



INITIATIVE FOR STRATEGIC
LITIGATION IN AFRICA

PRESS RELEASE

EXPERT ADVISORY MEETING ON COHABITATION

ISLA'S OFFICES – 15TH FLOOR MARBLE TOWERS, 208-211 RAHIMA MOOSA STREET, JHB

On Friday and Saturday, 17 and 18 May 2019, the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA) will host an Expert Advisory Meeting on the regulation (or rather, lack thereof) of cohabitation relationships and their particular consequences for women and their rights to land and property.

ISLA is a Pan African feminist organisation that uses the rule of law in African domestic and regional courts to advance women's human rights and sexual rights. ISLA's work is based on the belief that strategic litigation is an immensely powerful tool for social change because it helps to reframe the understanding of people's entitlements before the law and it challenges existing legal discourse.

The Women's Land and Property Rights (WLPR) Programme focuses on using courts to challenge discriminatory laws that adversely impact on women's ownership, control and access to land and property rights, including the rights of women in cohabiting relationships or in unrecognised customary marriages who are left without recourse to access property, land and even their children when their partner dies or abandons the relationship.

To this end, ISLA will be hosting experts from South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and the USA to:

- Inform the development of a litigation strategy on litigating for the realisation and protection of the rights of women in cohabitation relationships, by setting out priority issues and principles for elaboration through litigation;

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- Specifically advise on appropriate issues and approaches for litigation domestically and regionally, on the African continent; and
- Advise on the approaches ISLA might best employ in pursuing litigation of these prioritised issues.

The meeting will consider: the issues of priority, internationally (with reference to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol); region-specific challenges and opportunities (with reference to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol);) and the challenges and opportunities domestically (with reference to the legal, cultural and socio-political contexts in South Africa, Kenya and Uganda). ISLA hopes that the discussions at the meeting will help it to be clearer about the kinds of cases that it should be supporting in its work, the kinds of cases it should be encouraging its partners in the region to bring domestically, and ways in which it might address additional needs of women in cohabitation relationships.

If any academics, lawyers, activists are interested in attending please contact Sophie January or Mateenah Hunter, by 11:00 on Friday, 17 May 2019 on +2711 338 9028 or at sophie@the-isa.org or mateenah@the-isa.org. There are two seats open for in-person attendance and a GoToMeeting event set-up for digital attendance. Alternatively, those interested can follow ISLA on Facebook or Twitter (@ISLAfrica) for live updates #ISLACohabit2019