



مركز بحوث الرقابيين الأفارقة

African Ombudsman Research Centre

Centre de Recherche des Ombudsman Africains

Centro de Investigaçao da Provedoria de Justica Africana

Ombudsman Offices at the Forefront: Promoting Gender Equality and Justice

Date: Tuesday, 26 August 2025

Location: Online Webinar

In celebration of South Africa's Women's Month, the African Ombudsman Research Centre (AORC)—the research and training arm of the African Ombudsman and Mediators' Association (AOMA), based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)—hosted a dynamic webinar on gender-inclusive policies in Ombudsman offices. Held in partnership with the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), the session showcased the critical role Ombudsman institutions play in promoting equality, fairness, and justice for women.

Advocate Kholeka Gcaleka, Public Protector of South Africa and Chairperson of the AORC Board, opened the webinar with a compelling reflection:

"Gender equality refers to that stage of human social development at which the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of individuals will not be determined by the fact of being born male or female... Ombudsman institutions are uniquely positioned to champion gender."

The facilitator, Ms. Yoliswa Makhasi, Head of the Public Service Reform Program at the New South Institute, set the stage for the discussion by emphasizing actionable strategies to embed gender-inclusive practices both internally and externally within Ombudsman institutions.

Expert Presentations

Ms. SP Jali, Attorney of the High Court of South Africa and Lecturer, School of Law, UKZN, emphasized internal workplace inclusivity, advocating for shared parental leave for mothers, fathers, adoptive, and commissioning parents. *“An employee who is a parent... is entitled to the leave stipulated.”*

Hon. Verónica Manquel, Procuración Penitenciaria de la Nación Argentina, highlighted systemic barriers women face in accessing justice, stressing gender-sensitive complaint handling and partnerships with civil society. *“Many women remain in invisibility behind the walls.”*

Dr. Janine Hicks, Senior Lecturer, School of Law, UKZN, focused on systemic advocacy, underscoring how Ombudsman offices can influence policy reform and ensure women’s voices are included in service delivery. *“Ombudsmen must adopt strategies to enhance women’s voice and agency.”*

Key Takeaways

The webinar highlighted a comprehensive three-tier approach: implement inclusive HR policies internally, ensure gender-sensitive complaint handling, and drive systemic reform externally. Through these measures, Ombudsman offices are setting new standards in gender equality and justice.

Acknowledgments

AORC thanks its partners, including the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and the Office of the Public Protector South Africa (PPSA), for their support in making this webinar a success.

With kind regards,
Franky
On behalf of the AORC & AOMA Webinar Team