The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law brings justice closer to civil communities around the globe

**Laws and regulations are fundamental cornerstones of any democracy. They dictate rights and obligations of people, organisations and states and thereby help prevent or peacefully resolve conflict. But legal frameworks don’t always match current day reality and are often difficult to understand. The people these laws are meant to protect therefore don’t always have access to the justice they are essentially entitled to. This causes conflicts to linger, people to feel unsafe and brings tension among communities.**

According to The Hague Institute for Innovation of Law (HiiL), over 70% of the 1 billion people facing a new justice problem globally each year do not find a satisfactory resolution. 30% don’t even feel empowered enough to take action. HiiL is set out to resolve this problem, and make justice accessible to all.

The impact that accessible justice systems have on communities can be transformative. As people get the tools they need to solve conflicts by themselves or with their informal network, they put less claim on the legal system, which can focus on more complex, heavier crimes. Also, it gives people agency in the case of injustice or conflict, which as a consequence makes them feel safe and secure in their communities and homes.

**A data based approach**

Unique in its kind, HiiL was founded in 2005 in The Hague as a civil society organisation committed to people-centred justice and backed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the municipality of The Hague. HiiL works at the intersection between citizens and justice authorities, researching opportunities to make justice work. Data-based insights from research in 18 countries form the foundation of their work, and dictate priorities and focus.

For example, in Nigeria, where HiiL has been working since 2006, HiiL research indicates that 81% of citizens encountered legal problems in 2022. 55% of those legal problems were resolved either partially or completely and the most common legal problem categories are disputes with neighbours, domestic violence, land disputes, crime, and housing problems.

The research also indicates that people in Nigeria often rely on their inner circle when addressing their most pressing legal problems, frequently seeking help from family and friends. Among the outcomes drawing from this research, are guidelines for land and family justice in Ogun state. With these guidelines in hand, citizens, informal and formal advisers can prevent or resolve disputes in a just and peaceful way.

**Working group on user-friendly contracts**

Another way in which HiiL improves access to justice is by supporting [game-changing service delivery models](https://www.hiil.org/news/bridging-the-justice-gap-with-gamechanging-services/). One such innovation is user-friendly contracts which improve clarity in contracts and other legal documents. Two examples are Creative Contracts based in South Africa and Visual Contracts based in the Netherlands. Both startups offer simplified employment contracts which make legalities easy to understand. For example, illustrating formal contracts in the style of a comic book to help illiterate citizens navigate legal documents requiring signatures.

**Accelerating impact across the world**

As part of a global network of international justice and development organisations, HiiL publicly shares their [research](https://dashboard.hiil.org/), methods, insights and best practices. This way, organisations across the globe can accelerate people-centred justice innovation in their countries and communities. In addition, HiiL supports promising startups that make justice accessible with their annual Justice Accelerator programme. It is the only startup programme and innovation ecosystem builder in the world entirely dedicated to access to justice.

Since 2011, the Justice Accelerator has supported 139 startups, some of which are growing fast. Also, HiiL’s [Innovating Justice Fund](https://innovatingjusticefund.org/) provides funding for startups that are ready for investment. Examples of successful alumni from the Justice Accelerator are Nigerian [iVerify](https://www.iverify.ng/), which provides identity and background checks for prospect employees, tenants or businesses, Tunisian [Civitas](https://civitas.tn/), which is a platform for digital municipal services, and [Lexyom](https://www.lexyom.com/) from UAE, which provides easy to use legal document creation.