



IDLO International Conference on Legal and Judicial Development Assistance

Rome, 21st September 2010

The International Development Law Organisation's conference in Rome brought together researchers, aid donors, international organisations and national government officials for a day of intensive discussions on the current state of 'rule of law' and legal reform aid initiatives <http://www.idlo.int/Publications/LegalJudicialConferenceReport.pdf>. The IDLO is an intergovernmental organisation funded by member governments, donors and has permanent observer status at the UN. Professor Crook, leader of the APP Justice Research Stream, was invited together with Donal Cronin from Irish Aid, one of APP's principal funders. The meeting revealed how significant legal issues are in international development: \$2.6 billion was devoted to legal and judicial programmes in 2008 alone, mostly by bi-lateral donors, focusing on access to justice, legal empowerment and post-conflict or transitional justice in fragile states. (A full session was devoted to the large-scale programmes now operating in Afghanistan).

Of particular interest to APP were the sessions on sector –wide justice reform, and legal empowerment for poverty reduction. Sarah-Marie Callaghan (Irish Aid, Kampala) described the success of Irish Aid's work on the Justice Law and Order Sector programme in Uganda, due mainly to the effective co-operation which had developed among the donors, the Ugandan Judicial Service and other key sector agencies, underpinned by government support. This contrasted with the more difficult situation in Kenya, where political conflict and politicization of law agencies has generated real resistance to reform. The importance of local commitment to reforms emerging from locally-developed and accepted agendas was also underlined in the reports on IDLO assistance to Southern Sudan and Rwanda. IDLO itself, with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has produced a major research report on legal empowerment and justice for the poor, 'Practitioners' Perspectives' edited by Thomas McInerney and Stephen Golub (http://www.idlo.int/Documents/Legal_Empowerment_Practitioners_Perspectives_Book.pdf) and is funding another project on legal empowerment through engagement with 'customary' legal systems, which will have immense comparative interest for the APP's work .

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