

# EQUAL JUSTICE: SECURING EQUAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN THE HIGHER JUDICIARY

## PANEL BRIEFS

### **Panel 1- Levelling the Scales: Bar Associations as Catalysts for Gender Equality**

Bar associations can play a crucial role as intermediaries, actively working to dismantle systemic barriers and establish pathways for women to rise to leadership positions within the higher judiciary. Advocates' associations and their leaders can advocate for reforms in judicial selection processes to ensure fairness and inclusivity. This may involve advocating for increased transparency, the establishment of diverse selection committees, and the implementation of measures to mitigate bias against women. Bar associations can affirmatively advocate for increased diversity on the bench and provide guidance to women and other underrepresented groups on the process and requirements for attaining a judicial position. Women's bar associations can be of assistance at every step in the process, by organizing formal and informal programs and networks, and by providing links to relevant information, in developing a diverse judiciary. This panel will explore what role the bar associations can play in fostering gender diversity within the judiciary.

### **Panel 2 – Justice in Numbers: Data-Driven Law Reform**

The systematic collection of accurate and comprehensive data on judicial appointments in the higher judiciary, disaggregated by gender and intersecting identities where available, can serve as a pivotal tool for uncovering systemic disparities, facilitating evidence-based law reform and policymaking. This panel will explore how data and evidence-based research can be harnessed to bring about transformative reforms aimed at augmenting gender diversity within the judiciary. We will explore what types of data are relevant for understanding gender diversity in the judiciary and how can this data be effectively collected and analyzed and is it time for law reform to increase transparency and accountability in the judicial system.

### **Panel 3- Judicial Diversity: Reflections from the Bench**

In India, appointments to the High Courts and the Supreme Court are distinct in that judges themselves are responsible for appointing fellow judges through the Collegium System. Introduced as a measure to safeguard judicial independence. The Collegium System has also been critiqued for its lack of transparency. This panel brings together former judges of High Courts to delve into the systemic barriers hindering gender diversity in the judiciary and identify strategic interventions for dismantling them. Our panellists will share their perspectives and will discuss actionable strategies for mentorship, advocacy, and systemic reform, offering a roadmap for change. The panel will also explore what reforms are needed in judicial selection processes to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

### **Panel 4 – Reporting Justice: Media’s Role in Highlighting the Gender Gap in the Higher Judiciary**

The media plays a crucial role in drawing attention to the persistent lack of gender diversity within the judiciary. Media coverage can enhance transparency within the judicial system, compelling institutions to address this issue. The media’s influence extends to shaping public perception of gender diversity in the judiciary by framing narratives and highlighting diverse perspectives. This panel discussion will delve into the critical role of the media in bringing attention to this issue. The discussion will focus on the power of storytelling and data-driven reporting in raising public awareness, fostering dialogue, and driving meaningful change. Additionally, we will explore strategies for responsible and impactful reporting that promote a more equitable and representative judiciary.