

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON
“RULE OF LAW AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA: LEGAL REALITIES, BARRIERS
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN’S ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND EMPOWERMENT”
HELD IN LILONGWE, MALAWI, 26TH – 29TH JUNE 2018**



Gendered power structures and social norms lock women in positions that limit their productivity and their ability to make choices to improve their situation. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the gender gap for economic participation and opportunity stands at 32 percent in favour of men. To tackle such inequalities and promote women’s economic rights, legal, structural and norm change within social institutions must be undertaken as a matter of priority.

Economics play a huge role in the full realization and enjoyment of human rights. Therefore, economic empowerment of women determines whether they can own property, whether they

can litigate, adjudicate and even whether they can influence political processes. Inevitably, this determines their approach and access to justice whether formal or informal. Studies have shown that economically empowered women are placed in a stronger position to meaningfully participate, together with men, in shaping the development agenda of their society as well as make decisions that promote the welfare of their families and their own wellbeing.

The law plays a huge role in how gender equality and economic empowerment are addressed. Law and legal institutions are on the one hand capable of governing the strengthening of development effectiveness and can help in ensuring that progress is delivered in a just and equitable manner. However, on the other hand, the law is capable of hindering empowerment and progress for women.

It is against this backdrop that the KAS Rule of Law Program for Sub-Saharan Africa convened a workshop on rule of law and inclusive development in Africa, focusing on legal realities, barriers and opportunities for women's economic rights and empowerment in a bid to interrogate how law and legal institutions contribute to the fight against economic inequality and discrimination, as well as consider legal measures that should be undertaken to enhance women's economic empowerment.

In particular, the workshop sought to give an overview and sensitize participants in the area of gender equality, specifically focusing on access to productive and natural resources, decent labor systems and capital, in accordance with Goal No. 5 of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Subsequently, participants were expected to share and propose practical and viable solutions towards achieving the aforementioned goal in the context of the prevailing conditions in their respective countries and regions.

The workshop brought together legal scholars, women rights activists, professionals and researchers from Southern and Eastern Africa who exchanged experiences and expertise in the field of women's economic rights and empowerment. They were drawn from Kenya, the Kingdom of eSwatini, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The topics of discussions included gender equality and participation in trading and natural resources, gender sensitive social protection systems, female inheritance and access to ownership and control over property rights among others.