

## PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN IRISH RULE OF LAW (IRLI) AND CHILDREN'S DIGNITY FORUM (CDF)

International and regional instruments have emphasized on the need for access to justice for women and children as not only a right in itself, but also an essential factor in the enjoyment of other rights, and a factor in sustaining peace and sustainable development. Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development highlights the importance of women's and children's access to justice to achieve Goal 5 (gender equality and women's empowerment) and Goal 16 (peace, justice and the rule of law). However, ensuring the realization of women's access to justice is challenging. Women and children particularly girls continue to be marginalized with discriminatory laws and policies that still continue to undermine their dignity.



It would seem that the current legal and institutional framework on enforcement of sanctions is weak, currently there is no law that addresses GBV in its entirety and hence, fails to protect women and children from violence. Legal reforms continue to ignore gender inequalities. They tend to side-line the need to reform discriminatory laws, despite widespread recognition of substantial gender inequalities in this area. Advertently and inadvertently, reforms tend to promote adherence to discriminatory customary laws and traditions under the guise of supporting 'local' laws or regulations. They are sometimes poorly conceived – lacking significant analysis of the context – thus exacerbating gender inequalities.



Henceforth, the unresponsiveness of the justice institutions continue to deter women and children from seeking justice. Under-reporting and case attrition is acutely problematic in gender-based violence (GBV) instances. In many cases, conventional justice reforms have effectively sidelined the justice needs of women hence making victims of VAWC to lose faith in the justice system and opt for out of court settlement which largely limit access to women and children rights as they are more patriarchal in nature.

Despite the increasing recognition of women and children inclusion, they still remain to be the group that is often excluded from fully participating in and benefiting from various aspects of law, justice and development work. Because of lack of knowledge of their rights and the legal system; furthermore, distance – whether geographic, financial, political – from justice structures prevents women from claiming and realizing their rights. Similarly, women and children face additional hurdles due to discriminatory social and cultural norms and practices.

Therefore, CDF has partnered with Irish Rule of Law (IRLI) in raising awareness to communities, strengthening capacity to duty bearers for example, the magistrate, Police force, health care providers on significance of evidence and access to justice to the survivors of Gender Based Violence in Mpwapwa District, Dodoma Region.

