

Practical Guide

Team Europe Democracy (TED) Initiative Rule of Law Clinics 2024 – 2025

People-Centered Justice for Enabling Environments

This booklet presents key insights from the Rule of Law clinics organised by the Team Europe Democracy (TED) Working Group on Rule of Law and Accountability in 2024–2025. For any questions or further information, please contact the TED Secretariat at secretariat@teamedemocracy.eu September 2025

TED brings together EU institutions, Member States and like-minded European organisations to collaborate on promoting democracy. It is dedicated to fostering joint actions, aligned implementation, and rigorous assessment of strategies and approaches to enhance collective impact.

TED's Rule of Law clinics focused on people-centered justice (PCJ) – an approach that puts the needs, priorities, and lived experiences of people at the heart of justice systems, ensuring that justice is accessible, fair, and effective in their daily lives. Co-convened by TED's thematic leads, the Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiIL), the International Development Law Organisation (IDLO) and the World Justice Project (WJP) and further network members, the clinics provided space for collective reflection, peer learning and practical exchange on innovative ways to embed PCJ in European justice programming.

This booklet serves as a practical guide to people-centered justice, offering a closer look at key aspects discussed during TED's Rule of Law clinics. It distils the main takeaways offering links and resources to further learning opportunities.

Clinic 1 – Data and Evidence

Discover why data matters for people-centered justice: how it is collected, what it reveals, and how it strengthens programming. [See page 2.](#)

Outcome report and recording on «Capacity4Dev»

Clinic 2 – Customary, Informal and Community Justice

Explore the role of informal and community-based systems across countries: What opportunities do they open, and what challenges remain? [See page 5.](#)

Outcome report and recording on «Capacity4Dev»

Clinics 3 & 4 – PCJ approaches in the Land Rights Ecosystem

Against the backdrop of the **Global Gateway strategy**, learn why PCJ is essential for sustainable investments – making land governance more just and inclusive. What can evidence contribute, and how can communities engage effectively? [See page 9.](#)

Outcome report and recording on «Capacity4Dev»

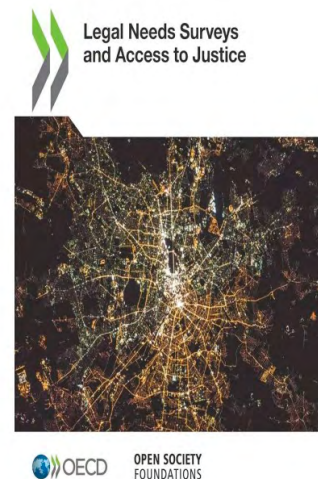
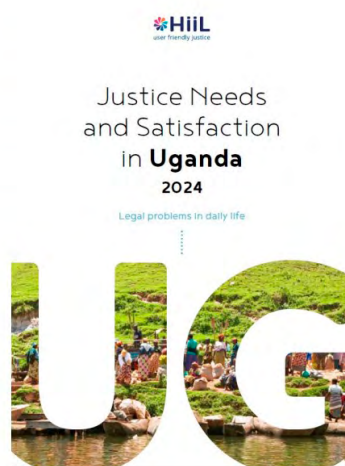
The clinic focused on the role of **data and evidence in PCJ programming**. The [OECD - OCDE 2023 Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centered Justice Systems](#) served as a guiding framework, highlighting the need for justice systems that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of individuals.

Why perform a legal needs survey?

“What is happening in the streets and what is happening in the institutions is different.” Many working within the system see the justice system as functioning, since they only look at their own part of the picture. Legal needs surveys play an important role as they broaden the view beyond the formal justice systems. They cover the “demand side” and provide evidence on perceptions and experiences outside of the formal justice system. So far, few countries are collecting this information. If they do, surveys are often not institutionalised, and data is collected on an ad-hoc basis with the risk of it being lost when governments change.

Who is in the driving seat? Ministries of Justice, sometimes together with statistical services.

Which type of legal needs surveys already exist?



World Justice Project's [Global Insights Access to Justice 2019](#) captures comparable data on legal needs and access to civil justice on a global scale, representing the voices of more than 100,000 people in 101 countries. It provides evidence how ordinary people worldwide navigate their everyday legal problems including data on the most common challenges, experiences, sources of help, status of the problem, the resolution process, and the impact of justice problems on people's lives.



The 2019 OECD [“Guide on Legal Needs Surveys and Access to Justice”](#) provides a framework for understanding and measuring legal needs as well as methodological guidance and model questions to capture three core components of effective access to justice: 1. The nature and extent of unmet legal and justice needs; 2. The impact of unmet legal and justice needs on individuals, the community and the state; and 3. How specific models of legal assistance and dispute resolution are utilised to meet needs.



HiIL's Justice and Needs Satisfaction (JNS) survey is a quantitative survey tool that measures the gap between people's justice needs and the justice solutions they receive. The JNS relies on a random sample of respondents of approximately 1,000 to 6,000 people in a given country. It identifies the most common legal problems in the past four years in a country or in regions, disaggregating for where they occur and who experiences them. The study becomes a baseline from which it is possible to create targets, indicators, and can be conducted faster (6-7 months) and with less resources (budget of approx. €125,000 - €155,000).

Examples:

- [Justice Needs and Satisfaction in Nigeria \(2023 & 2024\)](#)
- [Justice Needs and Satisfaction Survey in Ethiopia](#)
- [Justice Needs and Satisfaction Survey in Uganda](#)
- [Justice Needs and Satisfaction Survey in Tunisia \(2017 & 2023\)](#)
- Justice Dashboard: Explore the interactive data visualisation on justice needs of people from 18 countries here: [Countries - Justice Dashboard](#)

Recommendations to drive a people-centered culture:

- ➔ A legal needs survey will often need to be translated into actual policies, which then inform the development, design, and implementation of effective justice services.
- ➔ Data alone doesn't drive change, and PCJ isn't only about collecting data on people's needs: Data needs to be activated by leaders and/or institutions to make an impact. **Effective PCJ requires examining and engaging with institutions and actors within the national justice systems.**
- ➔ It is important to establish a people-centered justice culture and to **foster the narrative of "justice as a public service"**: Justice is a fundamental public good, no different from access to potable water, basic healthcare and primary education. Therefore, there is an obligation on states to ensure that the distribution and delivery of justice is accountable, affordable, accessible and appropriate to and for all citizens.

Considerations for policy dialogue:

- ➔ Encourage justice needs surveys to be part of social surveys so they can be more regularly conducted on an institutional basis.
- ➔ Push for data collection to become part of national justice delivery assessments.



Moving from analysis to design to implementation of justice solutions

Recommendations to secure sustainability through national buy-in

No people-centred solutions without people-centred design processes



Including a diverse range of stakeholders in the design process, ensures national buy-in and ownership on the resulting delivery model. Key national partners, such as Ministries of Justice and Judiciaries, should be included from the very beginning so that they feel invested in the implementation of the designed solution. For example, [Hiil's Justice Innovation Lab \(JIL\)](#) convenes 25-30 stakeholders that include government representatives, community justice providers, people facing justice problems, lawyers, academics and policy experts. The stakeholders participate in a structured 4-stage design process to develop an innovative, sustainable solution to address a justice problem.

Using data as a starting point



Grounding delivery models in data and evidence helps secure national buy-in. Data provides a relatively objective basis for selecting and prioritising justice challenges and solutions and supports the mediation of conflicting interests of national stakeholders.

Developing a sustainable scaling plan and financial model



In order to be sustainable and have impact justice delivery models must be accompanied from the onset by a financial model and an implementation plan for scaling up (See [Hiil Trend Report: Delivering Justice Rigorously](#)).

Counterpart financing from national partners



Securing counterpart financing from national partners, for example, through budgetary allocations from Ministry of Justice.

Faster transitions



The duration of time between data-collection, design, piloting and scaling should be efficient in order to ensure that national stakeholders remain engaged.

Considerations for funding:

Explore mechanisms for rapid and flexible funding



One consequence of the momentum behind people-centred justice is that organisations are receiving an increasing number of requests from justice leaders to help them develop people-centred justice programmes for their countries. These requests are often linked to a unique window of opportunity to move forward: an election, an appointment, or a new policy. Too often, the organisations cannot respond adequately. Many countries do not have funding available at short notice. It takes time to get the funding together for a full programme. Some form of 'quick start' funding could have a huge impact. It would allow a justice leader who sees an opportunity to start fast - for example with a national justice needs survey - while, in parallel, the mobilisation of larger funds takes place. Learn more about approaches already being applied in other areas, such as the private sector: [Hiil: Creating an Enabling Financing Framework for Justice Innovation](#).

Budgets for Scaling



Financing for pilots and scaling should be accounted for in the design process.

Why engage with customary and informal justice services?

A vast majority of justice seekers globally make use of customary, informal and community justice (CIJ) services. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, an estimated **80-90% of disputes** are dealt with through CIJ mechanisms, and they remain important even in countries with robust formal justice systems. Under the EU's Global Gateway strategy, engaging with these services is key to ensuring that investments are inclusive and sustainable.



Advantages of engaging with CIJ services include:

- Speed and efficiency
- Geographical, financial, linguistic and cultural accessibility
- Cultural relevance
- Focus on community ownership and restorative justice, which helps foster harmony between disputants and within wider communities
- Contribution to peacebuilding and state-building agendas, which in turn strengthens institutions in fragile contexts

What are possible challenges in engaging with these services?

CIJ systems demonstrate considerable diversity across contexts



Contextualisation

- It is important to recognise that the intended results of CIJ programmes will need to be context-specific and engagement will vary accordingly.
- Figuring out who and where the changemakers are (such as CSOs, academics, and donors) and working with them by taking the overarching approach that traditions are not set in stone, but evolve with society.

Rights abrogating practices, especially the rights of women and girls



Promoting the participation and leadership of women and other marginalised groups

The Standard Operating Procedures in Alternative Dispute Resolution Centers in **Somaliland** prescribe that at least 20 per cent of the adjudicators should be female and that a minimum of one female adjudicator will participate in every panel hearing a case involving women and children.

Access to Justice for GBV Survivors in Somaliland



In **Malawi**, women participated as justice providers in state customary courts, which sit astride formal and informal justice services. Their participation led to a significant reduction in child marriages.

Women's Participation in Customary and Informal Justice





Creating guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for CIJ adjudicators

Guidelines for customary leaders in **Niger** that include accessible general and legal information as well as best practices: supported by HiILSources.

[Prevention and Resolution of Land Conflicts in Niger](#)



Local rules and dispute resolution procedures have been codified with the help of local NGOs in several *sukus* in **Timor Leste**, referred to as *sukus* or *tara-bandus*. Community leaders agree that these have increased respect for and compliance with local rules.

[Local Justice in Timor Leste](#)



Standard Operating Procedures for Alternative Dispute Resolution Centers in **Somalia**, supported by IDLO.

[Somalia's Alternative Dispute Resolution Centers](#)



Creating monitoring and accountability mechanisms that foster changes

In **Sierra Leone**, Timap for Justice and the Promise of Paralegal Initiatives worked with Community Oversight Boards (COBs) to ensure that paralegals are accountable to the host communities.

[Timap for Justice: Paralegal Initiative in Sierra Leone](#)



In **Uganda**, Magistrate Courts review all decisions by the Local Council Court that exceed a certain threshold in order to prevent extortion and unfair compensation claims.

[Case Study: Local Council Courts in Uganda](#)



Insufficient accountability and oversight, including lack of harmonisation with formal justice systems



The intervention of external stakeholders on behalf of CIJ service providers, making them visible before formal authorities

The World Justice Project has supported CIJ services in **Mexico** through research and increased visibility, including through visual storytelling.

[Report on Peace and Dialogue Centers in Mexico](#)



Fostering legislative harmonisation

Kenya's policy on Promoting Alternative Justice Systems (AJS) creates infrastructure for engagement from informal justice providers all the way to the Supreme Court, balancing the usefulness of local practices with the supremacy of the constitution and national law.

[Promoting Alternative Justice Systems in Kenya](#)



Identifying allies, facilitating relationship-building and dialogue between the formal and informal systems while being mindful of respective mandates, encouraging cross-fertilisation between both systems

Local civil society organisations in **South Sudan** organized relationship-building seminars between communities that still practiced human compensation and those that had instituted other forms of compensation. The approach helped chiefs to see how ending human compensation did not erode or threaten customary law.

[ODI: Supporting Everyday Justice Providers](#)



Long-term aid sustainability and effectiveness, including risks associated with attempts at scaling CIJ programmes



Institutionalising local ownership through community-driven design, capacity building for local stakeholders and knowledge transfer at the end of the programme cycles

The EU-UNDP Activating Village Courts in [Bangladesh](#) project, has successfully ensured that the village court function is sustainably taken over by the Government by 2027.

Activating Village Courts in Bangladesh project



What is the role of data and evidence in customary and informal justice services?

Drawing from TED's Rule of Law Clinic on the role of data and evidence in PCJ programming in October 2024, data and evidence can inform CIJ programming by:

Diagnosing



This helps identifying rates at which justice seekers engage with CIJ systems, for what purposes, and if these are ultimately satisfied; e.g., [Burkina Faso](#), [Uganda](#), [Niger](#).

Enabling us to know who are CIJ users in terms of numbers and profiles



To effectively design programming it is necessary to know who CIJ users are, thereby assessing and helping to close the justice gap for women and other marginalised groups; using it to inform national strategies, design policies and interventions.

Improving the quality and efficiency of the justice decisions



Data collection and management systems for the informal justice sector can improve its case management, transparency, accountability, and overall application. E.g. the capacity needs assessment established for the [Kenya National Council of Elders \(p. 30\)](#).

Forming the basis for dialogue and improved coordination



It is helpful to form the basis for dialogue and improved coordination between the formal and informal systems as well as identifying mechanisms and strategies for incorporating traditional methods of dispute resolution into legislative reviews.



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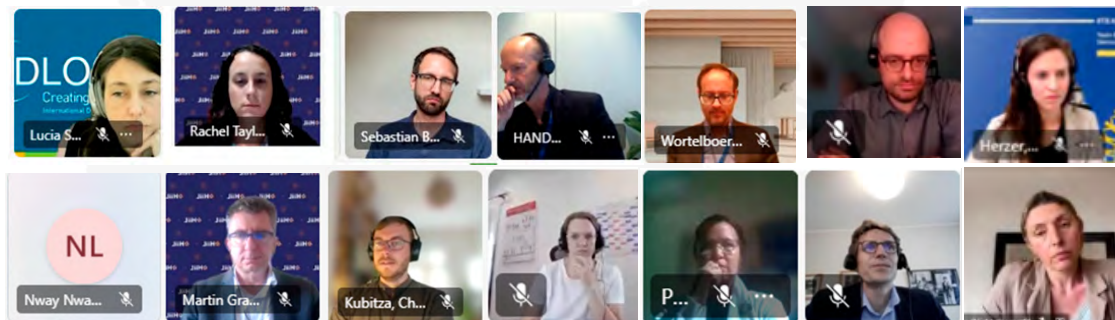
Why focus on land-rights?

In many countries where land is the backbone of the economy and the guarantor of livelihoods, it is one of the most common sources of conflict. Investments that will take place under the EU's Global Gateway strategy, will most likely take – a lot of – land.

“If you work on land, you work on justice”
Marco Lankhorst, Chief, Programme Development Monitoring and Reporting, IDLO

Land insecurity is a global crisis that links to gender inequality and rights of indigenous communities - whose rights are often not officially recognised.

“Without real action on land rights, there can be no real progress in poverty reduction, climate mitigation, or gender justice.”
- Laura Meggiolaro, Independent Expert and former Managing Director of Land Portal.



Solutions to land problems must be people-centered

Such an approach requires:

- Clear rules and processes
- Participation by those who will be most impacted by decisions on land use
- The principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) (“prior and informed consent” should be linked: see recommendations [here](#))
- The protection of human rights defenders

How can people-centered data and evidence help?

It is key to get a full picture of current justice needs and experiences. It identifies pathways people have taken for problem resolution, it shows who is facing land problems and it can help to raise the cost of violations for the companies.

Applying people-centred data to large-scale land investments helps to:

- Conduct context assessments
- Design innovative solutions and mechanisms
 - E.g. hybrid systems that integrate both the informal and formal systems - to resolve disputes arising from large-scale investments.
- Ensure the presence of safeguards- review if FPIC principles are enshrined in law and applied at the subnational levels and if everyone is trained on these principles and how to use them.
- Link existing research on PCJ to understand what is working or not and ways that we can get these communities to meaningfully participate in the decision-making to prevent tension that will lead to further conflict.

Examples of useful data sources:



LANDex – the Global Land Governance Index places people at the centre of land data, promoting inclusive monitoring and building a data ecosystem that reflects the **diverse realities of land governance**. Based on ILC's 10 thematic commitments, the Index tracks progress globally towards people-centred land governance (PCLG) across three levels: legal frameworks, implementation, and outcomes.



The Land Matrix Initiative (LMI) is a global, independent observatory that tracks and shares **data on large-scale land acquisitions worldwide**. By compiling information on land deals—whether concluded, intended, or failed—it increases transparency around who is acquiring land, where, and for what purpose. Working with regional partners worldwide, the initiative combines global comparability with local perspectives.



Prindex, led by the Global Land Alliance, measures **how secure people feel about their land and housing rights**. In partnership with other initiatives, it provides open, comparable data that includes the perspectives of marginalised groups. By doing so, it fills a critical gap in tenure security data, helping to inform policy and raise awareness.



The **SOLIndex (State of Land Information Index)**, developed by the Land Portal Foundation, measures **how open and accessible land data is at the country level**. It assesses areas such as land tenure, use, value, and development, scoring data on criteria like availability, openness, and usability. By offering a comparable global benchmark, the SOLIndex promotes transparency, guides policy, and complements other initiatives.



Alliance for Indigenous, Land and Environmental Defenders (ALLIED)'s Data Working Group unites national and global data collectors to build a consolidated database **tracking lethal and non-lethal attacks on Indigenous, Land, and Environmental Defenders**. It seeks to strengthen protection protocols, hold governments and businesses accountable, and support civil society responses by sharing and analysing verified data.



LandMark is a global, online, interactive platform dedicated to working directly with **Indigenous Peoples and local communities to map and monitor their lands**. It consolidates spatial data from diverse sources to provide maps and critical information on collectively held lands, including tenure status, potential pressures, land-cover changes over time, and communities' contributions to environmental protection.



Civic Participation for just Land Governance – Practical Examples



Building partnerships to support people-centered land governance requires robust collaboration between government agencies and civil society organisations. The International Land Coalition has published a toolkit designed to guide government actors and CSOs seeking to engage in a partnership. Beyond case studies and lessons learned, it sets out a comprehensive process that identifies a long-term goal, maps out stakeholder roles, and defines clear outcomes and intervention strategies.

[Read more](#)



Managing land and resource disputes in Niger: Hadin kai - Bani fondo, meaning “*The Path to Cohesion*,” is a pioneering digital platform designed to manage land and resource disputes through innovative digital solutions. It strengthens the capacities of traditional leaders and supports local communities in addressing everyday justice challenges. The initiative is supported by HiiL.

- Organised into step-by-step guides and presented in a conversational format via a dedicated virtual voice assistant, the platform provides useful information, practical guidelines, and best practices for resolving or preventing a range of conflicts.
- The strength lies in its inclusive governance model, led by the Ministry of Justice and supported by a steering committee composed of experts from the National Legal Aid Agency, the Permanent Secretariat of the Rural Code, and the Association of Traditional Chiefs of Niger.

[Read more](#)



Transforming Land Conflicts into Agrarian Reform in Indonesia: The Priority Locations for Agrarian Reform Strategy is a step-by-step guidance tool that functions as a bottom-up mechanism to identify the extent and quantity of land held by farming families, address the unequal land ownership structure at the farmer level, determine potential recipients of land redistribution, and ensure legal protection for farmers’ lands. The initiative is supported by Oxfam as part of the FAIR Partnership project.

[Read more](#)



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Productive, sustainable, and rights-based land investments in Laos:

- **Connecting investors with local communities** to bring together local community members and representatives to formally and constructively discuss community concerns and the company's perspective. [Read more](#) how to prepare an "Investor Dialogue Forum" step by step and watch the [video](#) to assess outcomes and impact.
- **Improving compliance:** The introduction of worker contracts addresses unclear conditions, unequal pay and high staff turnover. This improves compliance with labour laws, strengthens workers' rights and increases commitment while reducing the risk of losing skills.

[Read more](#)



These efforts were supported by the [Responsible Land Policy project](#), co-financed by the European Union and the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.



Further Readings:

- Lessons learned from Chad, Burundi, Uganda, Colombia and Iraq for fair, just and people-centered land governance of the [Land-at-scale project](#), financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands: Brochure LAND-at-scale. See further info [here](#).
- The **Land Portal Foundation** creates, curates and disseminates land governance information by fostering an inclusive and accessible data landscape. It has evolved from a simple information gateway to become a knowledge broker, a resource base, a vibrant online community of users and a trusted voice within global land governance. See further info [here](#).

Digital Version:



For the digital version, including the links, please scan

This booklet reflects what was presented during the sessions. While efforts have been made to ensure accuracy and completeness, TED assumes no responsibility for any errors, omissions, or updates.