



Dedicated to people-centred justice

HiiL Strategy

2026-2029



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1 Introduction

After nearly 20 years of operations, HiiL has evolved into a global organisation with offices and programmatic footprints across four continents. In the last two decades, we have championed the gradual but steady shift to people-centred justice as a fundamental pillar for improving access to justice. We have supported innovation in justice solutions, generated data for informed decisions in addressing justice needs and worked with governments to reform their justice system to better address the justice gap. We have played an important role in building and supporting the global movement for people-centred justice.

These modest contributions have also been a learning curve for us as an organisation on prevailing challenges to access to justice. More than ever, the justice movement is facing steep difficulties. Our world is changing very fast and in some ways unrecognisable. Values we assumed were settled before are increasingly being called into question. The rule of law is under attack and justice is not being prioritised by a lot of countries. Funders and countries big on ODA are pulling back. There is an urgent need to reinforce the importance of justice, interpret the language of justice in a way that it resonates with critical stakeholders and work towards promoting an ecosystem of justice practitioners focused on people-centred justice.

This strategy is our response to the prevailing realities of the time. We are convinced more than ever that we need to find a new language for justice that recognises the normative value of justice but to also clearly show how justice contributes to stability, economic prosperity and stronger societies. We are keenly aware that we need a solidarity network for justice to build a strong ecosystem of practitioners whose complementary skills help to bridge the justice gap. We are guided by a new urgency for innovation- ensuring that we are building creative justice solutions that are affordable, accessible and reliable. We recognize that justice means different things to different people and that justice needs are often influenced by context and lived reality. We are committed in this strategy to continue our work in understanding specific needs of justice consumers through our justice needs survey and we are resolute in our commitment to create context fit justice solutions.

In developing this strategy, we embarked on a process of organisational introspection which involved all of HiiL staff. We reviewed our journey as an organisation, analyzed the state of people-centred justice and reflected on what our role should be at this time. We consulted with our external partners and developed a strategy that not only builds on our strength but also positions us as a critical partner in the larger justice ecosystem. We have reviewed our vision and mission ensuring that our focus on access to justice is firmly positioned in building stable societies. While our design must be informed by creative and innovative responses to current realities, our ambitions are rooted in reality, in the demands of the field that we work in and the priorities of countries and communities we want to engage with. Our choices are primarily guided by what we believe will make an actual difference in reducing the justice gap. We believe that access to justice is possible for everyone and that our collective efforts and collaboration across key justice stakeholders can indeed reduce the justice gap.

2 Overview: what's new in this strategy?

The new strategy emerges from a period of deep reflection, consultation and collegial debate in the context of a changing operational and funding environment, under new leadership. The main sources of learning have been the external evaluation of our third strategic partnership with the MFA '*Activating the Power of People-Centred Justice*' (2024), ongoing exchanges with funders, partners and local stakeholders, and our research and policy collaborations, especially the [OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems](#) (2023). Most of the changes documented in this strategy represent an evolution of existing thinking, rather than a radical departure. Indeed, many of these changes have already been in practice at Hiil for over a year.

(1) The theory of change is more flexible, and more closely aligned to the OECD Recommendation on people-centred justice.

Our new theory of change reflects the complexity of justice system reform. Our goals are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, rather than sequential stages toward impact. The language of our theory of change mirrors the OECD recommendation on people-centred justice, to which we contributed and which we endorse as a roadmap towards national-scale delivery of people-centred justice. We now refer to a 'toolbox' of methods, which have evolved from a linear sequence of steps into a flexible set of methods that programmes can combine and adapt to local demand, context, partnerships, and resources.

(2) We take a more country-led approach to designing and implementing programmes.

Country programmes have greater decision-making power and flexibility: each leads its country strategy and programme plans in consultation with the other colleagues and units, grounded in Hiil's overall approach but tailored to local realities. This aligns with our commitment to ensure that our programmes are demand driven and context specific. It is also a major pillar of our localisation effort to lean on the agency of local staff and partners in developing our programmes.

(3) We place a stronger emphasis on partnerships as the route to scale and sustainability.

We are keenly aware that no organisation by itself can achieve the kind of reform and system change needed to make justice accessible to all. With decrease in funding and difficult environment for justice, it is even more obvious that what is needed at this time is more collaboration and expanded partnerships. Times have changed. With a growing international consensus on the people-centred justice approach and increased competition for funding resources, there is increased opportunity for synergy and programming coherence with partners. We will seek, therefore, to work more closely and creatively with other Rule of Law partners and with non-traditional actors such as the private sector, social investors, and organisations active in governance, security, and development. We expect that these partnerships will expand our joint reach, resources, and capacity to generate durable results. This aligns with the growing demand of our partners and funders for a strong ecosystem for justice service providers.

(4) We go beyond *designing* solutions, to [helping to] *deliver* them.

An (implied) assumption of the last theory of change was that if new people-centred justice services were co-designed by strongly-networked [institutional] stakeholders, based on good data about peoples' needs, that political will and funding for implementation would flow; either from local institutional/governmental sources, or international funding partners. Despite sustained efforts locally, we encountered repeated barriers when the time came for new services to be budgeted, piloted and implemented at local level. These obstacles compounded when pursuing national scale implementation.

We recognised this learning in the second half of the *Activating the Power of People-Centred Justice* programme, and leveraged flex funds and other opportunities to fund piloting phases for new services. This approach is showing early signs of success, with pilot programmes active in Ethiopia, Nigeria and Tunisia. As a result, we document this shift from a 'design and drop' approach to a longer-term 'design and deliver' approach; with the capacity to shepherd new initiatives from pilot phase to implementation, scale-up, and institutionalisation. This will happen primarily through partnerships, in addition to internal expertise in pilot implementation, financing and governance.

(5) We will specialise further on in-demand thematic areas.

As we look to diversify our funding sources, we see an opportunity to specialise (and promote ourselves as specialists) in high-demand thematic areas where we have established expertise. Where appropriate, we will develop programmes and contribute to work in partnerships applying these thematic lenses. The thematics we will deepen our focus on are:

Land justice
Family justice
Gender-based violence
Legal problems of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (mSMEs)

Declaring this focus will help us direct resources and focus our fundraising efforts. We will explore additional thematics where intersections of external demand and internal expertise are identified.

(6) We will develop an advisory capacity.

As we look to diversify our funding sources, we see an opportunity to develop a business model for dedicated advisory services. This builds on an in-depth internal consultation process that took place between 2023-24. We expect that an advisory services offering will grant us access to new funding sources, and enable us to respond with agility to emerging [government/institutional] needs outside of the traditional programme cycle.

3 Vision

3.1 Vision statement

At HiiL, we envision a world where everyone has access to a fair and effective justice system which unlocks opportunities, drives development, and builds lasting peace and stability. We believe that justice should be people-centred; that is, taking their perspectives and needs into account. Justice is not only a fundamental right but also a cornerstone of stability, inclusive growth, and sustainable peace.

3.2 Rationale

When justice is accessible and reliable at scale, including for marginalised groups, societies experience greater trust, stronger governance, and resilience to conflict. Effective justice systems safeguard property rights, support fair markets, protect the vulnerable, and provide mechanisms for accountability. They reduce risks for investors, expand opportunities for entrepreneurship, and strengthen the legitimacy of governance structures. In fragile and conflict-affected settings, they are essential to reconciliation, institution-building, and recovery.

That is why we place justice at the centre of sustainable development and peacebuilding. Our vision calls for moving beyond narrow law-and-order models toward innovative, evidence-based, people-centred solutions that solve the justice problems people face in daily life. Advancing fair and effective justice systems lays the foundation for inclusive prosperity, durable peace, and adaptive societies.

4 Mission

4.1 Mission statement

At HiiL, we work with formal and informal justice actors to turn people-centred justice from theory into action. By combining evidence, innovation, and convening power, we shape policies and solutions that expand access to justice for people and businesses. Closing the justice gap¹ helps build fairer, more stable and peaceful societies.

4.2 Rationale

Closing the global justice gap requires more than incremental reforms. It demands a fundamental reorientation of justice systems toward outcomes that matter to people in daily life: safety, fairness, resolution, and dignity. Our mission reflects this orientation. By working with communities, generating evidence, and innovating solutions based on lived realities, we create practical pathways to fair resolution and more inclusive justice systems which help build prosperous and stable societies.

¹ 5.1 billion people - roughly two-thirds of the world's population - experience unmet justice needs. See chapter 5.1.

5 Context analysis

5.1 A global trust and governance crisis deepens justice problems.

The world is facing a profound governance crisis, marked by a sharp decline in trust in governments and public institutions, pressures on democratic norms, and a massive justice gap. 5.1 billion people² - roughly two-thirds of the world's population - experience unmet justice needs. Ordinary people, especially those belonging to marginalised groups, struggle to resolve important conflicts and preserve relationships that deeply affect their prosperity, safety and quality of life: over land/resource ownership and use, family finances and parenting in the case of divorce, employment and housing agreements. When people experience a justice problem, most don't trust lawyers, the courts or government services to help resolve it. When justice needs go unmet continuously and systematically, frustration boils over, and the cycle of mistrust deepens.

Globally, progress on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.3 'Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all by 2030' is considered by UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR to be 'dangerously off track'. The agencies observe that 'progress on violence reduction, access to justice, inclusive governance and peaceful societies is stagnating or in reverse.'³

We work in countries experiencing this crisis of governance and decline in trust affecting ordinary people's access to justice. Countries like Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Syria, and Tunisia grapple with varying levels of political instability and fragile transitions of power; leading to shifting government priorities and disruptions to reform efforts. Instability keeps the rule of law fragile. In countries where we work, we observe both extreme and mundane consequences of this fragility for justice: from widespread human rights violations eroding legitimacy, political interference in the judiciary, entrenched corruption, to simply outdated and under-resourced public sector processes.

Institutional barriers to access to justice are compounded by cultural, technological and financial divides. Even where authorities have a genuine interest in reform, heavy bureaucracies and traditional mindsets often resist and slow the pace of change. Unequal digital penetration and disparities in literacy create uneven access to digital tools which deepens exclusion. Resource constraints and declining international funding make sustainability more difficult to secure.

Effective justice mechanisms play an important role in preventing conflict and promoting stability.⁴ Where individual justice needs are unresolved, communities are more prone to unrest, violence, and displacement. Equipping communities with peaceful, effective means to resolve disputes restores trust and preserves cohesion.

² [2019 report from World Justice Project and justice for all taskforce.](#)

³ [Global progress report on Sustainable Development Goal 16 indicators: A wake-up call for action on peace, justice and inclusion \(2023\)](#) (UNDP, UNODC and OHCHR).

⁴ See [UNDP \(2025\) People-Centred Approach To Justice And Security](#) '...the fundamental role of justice and security for preventing, responding to and recovering from conflict, crisis and fragility, and enabling more just, inclusive and peaceful societies for sustainable development.' See especially p 13 'Recognizing justice and security are shaped by politics and power'. See also [OECD \(2021\) OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice](#) and [MFA Letter of 20 February 2025 from the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development to the House of Representatives on International Development.](#)

5.2 Everyone accepts that improving access to people-centred justice is the solution. But how?

International development aid has focused primarily fixing imperfect or weak governance through strengthening institutions. HiIL has long advocated for the view that this approach is too narrow in focus. In recent years, the development community has been catching up. There is a growing consensus that the world needs an approach to improving access to justice that places peoples' needs at the centre of any solution (hence, 'people-centred justice'). This is reflected most notably in the [OECD \(2023\) Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems](#) based on the [OECD \(2021\) OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice](#) to which we contributed. We endorse the framework to secure 'appropriate leadership for people-centred justice and the transformation this requires', namely that states should:

1. Establish a people-centred purpose and culture in the justice system,
2. Design and deliver people-centred legal and justice services,
3. Establish a governance infrastructure that enables people-centred justice,
4. Empower people to make people-centred justice transformation happen,
5. Commit to participatory and evidence-based planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

We have incorporated this framework in our operations, often working towards a combined approach that sought to operationalize all of the elements of this framework in our country programs. We have learned much in the process, and we closely follow the learning of other strategic partners, contributors to the OECD Framework and members of the Justice Action Coalition. However, important questions remain about how to most effectively operationalise the framework, especially for designing and delivering people-centred justice services.

The recurring questions by justice stakeholders especially governments is: What are the concrete examples of what has worked in delivering people-centred justice? Systematic demonstrations of what works, how it can be scaled, and how it leads to fairer and more effective outcomes need more time and investment to develop. This tension between key stakeholders needing evidence, and the evidence needing the buy-in of key stakeholders to manifest, limits the capacity of the field to mobilise broad support and investment.

While evidence from the field remains fragmented or anecdotal, it is nevertheless developing. Whether through our own programmes, or observing others, we see promising examples around the world, from alternative dispute resolution (mediation, arbitration, conciliation), community justice initiatives, paralegal and self-help services, online/app-based digital services, amongst many others. These mechanisms can take many forms, fundamentally it's about ensuring that the pathways for resolution of justice needs are credible, accessible and effective.

It is important to highlight some key opportunities that the current context provides:

- The growing acceptance by stakeholders (governments, funders and justice service providers) that people-centered justice represents an important approach to addressing the justice gaps gives momentum to our work and that of other partners
- The growing recognition that justice is an important foundation for stability and economic development helps us broaden our partnership and strengthens our advocacy.
- Growing interest and demand from partners for closer collaboration amongst justice service providers creates impetus for a stronger justice ecosystem that helps complementarity of efforts and greater impact.

6 HiiL's niche

At HiiL, people-centred justice is not a theory: it is our practice. While many actors search for evidence of what works, we use our relationships with governments, legal professionals, traditional leaders, and civil society to design and deliver practical, people-centred services. We learn quickly through pilot programmes and adapt as we go.

Innovation is in our DNA. 'Innovation' carries different meanings and connotations. To us, it is a core value. Innovation is embedded across everything we do: in how services are designed, how evidence is used, how we take decisions, and how we challenge conventional approaches.

When we describe something as people-centred, it is grounded in data. Our JNS surveys are globally recognised as a leading source of justice data distinct from other available justice surveys. They provide robust evidence to inform policy dialogues, guide interventions, and help governments prioritise reforms based on people's needs and actual experiences. By focusing on lived experience, JNS data shapes both our own strategies and broader policy agendas. We help governments and institutions see the justice system from the eyes of the people.

HiiL combines advocacy and implementation capacity. This reinforces our credibility with national counterparts and the international community, and allows us to tailor methods to different contexts, including fragile and rapidly changing environments. It is a unique approach to influencing change. Our approach is pragmatic, relationship-driven, and focused on results that are relevant and sustainable.

We influence institutional 'purpose and culture'⁵ at the ecosystem level. Effective justice systems depend on connected formal and informal mechanisms. HiiL plays a bridging role: convening diverse actors, facilitating collaboration, and helping embed a people-centred mindset across systems. Our access to Ministries of Justice and other government bodies, alongside strong collaboration with civil society and international partners, gives us reach and legitimacy.

We are a bridge between local evidence and global standards. Through our field presence and work with local communities, we are able to generate evidence and data that informs global conversations on people-centred justice and conversely, we take lessons from the comparative learnings at the global platform to our country level operations.

⁵ People-centred 'purpose and culture' is a pillar of the [OECD \(2021\) OECD Framework and Good Practice Principles for People-Centred Justice](#). Institutional or organisational culture refers to a group of people's set of shared beliefs, values, priorities and motivations. It should not be mistaken as pointing to socially sensitive notions such as high or low culture or advanced or backwards culture.

7 Theory of change

7.1 Summary of the theory of change

If we leverage our convening power, innovation skills, implementation capacity and research expertise to bring together providers and justice users in formal and informal justice systems, **so that**:

- (1) Innovation and a people-centred purpose and culture are embedded in justice systems.⁶
- (2) Innovative, scaled services and processes are designed to meet people's most pressing justice needs based on good data.⁷
- (3) Regulatory and financing environments enable people-centred justice, including at the international funding level.⁸
- (4) Justice is measured by the outcomes that matter to people and businesses.⁹

Then, together, these changes will lead to more individuals and businesses having access to services and processes that enable them to resolve their most pressing justice problems affordably, fairly, and quickly.

We **assume** that, when justice services become more affordable, fair and responsive, demand from individuals and communities will increase. We acknowledge this as a critical assumption that is informed by our experiences in the field and we will monitor it through data on justice needs, satisfaction, and use of services.

If justice processes deliver affordable, fair and quick outcomes, **then** the justice gap narrows. Over time, as effective approaches scale nationally and globally, this contributes to stability and prosperity, particularly in fragile and transition settings.

7.2 Note on the theory of change

The footnotes indicate how our updated theory of change is aligned with the OECD pillars 1,2,3 and 5 as a signal of our support for a broad consensus on people-centred justice. This alignment builds on HiIL's own history of implementation, research, and consultation, especially in lower- and middle-income countries and fragile rule-of-law contexts. We recognise that we are not working in isolation and we will strategically pursue complementarity with other groups working on PCJ especially in areas that our work does not address.

⁶ See Pillar 1 of the OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems.

⁷ See Pillar 2 of the OECD Recommendation.

⁸ See Pillar 3 of the OECD Recommendation.

⁹ See Pillar 5 of the OECD Recommendation.

8 Strategic objectives

8.1 Why set strategic objectives

The theory of change describes how people-centred justice can be achieved systemically, outlining the outcomes HiiL seeks to influence. The strategic objectives define HiiL's priorities and areas of action over the strategy period. This is where we will concentrate our effort and resources.

HiiL works in an area of highly complex, systemic change. Experience from previous programmes showed that mapping outcomes directly or linearly to areas of work is overly simplistic and does not reflect reality. Progress depends on multiple, interacting factors that evolve over time. For this reason, the strategic objectives are not one-to-one extensions of the theory of change; rather, they translate desired outcomes into concrete areas of action where HiiL can most effectively contribute, learn, and adapt within a dynamic system.

Each strategic objective aligns with the overall direction set out in the theory of change, but their relationship is non-linear and overlapping, reflecting the complex nature of justice system reform.

HiiL's strategic objectives are designed as a direct response to the reality outlined in chapter 5. We focus on areas where we can influence the justice system most effectively:

- **Shifting mindsets and policy frameworks** (Objective A) by promoting a global movement for people-centred justice grounded in data and credible advocacy.
- **Strengthening the justice ecosystem** (Objectives B, C, D) by supporting innovators, justice providers, and institutions to design, re-design and scale solutions that make justice more accessible and fair.
- **Demonstrating what works** (Objective E) through focused initiatives that show how people-centred justice can deliver tangible benefits in high-need areas such as land, small business, family, and gender-based justice problems.

These objectives will be pursued through country programmes and global initiatives, informed by our contextual analysis and existing knowledge. In most settings, we (and our partners) are not 'starting from zero'. Country strategies, developed between local offices and The Hague, will draw on the resources in the HiiL toolbox to drive the changes set out in the strategic objectives.

8.2 The strategic objectives

(A) Promote a global shift towards people-centred justice through research, advocacy, leadership, and strategic communication.

Concretely, this means we will pursue the following strategic directions:

- Advance the global PCJ agenda through clear evidence and framing by generating insights on emerging priorities such as PCJ outcome measurement, justice financing, and SMEs and justice.

- Strengthen integrated advocacy and strategic communication to translate justice issues into accessible narratives and influence debates across major global platforms and multilateral institutions.
- Expand and leverage broad partnerships and coalitions (including OECD, the Justice Action Coalition, Team Democracy Europe, the African Alliance on PCJ, and regional networks) to amplify the PCJ message and open political and financial space for implementation.

Country strategies will draw on these directions in selecting where to focus efforts using Hiil tools.

(B) Build and support strong ecosystems of justice providers using people-centred design, innovation, and data-driven learning.

Concretely, this means we will pursue the following strategic directions:

- Strengthen national ecosystems through evidence and people-centred design by helping justice actors use data, user insights, and practical models to improve services and address priority justice problems.
- Build capacity and technical capability across justice networks by supporting national stakeholders with research, facilitation, and technical assistance that enables learning, adaptation, and innovation.
- Support collaborative problem-solving and innovation pathways by fostering enabling regulatory environments, networks, platforms, and partnerships that enable providers to test, refine, and scale people-centred solutions.

Country strategies will draw on these directions in selecting where to focus efforts using Hiil tools.

(C) Make justice processes fairer and easier to use by connecting and improving formal and informal systems.

Concretely, this means that we will pursue the following strategic directions:

- Strengthen linkages between formal and informal systems by generating and sharing comparable insights on community justice practices and supporting countries to apply these lessons in policy and service designs.
- Support improvements in community-level justice services by expanding work in Ethiopia, Nigeria, the Sahel, and Kenya, and by facilitating cross-country learning across programmes.
- Advocate for investment in effective informal justice pathways by using data, research, and practical examples to guide governments toward fairer, easier-to-use justice processes.

Country strategies will draw on these directions in selecting where to focus efforts using Hiil tools.

(D) Help governments and institutions strengthen how they deliver people-centred justice at scale, especially in fragile settings.

Concretely, this means that *we will* pursue the following strategic directions:

- Support governments to diagnose and address priority justice problems by applying JNS, stakeholder engagement, and people-centred design tools to develop context-fit solutions in fragile and transitional settings.
- Expand our footprint in fragile regions by building on experience in similar contexts and engaging in countries such as Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq where opportunities for justice reform emerge.
- Strengthen large-scale delivery pathways for PCJ by providing targeted advisory support and exploring how private-sector actors can contribute to sustainable, scalable justice services.

Country strategies will draw on these directions in selecting where to focus efforts using Hiil tools.

(E) Demonstrate effective people-centred justice solutions in key areas such as land, small business, family, and gender-based violence.

Concretely, this means that *we will* pursue the following strategic directions:

- Strengthen and refine PCJ solutions in priority thematic areas by harvesting lessons from ongoing projects and improving the design and delivery of work on land, small business, family, and SGBV.
- Develop and test new approaches through research and innovation by creating practical tools and strengthening practices that help justice providers address these problems more effectively.
- Collaborate and co-design with complementary organisations to expand impact, including broader partnerships in Nigeria for SGBV and joint work where thematic alignment adds value.
- Build the policy and investment case for thematic PCJ solutions by documenting what works and engaging national, regional, and EU actors—especially around land and SMEs within the Global Gateway agenda.

Country strategies will draw on these directions in selecting where to focus efforts using Hiil tools.

9 Toolbox

HiiL's experience and assets uniquely position us to deliver on these objectives because:

- **Data and evidence:** Our JNS surveys provide the empirical foundation for prioritising reforms that reflect people's actual needs.
- **Innovation and design capability:** We have proven methods for turning insights into scalable, affordable, and user-friendly justice services.
- **Convening power and partnerships:** We bring together governments, civil society, innovators, and donors to co-create solutions that bridge formal and informal systems.
- **Local presence and adaptability:** Strong country teams and partnerships ensure relevance, ownership, and sustainability, especially in fragile contexts.

The HiiL 'toolbox' is the set of methods we use to deliver people-centred justice. They are the foundation of our value proposition. Built on rigorous methodologies, these tools have been developed and refined by experts and are continuously validated, tested and improved across programmes. While nomenclature, goals and target audiences evolve, the thread of HiiL's DNA (evidence, innovation, collaboration, and learning) remains constant.

Each tool contributes to one or more of HiiL's strategic objectives, and together they form a coherent system for translating our theory of change into practice. The toolbox has evolved from earlier strategies where tools were seen as sequential steps leading to fixed outcomes. We now view them as a **flexible, adaptive set of methods** that programmes can combine and tailor according to context, partnerships, and resources to achieve the greatest impact.

Our toolbox currently includes:

<i>Justice Needs And Satisfaction (JNS) Survey & Electronic Justice Needs And Satisfaction (e-JNS) Survey</i>	<i>Transfer of data expertise and national ownership through capacity building and national events</i>	<i>Stakeholder Engagement & Dialogue</i>	<i>Evidence-Based Guidelines</i>
<i>Qualitative Research: Political Economy Analysis, Qualitative Legal Needs Research</i>	<i>Justice Innovation Labs: Solution design Prototyping Piloting</i>	<i>Justice Accelerator for CSO and SME</i>	<i>Scaling innovative solutions</i>
<i>Knowledge and policy dissemination</i>	<i>Visioning, Strategy Design, & Reform Implementation</i>	<i>Coalition building and participation (AAPCJ, JAC, OGP...)</i>	<i>Specialised expert services in legal problems related to land, family, employment, SMEs and domestic violence</i>

The toolbox is dynamic. Internal experts regularly review methods, integrate lessons, and update guidance. Programme feedback, peer learning, and evaluation findings directly inform tool refinement. Better integration between tools, so data, design, and delivery reinforce each other, will be a priority. This commitment to continuous improvement and innovation keeps the toolbox credible, efficient, and effective in delivering people-centred justice.

During the strategy period, we will prioritise the development and refinement of tools that enable the political adoption of PCJ, foster scaling up of PCJ services and demonstrate convincingly what works.

10 Partnerships

Achieving Hiil's vision requires an ecosystem approach. Bridging the justice gap cannot be done by a single actor; it requires collaboration across institutions, professions, and communities to create diverse pathways that meet people's needs. Justice reforms require a whole society approach built on the recognition that there are very diverse dynamics that impact and inform reforms in government. In this strategy period, we will strengthen partnerships, networks, and alliances that advance the global movement for people-centred justice. Our work engages a wide range of stakeholders, including outside the traditional justice stakeholders, each playing a critical role.

10.1 Partners

At the national level, we build relationships within and between formal, informal, traditional/customary justice actors, civil society, and the private sector to implement our theory of change.

- In the **formal justice sector**, our key stakeholders are the judiciary, justice institutions, key government ministries (like the Ministry of Planning, Land, Digital Economy, etc) , lawyers, paralegals, and professional associations.¹⁰
- In the **informal justice sector**, our key stakeholders are frontline justice workers, traditional and religious institutions, communities and local governments.
- In **civil society**, our key stakeholders are national organisations, academic institutions, NGOs and community advocates.

Where synergies with our theory of change exist, we will seek to work in partnership with [international] development actors, INGOs, the private sector and social investors.

We will coordinate and where possible collaborate with the UNDP and IDLO, based on strategic rule of law and access to justice objectives as part of country frameworks¹¹. At the regional and international level, we will continue to **contribute to platforms and collaborate with partners** such as the World Justice Forum, the Justice Action Coalition, the African And Ibero-American People-Centred Justice Alliances, the African Union, the European Union, and the Open Government Partnership amongst others. We will seek closer relationships with the Munich Security Conference, Paris Peace Forum, Skoll World Forum

¹⁰ E.g. Law Society, Bar Association.

¹¹ This is important because these institutions receive significant funding from the Dutch MFA for access to justice work.

amongst other important governance platforms to access and engage with non-traditional justice partners¹². These collaborations connect field experience with global agendas and help us to translate global commitments into local action.

10.2 Approach to partnerships

Partnerships are built on mutual benefit and shared purpose. HiiL acts as a convenor and ecosystem builder, connecting actors within and beyond the justice sector, including those in governance, security, and migration. As an advocate and amplifier, we use data and evidence to promote people-centred justice and elevate the voices of users and innovators. As an active coalition member, we contribute expertise and align efforts with wider movements for inclusive governance and social resilience.

11 Organisational structure

HiiL's structure is guided by three principles: **multilevel presence, cross-fertilisation, and agility**. We operate nationally, regionally, and globally, ensuring that lessons flow in all directions and that we adapt quickly to changing contexts while maintaining high standards.

Our work at the national level is the starting point, and the focus of our theory of change. Strong country focused teams and trusted local partners design and implement tailored justice strategies. National experience informs and is reinforced by our regional and global engagement. We collaborate with regional organisations and participate in international coalitions and fora to embed people-centred justice in broader policy agendas and share evidence of what works.

Our headquarters in The Hague serves as a hub linking these levels, proactively and structurally gathering, elaborating and sharing learnings from our programmes. Dissemination of learning takes place both internally (from and towards country teams), and externally, with stakeholders and partners. A network of specialists in the Hague and around the world provides technical expertise and support to strengthen delivery across all levels.

¹² Organisation who may not work directly on justice issues but whose work impacts and complements justice sector reforms and global PCJ movements.

12 Where we work

12.1 Focus countries

We focus our efforts where our experience and consultations have shown that people-centred justice can make the greatest difference. We work in a range of contexts across MENA, West and East Africa and the Sahel; some long-term work in middle-income countries, and an increasing focus on fragile and conflict-affected settings.

In the 2025-2029 strategy period, resource permitting, we expect to continue working in:

Nigeria
Tunisia
Syria
Ethiopia
Niger
Burkina Faso

We are also developing prospects for work in, among other places:

Mali
Kenya
Lebanon
Iraq

We recognise that the justice gap is global, including in our home country of the Netherlands. Nevertheless, for this strategy period, we express a clear intention to focus in the MENA, West and East Africa and Sahel regions where we have the strongest existing expertise, relationships and track record. We will be very open to new opportunities in these regions. In compelling cases where unique opportunity meets our expertise, we will consider potential re-engagement in South America, Asia and Europe.

HiiL's presence takes different forms. In some countries, we maintain in-country teams that anchor programmes and engage closely with stakeholders. In others, we work through strong local partners without establishing permanent offices. We also engage at the regional level where cross-border dynamics and institutions create leverage for systemic change.

Decisions on where to work are guided by clear criteria: alignment with HiiL's mission, stakeholder commitment, prospects for sustainable funding, security and access conditions, and the potential for scaling successful approaches. This ensures focus while retaining flexibility to seize high-impact opportunities.

12.2 Advisory services

We aim to establish a small consulting unit providing strategy and advisory services to governments and justice institutions on people-centred reforms. This builds directly on our experience in implementing justice innovation in fragile contexts and positions HiiL as a trusted technical partner for national-scale reforms. It provides a framework for rapid response to new opportunities. A preliminary financial forecast has been developed and will be validated as part of the first year's market validation action. There is already observable demand: ministries and intergovernmental bodies articulate clear problems and are actively seeking solutions.

13 Resources

13.1 Funding landscape

Since 2022, the USA, the European Union, and several European governments have sharply reduced aid budgets, shifting resources from human rights, rule of law, peacebuilding, and climate to defence and migration.¹³ Belgium, France, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, and the EU together have announced \$17.2 billion in cuts to official development assistance (ODA) over the next five years.¹⁴ The closure of USAID in 2025, which accounted for \$43.8 billion of the global \$223 billion ODA budget in 2023, adds further uncertainty.

This upheaval in the institutional funding landscape has far-reaching effects on communities, projects, and organisations worldwide. While other donors may fill some gaps, priorities have shifted and ODA levels are unlikely to return to 2023 levels soon. Yet disruption also brings opportunity. Many organisations are rethinking their business models to achieve greater sustainability and impact.

13.2 Summary of fundraising strategy

Our working assumption is that ODA funding, especially for justice will continue to diminish, but HiiL is in a relatively strong position thanks to our long-standing partnership and alignment with the Dutch MFA and embassies in the countries where we work. The Dutch MFA support accounts for nearly 85 percent of our total revenue in 2025. Our fundraising goal is to diversify our funding base by increasing funding sources outside of the MFA by at least 100 percent in the next four years.

The relationship with the Dutch MFA provides both stability and credibility as we diversify and adapt to the new funding landscape. To achieve diversification HiiL will focus on institutional funders with the strongest interest in justice, and invest in developing a targeted Trusts and Foundations income stream to increase funding with both existing and new funders. Building on the strong programming engagement HiiL already has with parts of the private sector, we will test and develop a new credible private sector income stream. We will also explore additional funding sources via new partnerships and unconventional prospects including advisory services.

Internally this requires we need to further strengthen our whole-organisational capacity for sustainable income generation, including in-country, MEL/Comms, and Supervisory Board support. We need to strengthen the skills, systems, and partnerships needed to localise operations, work effectively in consortia, and deliver diversified, sustainable income streams for HiiL and its partners. Also very importantly we need to refine and strengthen our messaging to align with prevailing countries priorities: Communicate more clearly the contribution of people-centred justice to peace and security, technology, economic development (especially for mSMEs), stability, and climate resilience.

¹³ German Institute of Development & Sustainability, January 2022: Populist radical right parties' impact on European foreign aid spending, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcms.13308>

¹⁴ The Guardian, January 2025: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/jan/23/global-development-economics-donor-spending-refugee-oecd-world-bank-peak-aid>

14 Measuring and learning

We will continuously monitor the implementation of this strategy. Monitoring serves the dual purpose of ensuring operational clarity and accountability, and ensuring that we are continuously learning and adapting our approach. We will monitor this strategy on four dimensions: impact, strategic positioning and thought leadership, internal capability, and financial health.

(1) Our impact, which is generated by the execution of our Theory of Change. We measure success by whether our influence creates tangible change in justice processes and justice institutions (sphere of influence), and ultimately, improves access to justice in the countries we work in, and globally (sphere of concern). Our impact is observed at two related, yet distinct, levels: the justice journeys level and the national justice systems level.

(1.1) Justice journeys level | This is the level where people and businesses experience justice. A success of our strategy will mean that more legal problems are resolved more quickly and fairly, while justice journeys are accessible, affordable, and efficient. Tools such as the JNS, the people-centred justice measurement tool, case studies and storytelling will measure and verify the success of the strategy.

(1.2) National justice system level | Our vision is to improve access to justice and ultimately eliminate the justice gap in the countries where we work. Primary metrics for this are the perceived resolution of legal problems, the fairness of the process and results, and the longer-term outcomes that people-centred justice delivers to individuals, businesses, and communities. The paradigm shift towards people-centred justice occurs at both the political and organisational levels. Leadership and capacity for people-centred justice are critical elements of that level. Recognising that measuring transformation is challenging, we will observe changes in the purpose and culture of key justice institutions and stakeholders.

(2) Our strategic positioning and thought leadership, which tracks Hiil's global authority, relevance to donor priorities, and success in cultivating a diverse network of partners, including local CSOs and the private sector. At the global people-centred justice movement level, success is demonstrated by the movement's strength and Hiil's contribution to it.

(3) Our internal capability, which measures the organisational health needed to sustain high-quality work, focusing on operational effectiveness and other key organisational metrics.

(4) Our financial health, which focuses on our resilience by tracking funding diversification, multi-year stability, and prudent use of resources.

All key performance indicators will be further developed and defined in a separate plan. These metrics will be reviewed regularly to inform strategic decisions, adapt our operations and ensure we are learning as we implement.

15 Strategic risk profile and mitigation

HiiL's strategy is designed to help us stay ahead of major **risks** to our mission including:

- external pressures such as shifting donor priorities, funding volatility, and political shifts, and
- operational risks like field security, cyber security and data breaches, staff capacity and retention, and
- integrity risks of SEA, corruption, and fraud in procurement and partnerships.

We **mitigate** these risks by grounding our strategy in a few essential priorities:

- We will pursue diversified, multi-year funding streams, expanding our income base through targeted institutional, foundation, and private sector funding to reduce dependency on any single source;
- We will continuously update our security assistance and traveler check-ins. We will strengthen IT security tools, regular staff training, and compliance with data privacy rules. We will improve workforce planning tools, prioritize talent development, and foster a supportive work culture to reduce attrition.
- We will (continue to) strengthen partnerships through rigorous due diligence and shared values;
- We will (continue to) enforce strict anti-corruption and ethical standards and maintain robust digital and physical security protocols and training, and ensure continuous investment in professional staff development.

Crucially, these activities are governed by a **commitment to adaptive programming**, ensuring that our operations are continuously tested, learned from, and adjusted. This way of working keeps us agile, focused, and able to deliver sustained results in this evolving landscape.

T: +31 (0) 70 762 0700 | E: info@hiil.org
Muzenstraat 120, 2511 WB The Hague, The Netherlands
www.hiil.org