



African Women in International Courts

A Digital Archive Series

Vol. 2





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Women in International Courts

African Women and International Courts is a digital archive of brief descriptions of the career journeys of African women working in various international courts and tribunals. This archive was created to highlight the journeys, and historicize the legacy and contributions of African women working in international courts.

For a comprehensive look into the lives of some of these trailblazing women, click to read:

[Dawuni, J & Kuenyehia, A \(eds.\). 2018. International Courts and the African Woman Judge: Unveiled Narratives. Routledge Press.](#)



Florence Rita Arrey (Cameroon)

International Residual Mechanism for
Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT)

Florence Rita Arrey was born on May 18, 1948, in Cameroon. She earned her Bachelor of Law degree at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, and a Diploma in Legal Drafting as well as a certificate in International Law at the University of London Advanced Institute for Legal Studies. Florence subsequently obtained a diploma in Magistracy from the National School of Administration and Magistracy, Yaounde.

Judge Florence Arrey's career has been marked by notable firsts beginning with her appointment as the first female State Counsel in Cameroon in 1974 and her appointment as the first woman Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal in 1990. Between 1974 and 1990, other positions occupied by Florence Arrey were the President of the Court of 1st Instance Tiko, Advocate General of the Court of Appeal, and Vice President of the Court of Appeal. Her industriousness led to her appointment to the Supreme Court of Cameroon in 2000 and her subsequent appointment as the director of Judicial Professions in the Ministry of Justice, Cameroon. In 2018, Judge Arrey was appointed a pioneer member of the Constitutional Council, an institution mandated to rule on the constitutionality of laws in Cameroon.

Justice Arrey's international career began in 2003 when she was elected as ad litem judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the first Cameroonian to be so elected. In 2011, the lady justice occupied the positions of Vice President of the United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and Judge of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). Judge Arrey has been a vibrant member of many local and international associations including the International Association of Women Judges (Vice President), Common Law Magistrates and Judges Association (first president of the Cameroon chapter), and President of the Cameroon Association of Women Judges. She is recognized for ruling in landmark cases that advocated for women's right to own property and influenced gender reforms in Cameroonian laws. In 2010, she was one of the fifty women recognized during the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Cameroon's Independence.



Florence Ndepele Mwachande Mumba (Zambia)

Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC)

Florence Mumba was born in 1948 in Zambia. She earned her Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Zambia in 1972 and was called to the Bar in 1973 after completing her studies at the Law Practice Institute.

From 1973 to 1980, Florence worked as Legal Counsel for the Ministry of Justice in Zambia and the Department of Legal Aid. She made history by becoming the first woman to be appointed High Court Judge in Zambia in 1980. She served in this capacity for eight years after which she was appointed to the Office of Investigator General (Ombudsman) in 1989. She eventually became the Director of the International Ombudsman Institute Board and was elected Vice-President of the Board until 1996. A year after, she was appointed to the Supreme Court of Zambia. Judge Mumba's international career begun with her joining the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, where she aided in the drafting of a resolution in 1992 to have rape considered a war crime. She further served as Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists from 1994 to 2003.

During this period, she participated in drafting the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the establishment of the African Court of Justice in 1995. In 1997, Mumba was elected judge of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and served as Vice President of the tribunal from 1999 to 2001 and in the Appeals Chamber from 2003 to 2005. Furthermore, Judge Mumba was appointed to the African Union High Panel on Darfur in 2009 and later appointed Reserve Judge of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) in the same year. Afterward, she was appointed as a full-time judge of the Supreme Court Chamber of the ECCC in 2012 where she currently continues to serve. Judge Mumba is recognized for playing an active role in introducing rape as a war crime as well as a crime against humanity in the statute of the ICTY which is linked to the first trial she presided over – The Furundžija case.



Hansine N. Donli (Nigeria)

ECOWAS Court of Justice

Justice Hansine Donli was a judge of the ECOWAS Court of Justice from 2001 to 2009, and President of the Court from 2001 to 2007. Ms. Donli was also the Court's first member and first President and served as Dean of the Court from 2009. While serving at the ECOWAS Court, she was on the panel of judges that delivered several groundbreaking judgments. These included the SERAP vs. Nigeria case, which held the Nigerian government accountable for the environmental damage oil companies caused in its country.

Prior to serving as President of the Court, Ms. Donli was a High Court judge and served as Kaduna State Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice. She has attended international conferences in Seoul, Berlin, and Barcelona, and was an active participant in the International Conference on the Law of Evidence in Vancouver, Canada.



Hortense Rabenjarivelo (Madagascar)

Common Court for Eastern & Southern Africa (COMESA)

Hortense Rabenjarivelo neé Rakotomena made history when she became the First President of the Court of Appeal of Antananarivo, Madagascar. She was born in 1951 and holds a Bachelor of Laws degree, specializing in trade, lease, and rents, provisional defense amongst others. Hortense was appointed as a judge of the First Instance Division of the COMESA Court of Justice in 2005 for an initial term of three years. Her tenure of office was renewed at the Thirteenth Summit of the COMESA Authority in 2009 and finally came to an end in 2015 after ten years of dedicated service.

Other roles Judge Hortense has occupied include the Alternate President for the Succession Chamber Responsible for Matrimonial Systems, Contract, Civil and Criminal Cases, a judge in the Magistrates Court, and an advisor in the Antananarivo Court of Appeal.



Imani Daud Aboud (Tanzania)

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
(ACtHPR)

Justice Imani Daud Aboud is a Tanzanian judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights who was elected to serve in that capacity in July 2018. Justice Aboud received her Bachelor of Law degree from the University of Dar es Salaam and her Master of Law degree from the International Maritime Organization.

She is a judge of the Tanzanian High Court and has held several important positions, such as that of the Assistant Director in the President's Office (Public Service Management), and State Attorney at the Attorney General's Chambers. She was President of the Tanzania Women Judges Association (TAWJA) from 2015 to 2017 but now serves as a trainer in programs such as 'Sextortion'. Justice Aboud was one of the founders of the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRAGG) in Tanzania and was a member of the Tanzanian task force behind the Local Government reform and Labour Law Reforms.

She has also represented her government in many different human rights conferences and has written reports on Human Rights to the UN and other international monitoring bodies such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Justice Aboud has also served as Vice-Chairperson to the Independent Review Electoral Commission in Kenya, a commission created to review the election process in the country.

She represented Africa on the International Association of Women Judges' (IAWJ) Board of Directors and is a member of the Monitoring Team in the United Nations Mechanism for the International Criminal Tribunal (MICT), where she handled Rwandan genocide cases. She was a Monitor in two court proceedings related to the Jean Ukwinkindi case in Rwanda in April 2015. She is also on the Advisory Board for the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Citizen for Justice branch based in Malawi.



Janúaria Tavares Silva Moreira (Cape Verde)

ECOWAS Court of Justice

Honorable Justice Januària Costa is a Cape Verdean lawyer with a law degree from the Faculty of Law at the University of Lisbon. She is currently a judge on the ECOWAS Court of Justice. Justice Costa was registered as a lawyer under the Portuguese Bar Association and started a Legal Practice there in 1991.

In 1993, she served as manager of the Judicial Component of the 'Public Sector Reform and Capacity Building' project financed by the World Bank. In 1995, she served as a correspondent for the Permanent Secretariat of the Conference of Ministers of Justice of Lusophone Countries and was on the Organizing Committee of the IV Conference of Ministers of Justice of Lusophone Countries. In 1996, she served as Advisor to the Minister of Justice and was elected as a Judge of Law in the Cape Verdean District of São Filipe. She was transferred as Judge of Law to the Civil Court of the District of Santa Catarina in 1998, and in 1999 she was selected as Judge of Law in the Auxiliary Civil Court of Praia. She served as President of the Council of Social Communication in 1999 and was Minister of Justice from 1999 to 2001.

In 2005 she served as a Judge of Law at the 4th Civil Court of Comarca da Praia. She served as a professor at the Jean Piaget University of Cape Verde between 2009 and 2011 and was a Member of the Superior Council of the Judiciary from 2009 to 2012. Justice Costa has completed Complementary Training in Criminal Law, Criminal Procedure and Fundamental Rights, and attended a Judges Training Course at the Judicial Studies Center, Lisbon in 1995. In 2006, Justice Costa participated in the 1st Course on Environmental Law for Lusophone Countries, a course organized by the Institute "O Direito Por o Planeta Verde" and the United Nations Environment Program in São Paulo, Brazil.



Joyce Aluoch (Kenya)

International Criminal Court (ICC)

Joyce Aluoch is a Kenyan judge who served as a judge of the International Criminal Court (ICC) from 2009 to 2018. Aluoch attended Butere Girls' School for her Ordinary Level Certificate, and Limuru Girls' School for her Higher School Certificate. She received her Law Degree from the University of Nairobi, a diploma in Legal Studies from the Kenya School of Law, and a Master's degree in International Relations from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

In 1974, Justice Aluoch was appointed a District Magistrate II, where she oversaw several trials convicting rebels after a coup attempt took place in Kenya. In 1993, Justice Aluoch was appointed a judge of the Kenyan High Court, where she eventually moved up to become a Senior Judge of the Court and handled cases related to family, commercial, criminal, and civil law. She also became inaugural head of the Family Division of the High Court, where she pushed for fair, timely, and affordable justice.

Justice Aluoch was elected as Vice-Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2003, after serving as the Chairperson of the African Union Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2001. At the African Union Committee, she had been involved in negotiations made on behalf of the African Union, and undertaking missions that gathered information on the rights of children in certain regions. At the UN Committee, she worked towards the implementation of the new Sexual Offences Act of 2006.

Justice Aluoch was appointed to the Court of Appeal in 2007, only to be elected to the ICC in 2009. There, she served as a member of the trial division, and later as First Vice President of the Court. Justice Aluoch has received training in Humanitarian Law and was trained in Human Rights Law through the Jurisprudence in Equality Programme, run by the International Association of Women Judges in partnership with the Kenya Women Judges' Association.



Julia Sebutinde (Uganda)

International Court of Justice (ICJ)

Julia Sebutinde was born in the Kiwafu Village, Entebbe, Uganda. She attended Lake Victoria Primary School in Entebbe, Uganda, throughout the 1960s. After finishing primary school, she attended Gayaza High School, then pursued a degree at Makerere University, where she received a Bachelor of Laws Degree in 1977. Shortly after obtaining her undergraduate degree, she gained a post-Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Centre in Uganda. Sebutinde traveled to Scotland to obtain her Master of Laws Degree with Distinction from the University of Edinburgh in 1990. The university also awarded her with a Doctorate of Laws for her outstanding work in legal and judicial service in 2009.

After graduating from Edinburgh in 1991, Sebutinde worked in the UK for the Ministry of Commonwealth, then joined the Ministry of Justice in the Republic of Namibia. She worked on several individual committees where she drafted multiple treaties. These treaties established the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development. In 1996, Sebutinde was appointed as one of the judges of the High Court of Uganda.

Judge Sebutinde served as a judge on the Special Court of Sierra Leone between the years 2005 and 2011. In 2012, Sebutinde became the first African woman to be appointed to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), also known as the world court. Sebutinde has stood up against violence and acts of terror, whether it was against Charles Taylor, the former President of Liberia, or fighting for the courts to give reparations to the victims of violence in Sierra Leone. In 2001 Julia Sebutinde was given a Special Award by the Ugandan Law Society in recognition of her work towards justice in Uganda. She also received the “Good Samaritan Award” at the Congress of Advocates International in 2004. She was a member of the National Association of Women Judges of Uganda from 1996-2011 and the International Association of Women Judges. She also became a chairperson on the Board of Directors of the Acid Survivors Foundation in Uganda.



Kelello Justina Mafoso-Guni (Lesotho)

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights
(ACtHPR)

Kelello Mafoso-Guni is a former judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. She was also the first female lawyer in Lesotho and the first woman to serve in the High Court of Lesotho. Mafoso-Guni studied law at the University of Lesotho and the University of Edinburgh and was appointed Crown Counsel in Lesotho from 1970 to 1974. She then moved to the United Kingdom to work in the civil service for twelve years.

Upon returning to Africa, she became a magistrate in Zimbabwe in 1980, becoming the first woman in the country to serve on that bench. She served as Senior Magistrate but quickly moved on to become Provincial Magistrate of Mashonaland whilst also presiding over the juvenile court. She served as a magistrate in Zimbabwe for twelve years. In 1995, she returned to Lesotho and became the first woman judge appointed to the High Court, blazing a path for other female judges in the country.

Mafoso-Guni handled many cases, including some relating to gender discrimination. An example of one of these cases was *Mahasele v. Kali* (2011), in which Mafoso-Guni ruled against a soldier avoiding taking a paternity test. She reasoned that the child deserved to know who their father was. Up until her African Court nomination, Mafoso-Guni had proven herself to be an ideal candidate with over 20 years of judicial experience.

In 2006, she was elected for a four-year term as one of the first judges of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, alongside Sophia Akuffo. Despite only getting to hear one case during her term at the African Court, Mafoso-Guni was instrumental in laying down some of the foundations of the Court, including its codes of procedure and its registrar. She continued to work as a judge of Lesotho's High Court whilst at the Court.



Lombe P. Chibesakunda (Zambia)

Common Court for Eastern & Southern Africa (COMESA)

Lombe Phyllis Chibesakunda was born on May 5, 1944, in Zambia, then called Northern Rhodesia. She attended Chipembi Girls' School where she became the head girl and later studied at the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) in Lusaka. Lombe continued to read law at Gray's Inn in England and obtained a post-graduate diploma in International Law at the Australian National University.

In 1969, Lombe became the first State Advocate in the Ministry of Legal Affairs and was a parliamentary candidate for the Matero constituency and Solicitor-General in the Ministry of Legal Affairs. Having garnered much experience as a practitioner with the Ministry for six years, she joined the diplomatic corps in 1975 serving as ambassador to Japan. She also served as the Zambian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, the Holy Sea, and the Netherlands from 1978 to 1981. Justice Chibesakunda served in various judicial/adjudicatory positions presiding over both criminal and civil cases and supervising magistrates from 1981 to 1997.

Judge Chibesakunda's vast experience led to her appointment as a Supreme Court judge in 1997 during which time she concurrently chaired the Permanent Human Rights Commission of Zambia mandated to monitor the implementation of international human rights obligations by the Government. Although the candidature of Judge Lombe as a judge for the International Criminal Court was withdrawn by the Zambian government in 2009, she was appointed as the Acting Chief Justice of Zambia in 2012. Out of candidates presented by ten member states, Judge Chibesakunda polled nine votes resulting in her election as the first female Judge President for the COMESA Court of Justice in 2015. She is recognized for participating in the Lancaster talks which ushered in the independence of Zimbabwe as well as campaigned for the end of Apartheid rule in South Africa.



Margaret Tibulya (Uganda)

United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT)

Margaret Tibulya is a Ugandan judge born on August 14, 1966. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Law from Makerere University, Kampala, a Diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Centre, a Master's Degree in Law and Development from the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London), and a Master of Business Administration Degree from the Eastern and Southern African Management Institute (ESAMI). Margaret became a Pupil State Attorney in 1992 and rose through the ranks to become a Grade 1 Magistrate at the Chief Magistrates courts/Buganda Road and Mengo Courts. Between 2000 and 2008, she was the Chief Magistrate at the Chief Magistrates courts/Iganga, Masaka, Mbarara, and Buganda road courts. Following that, she served as the Deputy Registrar in Commercial and Criminal Divisions of the High Court from 2009 to 2013.

In 2013, Judge Margaret Tibulya became a Judge of the High Court of Uganda and is currently serving as the Deputy Head of the Anti-Corruption Court in Uganda. With over 25 years of judicial experience in labor and administrative matters, Margaret has served in other capacities, including a member of the Judiciary Terms and Reference Committee responsible for overseeing the operationalization of the Administration of Judiciary Act in Uganda. Justice Tibulya was appointed to the United Nations Dispute Tribunal for a non-renewable term of seven years in 2019 to fill one of four new half-time judicial positions at the Tribunal after garnering a resounding 110 votes out of 170.

Justice Tibulya is an ardent member of The Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association, The International Association of Women Judges, The East African Judges and Magistrates Association, The Association of Women Lawyers, The Association of Women Judges, and the Uganda Judicial Officers Association. She is the author of The Guide Book on Domestic Violence in Uganda.



Marie Thérèse Mukamulisa (Rwanda)

African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR)

Justice Marie Mukamulisa is a Rwandan jurist who was appointed judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights in July 2016 for a six-year term. Justice Mukamulisa received her law degree in Civil Law from the National University of Rwanda, and her LLB in Common Law from the University of Moncton, New Brunswick. She also has a Masters in Genocide Studies and Prevention, which she obtained from the Center for Conflict Management at the National University of Rwanda.

Before serving in the African Court, Mukamulisa held many high-level positions. For example, she was one of the twelve commissioners who drafted the Rwanda post-genocide Constitution and was a lecturer of Comparative Law at the National University of Rwanda. She was also Legal Counsel and Executive Secretary of the Consultative Council of Support Organizations for Basic Initiatives (CCOAIB), an umbrella organization of NGOs in Rwanda.

Justice Mukamulisa was appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court of Rwanda in 2003 and used her platform to shed a light on women and children's issues within the judiciary. In 2015, she became a member of the High Judicial Council of Rwanda, as well as several international judicial networks such as the International Hague Network of Judges (IHNJ). She was appointed judge of the African Court during the 27th African Union Summit.



Mary Kasango (Kenya)

Common Court for Eastern & Southern
Africa (COMESA)

Mary Muhanji Kasango is a Kenyan High Court Judge who was appointed to the bench in 2003. She received her undergraduate education at the Middlesex University in London and was subsequently called to the Bar, at Lincoln's Inn in England in 1979. On her return to Kenya, she was called to the Kenyan Bar after completing the Kenya School of Law. Prior to her call to the Bench, Mary worked as a part-time lecturer at the Kenya School of Law teaching Trust Accounts.

As an attorney, she had her own law firm under the name Muhanji-Kasango Advocates. Mary holds a Master of Laws in Intellectual Property Law from the Golden Gate University of Law. Her thesis focused on Kenya's encounter with the International Criminal Court (ICC) and discusses events surrounding Kenya's 1963 independence, the country's institutions before the 2007 general elections, and post 2007 elections. Thirteen years after her appointment to the Kenyan bench, Judge Mary Kasango was elected to the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Court of Justice - First Instance Division.

Justice Mary Kasango's judgment In the Matter of the Estate of M'mukindia M'ndegwa (deceased) is considered a positive judgment concerning succession by The Equal Rights Trust in their report addressing discrimination and inequality in Kenya. In 2019, she was listed as a recipient of the presidential award – the Moran of the Order of the Burning Spear (M.B.S.).



Memooda Ebrahim-Carstens (Botswana)

United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT)

Memooda Ebrahim-Carstens was born in 1954 in Francistown, Botswana. She attended Crescent Primary School in Lobatse and Mater Spei College in Francistown where she obtained her “O” Levels with distinction. Memooda received her law degree (BA Hons. Business Law), from the then City of London Polytechnic Business Law School, and earned her Barristers Degree in 1983 from Lincoln’s Inn, London.

Judge Ebrahim-Carstens became the first female and citizen of Botswana to be appointed to the Industrial Court of Botswana where she served from 1999 to 2009 after she had returned to Botswana from London to run her own legal practice from 1987 to 1998. Thereafter, she was appointed to the High Court of Botswana. Memooda’s tenure at the Industrial Court afforded her considerable experience in the fields of labor law, administrative law, adjudication, and mediation. Her depth of knowledge and experience helped in developing the Court’s jurisprudence particularly in the area of employment law. Her judgments have been reported in the Botswana Law Reports, ILO publications, and the African Human Rights Law Reports.

In 2009, Justice Ebrahim-Carstens was appointed to the United Nations Dispute Tribunal (UNDT) in New York after she garnered 122 out of 183 votes. She eventually became president of UNDT in 2011 and ended her tenure with the Tribunal finally in 2019. Justice Ebrahim-Carstens has held several positions and appointments in both social and public spheres including Membership Secretary of the Mansfield Law Club (London); Executive and founding member of both the Francistown Consumer Action Group and Area A Neighbourhood Watch; Executive Member of the Francistown Golf Club; Executive Officer of the Pupillage and Legal Education Committee of the Law Society of Botswana; Former Board Member of Botswana Water Utilities Corporation; Trustee of the Supa Ngwao Museum Francistown; Trustee of Y Care Charitable Trust; and Member of the Botswana Law Reporting Committee. Judge Ebrahim-Carstens is credited with the paper, “Gender Representation on the Tribunals of the United Nations Internal Justice System: A Response to Nienke Grossman.”



Miatta Maria Samba (Sierra Leone)

International Criminal Court (ICC).

Miatta Samba is a Sierra Leonean judge who was elected to the bench of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2020. She holds a Bachelor of Laws Degree from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, and Master of Laws degrees from Centre for Human Rights, the University of Pretoria in South Africa and Centre for Petroleum Law and Policy, the University of Dundee in Scotland. Miatta was called to the bar in Sierra Leone in 1999 and from 2002 to 2006 she worked as an Investigator, Prosecution Witness Management Coordinator, and Associate Prosecutor at the Office of the Prosecutor of the Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Miatta Samba worked in various capacities between 2006 and 2015; as a member of a sub-committee of the Sierra Leone Law Reform Commission that focused on gender law reform, Senior Prosecutor at the Anti-Corruption Commission, and Commissioner on the Commission of Inquiry established to investigate the untimely death of the then Chief Immigration Officer, Ms. Gloria Newman Smart. She was elevated to the Court of Appeal in 2019 and a year after was appointed as a judge of the Residual Special Court for Sierra Leone.

Between 2006 and 2010, Miatta served as a Field Operations Officer for the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) assigned to the Uganda Field Office. Her mandate in this position was to protect and promote the rights of witnesses and survivors who were participating in an accountability process in both Sierra Leone and Uganda. Judge Samba is a lecturer at the University of Sierra Leone. A position she has occupied since 2003. She is a member of Legal Access Through Women Yearning for Equal Rights and Social Justice, the leading gender equality advocacy organization in Sierra Leone and the chair of the Legal Aid Board. She is recognized for rendering judgments that have significantly contributed to accountability for sexual and gender-based violence.



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