

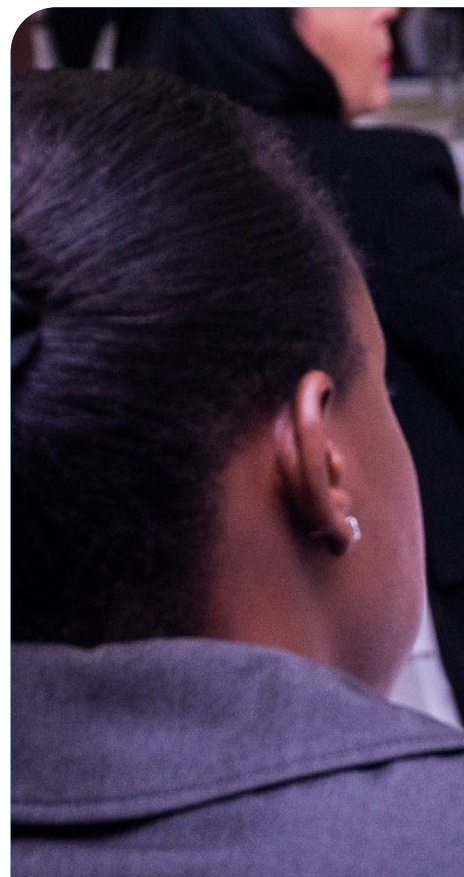
Land Justice at HiiL: where we work and what we do



For many people across the globe, land is everything: it is home, livelihood, heritage, property and the foundation of economic well-being. Yet access to land and tenure remain one of the most contested and fragile aspects of justice systems worldwide. From rural villages to expanding urban centres, people and communities face legal problems when disputes arise over boundaries, ownership, use, transaction, inheritance or expropriation. When unresolved, the negative consequences of land disputes escalate. They fracture communities, trap families - in particular women - in cycles of poverty, and, in some cases, fuel broader social unrest. Justice systems fail to provide fair, accessible, affordable and user-friendly pathways for resolving land-related legal problems.

The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL) is an organisation dedicated to ensuring that justice is accessible, affordable, and easy to understand. We call this people-centred justice. By collaborating with justice providers, including ministries of justice and judiciaries and informal and community-based justice leaders, we develop solutions that enable more individuals to prevent or resolve their justice challenges.

Partnering with HiiL means joining the forefront of a people-centred justice movement that puts communities at the heart of land solutions. Our unique, data-driven approach ensures land issues are resolved fairly, sustainably, and in ways that truly work for the people affected.



Understanding the problem from the users' perspective: Justice Needs and Satisfaction Surveys

We have developed a unique approach to understanding the justice issues people face and how they try to resolve them and what outcomes they get. Since 2014, we carry out Justice Needs and Satisfaction (JNS) surveys around the world to capture people's experiences and the solutions they seek. Insights from these surveys are often used by governments and partners to inform justice strategies. Land is consistently one of the most reported and impactful problems arising in our JNS.

As part of a framework agreement with UNHCR, we are also conducting JNSs among internally displaced people (IDPs). We have done this in Burkina Faso, Iraq and Honduras with more countries upcoming.

- Ethiopia: An estimated 8.2 to 8.6 million land disputes occur every four years, over a third of all serious justice problems.
- Nigeria: In Ogun State, land disputes have the highest negative impact of all civil justice problems.
- Burkina Faso: 1 in 4 people faces a land dispute, particularly in rural areas.
- Uganda and Niger: Widespread disputes over inheritance, grazing rights, and unclear land titles.



Turning data into solutions: Co-developed guidelines

HiiL works with justice providers, researchers and community leaders to develop practical, tailor-made and context-specific guidelines for resolving justice problems, including those related to land. These guidelines provide recommendations and step-by-step interventions for preventing and resolving people's justice problems. They are based on empirical research in the fields of psychology, communications, criminology and conflict resolution. Designed to be tested and implemented locally, they help justice practitioners deliver better outcomes for people, strengthen their capacity to solve problems using evidence-based approaches, and embed effective, standardised methods of dispute resolution in communities.

More information on the guidelines, including its methodology, can be found on our [Justice Dashboard](#).

In Ogun State, Nigeria, we co-developed guidelines for land and family disputes with contributions from 92 justice professionals. Over 1,000 professionals have since been trained in applying them.

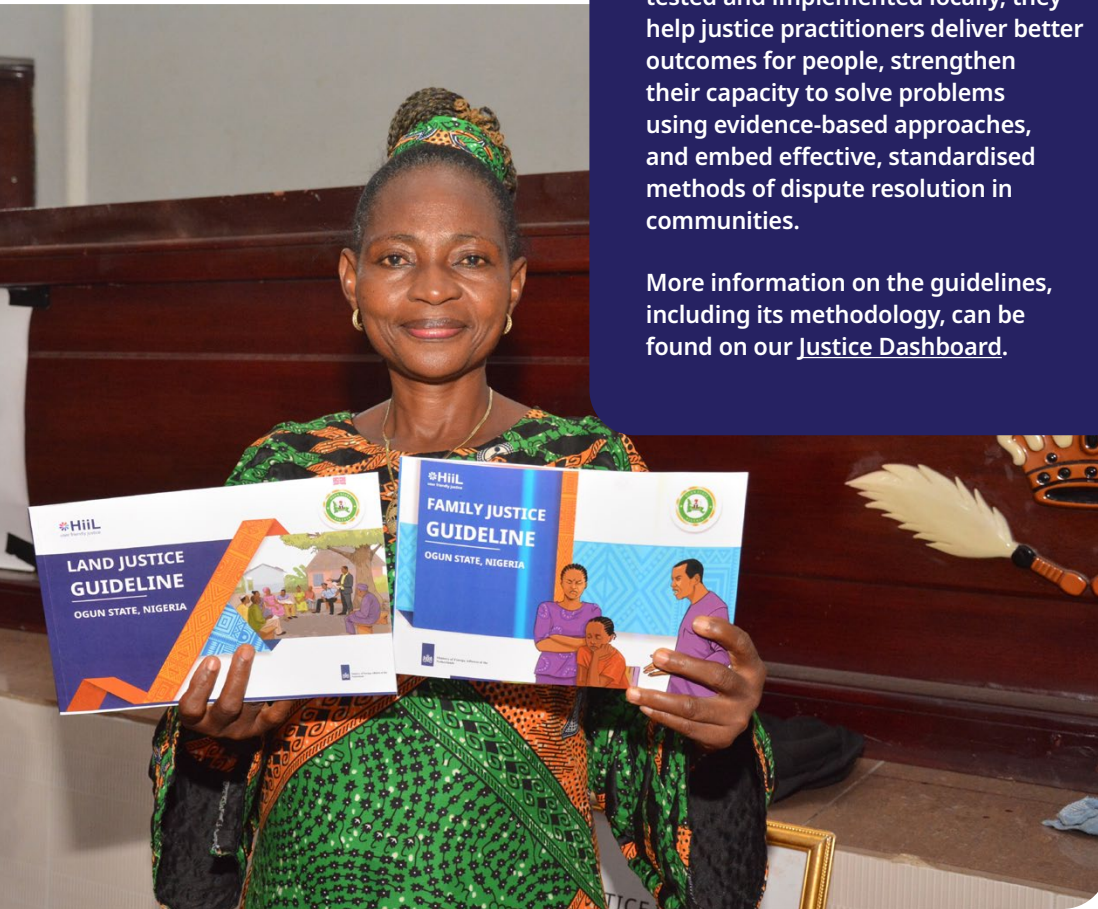
"I applied the land guidelines in a case involving two brothers who were in conflict over a property left by their late father. Typically, such cases are forwarded to the courts. However, drawing from the knowledge and experience I gained during the training - particularly in conflict prevention and proper documentation of land - I was able to resolve the dispute amicably, preventing the need for lengthy court processes and ensuring proper documentation to avoid future disputes."

— Adesanya Lawrence Olaleke, Area Commander, Sango-Ota Area Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

In Niger, a manual was produced to guide resolution of land conflicts using both statutory and customary practices.

"Before, we handled 150–200 land disputes per year. Since implementing the guidelines, this has dropped to 25–30. It's a relief—for farmers, herders, traditional chief and the State."

— Mahamadou Maman, Canton Chief, Dogondoutchi, Niger



Innovation: supporting co-creation and early resolution

Justice Innovation Labs bring together a diverse group of key stakeholders in the justice system of a country to co-design solutions. These solutions are innovative, scalable, and financially viable, with strong local ownership. In Niger, HiiL's Justice Innovation Lab co-created a digital platform for customary leaders to resolve land

disputes. It is grounded in formal legal standards and customary practice and is being piloted in areas where land issues are most acute. The tool includes a voice assistant for basic phones and is free for Airtel users. This helps strengthen early resolution and improves trust in justice institutions.

Justice Accelerator: locally-led solutions

HiiL also runs Justice Accelerator programmes that support justice-tech entrepreneurs and civil society organisations (CSOs) in tackling pressing justice challenges. It is the only accelerator dedicated to preventing and resolving justice problems, helping startups develop solutions and scale what works best. Through scouting and training innovators, the programme brings accessible, people-centred justice closer to where it is needed most.

Over the past 10+ years, HiiL has supported more than 170 startups through every stage of their journey – from ideation and incubation to acceleration and scaling. In Niger and Burkina Faso, these programmes have focused on land, domestic violence and family disputes. A similar initiative is ongoing in Iraq, focusing on housing, land and property issues.

What this work achieves

- ▶ Helps resolve disputes earlier and more fairly
- ▶ Strengthens local capacity for justice delivery
- ▶ Empowers people to exercise their rights to land and resolve their problems
- ▶ Increases trust in justice systems
- ▶ Reduces conflict and contributes to economic stability

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