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Q&A with Bertha Argüello

Partner at Arias, Nicaragua

From the perspective of gender equality how does the environment which you work in now compare to the one you began your career in?

My work environment has had few changes since my first career began some 25 years ago. Although women did not have many decision-making positions then, I can only mention a handful of times when my employer and peers presented gender concerns or expected male counterparties to take on high profile roles. In a country where the first Latin American woman was elected president, I am fortunate to say I have not felt inequity in my work environment or community in general.

In general, do you feel the legal profession in Nicaragua treats women and men equally?

Yes, I do. Approximately half of authorised attorneys in Nicaragua are female, with many women having been appointed to the judiciary and the chief justice position is currently occupied by a woman. Nonetheless, there are still opportunities to be had in private practice, where in-house counsel positions are generally occupied by men.

Are there any initiatives to promote gender equality in the legal profession in Nicaragua?

Some initiatives have taken place in the last few years, particularly efforts to create a local chapter of The Vance Center's 'Women in the Profession' programme, with the purpose of promoting, increasing and extending women's representation and leadership in the legal profession throughout Nicaragua. I participated as a founding member with female peers from other law firms in the organisation of this entity, which unfortunately did not go through the required authorisation process. Similar work has not been recently undertaken.

Do you feel women are well represented at partner level and in management positions in firms in Nicaragua?

Yes, I do. In Arias' case, 48% of our regional partners are women (50% in the case of our Nicaragua office), 55% of our associates are women

and 65% of our management team are women. Local law firms, generally, also have a strong female presence.

What initiatives do you have in place at your firm to promote gender equality?

Though we do not have specific programs, Arias is agender blind employer, which promotes and has consistently demonstrated gender equality at all levels.

Do you think your firm compares well to others in your market when considering gender equality?

Yes, I do. Arias has a strong female presence at all levels as I already outlined.

If you could introduce one policy related to gender equality in the legal profession what would it be?

I would propose policies for retaining and advancing women in the profession, including flexible and remote working, job sharing, and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.

What do you feel are the biggest obstacles for women in Nicaragua joining the legal profession now?

The biggest obstacle from my experience is balancing your personal and work life. We need to replicate successful practices from other countries that allow women to reach their full potential without having to sacrifice personal goals.

What advice would you give to female lawyers in junior positions seeking promotion?

Success is based on hard work, determination and consistency, not merely on intelligence. Likewise, while encouraging young professionals to accede to senior and partner positions, personal and family goals must be considered, as greater responsibility and recognition requires – at least when first assuming those positions – considerable sacrifices.

What do you consider to be the greatest achievement of your career?

Transitioning from the public sector into private practice was particularly challenging, having to change my mindset and work culture.

Zoe Phillips Takyi-Appiah

JLD & MB Legal Consultancy
Ghana

Bar admission: Ghana, England & Wales
Industry sector: Energy, Mining, Natural resources
Practice area: Banking

Rosa Kudoadzi

Sesi Legal
Ghana

Bar admission: Ghana
Practice area: Restructuring and insolvency, M&A

Athanasia Tsene

Bernitsas Law
Greece

Bar admission: Greece
Practice area: Banking

Catherine Marie Karatzas

Karatzas & Partners
Greece

Bar admission: Greece, New York
Practice area: Capital markets, M&A

Christina Papanikolopoulou

Zepos & Yannopoulos
Greece

Bar admission: Greece
Practice area: Banking, Capital markets

Evangelina Lardizábal

Arias
Honduras

Bar admission: Honduras
Practice area: Banking, Capital markets, M&A

Anne-Marie Godfrey

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld
Hong Kong

Bar admission: Hong Kong, Ireland, England & Wales
Industry sector: Banking, Investment management
Practice area: Investment funds

Judy Lee

Appleby
Hong Kong

Bar admission: Bermuda, British Virgin Islands
Industry sector: Energy, Real estate
Practice area: Capital markets, Investment funds, M&A



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BANKING
AND FINANCE

CAPITAL
MARKETS

M&A

Evangelina joined the firm since 2002 and has led the Honduras team since the opening of the Arias office. She plays a holistic role in the Firm, is a full-time leader and lawyer with extensive knowledge in legal matters, who has been in the private practice of law for over 30 years, ensuring accurate and adequate advice for her clients.

Evangelina has led teams in the different practice areas and has participated in multi-jurisdictional mergers and acquisitions, and project financings of significance in Honduras and Central America, involving diverse sectors. She has advised several national and international companies, banks and insurance companies, energy, services, food, telecommunications, free zones, and has also provided tax advice on complex operations successfully, both local and international operations.

She is a well-known and highly regarded attorney in Honduras; clients appreciate her professionalism and commitment to their cases. She is a Member of Colegio de Abogados de Honduras and has a Law Degree from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Honduras (UNAH).

Bar admissions Honduras

Arias



Founder of regional firm Arias' Honduran branch, Evangelina Lardizábal is one of the country's leading transactional lawyers. Her practice area and sector experience and expertise are broad, encompassing significant M&A and project finance deals and work in banking, energy and telecoms.

Pip Greenwood

Russell McVeagh
New Zealand

Bar admission: New Zealand

Industry sector: Technology and telecommunications

Practice area: Capital markets: Equity, M&A

Gloria María de Alvarado

Alvarado & Asociados
Nicaragua

Bar admission: Nicaragua

Industry sector: Banking, Technology and telecommunications, Natural resources

Practice area: Banking, Capital markets, M&A

Bertha Argüello

Arias
Nicaragua

Bar admission: Costa Rica, Nicaragua

Practice area: Banking, Capital markets, M&A

Felicia Kemi Segun

Adepetun Caxton-Martins Agbor &
Segun
Nigeria

Bar admission: Nigeria

Industry sector: Energy, Oil and gas

Practice area: Banking, Project finance, M&A

Olubunmi Fayokun

Aluko & Oyeboode
Nigeria

Bar admission: Nigeria

Industry sector: Energy, Oil and gas, Mining, Natural resources

Practice area: Banking, Capital markets, M&A

Oghogho Makinde

Aluko & Oyeboode
Nigeria

Bar admission: Nigeria

Industry sector: Energy, Oil and gas

Practice area: Banking, Project finance, M&A, Project development

Myma Belo-Osagie

Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie
Nigeria

Bar admission: Ghana, Nigeria, New York

Industry sector: Technology and telecommunications, Oil and gas

Practice area: Banking, Project finance, M&A, Project development

Yinka Edu

Udo Udoma & Belo-Osagie
Nigeria

Bar admission: Nigeria, England & Wales

Practice area: Banking, Capital markets



Bertha Argüello

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Bertha M. Argüello has been in Arias since 2003 and advises clients in banking and finance, corporate and commercial and mining matters, but focusses her expertise in banking, financial and insurance law, regularly advising investors and foreign institutions on supervisory and compliance regulations of supervised institutions in Nicaragua. She has been a member of the board of a financial institution since 2016, as well as its risk and compliance committees, representing client interests and contributing to strengthening the entity's presence nationwide.

Bertha likewise advises clients on complex financing arrangements and security structures for both regulated and non-regulated entities. Her experience also includes working in Arias' expanding labor department, advising clients on diverse employment matters, as well as general management and corporate solutions.

She holds a Master of Law from Harvard Law School and a Juris Doctor degree from Universidad Autónoma de Centro America, San Jose, Costa Rica. Bertha is admitted to the Bar in Nicaragua, authorised as a notary public since 2000.

Bar admissions Costa Rica, Nicaragua

Arias



Arias partner Bertha Argüello is one of Nicaragua's top banking and financial services specialists. Her expertise lies in advising regulated entities on domestic banking supervisory law and compliance, but she is also experienced in working on banking and finance transactions.