

**Virginia Shingairai Chitanda: *Chief Technical Advisor (Decentralization)***

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Ms Virginia Shingairai Chitanda (Zimbabwe) is the in-coming Chief Technical Adviser, Liberia Decentralization Support Program. She is a lawyer with 29 years of experience in governance and rule of law sectors in conflict and immediate post conflict countries, namely Rwanda, Sierra Leone, The Sudan (including Darfur) and South Sudan. She has expertise in decentralization and local governance, traditional and customary legal systems, policing systems, legal aid systems, legislative drafting, and women's rights empowerment and accountability mechanisms (to include investigation and prosecution of gender crimes against humanity). From 2006 she has been supporting the Local Government Board and the President's Office in South Sudan to implement the decentralization policy while in UNDP. As the lead technical advisor she guided the high-level consultations and deliberations on decentralization producing the Local Government Policy Framework (2006), Local Government Act, 2009 and the Inter-governmental Linkages Blueprint (2010). Most recently she is supporting the Ministry of Interior to organize the South Sudan National Police Service in conformity with the decentralized format. Virginia also has a long track record advocating for the rights of women globally. She is a founder member of the Women and the Law in Africa Trust, which successfully transformed the rights of women to property and inheritance in Southern Africa. She is a past Executive Director of the Sexual Assault and Prevention Centre of the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) where she was an adjunct professor in the Department of Women Studies and the Faculty of Law. From 2002 to 2005 she led the investigation and prosecution of gender crimes at the Special Court for Sierra Leone. She holds a Masters Degree in Law specializing in International Human Rights Law.