator. Agree a notetaker with the group.
- Explain the rules.
- Inform the group on the process of taking notes and how they will be used further.

- Give participants the opportunity to introduce each other to establish confidence.
- Keep a watchful eye for non-verbal behaviours.
- Remind participants that, during the roundtable, they have equal status.
- Conclude by summarising main points, review action points and explain next steps.
- End on time and on a positive note.

After the roundtable

- Circulate a draft report among participants for amendments.
- Produce a final report of your meeting, including follow-up on any actions.
- Write to participants thanking them for their participation, asking them if they want to remain involved and sharing the report with them.

Annex 4: Women in Law Pledge

WOMEN IN LAW PLEDGE:

a commitment for gender equality across the legal profession

This Pledge is a commitment by signatories to work together to harness the power of gender equality to transform the business of law.

Organisations that sign up to this Pledge are committing to do all that is in their power to build a more equal and fair profession. A balanced workforce is good for business and workplace culture; and is increasingly important for clients.

Given the profile of the legal profession¹, the intended outcome of this Pledge is to achieve gender equality in senior ranks of the profession and amongst those with a leadership role. More broadly, the Pledge reflects an aspiration to see gender balance at all levels across the legal profession, to tackle the gender pay gap and other inequalities that still affect all women in law today, especially those facing multiple layers² of discrimination, e.g. gender and ethnicity or disability, etc.

THE PLEDGE



- Commits organisations to supporting the progression of all women³ into senior roles in the legal profession by focusing on retention of all women and enabling progression into partnership, silk and/or judicial appointment and other leadership roles;
- Recognises the diversity of the sector and that organisations will have different starting points in terms of gender equality, and should therefore set action plans, objectives and targets that are right for them;
- Requires organisations to publish their action plans and publicly report on progress to deliver against their objectives and targets to support the transparency and accountability needed to drive change.

My organisation pledges to promote gender equality by:

1. Having one named member of our senior leadership team/management committee who is accountable for gender diversity and inclusion;
2. Setting specific gender objectives and targets at leadership level and at other levels as appropriate;
3. Considering the differential outcomes for different groups of women at all levels of the organisation e.g. their background, identity and range of experiences;
4. Developing an action plan to achieve gender equality in our senior management and leadership teams;
5. Committing at senior level to tackle sex discrimination, bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace;
6. Committing to tackle workplace culture and bias that may result in differential outcomes in the workplace;
7. Making public our pledge and publishing our objectives and targets and action plan;
8. Ensuring pay, reward and recognition of the senior leadership team is linked to commitment to or delivery against the organisation's gender equality objectives/targets, as applicable.⁴

¹ Law Society: Women represent over 60% of entrants to the legal profession since 1990, and make up over 50% of practising solicitors, yet less than 30% of partners in private practice are women (source: Law Society Annual Statistics). Bar Council: There has been approximate gender parity at pupillage for the last ten years, yet only 38% of barristers are women whilst just 16% of practising Queen's Counsel are women. (Bar Council, April 2019). CILEx: 75% of CILEx members are women.

² This is often referred to as intersectionality, which looks at how other characteristics overlap with gender and impact on the experience of different subgroups, e.g. ethnic minority women, disabled women, women with caring responsibilities, etc.

³ With full regard to their background, identity and range of experiences, including but not limited to: age, gender identity, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, socio-economic background and caring responsibilities.

⁴ Pledge 8 may be deleted for self-employed barristers in chambers.

Annex 5: List of interviewees

1	Nicole Dillon	Argentina	Allende and Brea
2	Florencia Heredia	Argentina	Allende and Brea
3	Alisa Fiddes	Australia	King & Wood Mallesons
4	Adrienne Morton	Australia	Australian Women Lawyers and Tasmanian Women Lawyers
5	Ella van der Schans	Australia	Victorian Women Lawyers and Tasmanian Women Lawyers
6	Raquel Stein	Brazil	Brazilian Mentoring Group
7	Yordanka Bekirska	Bulgaria	Bulgaria Lawyers for Women's Rights/ Association of Women Lawyers
8	Dace Lutens-Thummel	Europe	European Women Lawyers Association (DACE)
9	Brooke Holden	Hong Kong	Women in Law Hong Kong
10	Christina Blacklaws	UK/international	Law Society of England and Wales/ International Bar Association (IBA)
11	Sarah Carnegie	International	International Bar Association (IBA)
12	Priya Lele	International	She Breaks the Law (White and Case)
13	Anne Ireri	Kenya	FIDA
14	Izabella Konopacka	Poland	Women in Law
15	Ivy Wong	UK	Legal Geeks (Lexco)
16	Jeanne Marie Clavere	USA	National Conference of Women's Bar Associations
17	Lieselot Whitbeck	USA	Member of AMIGA Law Facebook group
18	Joanna Conway	UK	Women in Law IP Group
19	Rikka Beppu	Japan	Women in Law Japan



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