

Kadaga roots for virtual law firms to empower women

By Andrew Ssenyonga

The Speaker of Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, has advised women lawyers to embrace opportunities arising from use of technology to set up virtual law firms, to allow mobility of legal services.

She noted that unlike the current system of work where one has to sit in an office, with virtual firms, many women will be able to work from home as they fulfil their motherly obligations.

Kadaga argues that mobile-friendly legal research solutions increase productivity by more than 30% and allow its attorneys to practise in a geographically dispersed manner.

"I believe that mobility is one of the keys to moving the legal profession forward in serving our clients. We are moving to a future where I can run my entire legal practice from a tablet and a smartphone," she added.

During the East African Women Lawyers' Conference yesterday in Entebbe, Kadaga said virtual law firms also improve the ability to get access to comprehensive legal research from both primary and secondary sources.

"It is the most cost-effective legal-research option available for lawyers who are practising in today's highly competitive environment," she said.

A virtual law firm is a legal practice that does not have a bricks-and-mortar office, but operates from the homes or satellite offices of its lawyers, usually delivering services to clients at a distance using technological means of communication.

Friendly during maternity leave

The Speaker also noted that these firms can allow women during maternity leave handle the matters in court through guiding the lawyers sitting in for them.

"Most times lawyers holding brief (delegate) for colleagues who are

Kadaga (third-left) talking to her colleagues during the East Africa Women Lawyers Conference at Gold View Hotel in Entebbe, yesterday.
Photo by Kennedy Oryema



BETWEEN THE LINES:

■ Kadaga said it is critical for women lawyers to build networks in the profession so as to reinforce their practice.

unavailable for several reasons, have been compelled to seek adjournment on premise that their colleagues who are absent, are well-versed with finer details of a particular case," she said.

Kadaga added that it is critical for women lawyers to build networks in the legal profession so as to reinforce their legal practice and in politics, in order to secure mentors with capacity to propel them higher.

"A new opportunity to establish

networks lies in creative use of ICT. This offers space for virtual meetings, which can be professionally managed within set rules of conduct," she advised.

Ambassador Sinare Maajar, who delivered the keynote address, advised that women must work hard to strive for excellence and stake out their claim as the best in the profession.

"The challenges are real, but surmountable. Some challenges are simply laughable and you move on; you can singly deal with others and move on or take action if necessary," she said.

Isabel Bueno, the chairperson of the Women Lawyers' Interest Group at the International Bar Association, said law firms lose women talent in firms, which

means that there is need for making efforts to attract and retain them.

"We should implement programmes that allow women professionals to be able to make a choice to stay in the profession," she said.

Bueno noted that helping women lawyers develop their own clientele base and the ability to generate business for themselves should be at the forefront.

"Networking with other women may be easier, so we have to seek these opportunities," she said.

The event was aimed at raising ideas on how to bring together women lawyers from across the region. It was organised under the theme, "Future proofing of the legal profession in East Africa".