

“Injustice anywhere is a threat
to justice everywhere”

Martin Luther King

JUSTICE FOR ALL

CHALLENGE PAPER FOR THE FIRST MEETING OF THE TASK FORCE ON JUSTICE

This challenge paper has been prepared for the first meeting of the Task Force on Justice, which has been formed as an initiative of the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies. It provides a starting point for the Task Force as it begins working to encourage an acceleration in the provision of justice to people and communities outside the protection of the law, in line with SDG16.3 and related targets on justice.

THE JUSTICE CHALLENGE

1. Without increased justice, it will be impossible to deliver the 2030 Agenda commitments for people, planet, prosperity, and peace.

At the heart of the 2030 Agenda lies a vision of a “just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world in which the needs of the most vulnerable are met.”

Justice is a thread that runs through all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The agenda is based on a commitment to human rights, to equality and non-discrimination, to reaching the furthest behind first, and to tackling disparities of opportunity, wealth and power.

Current levels of injustice are unacceptably high. When they are victims of violence or crime, or are involved in a legal dispute, too many people either have no access to justice or are failed by poor quality, or abusive, justice institutions.

When people interact with government, they are often unfairly treated or are denied access to services vital to their welfare and development. Economies are undermined by a lack of rule of law, while environmental injustice threatens communities, societies, and, increasingly, the future of the planet.

In countries rebuilding after violent conflict or widespread insecurity, progress towards strengthening the rule of law is often painfully slow, despite powerful evidence for how transitional justice mechanisms can promote peace and provide the foundations for more resilient patterns of development.

Through the 2030 Agenda, the world’s leaders promised to “take the bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path.” They will be unable to deliver this pledge without early action to tackle the many injustices that are a barrier to development for people, communities, and societies.

2. SDG16.3 provides a unique opportunity to accelerate the provision of access to justice, but a lack of data, evidence, and strategies is hindering implementation.

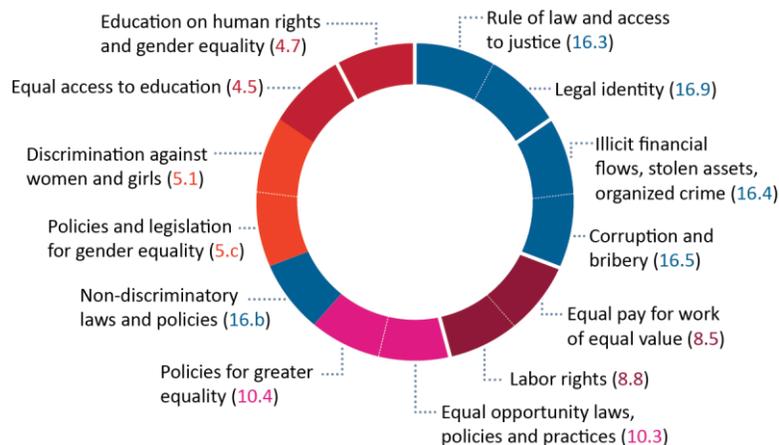
The Millennium Declaration promised a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, but the Millennium Development Goals did not cover justice. The final MDG progress report was silent on a widespread

failure to realize the Declaration’s commitment to a world where people live free from violence, oppression or injustice.

When the SDGs were negotiated, the Justice 2015 campaign made “an urgent call to the Member States of the United Nations to declare now that justice, the rule of law, and legal empowerment are essential principles in the new global development framework.”¹

This call to action was heeded, leading to a series of ambitious targets that form part of the 2030 Agenda’s vision of *peaceful, just and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence*.

SDG16.3 commits to providing equal access to justice for all by 2030, with other targets covering the denial of legal identity, major forms of injustice such as corruption and illicit flows, human rights, and gender equality and empowerment.



But there are serious obstacles to turning these targets into reality. We lack the data to monitor progress and the evidence to underpin effective policies and programs. Justice partners are yet to unite around common strategies or to identify priorities for implementation. In many cases, political will to invest in justice is lacking, especially for marginalized and powerless groups.

3. Justice is starved of investment and we lack a business case that sets out the costs and benefits of increased financing.

Levels of expenditure on justice are inadequate to deliver SDG16.3 and related targets.

Consolidated international data on budgets for the justice sector are not available. Data from the Council of Europe show that its members spent between 0.5% (Greece) and 6.6% (Russian Federation) of public expenditure on their justice systems in 2014, with a median expenditure of €45 per capita.² Across 25 countries, budgets for legal aid vary from \$34 (Netherlands) to \$0.01 (Nepal) per capita, with an average of \$5.82.³ In conflict-affected states, where the justice gap is greatest, just 3% of development assistance is spent on justice.⁴

Budgets are under pressure in many countries, with a review finding that “most governments... are trying to drive down cost in their justice departments at present.”⁵ At the same time, substantial sums of money are currently wasted on interventions that do not meaningfully improve access to quality justice, and which – in some cases – themselves fuel injustice.

As yet, we lack an analysis of how much it will cost to deliver SDG16.3 and related targets. A recent study estimates the cost of scaling up the basic provision of legal services at between \$0.1 and \$1.30 per capita in low and middle-income countries, but this work is in its early stages.⁶ Birth registration is an

exception. The World Health Organization and World Bank have calculated it will cost \$3.8 billion to scale up the civil registration and vital statistics systems that register births in 73 countries.⁷ The international financing gap is \$199 million per year.

Little evidence is available to assess the effectiveness of existing expenditure, or the likely returns on new investment. This contrasts with sectors such as nutrition, where a World Bank ‘investment framework’ sets out a range of benefits from financing the nutrition targets, including 3.7 million child deaths averted and returns of \$4-35 for each dollar spent on the most effective interventions.⁸ The framework was launched by international leaders, with a focus on the \$2.2 billion per year that would “jump start progress” towards the targets.⁹

4. Recent years have seen a wave of innovation in justice, but new models and approaches are yet to cohere in an agenda for action tailored to SDG16.3.

A series of studies have found that evidence is weak and fragmented for how access to justice can be increased.¹⁰ One review has characterized the existing knowledge base as ‘meager,’ reflecting an historic focus on *why* we need to tackle injustice, rather than *how* meaningful increases in justice can be delivered.¹¹

This, however, is changing:

- *Improved data offers a much clearer understanding of the burden of injustice.* Through its surveys, HiiL has found that 60% of legal disputes involve five common problems: family disputes, neighbor disputes, employment disputes, crime, and land disputes.¹² The World Justice Project has recently released new data on legal needs for 45 countries (100 countries will be covered by the end of 2018).¹³ This is providing us with fresh insights into how to deliver a transformation that will meet the most urgent needs for justice.
- *There is an increased focus on results.* The legal empowerment movement offers concrete solutions to instances of injustice, solving everyday problems and “demonstrate[ing], case by case, that even in environments accustomed to arbitrariness and unfairness, justice is possible.”¹⁴ Many countries now understand that quality justice can often best be delivered outside the justice system, with formal justice institutions a last resort for responding to legal disputes.¹⁵ A landmark report has explored how both state and non-state actors (community paralegals, private sector initiatives, etc.) are needed to provide legal aid to the people who need it most.¹⁶
- *We have a new understanding of what works for those seeking justice in the face of violent crime.* Recent years have seen a dramatic growth in research into what works to prevent violence, much of it coming from a public health perspective.¹⁷ Focused deterrence has demonstrated reductions in crime in communities experiencing the highest levels of violence, through a partnership between justice and community actors.¹⁸ The role of the justice system has been highlighted in preventing rather than responding to violence, for example through laws that limit the misuse of alcohol.¹⁹ Powerful evidence has been developed for those with the greatest justice needs, for example women²⁰ and children²¹ facing violence.

5. There is a limited window to strengthen and empower the movement for justice, and to demonstrate momentum for SDG16.3 that will support increasing ambition and results in the 2020s.

In September 2019, heads of state and government will gather in New York to review the first four years of the 2030 Agenda. They will provide “high-level political guidance on the agenda... and mobilize

further actions to accelerate implementation.”²² In July of the same year, a ministerial High-level Political Forum will review SDG16.

This is a critical milestone for those working to deliver justice for all. It is an opportunity to:

- *Demonstrate and celebrate success* in countries that have made the SDG targets for justice a priority. This will show that progress is possible with political will, evidence-based strategies, strong partnerships, and increased financing.
- *Provide a platform for countries to make ambitious and credible commitments* to implement SDG16.3 and related targets from 2020 onwards, and for international and regional actors to provide increasingly coherent international and regional support for justice. This will build momentum for the future.
- *Energize and empower the movement for justice*, while winning the argument that justice is the business of all parts of society and needs to be mainstreamed across all sectors. This will take justice out of its silo and push it up the policy agenda.
- *Resolve to demonstrate measurable progress against the SDG targets* by 2023, when leaders will meet for the second time to review the 2030 Agenda as it passes its half way point. If successful, this will provide a platform for scaling up and accelerating implementation from 2024 onwards.

This mobilization requires action at all levels, from the local to the global. It takes the scale and the ambition of the SDG targets seriously. And it responds to the call made in the 2030 Agenda for “an intensive global engagement in support of implementation of all the Goals and targets, bringing together governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors, and mobilizing all available resources.”²³

MOVING TOWARDS JUSTICE FOR ALL

The Justice Gap

Ten years ago, the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor argued that:

*Four billion people are robbed of the chance to better their lives and climb out of poverty, because they are excluded from the rule of law.*²⁴

This figure continues to resonate and is still widely used. It was based on the best available data at the time, but relies on studies from just 20 countries, some of which pre-date the MDGs.²⁵

As discussed above, a great deal of new data has been collected since the Commission published its landmark report (see figure 1). The challenge is now to synthesize this data with the aim of creating a new estimate of the size of the justice gap. This synthesis would:

- Provide a compelling and comprehensible picture of what people need and want when they seek justice, and of what kind of justice they receive. This cannot be achieved through a single figure, but a concise analysis is needed if it is to be communicated effectively.
- Capture the experiences of groups that have pressing justice needs, such as women and children, or that face systematic exclusion and discrimination when seeking justice. This supports the people-centred nature of the SDGs and the pledge to reach the furthest behind first.

- Break down the data into categories of justice need, presenting data in a format that increases understanding of priorities and opportunities for effective implementation of SDG16.3. This will increase the capacity of policymakers to act.
- Link data on the justice gap to data on social, economic and environmental outcomes. This will anchor justice within the broader sustainable development agenda.

Data Sources for Assessing the Justice Gap
Legal identity/birth registration [Administrative/survey data]
Civil disputes: reporting/resolution [Legal needs surveys]
Victims of violence and crime [Victimization surveys]
Defendants/perpetrators impunity; journey through justice system (arrest/investigations; pre-trial detention; fair trials; prisons rehabilitation) [International Statistics on Crime and Justice]
Satisfaction with justice/non-justice institutions [Perception surveys]
Administrative justice: decision making; equal treatment; grievances/redress mechanisms [Various administrative data]

Figure 1

Despite improvements in the availability of data, work on the justice gap will identify the need to do more to monitor progress towards to the SDG targets for justice, to understand the needs of those excluded from justice systems, and to provide evidence for effective policymaking. The Task Force should explore strategies for strengthening justice data between now and 2030, and make recommendations on global and national indicators for SDG16.3 and related justice targets.

Making the Case

A strengthened understanding of the scale of the justice gap provides the basis for making a new case for action and investment in access to justice for all.

The case for investment would cover:

- Major social, economic and environmental benefits from increasing access to justice, drawing on research that links justice to areas such as health,²⁶ inclusive growth,²⁷ an effective business environment,²⁸ or levels of entrepreneurialism.²⁹
- The costs of injustice, in terms of the costs of increased poverty and social exclusion,³⁰ crime and violence,³¹ corruption,³² and political instability and violent conflict,³³ and of the damage caused by counterproductive expenditure in areas such security,³⁴ criminal justice,³⁵ pre-trial detention,³⁶ and incarceration.³⁷
- The financing need for priority interventions to increase access to justice in different country contexts,³⁸ alongside questions of affordability, both for states³⁹ and for people with unmet legal needs.⁴⁰

In some cases, it will be possible to draw upon existing work, such as the investment case for birth registration.⁴¹ For the most part, it will be necessary to develop an analytical framework that is able to provide justified estimates that draw on, and make the most of, fragmented data.

The case for investment will provide the basis for the Task Force to explore a financing strategy for justice for all. This would cover sources of funding (domestic resource mobilization, private sector investment, international development finance, philanthropy, etc.), as well as innovative approaches to funding justice.

The financing strategy could highlight priorities that are currently under-funded, such as increasing budgets for innovation, creating incentives for collaboration between justice actors and those working in other sectors, and investments in prevention rather than in response.

What Works

The Roadmap for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies was launched in September 2017 by a group of member states, international organizations, major partnerships and networks. It acts as a ‘first guide’ for those working on the implementation of SDG16+.

The roadmap identifies ‘increasing access to justice’ and ‘legal empowerment’ as one of nine catalytic actions. It sets out steps to accelerate progress towards SDG16.3 and related targets and proposes seven priorities for implementation (see annex 1). However, partners recognized the need for further, and more detailed, analysis of how the justice gap can be closed, leading to the formation of the Task Force.

The Task Force will review the strategies, tools and approaches that have the greatest potential to increase access to justice. It could:

- Draw on evidence presented on the justice gap to identify the justice problems that are the highest priority for greater implementation.
- Highlight interventions where there is good evidence for impact and the challenge is how to implement at scale.
- Identify other areas where there is weaker evidence for what works, and where the priority is to design innovation strategies that respond to unmet needs for justice.⁴²
- Explore the major obstacles to implementation in the justice sector and make recommendations for overcoming these obstacles.

The Task Force will also need to focus on the people who are on the frontline of delivering justice, recognizing that human rights defenders face growing risks, while security and justice institutions are themselves often “politicized, abusive, corrupt, and lacking accountability.”⁴³

A significant improvement in access to quality justice can only be achieved through substantial investment in the justice workforce. It will need to develop recommendations for how to expand the actors engaged in delivering justice for all, strengthening networks of grassroots actors, expanding the role of the private sector, and deepening partnerships with other sectors.

In developing an agenda for action, the Task Force might draw on other models, such as the seven INSPIRE strategies for ending violence against children (WHO, UNICEF, World Bank and partners),⁴⁴ the strategy for eliminating malaria within a generation (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Office of UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Health in Agenda 2030, and Malaria No More),⁴⁵ nutrition’s focus on the “1,000 day window has a profound impact on a child’s ability to grow, learn and thrive,”⁴⁶ or – from the early 1980s – the “four simple, low cost and doable elements” that drove the Child Survival Revolution (UNICEF, WHO, UNDP, the World Bank and the Rockefeller Foundation).⁴⁷

Call to Action

All partners agree that the Task Force cannot deliver ‘just another report’. From the very start of its work, the focus must be on translating recommendations into commitments and actions. There is little disagreement on the need for justice, the challenge lies in making the shift to delivering better justice outcomes across the board.

As it begins its works, the Task Force has an opportunity to:

- Mobilize a growing coalition of justice partners, building a collective vision and shared direction for taking forward SDG16.3 and related targets.
- Agree workstreams that will develop analysis of the justice gap, the case for action, and what works, and explore opportunities such as the proposed High-level Group on Justice for Women.
- Take early steps, working with justice partners, to identify countries that are interested in making new commitments on justice ahead of the HLPF in 2019.
- Build links to other initiatives, such as the ongoing review of the UN Global Focal Point arrangement for Police, Justice, and Corrections, drawing on and amplifying their commitments.
- Maximize the potential of major events and reports, such as the Walk Together campaign for Nelson Mandela’s centenary, the tenth anniversary of the Commission on Legal Empowerment of the Poor, or the third International Conference on Legal Aid.
- Plan a program of work, including two further Task Force meetings, in 2018 and early 2019, preparing the Task Force to launch its findings in Spring 2019.
- Commit to using the High-level Political Forum to launch a set of ambitious voluntary commitments on justice, at ministerial level (July 2019) and head of state/government level (September 2019).



4 Increase justice and legal empowerment

We have an opportunity to promote the rule of law and increase access to justice in all countries, with a substantial impact on the most vulnerable and furthest behind.

Prevent

Grievances are addressed, reducing the risk of violence and tackling impunity.

Renew

Justice and security institutions become more accessible and responsive.

Involve

People can claim their rights and entitlements, allowing them to reach their full potential.

Most people are unable to count on the full protection of the law. While many countries have taken steps to increase access to justice, universal access is out of reach on current trajectories. We can accelerate progress if we:

- Understand why and how women and men seek justice, and whether they feel they are treated fairly when they seek a legal remedy.
- Empower them to use and shape the law in ways that remove obstacles to their development, and that of their families and their communities.
- Focus on the needs of victims and witnesses of violent crimes within the justice system, in particular women, children and vulnerable groups.
- Enable people to access justice for civil matters, including those related to land and property, family law, health, and labor.
- Support alternative resolution mechanisms to solve disputes outside the formal justice system where possible, allowing courts to concentrate on more serious cases.
- Ensure full judicial independence and transparency, and make justice and security institutions more inclusive, accountable transparent, and effective.

The justice sector has long been neglected and underfunded. However, this is an area of growing innovation and one where many countries are showing leadership.

1. Use regular surveys to capture data on legal needs, rates of victimization, and confidence in justice and security institutions.
2. Develop a strategy for improving access to legal aid and assistance for civil and criminal matters, building on the UN Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid and the UNDP/UNODC Global Study on Legal Aid.
3. Increase the capacity of justice and security institutions to operate in ways that are informed by the evidence on violence prevention, building trust and legitimacy, and increasing accountability.
4. Extend and improve services provided at the community level, while increasing the use of mobile courts, informal dispute resolution mechanisms, and other cost effective approaches, in line with international human rights standards.
5. Strengthen administrative justice, including access to redress and complaint mechanisms, and facilitate people's ability to claim their rights related to health, education, land, and natural resources.
6. Support transitional justice processes to secure truth, justice, reparations, and guarantees of non-recurrence for victims of conflict or large scale human rights violations, and invest in efforts to prevent recurrence.
7. Make greater use of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) and other national, regional and global platforms to strengthen justice and security institutions, and to increase legal empowerment, while creating tools and resources to support those working on legal empowerment.

ENDNOTES

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