

International Non-Governmental Organisations (International NGOs)

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About:

Global 50/50 is an independent think tank that informs, inspires and incites action and accountability for gender justice. Global Justice 50/50 is part of this mission, assessing organisations' public commitments, workplaces policies, leadership representation, and data reporting practices through a gender justice lens.

The full 2026 Global Justice 50/50 Report examines 171 global and regional law and justice organisations across 30 countries. Here we report on 51 international NGOs in the sample (see page 18 for full list).

The enjoyment of life is not for all
Purulia, West Bengal, India. 2022.
Barun Rajgaria

At dusk, a young girl carries water while boys play around her, tracing the early lines of gendered labour that shape lives.



At a glance

Our research reveals that leadership and decision-making continue to privilege actors from a small portion of the world, limiting whose perspectives shape organisational priorities. To genuinely uphold the principles of equality, civil society must ensure its own structures reflect the fairness and equity it seeks to champion externally.

Limited commitments:

Many international NGOs recognise the importance of gender equality, but commitments are inconsistent across organisations.

While many publicly support gender equality, a significant proportion still make no formal commitments, even when working directly on women's rights, human rights, or access to justice.

Among 51 international NGOs

 **61% (31/51)** have a public commitment to gender equality

Partial policies:

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures are not consistently published.

Commitments alone are not enough; specific measures are needed to drive progress. Yet many organisations still lack detailed workplace policies needed to make equality real. Without actionable policies, progress remains aspirational rather than operational.

Among 51 international NGOs

 **31% (16/51)** have gender equality workplace policies

 **29% (15/51)** have fairness and equity workplace policies

Limited board guidance:

Policies on board representation and inclusion are rare.

Eight percent of organisations published policies on representative and inclusive boards. This leaves major gaps in accountability and weakens efforts to build diverse, equitable leadership at the highest levels.

Among 50 international NGOs

 **8% (4/50)** have published policies on representative and inclusive boards

Concentration of power:

Leadership is gender balanced but heavily concentrated among nationals of high-income countries.

Women from low- and middle-income countries hold only a fraction of CEO and board chair roles, revealing persistent geographic inequities.

Among 52 CEOs

 **12% (6/52)** are women from LMICs

Among 54 board chairs

 **15% (8/54)** are women from LMICs

Among 494 board members

 **13% (66/494)** are women from LMICs

Data deficits:

Most international NGOs do not have policies to regularly report sex-disaggregated programmatic data or undertake gender analysis.

Organisations' failure to collect, analyse, and report data disaggregated by sex or undertake gender analysis makes the gendered impacts of their work largely invisible. Without this data, organisations cannot fully understand – or be accountable for – who is being left behind.

Among 51 international NGOs

 **10% (5/51)** have a commitment to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

Gender parity in the law and justice sector benefits everyone by:

**Delivering
Better Gender
Justice Outcomes**

**Improving the
Quality of Judicial
Decision-Making**

**Increasing
Public Trust
in the Sector**

**Enhancing
Organisational
Performance and
Profitability**

**Expanding Access
to Justice and Equity
in Service Delivery**

Assessing international NGOs

International non-governmental organisations (international NGOs) operate at the forefront of global justice, advocating for human rights, legal reform, and equitable access to justice. Their activities include strategic litigation, global public campaigning, technical assistance to states and other stakeholders, and, in some contexts, direct service delivery, as well as research and monitoring. International NGOs also engage with international and regional institutions, contribute to norm development, and hold public and private actors accountable across borders, shaping legal and policy agendas at multiple levels.

The 51 international NGOs in our sample represent some of the most influential organisations working on justice, human rights, and rule of law initiatives worldwide. These organisations were selected based on their transnational reach and sustained engagement with international legal and policy processes. The sample focuses on organisations that shape global justice agendas, rather than those primarily operating nationally or regionally.

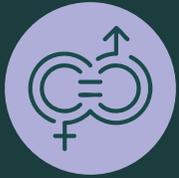
Global 50/50 only assesses publicly available information, a method that promotes transparency but is not without its limitations. Public commitments and policies do not always reflect internal practice, just as their absence does not necessarily indicate a lack of internal action, particularly in the context of the current global anti-gender backlash. The value of our approach, however, lies in offering a clear, comparative snapshot of how organisations publicly present their commitments and policies at a given moment in time.



Table 1. Variables reviewed: International NGOs



Does the organisation make a public commitment to gender equality?



Are workplace gender equality and/or fairness and equity policies publicly available?

Are policies on board representation and inclusion publicly available?



What is the gender and nationality of leaders,

INCLUDING

CEOs

Senior managers

Board chairs

Board members



Are policies available on reporting data disaggregated by sex or on undertaking gender analysis?

**Box 1.**

What we measure for each variable and how we assess the findings.

We assessed organisations' websites for publicly available information on the following:

1 Public statement of commitment to gender equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commits to gender equality/equity, gender justice, or gender mainstreaming in policy and planning. ● Work on women's rights, social justice, human rights, and/or access to justice, but no formal commitment to gender equality. ● No mention of gender or social justice.
2 Policies with specific measures to promote gender equality in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve gender equality and/or support women's careers. ● Stated commitment to gender equality and/or diversity in the workplace (above the legal requirement) but no specific measures to carry out commitments; and/or reports on gender distribution of staff. ● Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate". ● No reference to gender equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.
3 Policies with specific measures to promote fairness and equity in the workplace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy with specific measure(s) to improve diversity, inclusion, fairness and/or equality. ● Commitment to promoting fairness and equity evidenced by a) aspirational comments and b) listing protected characteristics; and/or some reporting on characteristics among staff. ● Policy is compliant with law but no more = "we do not discriminate". ● No reference to equality or non-discrimination in the workplace found.



4

Policies with specific measures to promote inclusion and representation in governing boards

-  Policy with specific strategies and measures (e.g. targets, dedicated seats, monitoring) to promote diversity, inclusion, and representation in the board publicly available.
-  Commitment to diversity and/or representation of affected communities on board found, but no specific measures to advance representation and inclusion; and/or some summary reporting on board composition, but no policy to advance representation and inclusion.
-  Publicly available policy and/or information on board rules but no commitment to principles of representation and inclusion.
-  No information on board policy or rules regarding composition and/or role (regardless of whether current board members are published).

5

Gender parity in senior management and in governing boards

-  56-100% women represented.
-  45-55% women represented; or difference of one individual.
-  35-44% women represented.
-  0-34% women represented.

6

Gender and nationality of the head of the organisation and board chair

There is no traffic light scoring for this variable; we only report on the aggregate numbers.

7

Policy on sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis

-  Policy or organisational commitment found to regularly report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
-  Project-specific commitments to report sex-disaggregated data and/or to undertake gender analysis.
-  No policy or commitment found.



Finding 1. Explicit commitments to gender equality are common, but not universal

Public commitments to gender equality signal institutional recognition of its importance and provide a foundation for accountability in practice. We reviewed whether international NGOs had stated such a commitment on their websites. 31/ 51 (61%) international NGOs had a formal, public commitment to gender equality. The remaining 20 (20/51; 39%) had no such formal commitments, although all engage in work related to women's rights, human rights and/or access to justice.

Figure 1. Public commitments to gender equality found, international NGOs (n=51)



 **61%**
of organisations have a public commitment to gender equality



Box 2. Organisational examples

Example of international NGO commitment to gender equality

Vision: A gender-equal world where every person lives free from violence, has full bodily autonomy, and has the power to access justice to protect and promote their human rights.

Mission: Creative feminists using international law to achieve gender equality and dismantle systems of oppression.

Theory of Change: Achieving a gender equal world requires systemic change and transformation of patriarchal structures through complementary strategies and approaches.

- Women deserve justice for violations of their rights, and states and institutions must be held to account when they fail to ensure gender equality.
- The progressive interpretation and application of international law and human rights are a strong foundation for gender equality in law and in fact.
- Multilateral institutions must be grounded in a feminist approach to effectively defend and advance human rights around the world.
- Change must be driven by those who are most affected, which requires global north organizations to uplift and share power with feminist grassroots actors around the world.

Global Justice Center (GJC)¹

Against all odds

Nigeria. 2025.

Aderemi Davies "AyaworanHO3D"

Adenike Adebayo is radiant, her pose one of quiet power. Having lost both legs in early childhood due to the mismanagement of a treatable illness, Adenike's story is not one of victimhood but of resilience, joy, and ambition.





Finding 2. Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity are limited, and few organisations have specific measures to advance those policies which do exist

Workplace policies on gender equality, fairness and equity with specific measures are important for setting clear standards and translating commitments into concrete, accountable actions. 16/51 (31%) international NGOs had published policies on gender equality in the workplace with specific measures.

Examples of specific measures included: gender-responsive recruitment and hiring processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for women's participation at senior levels; gender analysis and action in staff performance reviews and staff surveys; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards gender equality; and/or reporting back to all staff.

Similarly, a workplace fairness and equity policies with specific measures were found for 15/51 (29%) international NGOs. No public reference to non-discrimination, diversity, fairness or equity was found for 18/51 (35%) of NGOs.

Specific measures included: inclusive recruitment processes; mentoring, training, and leadership programmes; targets for representation; fairness and equity analysis and action in staff performance reviews; regular reviews of organisational efforts towards fairness and equity; and/or employee resource groups.

We do not assess the policies of small organisations – those with 10 or fewer staff – for these variables (unless they are hosted by a larger organisation). We would not expect organisations (nor did we find any) of

this size to develop gender equality, fairness and equity plans. However, we continue to encourage them to, at a minimum, make a public commitment to gender equality, fairness and equity.

Figure 2. Gender equality and fairness and equity policies found, international NGOs (n=51)

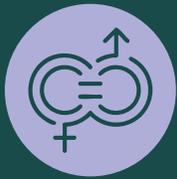
- Gender equality or fairness and equity policy with specific measures
- Stated commitment to consider gender equality or fairness and equity, but no specific measures
- Minimum legal requirement ("we do not discriminate")
- No public information found





Box 3. Organisational examples

Examples of international NGO gender equality, fairness and equity policies

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY
WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

We owe it as a duty of care to our employees, but also as a social driver – in the US, the Institute for Women's Policy Research found that poverty rates would halve for families with at least one working woman if equal pay was enshrined.

At Global Witness we're doing this by:

- *Providing full pay transparency*
- *Reporting the gender pay gap even if the number of employees you have doesn't require you to report it*
- *Introducing gender neutral parent leave to enable working parents to thrive*

Global Witness²

FAIRNESS AND EQUITY POLICY
WITH SPECIFIC MEASURES:

As part of its commitment to an inclusive work culture, Crisis Group will pursue gender-, race-, religion-, sexual orientation-, and disability-sensitive management. Relevant practices include carefully designed recruitment procedures, a zero-tolerance harassment policy, clear criteria for performance evaluations to reduce bias, generous parental leave, and equal pay for equal work; pursuing diverse means to increase the presence of underrepresented groups, in part through a voluntary mentorship program for junior staff; and fostering open communication.

**International Crisis Group
(Crisis Group)³**



Finding 3. Policies on board representation and inclusion are largely absent

Boards play a central role in shaping organisational priorities, culture, and oversight. Formal policies on board composition can help ensure leadership is diverse, equitable, and accountable. We looked for policies on board representation and inclusion with specific measures on board composition in the public domain.

Four (4/50; 8%) international NGOs had a board inclusion and representation policy with specific measures. For the vast majority (44/50; 88%), no such policy or commitment could be found.

Box 2. Organisational examples

Examples of international NGO board representation and inclusion policy

Article 21: Board election procedures

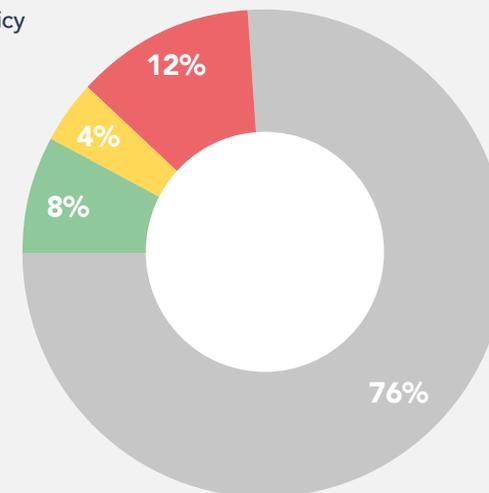
2. No more than one third (1/3) of the Board Members shall be elected by the Board itself, to ensure that the Board acquires the necessary balance of gender, expertise, regional representation or other diversity.

4. Neither gender shall comprise less than forty percent (40%) of the Board.

ActionAid International*

Figure 3. Board representation and inclusion policies found, international NGOs (n=50*)

- Representation and inclusion policy with specific measures
- Stated commitment to representation and inclusion, but no specific measures
- Publicly available board policy or rules, but no commitment to representation and inclusion
- No information found on board policy or rules



* One international NGO has been excluded as the board selection is driven by member states.



of organisations have publicly available board representation and inclusion policies

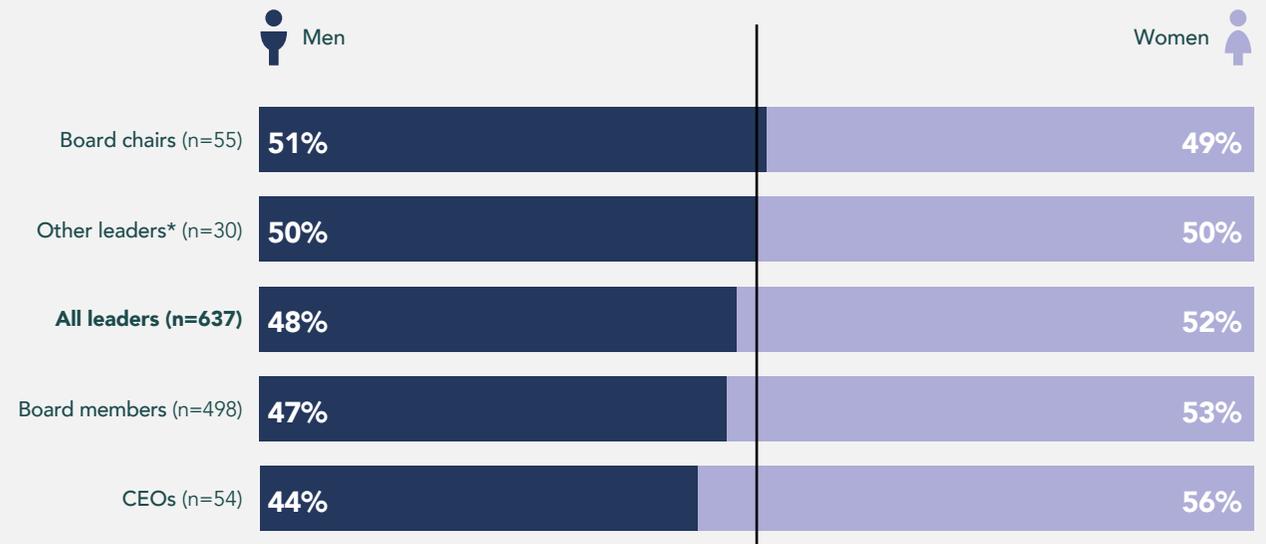


Finding 4. Gender parity hides deep geographic inequities in leadership

Across 51 international NGOs, women held 30/54 (56%) CEO positions and 27/55 (49%) board chair seats.



Figure 4. Proportion of men and women among power holders, international NGOs (n=637)



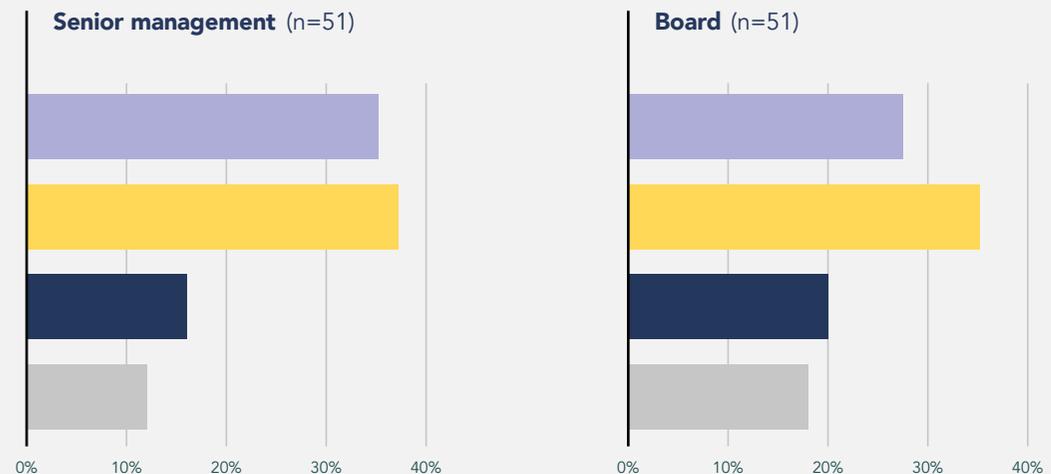
* Other leaders include Vice Presidents, Executive Vice Presidents, Deputy Secretaries-General, Deputy Executive Directors, Deputy Directors and Associate Executive Directors.



We collected gender data on 562 senior managers across 45 international NGOs and assessed how many organisations have achieved gender parity at the senior management level. For six (6/51; 14%) international NGOs, no information on their senior management team could be found. 19/51 (37%) had senior management teams at gender parity (45-55% women), and 18/51 (35%) had more women than men (55%+ women).

We also collected data on 584 board members across 42 international NGOs. For nine (9/51; 23%) international NGOs, no information could be found on their governing boards. Governing boards showed similar patterns, with 18/51 (35%) at parity and 14/51 (27%) where women outnumbered men.

Figure 5. International NGOs with gender parity in senior management and board membership (n=51)



INTERNATIONAL NGOs

READ THE FULL REPORT



Distribution of gender and nationality across leadership roles in international NGOs

CEOs
(n=52)

- 👤 **HICs: 37%** (19) men and **44%** (23) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 4%** (2) men and **12%** (6) women.
- 👤 **LICs: 2%** (1) men and no women.

BOARD CHAIRS
(n=54)

- 👤 **HICs: 41%** (22) men and **35%** (19) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 6%** (3) men and **11%** (6) women.
- 👤 **LICs: no men and 4%** (2) women.

BOARD MEMBERS
(n=494)

- 👤 **HICs: 30%** (149) men and **35%** (172) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 11%** (56) men and **11%** (57) women.
- 👤 **LICs: 3%** (13) men and **2%** (9) women.

OTHER LEADERS
(n=29)

- 👤 **HICs: 45%** (13) men and **34%** (10) women.
- 👤 **MICs: 6%** (2) men and **10%** (3) women.
- 👤 **LICs: No men or women represented.**

We reviewed the country of national origin of leaders and classified these by World Bank income classification. Of 637 leaders, nationality data were found for 629 (52 CEOs, 54 board chairs, 494 board members, and 29 other leaders), 41 of whom were dual nationals.

While women's representation is relatively balanced, leadership remains heavily skewed by geographical inequities. Most are nationals of high-income countries (HICs): 42/52 (81%) CEOs, 41/54 (76%) board chairs, 321/494 (65%) board members, and 23/29 (79%) other leaders. Nationals of middle-income countries (MICs) (8/52 (15%) CEOs, 9/54 (17%) board chairs, 113/494 (23%) board members, and 5/29 (17%) other leaders) and low-income countries (LICs) (1/52 (2%) CEOs, 2/54 (4%) board chairs, 22/494; 4% board members, and no other leaders) are underrepresented.

HICs: high-income countries
MICs: middle-income countries
LICs: low-income countries

Self-portrait I
Taipei city, Taiwan. 2024.
Wu Siou Ming

A face emerges, constructed from fragments of unspoken thought. This self-portrait, formed entirely of text, transforms the artist's private inner world into a visual field of meaning, contemplating the fragility and urgency of expression.

GENDER (IN)JUSTICE?





Finding 5. Commitments to disaggregation of data by sex or gender analysis are largely absent

Sex-disaggregated data is essential for understanding who benefits from programming and where gender gaps persist. For organisations working to advance justice, human rights, and equity, collecting and reporting this data is a baseline requirement for accountability and for assessing whether their external impact aligns with their stated values.

Across 51 international NGOs, we found that most international NGOs do not publish such information. Many (42/51; 82%) did not have a public commitment or policy to disaggregate programmatic data by sex or to undertake gender analysis, while five (5/51; 10%) organisations had a specific commitment or policy to do so.

Figure 6. Policies or commitments to report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis found, international NGOs (n=51)



10%
of organisations have a commitment to publicly report sex-disaggregated data or undertake gender analysis

**Box 3.** Organisational examples**Example of international NGO policy to sex-disaggregate data or undertake gender analysis**

We collect and analyse data on the relation of gender and corruption, and use them as a basis for our recommendations to policy makers. Through our Advocacy and Legal Advice centres in over 60 countries, we encourage people to report sextortion and other forms of gendered corruption.

We call on global leaders to:

- *Collect, analyse and publish gender disaggregated data on the differentiated impact of corruption on men and women;*
- *Recognise and effectively address sextortion as a form of corruption;*
- *Promote women's participation in public, economic and political life.*
- *Mainstream gender sensitive approaches in all anti-corruption work.*

Transparency International⁵

Women of Srebrenica
Srebrenica, Bosnia. 2015.
Mara Scampoli

A group of women mourn at the graves of those killed during the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995. The genocide, carried out by Bosnian Serb forces, targeted Muslim men and boys, claiming the lives of at least 8,372 victims.

Towards a gender-equal global law and justice sector

Achieving gender justice in the law and justice sector demands more than incremental improvements. It requires a fundamental shift in how institutions confront power, accountability, and inclusion. As this chapter shows, progress is possible, but only when organisations commit to transparency, embed equity in workplace culture, and ensure leadership that reflects the diversity of the communities they seek to serve. The path forward calls

for bold action: adopting and publishing robust gender equality, fairness and equity policies, investing in disaggregated data, and putting commitments into practice.

Global 50/50 provides tools, evidence, and guidance to help institutions move beyond rhetoric towards systemic, sustained change. The moment for decisive action is now, and the sector has both the responsibility and the opportunity to lead.

**EXPLORE RESOURCES
TO HELP YOU TAKE ACTION**





Claire Thomas

Executive Director of Minority Rights Group

Transforming leadership through inclusive policy and decentralised, community-led approaches: Minority Rights Group

Minority Rights Group (MRG) believes that rights and opportunities must not be an accident of birth. Our vision is of egalitarian societies built by inclusive policy and collective action that respect minority and indigenous ways of life. Members of these communities have uniquely gendered and intersectional experiences and frequently face discrimination and disadvantage. However, such exclusion cannot be addressed if it is invisible. Committed to ethical and community-led data practices, we disaggregate statistics by gender, age, disability and minority or indigenous status and situate quantitative data within qualitative testimony to ensure that lived experiences inform advocacy, intervention and policy. Our gender work, for example, examines how gender intersects with ethnicity, religion, language, disability and age to create distinct barriers, challenges and opportunities.

MRG's decentralized, bottom-up approach shifts power into the hands of minority and indigenous activists at the community level. Our programmes are co-designed in collaboration with our 300 minority and indigenous-led partner organizations worldwide. Gender is mainstreamed across all teams and initiatives, ensuring these programmes address the specific needs of minority and Indigenous women and girls, including those with disabilities. Faced with anti-gender, anti-diversity and anti-human rights agendas alongside diverse global crises, our approach enables meaningful representation and grassroots leadership. Both are essential for transformative, intersectional and lasting impact.



International NGOs in the Global Justice 50/50 sample

- A4ID: Advocates for International Development
- Access Now
- ActionAid International
- Amnesty International
- Anti-Slavery International
- Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR)
- Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
- Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA)
- Center for Reproductive Rights
- Civil Rights Defenders
- Cordaid
- Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR)
- Earthjustice
- Equality Now
- European Center for Constitutional and Human Rights (ECCHR)
- Freedom House
- Front Line Defenders (FLD)
- Global Justice Center (GJC)
- Global Rights
- Global Witness
- Greenpeace International
- Human Rights Foundation (HRF)
- Human Rights Watch (HRW)
- Humanity in Action
- International Law Institute (ILI)
- Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa (IHRDA)
- Institute for International Law and Human Rights (IILHR)
- International Bridges to Justice (IBJ)
- International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
- International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- International Crisis Group (Crisis Group)
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- International Justice Mission (IJM)
- International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP)
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)
- International Society for Human Rights (ISHR)
- Justice Rapid Response (JRR)
- Lawyers Without Borders (LWOB)
- Max Planck Foundation for International Peace and the Rule of Law (MPFPR)
- Minority Rights Group (MRG)
- Protection International (PI)
- Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG)
- Survival International
- The Carter Center
- The Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice (The Vance Center)
- The International Legal Foundation (The ILF)
- Transparency International (TI)
- UN Watch
- World Justice Project (WJP)



Endnotes

- 1 Global Justice Center. (2021). 2021-2026 Strategic Framework. https://wordpress-537312-2488108.cloudwaysapps.com/temp-uploads/2021/11/2021-2026_GJC-StrategicFramework_final.pdf
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- 5 Transparency International. (nd). Gender. <https://www.transparency.org/en/our-priorities/gender-and-corruption>