

## Justice Teresa Doherty CBE

### SI Bangor Northern Ireland nominates

Teresa Doherty joined SI Bangor in October 2003. She was Club President in 2016-2017 and is again in 2020-2021. Her first contact with Soroptimism was 1979 when SI Lae, Papua New Guinea (PNG), generously responded to her requests to improve conditions of women prisoners. Teresa was greatly helped by Soroptimist sisters in Freetown, Sierra Leone. On behalf of Bangor Club, she visited and supports the Fistula Clinic Freetown. While working in the Netherlands, Voorburg Club welcomed Teresa to their meetings. Teresa has attended and spoken at Soroptimist Conferences, workshops and clubs.

Teresa is a judge by profession. After working then volunteering in Zambia she returned home and studied law, qualifying as a barrister. She accompanied her husband to PNG (1976). She first worked as a Public Solicitor (legal aid) and became aware of gender discrimination against PNG women. After changes in employment law she became a Provincial Legal Officer. Although not part of her job description, Teresa continued to give legal aid, e.g. child maintenance and custody, enforcing the rights of women prisoners in court, and persuading police to change practices e.g. of asking rape victims "did you enjoy it". She travelled hundreds of miles on dirt roads to remote areas.



Teresa raised awareness of rights with a weekly radio broadcast in Tok Pidgin and as part of a group campaigning against domestic violence. Teresa wrote a simple guide on court procedures for child maintenance and custody claims. In 1987 she was the first woman appointed a Principal Magistrate, Senior Land Court Magistrate and Chair of Police Disciplinary Tribunal in PNG. In 1988 she was appointed a Judge of the National and Supreme Courts, the first woman judge in the South Pacific region. Her notable decisions included consent in rape can be conditional, and a child cannot be used as compensation. She travelled into remote areas including war zones.

Teresa instituted a prison inspection system to ensure the law was upheld; finding breaches of rights because of poor administration and oppressive customs. This system was adopted by the Chief Justice of India. When the town in which she lived, Rabaul, was destroyed in a volcanic eruption, Teresa cared for her staff and the prisoners despite the destruction of her own home.

In 1998 Teresa returned home to the UK and worked in private practice. From 2002 she was a Parole Commissioner for Northern Ireland.

In 2003 the Commonwealth requested her assistance in re-establishing the rule of law in post-civil war Sierra Leone. She was appointed a judge of the High and Appeal Courts in Freetown. Her notable decisions included refusal of adoption applications, which led to investigation by USA authorities and a Commission of Enquiry finding child trafficking.

In 2005 she was appointed as judge of the Special Court of Sierra Leone by the United Nations, dealing with cases of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Her dissenting opinion led to recognition in international law of forced marriage and sexual slavery as

crimes against humanity, and she was a member of the Court which first ruled on the use of child soldiers and convicted a sitting Head of State. Teresa is Vice President of the Court

Teresa was the first woman Councillor of the Law Society PNG, and is Chair of the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ) and a member of the Commonwealth Reference Group on the Promotion of the Rights of Women and the Girl Child. She is on the Election Observers Register of Ireland.

Teresa's work has been recognised by awards from:

- Papua New Guinea: 10th Independence Anniversary medal for Social Justice; Long Service Medal
- CBE (outstanding contributions to the Judiciary and community).
- Honorary Doctorate of Laws (LL.D) Ulster University for the promotion of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law
- 2018 N.I. Women's Forum: Achievement Award
- The IAWJ: Global Justice Award; IAW, Argentina Advancement of Human Rights Award

In 2019 Gender Justice Legacy Wall (Hague and New York) for "decades of work for justice and gender justice"

Teresa carried out voluntary work in the (then) Zambia Prisoners Aid society; in a Legal Aid clinic, Belfast, on the Board of Visitors, Maghaberry Prison, as a member of the Board of Governors of her old school and as a Resource Person for Physicians for Human Rights.

Teresa has spoken at numerous conferences about women's rights and against violence to women, including United Nations, World Bank, North and South America, Asia, Africa, Europe and Australasia. Teresa has written and published widely including on women's rights. Others have described her as having "made enormously positive contributions to domestic justice" and to gender justice.