

# The Benefits of Access to Justice for Economies, Societies, and the Social Contract

A Literature Review

By Mark Weston



**PATHFINDERS**  
FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES  
HOSTED BY THE NYU CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

# Introduction

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## *Defining “Access to Justice”*

“Access to justice” has traditionally been defined as access to the formal justice system in the shape of lawyers, courts, and the police. In recent years, however, the work of groups such as the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies; the Task Force on Justice; the Open Government Partnership; and others has helped broaden this definition. “Access to justice,” as a recent letter from the justice ministers of 16 countries to the United Nations Secretary-General put it, “is best understood as the ability of people to resolve and prevent their justice problems, and to use justice as a platform to participate in their economies and societies.”<sup>1</sup>

While courts and lawyers may be useful in these respects, there are a range of other formal and informal justice providers and approaches that may play an equally or more important role in addressing people’s justice needs. Informal justice providers include community paralegals, debt counsellors, religious leaders, community elders, trade unions, grassroots justice activists, and other mediators. Informal justice approaches include community mediation, traditional courts, helplines and other advice services, advocacy for the rights of disadvantaged groups, community legal centres, support for victims of injustice, restoration between perpetrators and victims, and rehabilitation schemes for offenders.

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This broader, people-centred approach to access to justice has begun to be recognized by justice policy-makers. Providing equal access to justice for all is a key commitment made by the world’s governments as part of Sustainable Development Goal 16. Among the indicators of progress toward the goal is the “proportion of the population who have experienced a dispute in the past two years and who accessed a formal or informal dispute resolution mechanism” (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup> The Justice Action Coalition, meanwhile, is bringing together justice leaders from around the world to champion and promote people-centred justice and to close the global justice gap.<sup>3</sup>

This literature review of the benefits of access to justice is the result of a collaboration between the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies (“Pathfinders” hereafter) and the Open Government Partnership (OGP). Aimed at high-level government officials and leaders of civil society organisations working in the justice field, it forms part of the background research for OGP’s second Skeptic’s Guide to Open Government. The review adopts a broad view of access to justice, assessing the impacts of improved and expanded provision of justice services—both formal and informal—on economies, societies, and the social contract.

## Research questions

The review aims to answer the following research questions posed by the Open Government Partnership Support Unit:

- *What have been the effects of improving access to justice on economic development?*
- *Has improving access to justice benefited disadvantaged groups?*
- *Has improving access to justice increased citizen participation and trust in government institutions?*
- *Has improving access to justice helped prevent corruption and reduce impunity?*
- *Has improving access to justice helped a country save taxpayer money?*

If so,

- *How and by how much?*
- *In what countries?*
- *Are results generalizable?*

The researchers added two questions of their own, based on input from the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies:

- *Has improving access to justice impacted levels of conflict and violence?*
- *Has improving access to justice impacted health and personal relationships?*

For the purposes of this report, the above topics were grouped under four headings. Part one of the report looks at the economic impacts of access to justice on individuals, businesses, and national economies. Part two considers the social impacts of access to justice in terms of its effects on health, personal relationships, and levels of violence and conflict. Part three shows how access to justice can strengthen or weaken the social contract between states and citizens. Part four assesses whether improving access to justice helps countries save taxpayers' money.

## Methodology

The review considers empirical studies on the impact of access to justice that were published between January 2017 and October 2021. It encompasses peer-reviewed literature published in academic journals as well as grey literature produced by governments and leading civil society and international organisations working on justice. In a small number of cases, the researchers also considered unpublished studies, such as doctoral theses, that have strong potential for achieving publication. The researchers do not include opinion or comment pieces or theoretical studies, or articles published only in the media. The focus is on English-language publications, but researchers also searched Google Scholar and the Google search engine for publications on access to justice in Spanish and French.

The researchers used six strategies to find evidence on the impact of access to justice. First, the researchers searched Google Scholar for academic literature answering the research questions listed above.<sup>4</sup> To ensure that the researchers captured the broader definition of access to justice, the researchers also searched for key phrases like “legal empowerment,” as well as common justice problems such as evictions, inheritance, and divorce. Each of these searches returned between 1,000 and 20,000 results for the period from January 2017 until October 2021. Sorting these titles by relevance, it was found that after the first 100 results (and usually after the first 20 or 30 results), empirical studies were rare. The researchers therefore studied the titles and Google Scholar summaries of the first 100 publications under each research question to select a longlist of documents that merited more detailed scrutiny.

The second step was to use the Google search engine to ensure that any useful non-academic reports were considered.<sup>5</sup> Third, the researchers searched the websites of key global organisations working on justice, such as Namati, HiiL, World Justice Project, and OECD. Fourth, the researchers sought suggestions from members and contacts of OGP and Pathfinders who are experts in the access to justice field. Fifth, and particularly for questions where information was scarce, the researchers conducted an iterative search of relevant documents referred to in publications found in the previous four stages. Finally, the researchers carried out Google Scholar and Google search engine searches for publications on access to justice in Spanish and French produced in the period under review.

After examining the abstracts of all longlisted papers, publications that were clearly not empirical or not about the impacts of access to justice were discarded (for example, those that considered the impact of corruption on access to justice but not vice versa, or those that were purely theoretical). The remainder were selected for detailed review.

After reading each publication fully and filtering for quality and relevance, a total of 116 publications were selected to serve as the basis for this narrative report. The report does not discuss each of the 116 publications, but draws on a selection of those that are most pertinent to the research questions. The researchers aim to provide a representative overview of research and data and to present a diversity of methodologies and perspectives on the impacts of access to justice.

## *The State of the Evidence*

In the past five years, hundreds of studies have been conducted worldwide on the impacts of access to justice and its absence. These studies covered economic and social impacts as well as the effects of access to justice on the social contract between states and citizens. They range from large-scale global studies (e.g., World Justice Project’s annual General Population Poll, OECD’s business analysis for access to justice) to national surveys conducted by HiiL, and local studies in a variety of settings. As well as the 116 empirical studies considered in this review, there are many more publications that discuss the theoretical impacts of access to justice and many others that discuss how to increase access to justice.

Regarding the economic impact of access to justice, there is a strong body of study on its impact on individuals, but evidence on its impact on businesses is more piecemeal. Data on the economic impacts beyond the direct costs for individuals and businesses are thin; it is possible that insufficient high-quality justice services discourages people from creating or expanding businesses, employing workers, or entering into contracts, but these effects are considered in only a small number of recent studies.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, a large number of micro-level studies have shown that interventions to improve both the quantity and quality of justice services have strong positive economic impacts on individuals and businesses.

With regard to the social impact of access to justice, there is considerable data showing how a lack of access can harm individuals' physical and mental health and increase violence in communities and against women. The effect on the health or education of children, however, has received less consideration. There is little recent data on the impact of inadequate access to justice on violence at a society-wide scale, although case studies show how interventions using justice provision to prevent violence and conflict can have a substantial peacebuilding effect.

Many recent studies highlight the positive social impacts of legal empowerment activities and legal aid on the most marginalised sections of society, which are often hardest hit by injustice and most at risk of abandoning the social contract with the state. Since many of these studies use a case study approach, it is not always clear if the interventions are transferable to different contexts. There is an opportunity for more independent, macro-level studies of such assistance to be conducted and for greater use of longitudinal data to strengthen the evidence.

Much of the literature on access to justice focuses on formal justice systems, covering both national and local levels. Informal justice services by community institutions, respected community individuals, civil society organisations, and others have received less attention. Most justice problems are resolved not in courts or by police but informally between individuals or with the assistance of mediators. Such informal approaches are often preferred to formal systems.<sup>7</sup> Greater research into how informal mechanisms work, their impact on individuals' quality of life, and the reasons why some problems prove too serious for them to adjudicate can provide a more comprehensive picture of the justice ecosystem and highlight promising areas for increased assistance and investment.

Research on the direct impacts of access to justice includes quantitative and qualitative surveys as well as mixed-method approaches. Many studies that assess interventions to improve access to justice are observational; while their findings generally include robust numbers, the absence of control groups make it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the discrete effects of an intervention. Randomised controlled trials, the gold standard of impact research, are scarce in the justice field, perhaps because of their cost or the ethical implications of having a control group that does not benefit from the intervention. An increase in comparing informal and formal justice provision or in examining the impacts of legal aid, legal empowerment, specialised courts, or new technologies would give policy-makers a more robust evidence base on which to allocate resources. Researchers could also make more use of "natural experiments" such as the recent cuts to legal aid in countries such as France and the United Kingdom as well as policy decisions

made during the COVID-19 pandemic. More detailed analysis of the impact on individuals and businesses of these cutbacks—which are seldom evidence-based themselves—can strengthen the case of those advocating for greater access to justice.

Thematically, the most commonly researched impacts of access to justice are gender-based violence, housing, family disputes, criminal law, and land disputes. Consumer, labour, and immigration issues have received much less attention, as have administrative justice and transitional justice.

Geographically, access-to-justice research in the past five years has covered countries in all world regions at both national and local levels. Lower-income regions are more strongly represented with regard to research on legal empowerment and community-based justice than with regard to formal justice services. In higher-income regions, this pattern is reversed. It is unclear, therefore, whether interventions that have proved effective in wealthier regions are transferable to less affluent settings, and vice versa. As a World Bank review noted, moreover, countries with autocratic regimes are under-represented in these research studies; therefore, it is unproven whether interventions that are effective in democracies can successfully transfer to autocracies.<sup>8</sup>

## One: The Economic Impacts of Access to Justice

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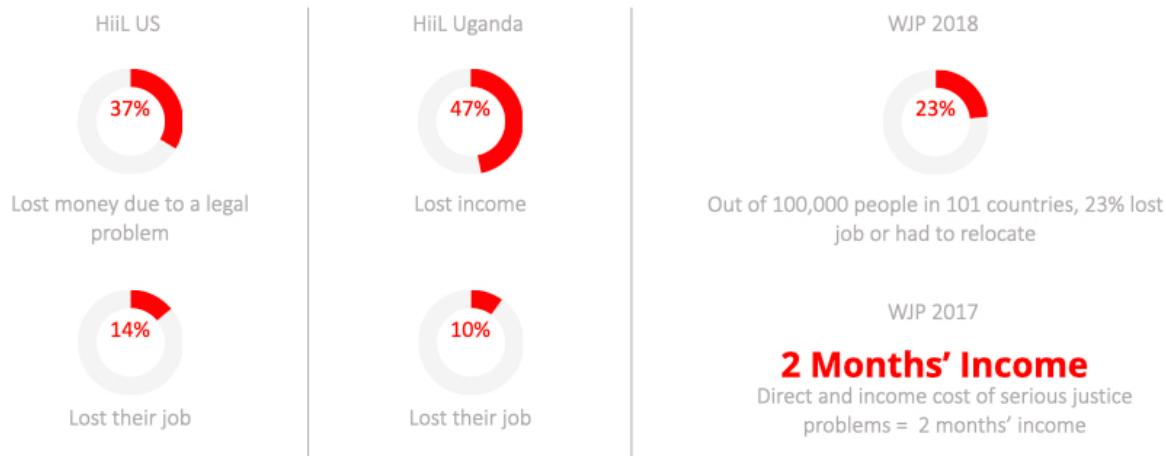


A lack of access to justice can economically impact individuals, businesses, government finances, and ultimately entire economies. A number of recent studies have attempted to calculate the economic effects of weak or absent access to justice. Others have assessed the economic benefits of interventions that strengthen access. While the data showing impacts on individuals from insufficient access to justice is robust, the impacts on businesses and on disadvantaged groups have been less extensively studied. Interventions to improve the quantity and quality of justice services appear to have large economic benefits.

## *Impacts on Individuals and Businesses*

### Economic Impacts

#### Effects on individuals:



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ECONOMIC IMPACTS

THE BENEFITS OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

Studies in both high- and low-income countries demonstrate how justice problems and the failure to resolve them can negatively impact individuals' finances.

A 2020 online panel survey by HiiL of a representative sample of 10,058 people in the United States found that justice problems imposed significant costs. Individuals who had experienced justice problems related to land or family issues in the previous four years estimated that they had spent over \$6,000 to resolve them. Problems with the police had cost more than \$3,000 to resolve, while justice problems related to immigration, money, domestic violence and abuse, housing, personal injury, or property damage had cost at least \$1,750 to resolve. Of the respondents who had experienced legal problems, 37% reported losing money as a consequence, 33% reported negative effects on their financial wellbeing, and 14% lost their jobs.<sup>9</sup>

A 2019 HiiL survey of 6,129 randomly selected people in Uganda, a low-income country, found that 47% of respondents who had experienced one or more legal problems suffered a loss of income as a result, while one in ten lost their job. Of those whose legal problems related to obtaining identity documents or dealing with the police, one in five reported that they had lost their job as a consequence.<sup>10</sup>

In the World Justice Project's 2018 General Population Poll (GPP) of approximately 1,000 people in each of 101 countries, 43% of respondents who experienced justice problems said that their lives were adversely impacted. With regard to economic impacts, 23% lost their job or had to relocate as a result of the problem.<sup>11</sup> Extrapolations from 2017 GPP data show that for those reporting a serious impact - such as illness, housing, or drug- or alcohol-related illness - from a justice problem and difficulty in paying to resolve it, the direct costs of dealing with the problem amounted on average to one month of income. The costs related to the problem's impacts on employment or income amounted to a further month of income.<sup>12</sup>

Since the 2008 financial crisis, countries including the United Kingdom have reduced funding for justice. The UK Ministry of Justice's budget was cut by more than 25% between 2010 and 2019,<sup>13</sup> while funding for legal aid was reduced by 35%.<sup>14</sup> A number of studies examined the impact of these cuts, although the full research potential of what is effectively a natural experiment has yet to be realised. In the UK county of Suffolk, two of three regional courts were closed in the wake of budget cuts; a qualitative survey of key stakeholders, combined with analysis of court data, found that individuals living farther away from the remaining court experienced "far greater" costs in terms of time than before the closures. This increase was exacerbated by the average number of days from charge to first listing rising from 34 to 42 days.<sup>15</sup> In a 2018 qualitative survey of 100 people in Liverpool, many participants reported "significant financial deprivation as a result of trying but not being able to resolve their legal issues. Some were unable to afford food, adequate housing or other essentials." Moreover, having to pay for legal advice in areas such as family law, employment, or welfare benefits forced many participants into debt.<sup>16</sup>

Even where justice institutions exist, expensive services can be a significant barrier to accessing justice. A UK study examined the impact of legal costs on individuals defending criminal proceedings whose income was slightly too high for them to qualify for legal aid. The study found that in many cases, and particularly for those at the lower end of the income scale, legal expenses reduced households' available monthly income to such an extent that they fell below the UK's Minimum Income Standard. "The means testing of legal aid," the study author concludes, "is set at a level that can require people on low incomes to make contributions to legal costs that they could not afford while maintaining a socially acceptable standard of living."<sup>17</sup>

Two studies in India are among a small number of empirical investigations that highlight the negative business impact from weak access to justice. Amirapu's analysis of the varying speeds at which Indian state courts process cases concludes that more efficient courts have a strong, positive effect on firms' growth.<sup>18</sup> Boehm and Oberfield's study of contract enforcement uses factory-level data to show that the aggregate productivity of manufacturing sectors would be boosted by an average of 5% if court congestion were reduced to the level of the least congested

state. For the states with the slowest courts, the productivity of manufacturing sectors would increase by 10%. Improving court efficiency, the authors conclude, would increase welfare; “reducing the average age of pending cases by a year would, on average, increase a state’s aggregate productivity by about three per cent.”<sup>19</sup>

Reducing access to justice can harm businesses and individuals. The French government’s 2008 decision to cut the number of labour courts by one-quarter meant that workers and employers often had to travel longer distances to litigate employment-related disputes. An evaluation of the effects of this reform found that between 2007 and 2012, those cities which were now farther from labour courts experienced a job creation rate that was four percentage points lower than unaffected cities. The firm creation rate was six percentage points lower. “These results,” the study authors argue, “emphasize the central role of labor courts for the good functioning of the labor market.”<sup>20</sup>

### *Exacerbating Disadvantage*

Members of society who are already disadvantaged face the highest barriers to accessing justice, and they are often hardest hit by its absence.<sup>21</sup>

Evidence on whether individuals with lower incomes experience more justice problems than wealthier people is mixed. WJP data suggest that in most countries, low-income groups experience a slightly higher prevalence of justiciable problems. In Canada and the United States, on the other hand, the number of problems per respondent reporting a problem is higher among those with high incomes (perhaps because those with low incomes do not always recognize problems such as debt or rental disputes as “legal” in nature). In nearly all countries, however, low-income groups experience significantly more serious justice problems. Those who are unemployed or living on public benefits face both a higher number of, and more serious, justice problems than others.<sup>22</sup>

Analysis of data from the Legal Australia-Wide Survey of more than 20,000 Australians—the largest legal-needs survey in the world—found that disadvantaged groups including indigenous people, single parents, homeless people, those receiving government benefits, unemployed people, and those with disabilities were between twice and four times as likely as the general population to have experienced problems related to fines in the preceding 12 months. Disadvantaged individuals were also significantly more likely to report that the impact of these problems was substantial. Impacts including loss of income, financial strain, and worsened physical and mental health increased with the level of disadvantage.<sup>23</sup>

Ethnicity can also exacerbate negative impacts of insufficient access to justice. One study examined more than 16,000 court records in New Orleans, United States of America, in 2015. It found that black people, who are 59% of the city, paid 84% of the total bail bond premiums and related government fees. They paid 69% of conviction fines and associated fees imposed by judges. Among black people who could not pay fines, 43% were arrested; only 29% of comparative white people were arrested. More than two-thirds of 52 respondents who were

subjected to bail, fines, and fees reported that the costs had had a “major impact” on their families’ financial stability.<sup>24</sup>

As well as being impacted by justice problems, disadvantaged people are less able to resolve them. The Australian study found that disadvantaged people were more likely than the general population to lack the financial and legal capability to resolve their fine-related problems.<sup>25</sup> The HiiL legal needs study in the United States found that while 52% of wealthier households (incomes of \$100,000 or more per year) successfully resolved their justice problems, this proportion fell to 44% among households with an income below \$25,000 per year.<sup>26</sup>

### *Impacts on Economies*

The effects of insufficient access to justice on individuals and businesses translate into significant negative impacts on city, state, and national economies.

In the New Orleans study, data for 16,000 cases regarding fines found the city spent more detaining individuals for unpaid court costs than it collected from the fines and fees. Researchers compared the revenue from fines, bail, bond, or other court fees to the cost of jailing people who didn’t pay these fees. In 2015, the city spent \$1.9 million more on detaining these people than it collected from paid fines and fees.. This figure did not account for monitoring and enforcement of these fees.<sup>27</sup>

An OECD study of 44 countries based on legal-needs data from the World Justice Project found that the costs of legal problems have serious impacts on national economies. Accounting for the reported impacts of such problems on respondents’ health, income, employment, and direct expenditures , the study found that in 39 of the countries, the annual cost of legal problems equates to at least 0.5% of GDP. In 29 of the countries, the costs amount to at least 1% of GDP, while in nine—including high-income Greece and Portugal as well as low-income Ethiopia, Malawi, and Nepal—they exceed 2% of GDP.<sup>28</sup>

## Economic Benefits of Access to Justice Interventions

Increasing the quantity of access to justice

**83 Countries**

1970-2014

Increase density of judges by 1%, boost GDP/capita by 0.17pp/year



Kenya

Free lawyers for farmers increased production by 42% and investment by 21%



Australia

Legal assistance to disadvantaged facing fines => same outcomes as general population



USA

Civil legal services for low-income women victims of IPV: 19.5% increase in monthly income

While the negative economic impacts of inadequate access to justice can be significant, efforts to increase the quantity and quality of justice provision can pay substantial dividends. The Task Force on Justice, in its 2019 Justice for All report, made the case for a shift toward people-centred justice. “A people-centered approach to justice starts with an understanding of people’s justice needs and designs solutions to respond to them. It is delivered by a justice system that is open, transparent and inclusive, and that works in collaboration with other sectors such as health, education, housing and employment.”<sup>29</sup> Recent studies show how people-centred approaches can yield economic benefits for individuals and for businesses.

Increasing the quantity of justice services can have large impacts. One analysis of longitudinal data focused on the number of judges per capita in 83 countries between 1970 and 2014. Its authors argued that increasing the density of judges leads to more cases being resolved and reduces the financial and time cost of accessing justice; this measure of access to justice is strongly correlated with the access to civil justice score in the World Justice Project’s Rule of Law Index and lends weight to their argument. The study, which takes no account of non-court approaches to justice, concluded that increasing the density of judges by 1% boosts per capita GDP by 0.17 percentage points per year. The strongest impacts were found in countries with weak justice provision.<sup>30</sup>

At a more local level, a randomised experiment provided a free lawyer for two years to Kenyan farmers working in areas with a high prevalence of land disputes and limited access to formal

justice institutions. During the study period, 85% of the 191 farmers in the treatment group had at least one meeting with a lawyer. In the control group of 147 farmers, only 14% had such a meeting. The authors found that because of the increased predictability of the economic environment, farmers in receipt of legal assistance increased their production by 42% and their investment by 21% compared with those who received no assistance. The authors cautioned, however, that to avoid flooding courts with new cases, large-scale provision of free legal assistance should be complemented with efforts to increase court efficiency.<sup>31</sup>

Increasing the provision can have particularly large economic benefits for disadvantaged individuals and communities. In the Australian study, it was found that when disadvantaged people received assistance to resolve their fines (e.g., from not-for-profits) their outcomes became similar to those of the general population.<sup>32</sup> In the United Kingdom, a qualitative study of asylum seekers—who gain economic as well as social benefits from being granted asylum<sup>33</sup>—found that those who were represented by lawyers at appeal hearings were significantly more likely to succeed in their appeals.<sup>34</sup> In the United States, government data from more than 18,000 immigration court cases showed that those who were represented were more than 30 percentage points more likely to be successful in avoiding deportation than those without representation.<sup>35</sup>

One of the largest access to justice studies conducted in recent years assessed the impact of the Shriver project in California. The project provided legal representation to low-income individuals to assist with civil justice problems. The ten pilot projects carried out between 2015 and 2019 covered housing cases, child custody cases, guardianship, and conservatorship matters. More than 20,000 individuals received full legal representation, while a further 23,000 received assistance with some aspects of their case. The mixed-method evaluation of the project included data from court files, legal service case records, and qualitative interviews with clients, courts, and other stakeholders. It found that the median saving for clients represented by Shriver attorneys who helped them negotiate reductions in debts and other fees to landlords was \$1,957. Assistance provided by Shriver attorneys and probate facilitators also resulted in fewer hearings and quicker processing times, and it reduced average courts costs by almost 30%.<sup>36</sup>

Increased access to justice can have large economic benefits for women. A 2020 intercountry assessment found that after controlling for reverse causality and other variables, countries where women had more access to justice also had higher female labour force participation.<sup>37</sup> A two-year panel study in the US studied 383 low-income women who had experienced intimate-partner violence. It found that access to legal services in the form of civil protective orders or family law services increased women's monthly income by 19.5% and significantly reduced their use of food bank and utility assistance, compared to when they didn't have such services.<sup>38</sup> On the other hand, a randomised controlled trial of a community-based legal aid program for women in Tanzania found that although women in the treatment group increased their legal knowledge and made more use of legal services, these improvements did not translate into more favourable land practices for women.<sup>39</sup>

# Economic Benefits of Access to Justice Interventions

Improving the quality of access to justice



USA

Online negotiation and payment platform => ~21% reductions in defaults on fine and fee payments + increased court efficiency



Nepal

Land protection legal empowerment program led to increased dispute resolution, reduced unpaid labor, improved economic status for women vs men



USA

Expungement of criminal conviction records => large upturns in employment rates and wages among ex-offenders

As well as increasing the quantity of justice provision, improvements in quality are also needed if access to justice is to be deepened. Innovative technologies, for example, can be used to improve court efficiency. A 2017 study assessed the introduction of the Matterhorn online platform, which allows online negotiation with judges, prosecutors, law enforcement officials, and third parties as well as online payment of fines and fees, in more than 50,000 cases in eight Michigan state courts in the US. Compared with cases that did not involve the platform, litigants who used the technology but still faced sanctions were on average 19% less likely to default on payments. Those who used the technology and were granted relief from additional penalties were 23% less likely to default on the original fines. Introducing the technology, "dramatically reduces the amount of time it takes for citizens to resolve their disputes and satisfy any fines or fees they owe....From the perspective of state courts, disputes end more quickly, the percentage of payments received increases, and it takes less time for courts to receive those payments."<sup>40</sup>

For disadvantaged individuals and communities, improving the quality of access to justice often begins with legal empowerment. Legal empowerment is different to formal justice processes in that it is a bottom-up approach that does not rely solely on state justice institutions to achieve justice. Its practitioners include community paralegals, community mediators, citizens advice services, justice advocates, and other grassroots groups. They help people and communities understand, use, and shape the law. Legal empowerment strengthens knowledge of legal problems and how to resolve them, provides financial, social, and psychological support for handling legal problems, and addresses the root causes of the legal problems experienced by disadvantaged groups.<sup>41</sup>

Legal empowerment practitioners frequently suffer from a lack of resources and a lack of security, but recent studies highlight their potential to use justice to economically advance low-income and marginalised communities. Namati conducted a qualitative study of a pilot land protection program in Nepal that involved community-based paralegals, community elders, and Community Land Reform Committees in drafting new bylaws, mapping, and planning land use, valuing land, and mediating conflicts over land. While the study was informal and small in scale, the midterm impacts of the project were concrete. The conflict mediation component resolved four out of six longstanding land disputes in communities. The new bylaws led to reported reductions in the amount of forced unpaid labour by sharecroppers and in the use of pesticides for fishing. They also led to enhanced protection of forest resources and to an increase in the number of married couples who applied for joint land ownership certificates. Improvements were also reported in women's economic status, with women more likely to be paid the same wage as men for the same work than in the period prior to implementation of the program.<sup>42</sup>

A further study involving land protection efforts by Namati and other legal empowerment organisations had more mixed results. Follow-up interviews were held with community mobilizers who had implemented a six-year land protection project in more than 100 communities in Mozambique, Liberia, and Uganda. In the period following implementation of the project, nearly half of the communities involved were approached by external actors seeking to acquire their land or natural resources, often on terms that were unfavorable to communities. Although they had received extensive training on a range of legal issues related to protecting their land rights, only 11 of the 28 communities who had been approached refused the request, sought help from public officials or NGOs, or attempted to negotiate for compensation or environmental protections. Of the remaining 17 communities, none signed a contract with the investor or received any written documentation related to handing over their land. These disappointing results "suggest that community land documentation and legal empowerment initiatives are, on their own, not sufficient to balance the significant power and information asymmetries inherent in interactions between rural communities and government officials, coming on their own behalf or accompanying potential investors."<sup>43</sup>

Two recent US studies show that supporting those who run afoul of the law greatly improves their economic prospects. Laws that allow the expungement or sealing from public view past criminal convictions help ex-offenders to reintegrate into societies and economies. A review of 30,000 individuals who had received conviction expungement in Michigan found that within a year of expungement, they experienced an increase in wages of more than 22% as they found employment or better-paying work.<sup>44</sup> Another US study, which retrospectively measured the effect of expungement on 264 criminal clients, found that expungement increased clients' employment rates by more than 5% over three years and their earnings by approximately one-third.<sup>45</sup>

## Two: The Social Impacts of Access to Justice

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### SOCIAL IMPACTS

Strong evidence showing the impact of a lack of access to justice on violence and health, weaker on the impact on violent conflict, interventions to improve A2J have large benefits

The social impacts of access to justice include reducing crime and violence and improving the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities. As with the economic impacts, studies assess both the social impacts of an absence of access to justice and the positive social effects from justice interventions. There is more evidence on insufficient access to justice impacting health and domestic violence than there is of its impact on violent conflicts. There is plentiful evidence to demonstrate how improving justice provision can reap social rewards.

#### *Impacts on Individuals and Businesses*

The importance of preventing justice problems was a key theme of the Task Force on Justice's Justice for All report. Prevention "reduces the number of people who suffer harm, and it allows scarce resources to be dedicated to responding to the most serious and intractable justice problems."<sup>46</sup>

The effect of evictions on crime and violence is an example of how not preventing justice problems leads to greater social problems farther down the line. Two recent studies in the US show how people who are evicted are more likely to commit crimes, including violent crimes. A study of longitudinal data on 3,515 mothers living in large cities revealed that evicted mothers are more than twice as likely to be booked by the police or charged with a crime (other than a minor traffic violation). The financial hardship caused by the eviction was found to be the main mediating factor between eviction and criminal involvement.<sup>47</sup> The findings of this study are

associations rather than conclusively proven causal effects. However, a multivariate analysis of crime, evictions, and census data in Philadelphia found that after controlling for neighbourhood characteristics and measures of economic disadvantage, neighbourhood eviction rates significantly impacted crime rates including homicide and robbery.<sup>48</sup>

The risk of eviction is increased when tenants lack legal representation. Analysis of municipal court data in Philadelphia in the US from 2007 to 2016 found that tenants with legal representation resolved their disputes without “disruptive displacement” in 95% of cases; for those without representation, only 22% of cases were resolved in this way.<sup>49</sup> In a Minnesota housing court in the United States, a comparison between the court records of 100 fully-represented clients in eviction cases and 274 randomly-selected individuals, 219 of whom received no representation and 29 only limited representation, found that the former won or settled their cases in 96% of instances, while those with no legal representation won or settled in only 62% of cases. Represented clients, moreover, were more than twice as likely to remain in their homes.<sup>50</sup>

The absence of legal representation can exacerbate the risk of further violence in the wake of domestic violence proceedings. An analysis of 2,954 intimate partner protective order hearings in Maryland courts (US) found that victims who had the assistance of a lawyer or legal advocate had their petition for a protective order denied in 21% of cases, compared with a denial rate of just 3% among victims represented by an advocate and 10% among those represented by a lawyer.<sup>51</sup>

### ***Impacts on Health and Personal Relationships***

Preventing injustice improves quality of life. A quantitative survey by HiiL of 6,129 adults in Uganda, complemented with qualitative interviews with users of justice services, demonstrated the effect of insufficient access to justice on people going through divorce or separation. It found that only 5% used family court to resolve their problems, with most resorting to informal third parties such as family members or friends to mediate the disputes. Only 34% of respondents with such problems were able to resolve them fully, while 32% could not resolve them at all. The consequences for the individuals involved were grave—71% of those who experienced a divorce or separation reported stress-related illnesses and 41% reported a loss of income.<sup>52</sup>

The health impacts of inadequate justice access can be substantial. The World Justice Project’s 2018 General Population Poll of 101 countries found that 29% of respondents experienced health problems as a result of their justice problems.<sup>53</sup> The above-mentioned HiiL survey of legal needs in the US found that among those with legal problems, 39% reported that they had negative mental health impacts and 23% had negative physical health impacts.<sup>54</sup> In a survey of 100 mostly low-income clients of a health-justice partnership in London, 58% reported their mental health had been affected “to a great extent” by their justice problems and 57% reported similar impacts on their physical health.<sup>55</sup> A study of crime on older people in Northern Ireland found that increasing age is associated with increased trauma in the wake of a crime against the person or the home. Older people, moreover, were found to be significantly less likely than those in younger age categories to achieve a successful police outcome when they were victims of crime.<sup>56</sup>

Eviction can have negative effects on health. The US “National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health” comprised survey data from more than 11,000 individuals aged 18 and 34 years. It found that eviction significantly impacted general and mental health, with some impacts lasting seven years. The authors surmised that policies to reduce eviction rates during the COVID-19 pandemic “may have a positive impact on population health, making health professionals effective potential policymaking partners.”<sup>57</sup>

## *The Benefits of Interventions*

### Social Benefits of Access to Justice Interventions

#### Violence and conflict



Guatemala



Nicaragua



Peru



Bangladesh

CICIG prosecution of organized criminals found to have prevented 18,000 murders

Mediation and legal information by paralegal Facilitadores Judiciales significantly reduced reported communal problems

Opening of Women’s Justice Centers => 10% decline in GBV, improved school attendance

Come to Work legal empowerment program => reduced violence + increased women’s agency

Efforts to limit the negative social impacts of a lack of access to justice have aimed to reduce violence, prevent evictions, and improve health.

Programs that have used justice interventions to reduce conflict and violence have had mixed results. An example of success is the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), established in 2006 to investigate and prosecute those involved in organised crime and corruption.<sup>58</sup> The commission, which was established by the government of Guatemala in collaboration with the United Nations, drew on input from international investigators and Guatemalan prosecutors and police. It worked to reform the judicial system to facilitate prosecution of criminal networks and reduce impunity. A review compared Guatemala against a weighted combination of 11 similar Latin American countries to assess the role CICIG played in the sharp decline in the country’s homicide rates between 2008 and 2016. A counterfactual analysis found that the homicide rate would have doubled in the absence of the commission and that the latter’s work helped prevent at least 18,000 murders.<sup>59</sup>

Bringing justice services closer to the people who need them appears to help reduce conflict. A study in Nicaragua used pre- and post-intervention community surveys to measure the impact in urban areas of a paralegal program named Facilitadores Judiciales. It found significant impacts on conflict reduction. The program's unpaid facilitators are elected by their communities and trained by local judges in problem-solving skills. They provide communities with legal information and education, attempt to mediate quick solutions to disputes, and refer those cases that cannot be immediately resolved to legal aid bureaus, courts, and other state institutions, often accompanying individuals through these processes. A multivariate analysis of the survey data found significant reductions in reported communal problems in a treatment group when compared with a control group. No significant improvements were found, however, in the perceived legal empowerment of survey respondents, and the presence of facilitators made no significant impact on the reported cost of obtaining justice.<sup>60</sup>

Many legal empowerment interventions worldwide have attempted to bring justice services closer to women experiencing violence. A small-scale case study combined qualitative and quantitative research of the impacts of Come to Work, a Bangladeshi NGO that provides legal aid, legal rights awareness training, and human rights education in low-income rural areas. The study found that among 100 service recipients who responded to a survey, 89% believed Come to Work's activities had helped reduce violence and oppression in their communities and 58% now felt more confident about resisting oppression themselves.<sup>61</sup>

Women's justice centres (WJCs) have also proved effective in addressing violence. In Peru, for example, these centres are staffed mostly by women and provide women with police, medical, and legal services in a single location in an effort to reduce gender-based violence. A quasi-experimental study of their impact analysed police complaint data as well as data from health providers and district attorneys. It showed that after the opening of a WJC in a community, reporting of gender-based crimes increased by 40% and gender-based violence, femicides, and female deaths due to aggression declined by 10%. No change was detected in crimes that were not gender-based or in crimes against men. Children living in households near a centre, moreover, became significantly more likely to attend school and less likely to drop out.<sup>62</sup>

Women's police stations, on the other hand, which are staffed mainly by women and deal specifically with crimes against women, appear to have less impact on gender-based violence. In Brazil, panel data from 2,074 municipalities between 2004 and 2009 showed no strong association overall between the opening of a women's police station in a locality and the rate of femicides. However, among women aged 15–49 years living in metropolitan areas, the rate of femicides fell 17%.<sup>63</sup> In India, which by 2013 had 479 women's police stations, examination of nationwide crime data found that while the opening of a women's police station was associated with a 22% increase in reported crimes against women and a 15% increase in arrests for female kidnappings. However, there was no significant impact either on self-reported intimate-partner violence or on female-specific mortality measures such as dowry death rates.<sup>64</sup> A further Indian study of crime registrations in three states concluded that women's police stations merely reduced the burden on standard police stations, without impacting levels of violence.<sup>65</sup>

Two recent US studies show how justice sector interventions can be used to prevent evictions. In 2017, the New York City Council guaranteed free legal representation in housing courts to low-income individuals who were at risk of eviction. An examination of eviction outcomes comparing districts where the program had been rolled out with those where it had yet to be implemented found significantly larger increases in representation for those living in the former. While there was no significant impact on the proportion of tenants facing eviction, the eviction warrant execution rate in treatment areas declined 1.6% between 2015 and 2017, whereas in control areas it increased by 0.6%. The difference was statistically significant even after controlling for poverty, racial composition, and other demographic variables.<sup>66</sup>

A second study measured how the Tenant Advocacy Project (TAP) in Franklin County, Ohio affected eviction outcomes. The project's staff and volunteers run a daily clinic that provides legal advice, courtroom representation, and referrals in cases where TAP cannot resolve the case. Comparing randomised samples of tenants from before and after the launch of the project, the study found that in the first six months of operation, 54% of cases involving non-TAP tenants resulted in judgments in favour of the landlord, compared with just 1.1% of cases where tenants were assisted by TAP.<sup>67</sup>

Studies of justice interventions to reduce the stress on families have, like those related to violence and conflict, been conducted primarily in the United States. Many report promising results. A randomised controlled trial of a pro bono initiative in Philadelphia found that clients of the lawyers were significantly more likely to resolve their divorce cases than those in a control group. Within three years of randomising the two groups, 45.9% of the treatment group had completed their divorces while only 8.9% of the control group had completed their cases.<sup>68</sup> A quasi-experimental study of the New York City Family Court compared parents charged with child abuse or neglect who were provided with interdisciplinary services—social work staff, parent advocates, non-profit attorneys—with parents who only had a standard attorney. Although no significant impact was found of the interdisciplinary model on children's risk of maltreatment, there were significantly faster rates at which children in the treatment group found permanent care and guardianship.<sup>69</sup>

A number of studies show potentially beneficial impacts of justice interventions on health. In a study in Iowa (US) of 85 women who received legal aid or family law assistance in domestic violence matters, women in receipt of assistance reported decreases in depressive or post-traumatic stress symptoms over a one-year period. However, there was no control group of unassisted women against which to compare the impacts.<sup>70</sup>

Health-justice partnerships, which combine health and justice service provision in clinics, hospitals, or legal centres, have been extensively studied. For example, a health-justice partnership established in a health and wellbeing centre by the Access to Justice Center at University College, London served mostly low-income clients experiencing serious legal problems. Clients were surveyed before they received legal advice from the center as well as three and six months after their first interaction. Using health and wellbeing scales as well as qualitative interviews with clients, researchers found statistically significant improvements in physical health

scores and in the reduction of anxiety and depression, as well as non-statistically significant improvements in overall mental wellbeing scores. Again, however, there was no control group against which to compare impacts, and although qualitative interviews supported the quantitative findings, it may be that other factors played a part in the improvements.<sup>71</sup>

A systematic review of literature on health-justice partnerships in OECD countries in 2020 included studies published between 1995 and 2018. Most were published before the period considered in this review, but the findings on the effects of health-justice partnerships are nevertheless instructive. Positive impacts were recorded on mental wellbeing and on the quality of patient care as well as on users' financial and social circumstances. Results on healthcare utilisation and costs were more mixed, however, and there was no evidence to support an impact of the partnerships on health inequalities or on prevention of health problems. "The evidence," the authors conclude, "supports health-justice partnerships as a means of improving access to justice for vulnerable groups and alleviating health-harming legal needs. Some key service objectives require a stronger knowledge base, while others remain un-evidenced."<sup>72</sup>

## **Three: The Impacts of Access to Justice on the Social Contract**

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The Pathfinders for Peaceful Just and Inclusive Societies' third Justice in a Pandemic briefing focused on the impact of justice at a time when the social contract between states and citizens is strained by COVID-19. The brief argued:

*Justice sectors are at the forefront of responses to the crisis...If justice institutions aggravate rather than alleviate social tensions, the social contract—the agreement of people to consent to state authority and follow rules in return for security, public services, and the ability to “articulate their interests, exercise their rights and mediate their differences”—will come apart. Conversely, if justice actors are seen to be defenders of fairness and inclusiveness, they can help build trust and give societies the cohesion needed for peaceful and prosperous recoveries.<sup>73</sup>*

Recent protest movements such as the Arab Spring protests, the #EndSARS protests against police brutality in Nigeria, and the Black Lives Matter demonstrations across the world indicate breakdowns in the social contract that have resulted in large economic and other costs to societies and governments.<sup>74</sup> During the pandemic, many citizens' refusal to comply with lockdowns, wear masks, or present for vaccination is rooted in a lack of trust in governments, and has often had serious negative public health impacts.

Studies conducted in the past five years paint a clear picture of how a lack of access to justice can alienate people and communities from state institutions and increase the likelihood that they will reject the social contract. The focus of such research is on how police actions imperil the social contract. The impact of distrusting courts, lawyers, and informal justice providers has received less attention. Interventions to tackle corruption and impunity and to reach the most marginalised communities with justice services, meanwhile, have been shown to help strengthen the social contract.

### ***Impacts on Trust***

Corruption and perceptions of impunity and unfairness pose perhaps the most serious threats to the social contract. If justice providers are seen as corrupt or allowing the powerful to escape sanction for crimes, trust in both justice systems and other state institutions may weaken.

A qualitative study of Somali former refugees in Tanzania found that when justice actors operate with impunity, there can be long-term negative impacts on trusting public institutions. The refugees' previous experiences of abuse in Somalia including torture, enslavement, state-sponsored discrimination and exclusion, and alienation from the justice sector were found to have combined to reduce their trust in Tanzania's justice sector. The erosion of trust made the group "fearful of engagement with the justice sector and ultimately increase[ed] vulnerability and social marginalisation. The feedback loop may begin with a mistrust of justice sector institutions that originates from previous experiences of persecution."<sup>75</sup>

Five recent studies in a variety of settings show how police behaviour, who are on the frontlines of justice provision, can strengthen or weaken citizens' trust in government institutions:

- *Analysis of 52,458 respondents to the European Social Survey in 27 countries found that in settings where police officers are perceived to behave fairly, levels of trust in political institutions are higher.<sup>76</sup>*
- *Survey data from three Colombian cities found that people who had involuntary contact with the police were more likely to believe that the police were effective in controlling crime and to view police services favourably if their contact had been characterised by respect for their rights.<sup>77</sup>*
- *In a quantitative survey in Hungary, positive personal experiences with the police were not found to have a significant impact in terms of improving trust, however, negative experiences had significant detrimental effects on trust.<sup>78</sup>*
- *In the United States, data from two national surveys showed that African American respondents were significantly more likely than white respondents to attribute police killings of African Americans to systemic problems rather than to the actions of lone "bad apples." These findings, the study authors argue, "have implications for public trust in government institutions and the ability of police to operate effectively."<sup>79</sup>*
- *Another US study, using a geocoded census of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams, found that militarised police units are "more often deployed in communities with large shares of African American residents, even after controlling for local crime rates." Nationwide panel data finds no evidence that SWAT teams reduce local crime or enhance safety of police officers. Furthermore, when 1,566 individuals were shown images of militarised police in a city, there was a significant reduction in the proportion of respondents who desired more police patrols in their own communities.<sup>80</sup>*

The International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala demonstrates the positive impacts on trust—and therefore on the social contract—of reducing impunity and corruption. The commission's objective was to assist the Public Prosecutor's Office in addressing organised crime in the country. Between 2006 and 2019 (when it was disbanded), it assisted in the prosecution of more than 120 corruption and human rights cases.<sup>81</sup> In 2017, a nationally representative sample of 1,546 Guatemalans were asked about how they trusted key institutions. CICIG, who was mandated to tackle corruption and impunity, fared better than either the Constitutional Court or the Public Prosecutor's Office. While only 43% of respondents trusted the Constitutional Court and 54% the Public Prosecutor's Office, 71% trusted CICIG.<sup>82</sup>

### ***Impacts on Civic Participation***

When citizens are alienated from justice institutions, they become less likely to comply with their expectations and less likely to interact with them and other public institutions.

In the analysis of the European Social Survey discussed above, compliance and cooperation with rules were found to be more likely where police officers were perceived to behave fairly.<sup>83</sup>

In southeast China, a survey of 929 urban respondents found a significant association between police legitimacy (consisting of lawfulness, fairness, effectiveness, and the quality of police interactions with the community) and the obligation to obey police.<sup>84</sup> In Belgium, examination of data from the Social Capital and Well-being in Neighbourhoods survey in Ghent showed that people who trusted the police were more likely to feel obliged to obey them.<sup>85</sup>

In some instances, alienation from justice systems becomes so extreme that people break laws made by institutions that they no longer see as legitimate. A small-scale focus group study in Santiago, Chile and Medellín, Colombia found that the perceived unfair treatment by the justice system of historically disadvantaged groups drives them away from state institutions and toward “non-state strategies” for resolving conflicts. These strategies range from the peaceful and constructive (community meetings, personal reconciliation, and NGO mediators) to the violent, including vigilante justice or turning to criminal gangs to redress harms.<sup>86</sup>

A study using data from the Economic Morality and Justice modules of the European Social Survey, which polled 25,000 to 55,000 people in 25 European countries, also found that the quality of justice systems affects people’s likelihood of breaking the law. Three indicators of judicial quality—the independence of a country’s judiciary, the impartiality of courts, and protection of property rights—were found to significantly impact individuals’ propensity to offer bribes to officials, falsely claim government benefits, make false insurance claims, or knowingly buy stolen goods. The lower the quality of justice systems, the higher was the likelihood of breaking the law. People living in countries with low-quality justice systems were also more likely to believe dishonest and illicit behaviours were acceptable.<sup>87</sup>

Citizens who are alienated by justice institutions may also become reluctant to use them. In a survey of 140 members of the Roma minority community in Romania, most respondents reported that they did not know where to find information to resolve their legal problems and 72% did not know where to go for free legal advice. Perhaps as a consequence, 74% feel that Roma “rarely get what they want when they go to court,” and 72% are so alienated from the justice system that they believe it is not worth the effort of bringing a case to court.<sup>88</sup>

In the United Kingdom, a qualitative study sought the views of 94 individuals whose civil justice problems were no longer covered by legal aid, following government cuts to such support. Respondents reported that the withdrawal of assistance had increased the stress of pursuing a legal case, extended waiting times at advice agencies, increased journey times and costs, and made problems more difficult to resolve. They also remarked on the unfairness of the benefits system and of their treatment by the government; their sense of powerlessness made them feel they could not hold the state accountable.

Many participants, the study authors report:

*had given up during the welfare benefits process and accepted decisions that they believed to be incorrect.... Some people stated that they could not face the stress of going through an appeal and had decided against disputing the decision on their claim....Participants repeatedly reported a lack of, or bad, legal advice as an important determinant in the failure of welfare redistribution and subsequent impacts.<sup>89</sup>*

Two further UK studies of the impact of cuts to criminal legal aid found in interviews with defence solicitors and barristers that the cuts made it more difficult for lawyers to provide fair and effective service. The increased burden placed on criminal legal aid lawyers resulted in less fair treatment of victims and defendants and increased the risk both of miscarriages of justice and of abuse by justice actors such as police going unpunished.<sup>90</sup>

## *The Benefits of Interventions*

### **Social Contract Benefits of Access to Justice Interventions**

#### Tackling corruption and impunity



Pakistan



Cameroon



India



Tunisia

Peer instead of presidential appointment of judges significantly reduced rulings in favor of government

Legal empowerment approaches helped pastoralists resolve land disputes and combat land-grabbing

Legal empowerment to women using maternal health services increased agency and reduced corruption

Legal empowerment advocacy campaign led to reform of a law that gave impunity to those accused of financial crimes

Interventions that work to strengthen the social contract via improved access to justice aim to increase judicial independence and accountability, tackle corruption and impunity, and enhance the quality-of-service provision to disadvantaged groups.

Judicial independence and institutional accountability are important to stifling corruption. In Pakistan, a reform that changed the selection procedure for judges from appointment by the president to appointment by peer judges was found to have led to a significant reduction in court rulings in favour of the government. For every 10% increase in the number of peer-appointed judges, the number of wins for the state declined by two percentage points. This increase in impartiality appears to have improved the quality of judicial decisions. Analysis of judgement order valuations of expropriated property found that the appointment of judges by their peers prevented land expropriations whose value equated to 0.14% of GDP, or \$390 million, per year. This figure was equivalent to Pakistan's entire federal health care budget in 2016.<sup>91</sup>

In Brazil, municipalities have been randomly audited since an anti-corruption program was launched in 2003. A comparison of municipalities that were being audited for the first time and those that had been audited previously found that corruption levels (as indicated by the proportion of federal funds that were diverted) were 8% lower in the latter group than in the former. The disciplining effects of corruption exposure on municipal governments were found to explain most of the reduction in graft. Even municipalities whose neighbours had been audited were found to reduce their levels of corruption by 7.5%.<sup>92</sup>

Legal empowerment has also helped citizens tackle corruption. In Cameroon, pastoralist communities frequently have their land-use rights abrogated by corrupt officials. Case studies of initiatives to build communities' legal capacity and assist them to challenge injustices have shown how paralegals have helped empower pastoralists to resolve land conflicts more quickly and to use protests and litigation to combat land-grabbing. The pastoralists, "feel more able to challenge unjust and unfair treatment and the practices of corrupt and self-seeking authorities."<sup>93</sup> A case study of the work of SAHAYOG, an NGO based in Uttar Pradesh, India, assessed the impact of the organisation's work to educate women who use maternal health services about their rights to free care and how to lodge complaints when faced with demands for bribes. It found that the program increased resources and agency among program participants, increased their ability to demand their rights, and led to reduced corruption on the part of health service staff.<sup>94</sup>

Legal empowerment also impacts impunity. Advocacy by legal empowerment organisations in Tunisia helped weaken a draft law that would have granted amnesty to those accused of financial crimes. More than 20 civil society groups came together in a campaign of protests, public statements, lobbying of parliamentarians, and workshops to raise awareness of the problem and, eventually, to push the government to reform the law.<sup>95</sup> In Iran, a "People's Tribunal" inspired by a group of mothers whose children had been executed during the country's revolution in the 1970s and 1980s, was supported by qualified jurists whose fact-finding efforts and legal analysis lent credibility to their advocacy. The campaign pressured the Iranian regime to admit publicly that executions had taken place, which was seen by the mothers as a major victory, although the regime took no steps to redress the harm done.<sup>96</sup>

In some countries, governments have implemented effective measures to reduce impunity. The above-mentioned International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala used a holistic approach including legal and judicial reforms, capacity-building of local investigative authorities, and mobilisation of civil society to prosecute more than 160 corrupt public officials, including two former presidents. The impunity rate in the country was found to have fallen from 98% of cases in 2006 to 70% nine years later.<sup>97</sup>

A qualitative study involving 55 in-depth interviews and six focus group discussions among lawyers, local leaders, conflict mediators, and service beneficiaries examined the impact on impunity for gender-based crimes of Rwanda's Access to Justice Bureaus. The district-level bureaus provide free access to legal services to those in need, educate and mobilise communities to prevent and tackle problems such as gender-based violence, and enlist the support of multiple sectors including hospitals, NGOs, and the police to improve access to justice. The study of

their work found that the bureaus had helped to empower women to resist abusers and to improve the rate at which perpetrators of gender-based violence were held to account. Seeing perpetrators punished for their crimes, moreover, was perceived in a number of instances to have deterred other men from committing similar abuses.<sup>98</sup>

The social contract is often weakest for disadvantaged and marginalised communities. Efforts to enhance these groups' access to people-centred justice services can have transformative impacts on their perceptions of the state. For example, Roma communities in Romania, Serbia, and Macedonia were provided with the services of paralegals and assisted with advocacy campaigns to claim their right to health care and expose abuses by health care personnel. Subsequent interviews with Roma civil society organisations and other key stakeholders revealed that abuses including denial of care, requests for bribes, harassment, and confiscation of documents declined markedly in all three countries. Roma also now felt better able to access effective health care.<sup>99</sup>

A case study of legal empowerment approaches shows how community paralegals helped disadvantaged communities in Mozambique to obtain improved access to health care. The program, implemented by Namati, places health advocates in communities. The advocates provide health rights education, support government-run Village Health Committees in assessing health facilities and identify and assist individuals and communities to resolve grievances with the health care system. The study of the program reviewed data on 24 patient or community complaints about the health system and conducted in-depth interviews with those involved. All of the cases reviewed had been resolved, and those interviewed reported that health advocates had helped both to bolster health service administrative capacity and reduce the costs of providing health care. Clients reported feeling more empowered to access health services. Indicating that the program had helped to repair the social contract, the study authors reported that "the program also engendered incipient improvements in relations between clients and the health system."<sup>100</sup>

The Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) in the US provides legal assistance to low-income Alaskans for family law matters. A telephone survey of 71 individuals who had been assisted by the project and 41 who had received no services found that 48% of those who received assistance reported favourable outcomes, compared with 28% of those who received no assistance. The difference was wider when the groups were asked how negative their perceptions of the legal process were, with a 38% gap and those who received no assistance were much more negative. For this small sample of low-income individuals, it appears that being able to access people-centred justice services may be more important than the outcome of their cases to their perceptions of the legal process.<sup>101</sup>

The police, too, can benefit from people-centred justice approaches. In Denver (US), the police complaints process has been reformed to allow for mediation between civilians and law enforcement officers. This non-adversarial approach enables the disputing parties to discuss the reasons for the conflict and work toward a resolution. An evaluation of the program, involving analysis of complaints documentation and interviews with key stakeholders, found satisfaction rates above 70% among both police and complainants. The complaints workload had been

reduced as a result of the program and the speed of grievance resolution had accelerated. However, there was no comparison group against which to compare these findings.<sup>102</sup>

Community policing, an approach whereby police and communities collaborate to prevent and tackle crime, has been adopted in many settings in recent years. A 2017 literature review covered studies conducted prior to the period we are considering and many of them were reportedly “modest in scientific rigor;” however, it concluded that community policing interventions were associated with improved perceptions of the police among citizens and enhanced police legitimacy. On the other hand, four-fifths of these studies that assessed the impact of community policing on crime found no significant positive impact.<sup>103</sup>

Studies of community policing published during the period under our review also unearthed mixed results. An experimental study of community policing projects in more than 500 neighbourhoods in six Global South countries found in interviews with citizens and police that the projects had no significant impact on crime levels, perceptions of future insecurity, crime reporting rates, or relationships between citizens and the police.<sup>104</sup> A quasi-experimental study of a community policing program in Trinidad and Tobago found a significant improvement in perceived safety among a treatment group that had experienced the program compared to a control group that had not. However, no statistically significant reduction in fear was recorded.<sup>105</sup>

More positively, a randomised field experiment conducted in Connecticut (US) found that “a single instance of positive contact with a uniformed police officer can substantially improve public attitudes toward police, including legitimacy and willingness to cooperate. The experiment involved visits to homes by police who used strategies proven to nurture positive contact with citizens. Police officers also gave those they visited a business card and their cell phone number. Baseline and follow-up surveys of 1,852 households randomly assigned to either a treatment or control group found improvement among the treatment group in positive attitudes to and confidence in the police, as well as reductions in negative attitudes. The visits’ impact was measured only up to 21 days after the intervention, however. No significant impact was found on attitudes to other local government institutions.<sup>106</sup>

A legal empowerment program to increase the awareness of poor and vulnerable women in Lebanon of their rights to justice and how to claim them helped make women more trusting of the police. A quasi-experimental impact evaluation of the program, which was run by the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence against Women (LECORVAW), used a composite index for measuring its effect on women’s empowerment. The study found that women who had attended the awareness-raising sessions were significantly more likely than a comparison group of women who had attended NGO programs covering different topics to say that they would advise a friend with serious problems to seek support from the police, lawyers, and women’s organisations, although not from the courts.<sup>107</sup>

Legal empowerment of disadvantaged groups can increase accountability and bring people closer to institutions. A legal advocacy project to promote Roma health that was run by NGOs in Macedonia was evaluated via a qualitative assessment that included pre- and post-program

interviews. It increased participants' awareness of their health rights as well as the number and sophistication of lawsuits they brought when they experienced violations. This increase of complaints was a result of heightened confidence in the ability of institutions to protect them. NGO-reports suggest that the program led to reductions in abuses of Roma by healthcare personnel.<sup>108</sup>

In a similar vein, a case study of the advocacy work of four legal empowerment NGOs in Kenya and South Africa that assist marginalised groups to access services found that advocacy partnerships with communities had improved health care, water, and housing services. In 69 qualitative interviews with community members and stakeholders including the NGOs' staff, government representatives, and service providers, efforts to build collaborative relationships with service providers as well as more adversarial approaches were reported to have helped enhance service provision.<sup>109</sup>

A recent study examined how advocacy by legal empowerment practitioners can assist in repairing the social contract with disadvantaged groups fighting an environmental justice case in Thailand. Karen villagers in the upper Mekong region suffered environmental contamination and health damages from industrial pollution of their local stream, but they were brushed off by the Ministry of Public Health when they first alerted officials. They obtained justice only when they received the support of a group of NGOs that helped them prepare a case and take their evidence to court. The court ruled in their favour and ordered the state Pollution Control Department to clean up the stream and pay the villagers compensation for medical treatment and the disruption to their work. This was the first time a Thai court had ruled against a government agency under the country's Environment Protection Act.<sup>110</sup>

## Four: Comparing the Costs and Benefits of Improved Access to Justice

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There is robust evidence that improving access to justice can provide a high return on investment. As we have seen, allowing injustice to spread, and denying effective justice services to those most in need imposes substantial costs as well as other stresses on individuals, families, businesses, communities, and national economies. In this section, which attempts to answer the question of whether enhanced access to justice saves taxpayers money, we draw on and update a 2019 literature review prepared for the Task Force on Justice.<sup>111</sup>

### *Savings for Justice Systems*

Providing more people with better access to justice appears to be a sound investment for justice systems. Pro Bono Ontario offers pro bono legal assistance to unrepresented litigants in the province of Ontario, Canada. A study analysing the economic impacts of its work drew on court statistics, telephone interviews with judges and court officials, and observation of court proceedings to establish whether the program saved the province money. It found that in the financial year 2015–2016, the economic benefits from the program amounted to \$5.76 millions return of \$10 for every dollar invested. The authors found that the main beneficiary was the provincial government, which saved money via having fewer claims of dubious merit, increased court efficiency, and via the value of program lawyers' time leveraged from the private sector.<sup>112</sup>

# Costs and Benefits

## Savings for justice systems



Canada



Australia



USA

Pro bono assistance for unrepresented litigants increased court efficiency and saved Ontario provincial government \$10 for every \$1 invested

Employability program for Aboriginal prisoners significantly reduced recidivism and returned the economy \$2.70 for every \$1 invested due to reduced incarceration costs

Mental health and substance abuse programs for prisoners reduce recidivism. Savings of \$1.27/\$1 and \$5.27/\$1 respectively due to reduced incarceration costs

Tailoring services closely to people's needs can also result in cost-savings for prison systems. In Australia, the Fairbridge Bindjareb Project aims to reduce recidivism among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by enhancing their employability before release from prison. It provides training in skills needed by the local mining industry, a lifestyle development program, and help for those who are released to find employment. A review of the program found that only 18% of participants re-offended within two years of release while among the general population, the rate is 40%. Furthermore, almost three-quarters were still in employment seven months after the program concluded. The reviewers conservatively estimated that the program provided a return to the economy of \$2.70 for every \$1 spent, with the largest savings resulting from the reduced fiscal cost of incarceration.<sup>113</sup>

A review of prison programs in the US that address the mental health or substance abuse problems of prisoners calculated the reductions such programs had on the cost of crime. The authors estimated from a range of studies that mental health programs reduce recidivism rates by a median of 21% and substance abuse programs by a median of 17% (assessments that correspond with those of other reviews). They calculated that the crime prevention from the mental health treatments provided a return of \$1.27 for every taxpayer dollar spent on prison reform and long-run incarceration costs. They found that substance abuse programs, which are less expensive to administer, provide a return of \$5.27 for every dollar invested.<sup>114</sup>

## *Savings for Governments*

As well as reducing justice sector costs, programs to improve access to justice can also have benefits in terms of wider government expenditure.

The costs to countries of violence and conflict are well established. Violent conflict has been estimated to cost 12.4% of annual global GDP,<sup>115</sup> while high rates of non-conflict violence also take an enormous economic toll.<sup>116</sup> Calculations from the United Nations' and World Bank's Pathways for Peace report estimated that under a conservative scenario, countries that increase delivery of core justice functions and expand access to justice can gain a return of \$16 for every \$1 invested by reducing the prevalence of violent conflict.<sup>117</sup>

Legal aid has been under threat in many countries as they grapple with the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic; yet it appears to have significant impacts on saving governments money. A 2019 literature review by the World Bank of 53 cost-benefit studies of legal aid services around the world mostly covered studies completed before our review period. The studies assessed the impacts of general legal aid programs as well as programs in specific fields such as domestic violence, eviction, and business foreclosures. The reviewers examined savings to governments in terms of cost savings to justice systems and reduced costs to public welfare programs. They concluded that, "the main findings of these CBAs suggest that the economic benefits of legal aid investment outweigh the costs, and that support for legal aid programs can bring significant budgetary savings to the government and economic savings to the society."<sup>118</sup>

A review commissioned by the Law Society of Scotland in 2017 calculated the social return on investment of legal aid for criminal, housing, and family law. The aid encompassed advice and assistance with legal matters, including representation during court proceedings. The review used analysis of legal aid data, surveys of solicitors, an outcomes-mapping workshop with solicitors and civil society organisations, and a literature and data review. It considered the benefits of legal aid on avoiding custodial sentences and eviction, improved mental health and employment prospects during a case, and the educational benefits to children of avoiding temporary living accommodations.

In each of the three areas of legal aid, there were significant cost savings for the government:

- *Every £1 spent on legal aid in housing cases yields a return of £11. One-fifth of this accrues to the public purse, due to reduced homelessness leading to lower demand for health and social services.*
- *Of the £5 estimated return for every £1 spent on legal aid in family cases, 5% accrues to the justice system since it has to deal with fewer cases.*
- *Of the £5 estimated return for legal aid in criminal cases, 10% accrues to public services, mainly through reduced numbers of prison sentences.*<sup>119</sup>

Also in the United Kingdom, the Citizens Advice Service provides free assistance with justice problems to millions of people in England and Wales every year. The organisation is funded by national and local governments, and a 2017 review of its work concluded that it generated government savings of \$2.40 for every \$1 invested. The wider social and economic benefits were estimated to be \$14.50 for every \$1 spent.<sup>120</sup>

Assistance to help reduce the amount of time those accused of crimes spend in custody can deliver significant cost savings to governments. In New York (US), a quasi-experimental evaluation found large public savings from “holistic defence services,” in which public defenders work on interdisciplinary teams to consider the multiple problems faced by defendants beyond the courtroom. Over a ten-year period, holistic representation averted almost 1.1 million days of custodial sentencing, with those clients 16% less likely to receive a custodial sentence than those represented only by criminal defence attorneys. The resultant reduction in the cost of housing inmates saved state and local taxpayers \$165 million, without taking account of any other impacts. The authors posit that a criminal defence that incorporates the views of family, immigration, and civil defence attorneys, as well as social workers and advocates, may help persuade prosecutors and judges of mitigating circumstances that are missed in typical defences.<sup>121</sup>

In San Francisco (US), a program to provide pretrial legal representation to low-income people who had been arrested also demonstrated substantial impacts. An evaluation of the program found that arrestees who benefited from the program were twice as likely to be released at arraignment as other arrestees. The average length of pretrial incarceration was reduced by 9.5 days (44%). By reducing the total number of days of incarceration by 11,200 per year, the program was estimated to have saved the city approximately \$335,000 annually.<sup>122</sup>

Finally, a cost-benefit analysis of legal representation for low-income tenants facing eviction in Philadelphia in the US found a benefit to the city of \$12.74 for every \$1 invested due to the savings generated by averted evictions. The benefits to government included reduced costs of providing shelter and emergency housing, reduced hospital and mental health costs, and a reduced burden on the court system.<sup>123</sup>

# Conclusion

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# CONCLUSION

## *How this Evidence Supports the Case for Open Government Reforms*

The studies discussed in this review provide strong evidence both of how a lack of access to justice can hurt economies, societies, and the relationship between states and citizens and of how interventions to improve access to justice can help rectify these harms.

Without accessible, efficient, and responsive justice services that are designed to respond to people's needs, economies fail to live up to their potential. Financial resources and time that could be invested in productive activities are squandered on pursuing legal cases; contracts are not made or trusted; poverty and debt increase. Reforming justice provision to make justice services both more effective and more widely available reduces costs to individuals and businesses; encourages enterprise; prevents people from falling into vicious spirals of poverty, debt, and ill health; and helps those who have fallen afoul of the law to get back on their feet and make a positive economic contribution.

People-centred justice services also trigger improved social outcomes. The studies we have considered show how access to justice can reduce violence in the home and in the community, prevent evictions that cause an array of negative social impacts, and improve physical and mental health. Where justice is absent, on the other hand, individuals, families, and communities can descend into criminality and conflict, with long-term impacts on their health.

Improved access to justice is vital for strengthening social contracts that have frayed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Heavy-handed enforcement of virus prevention measures has increased marginalised communities' distrust of justice actors such as the police.<sup>124</sup> Waning trust in justice institutions makes it more likely that people will break laws and less likely that they will turn to formal or peaceful channels to help resolve their problems. A number of the studies discussed in this review show how interventions by governments and legal empowerment organisations to reduce corruption and prevent impunity can help restore trust in institutions. Advocacy by legal empowerment practitioners, meanwhile, has helped marginalised communities redress grievances and claim their rights, which in turn has helped heal their relationship with the state.

Interventions to enhance access to justice have achieved a notably high return on investment. Justice has such a broad range of benefits that the rewards of expanding access to it go far beyond reductions in lawbreaking. Those making the case for increased and smarter expenditure by governments can draw on a strong evidence base that shows how relatively small investments can pay dividends with regard to business performance, poverty rates, physical and mental health, social cohesion, prevention of violence and conflict, and environmental protection. Calculations made by ODI for the Task Force on Justice suggest that the annual cost of providing each person with access to basic justice services ranges from \$20 per person in low-income countries to \$190 in high-income countries.<sup>125</sup> For comparison, the cost of universal primary and secondary education in low-income countries is \$41 per person per year and the annual cost of universal healthcare is \$76 per person.<sup>126</sup>

### *How this Evidence Supports the Case for Open Government Reforms*

Among the most promising avenues for further investigation is the impact of informal justice mechanisms. Many people with justice problems never have contact with the police, lawyers, or courts—their problems are addressed instead by community leaders, paralegals, debt counsellors, trade unions, religious leaders, or other civil society organisations. On occasion, they are addressed by individuals or organisations working in other sectors, such as healthcare or immigration. A more comprehensive perspective on the impacts of access to justice would consider informal as well as formal justice mechanisms.<sup>127</sup>

The important question of whether interventions are transferable across cultures and countries is also under-researched. There are often commonalities between justice needs in different settings, and the many case studies conducted so far infer impact, but a more experimental approach that trialled interventions in different locations would make it easier for policymakers to draw lessons from other settings.

Standardising methods for measuring the impact of access to justice would assist in this endeavour. This would also better indicate whether studies that find mixed or minimal impacts of justice interventions are a result of an overall failure of the justice approach or of particular flaws in the intervention. In the health sector, there are established methods to measure the costs and benefits of strategies and technologies, whose standardisation guides policymakers in all settings. Such methods are not yet used in measuring justice interventions and increased international

collaboration to agree on measurements will be needed if the sector is to catch up. Greater use of longitudinal data or of randomised controlled trials would also strengthen case study and other findings.

Finally, thematic areas where research coverage is weaker include the impact of access to justice on children and their education, violent conflict, labour rights and the quality of work, and businesses. More data in each of these areas would likely strengthen the case for improved access to justice, as well as pinpointing the most promising areas for interventions and strategies.

## Appendix – Cited studies, listed alphabetically

Cited studies, listed alphabetically				
Abdiikeeva A., Covaci A.	The Impact of Legal Advocacy Strategies to Advance Roma Health: The Case of Macedonia	2017	Macedonia	Qualitative survey
Aberra A., Chemin M.	Does legal representation increase investment? Evidence from a field experiment in Kenya	2017	Kenya	Randomized controlled trial
Adisa O.	Access to Justice: Assessing the impact of the Magistrates' Court Closures in Suffolk Research Report	2018	United Kingdom	Qualitative survey
Akhavan P.	Is Grassroots Justice a Viable Alternative to Impunity? The Case of the Iran People's Tribunal	2018	Iran	Case study
Alam F. et al.	Jirga and Dispensation of Social Welfare Services: A Case Study of Mohmand Tribal District, Pakistan	2020	Pakistan	Qualitative survey
Amaral S. et al.	Gender, Crime and Punishment: Evidence from Women Police Stations in India	2018	India	Secondary data analysis
Amirapu A.	Justice delayed is growth denied: The effect of slow courts on relationship-specific industries in India	2017	India	Secondary data analysis

Anderson J. et al.	The Effects of Holistic Defense on Criminal Justice Outcomes	2019	United States	Quasi-experimental
Azuhnwi B. et al.	Making Rangelands More Secure in Cameroon: Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Policy Makers, Development Actors and Pastoralists	2017	Cameroon	Case study
Barendrech M. et al.	Impact Assessment of the Facilitadores Judiciales Programme in Nicaragua	2013	Nicaragua	Mixed methods
Blair G et al	Community Policing Does Not Build Citizen Trust in Police or Reduce Crime in the Global South	2021	Brazil, Colombia, Philippines, Liberia, Uganda, Pakistan	Randomized controlled trial
Boda Z., Medve-Bálint G.	How perceptions and personal contact matter: The individual-level determinants of trust in police in Hungary, Policing and Society	2017	Hungary	Quantitative survey
Boehm J., Oberfield E.	Misallocation in the Market for Inputs: Enforcement and the Organization of Production	2018	India	Secondary data analysis
Brown K.J., Gordon F.	Older victims of crime: Vulnerability, resilience and access to procedural justice	2019	United Kingdom	Mixed methods
Burridge A., Gill N.	Conveyor-Belt Justice: Precarity, Access to Justice, and Uneven Geographies of Legal Aid in UK Asylum Appeals	2017	United Kingdom	Mixed methods
Citizens Advice	How we make a difference: Our impact in 2017/18	2018	United Kingdom	Secondary data analysis
Copps Hartley C., Renner L.M.	Economic Self-Sufficiency among Women Who Experienced Intimate Partner Violence and Received Civil Legal Services	2018	United States	Quantitative survey
Crowl J.	The effect of community policing on fear and crime reduction, police legitimacy and job satisfaction: An empirical review of the evidence	2017	United States	Secondary data analysis
Degnan E. et al.	Trapped in Marriage	2018	United States	Randomized controlled trial

Dehaghani R., Newman D.	Criminal legal aid and access to justice: an empirical account of a reduction in resilience	2021	United Kingdom	Qualitative survey
Deseau A. et al.	Access to Justice and Economic Development: Evidence from an International Panel Dataset	2019	Multiple countries	Secondary data analysis
Duker L.	From "Catch-22" to Equal Justice: How the lack of representation in court endangers domestic violence victims	2019	United States	Secondary data analysis
Eagly I. et al.	Detaining Families: A Study of Asylum Adjudication in Family Detention	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Ellen I.G. et al.	Do Lawyers Matter? Early Evidence on Eviction Patterns after the rollout of NYC's Universal Access to Counsel Working Paper	2021	United States	Secondary data analysis
Espinosa R. et al.	Labor market and access to justice	2018	France	Secondary data analysis
Ezer T. et al.	Legal Advocacy as a Tool to Advance Roma Health	2018	Macedonia, Romania, Serbia	Qualitative survey
Feruglio F.	Do More Empowered Citizens Make More Accountable States? Power and Legitimacy in Legal Empowerment Initiatives	2017	Kenya, South Africa	Qualitative survey
Finan F. et al.	Do Government Audits Reduce Corruption? Estimating the Impacts of Exposing Corrupt Politicians	2018	Brazil	Secondary data analysis
Gasna John G. et al.	Ending Impunity for Gender Crimes: access to Justice for Violence against women and its contribution to sustainable peace building in Rwanda	2021	Rwanda	Qualitative survey
Genn H., Beardon S.	Law for Health: Using free legal services to tackle the social determinants of health	2021	United Kingdom	Quantitative survey
Gerber L.A. et al.	Effects of an interdisciplinary approach to parental representation in child Welfare	2019	United States	Quasi-experimental

Gottlieb A., Moose J.W.	The Effect of Eviction on Maternal Criminal Justice Involvement	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Grundman L., Kruger M.	Legal Representation in Evictions – Comparative Study	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Gramatikov M. et al.	Justice Needs and Satisfaction in the United States 2021	2021	United States	Quantitative survey
Gramatikov M. et al.	Deep Dive into Divorce and Separation in Uganda	2020	Uganda	Mixed methods
Haider-Markel D.P., Joslyn M.R.	Bad Apples? Attributions for Police Treatment of African Americans	2017	United States	Quantitative survey
Hammond C., Vermeulen I.	Social Return on Investment in Legal Aid	2017	United Kingdom	Secondary data analysis
Hatch M.E., Yun J.	Losing Your Home Is Bad for Your Health: Short- and Medium-Term Health Effects of Eviction on Young Adults	2021	United States	Secondary data analysis
Hilbink L. et al.	Engaging justice amidst inequality in Latin America	2019	Chile, Colombia	Qualitative survey
Hirsch D.	The affordability of legal proceedings for those excluded from eligibility for criminal legal aid	2018	United Kingdom	Secondary data analysis
Jarvis K. et al.	Report to the California State Legislature for the Sargent Shriver Civil Counsel Act Legislation	2020	United States	Mixed methods
Jassal N.	Gender, Law Enforcement, and Access to Justice: Evidence from All-Women Police Stations in India	2020	India	Secondary data analysis
Kavanaugh G. et al.	Women Officers, Gender Violence and Human Capital: Evidence from Women's Justice Centers in Peru	2018	Peru	Quasi-experimental
Knight R.	The Challenge of Protecting Community Land Rights: An Investigation into Community Responses to Requests for Land and Resources	2019	Liberia, Uganda, Mozambique	Qualitative survey
Knight R.	Power to the People: A Case Study of Participatory Local Land and Natural Resource Governance in Nepal	2018	Nepal	Qualitative survey

Krylova Y.	Outsourcing the Fight against Corruption: Lessons from the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala	2018	Guatemala	Case study
Laisne M. et al.	Past Due: Examining the Costs and Consequences of Charging for Justice in New Orleans	2017	United States	Mixed methods
Lalinde Ordóñez S.	Impacto de la justicia procedural en la legitimidad de la policía: evidencia de Colombia	2020	Colombia	Quantitative survey
Lahidji R. et al.	Building a business case for access to justice	2020	Multiple countries	Secondary data analysis
Leigh Grace B.	Complex Vulnerability and Access to Justice for Former Refugee Populations: The Case of the Somali Zigula in Tanzania	2018	Tanzania	Qualitative survey
Lombardini S. et al.	Women's Empowerment in Lebanon: Impact evaluation of the project Women's Access to Justice in Lebanon	2019	Lebanon	Quasi-experimental
Maguire E. et al.	The effects of community policing on fear of crime and perceived safety: findings from a pilot project in Trinidad and Tobago	2019	Trinidad and Tobago	Quasi-experimental
Manuel M. et al.	Universal access to basic justice: costing SDG 16.3	2019	Global	Secondary data analysis
Marien S., Werner H.	Fair treatment, fair play? The relationship between fair treatment perceptions, political trust and compliant and cooperative attitudes cross-nationally	2019	Multiple countries	Secondary data analysis
Martins A.N.G.L.	Access to Justice for Women and Their Labor Force Participation: A Cross-Country Assessment	2020	Multiple countries	Secondary data analysis
Mehmood S.	Judicial Independence and Development: Evidence from Pakistan	2020	Pakistan	Secondary data analysis
Michel V.	Institutional Design, Prosecutorial Independence, and Accountability: Lessons from the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala	2021	Guatemala	Secondary data analysis

Mocan N.H. et al.	Quality of Judicial Institutions, Crimes, Misdemeanors, and Dishonesty	2018	25 European countries	Secondary data analysis
Mueller V. et al.	Filling the legal void? Impacts of a community-based legal aid program on women's land-related knowledge, attitudes, and practices	2018	Tanzania	Randomized controlled trial
Mummolo J.	Militarization fails to enhance police safety or reduce crime but may harm police reputation	2018	United States	Mixed methods
Núñez R. et al.	Justice Needs and Satisfaction in Uganda 2020	2020	Uganda	Quantitative survey
Panday P.K., Rabbani G.	Do legal empowerment activities of NGOs reduce gender-based violence in Bangladesh?	2017	Bangladesh	Quantitative survey
Patiño C, et al.	Global Insights on Access to Justice	2019	Multiple countries	Quantitative survey
Perova E., Reynolds S.	Women's police stations and intimate partner violence: Evidence from Brazil	2017	Brazil	Secondary data analysis
Petre G.	Access to Justice – Trust and Perceptions of the Roma Minority	2021	Romania	Quantitative survey
Peyton K. et al.	A field experiment on community policing and police legitimacy	2019	United States	Randomized controlled trial
Prescott J.J.	Improving Access to Justice in State Courts with Platform Technology	2017	United States	Secondary data analysis
Prescott J.J.	Expungement of Criminal Convictions: An Empirical Study	2020	United States	Mixed methods
Renner L.M., Hartley C.C.	Psychological Well-Being Among Women Who Experienced Intimate Partner Violence and Received Civil Legal Services	2021	United States	Quantitative survey
Rhode D.L. et al.	Access to Justice Through Limited Legal Assistance	2018	United States	Quantitative survey
Riley M., Prenzler T.	Mediation of Complaints against Police: Program Implementation in the Denver Police Department	2020	United States	Mixed methods

Schaaf M. et al.	'We all have the same right to have health services': a case study of Namati's legal empowerment program in Mozambique	2020	Mozambique	Qualitative survey
Schaaf M. L.	Social Accountability and Legal Empowerment for Quality Maternal Health Care	2018	India	Case study
Selbin J. et al.	Unmarked? Criminal Record Clearing and Employment Outcomes	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Semenza D.C. et al.	Eviction and Crime: A Neighborhood Analysis in Philadelphia	2021	United States	Secondary data analysis
Sigafoos J., Organ J.	'What about the poor people's rights?' The dismantling of social citizenship through access to justice and welfare reform policy	2021	United Kingdom	Qualitative survey
Sigafoos J. et al.	The impact of LASPO on routes to justice	2018	United Kingdom	Qualitative survey
Sitthikriengkrai M., Porath N.	'Lead-polluted water changed our lives': A Thai-Karen village's quest for environmental justice	2017	Thailand	Case study
Stewart S.	Discussion Paper: The Case for Smart Justice Alternatives: Responding to justice issues in WA through a Justice Reinvestment approach	2020	Australia	Secondary data analysis
Stout Risius Ross, Inc	Economic Return on Investment of Providing Counsel in Philadelphia Eviction Cases for Low-Income Tenants	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Sun, I.Y et al.	Police Legitimacy and Citizen Cooperation in China: Testing an Alternative Model	2018	China	Quantitative survey
The Council of Economic Advisers	Return on Investments in Recidivism-reducing Programs	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
The Resource for Great Programs	Return-on-Investment Analysis for Pro Bono Ontario	2017	Canada	Mixed methods
Thornton J.	The Way in Which Fee Reductions Influence Legal Aid Criminal Defence Lawyer Work: Insights from a Qualitative Study	2019	United Kingdom	Qualitative survey

Thoughtwell	Tenant Advocacy Project Evaluation	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Trejo G., Nieto-Matiz C.	Containing Large-Scale Criminal Violence through Internationalized Prosecution: How the CICIG Contributed to the Reduction of Guatemala's Murder Rate	2019	Guatemala	Mixed methods
United Nations, World Bank	Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict	2018	Global	Secondary data analysis
Van Damme A.	The impact of police contact on trust and police legitimacy in Belgium, Policing and Society	2017	Belgium	Secondary data analysis
Wei Z. et al.	Fines: Are disadvantaged people at a disadvantage?	2018	Australia	Quantitative survey
Winters M.S., Conroy-Krutz J.	Preferences for traditional and formal sector justice institutions to address land disputes in rural Mali	2021	Mali	Quantitative survey
World Bank, International Bar Association	A Tool for Justice: The Cost Benefit Analysis of Legal Aid	2019	Global	Secondary data analysis
Yarmosky A.	The Impact of Early Representation: An Analysis of the San Francisco Public Defender's Pre-Trial Release Unit	2018	United States	Secondary data analysis
Yerkes S., Muasher, M.	Tunisia's Corruption Contagion: A Transition at Risk	2017	Tunisia	Case study
Zechmeister E.J., Azpuru D.	What Does the Public Report on Corruption, the CICIG, the Public Ministry, and the Constitutional Court in Guatemala?	2017	Guatemala	Secondary data analysis

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- <sup>124</sup> Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, *Justice in a Pandemic - Briefing Three: Justice for All and the Social Contract in Peril* (Center on International Cooperation, Jul. 2021), <https://www.justice.sdg16.plus/justice-in-a-pandemic>.
- <sup>125</sup> Basic justice services include community-based legal advice and empowerment, basic formal and informal dispute resolution mechanisms, and accountability mechanisms such as ombudsmen.
- <sup>126</sup> Marcus Manuel, Clare Manuel, and Harsh Desai, *Universal access to basic justice: costing SDG 16.3* (Overseas Development Institute, 1 Apr. 2019), <https://odi.org/en/publications/universal-access-to-basic-justice-costing-sustainable-development-goal-163/>. Paper prepared for the Task Force on Justice.
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