

JUSTICE 2015

HOW JUSTICE IMPACTS DEVELOPMENT

Kadiatu, a cigarette seller and sometime sex worker from the east end of Freetown, Sierra Leone, knows what it's like to live without justice. One night a drunk off-duty police officer brutally beats her. As she lies unconscious, bystanders steal her main income source: her cigarettes. Kadiatu complains to the police but it goes nowhere — until paralegals step in. They meet with the officer, plan to monitor how the police discipline him, and prepare to file a lawsuit for damages. The officer quickly apologizes to Kadiatu and offers to pay compensation.

Justice problems like Kadiatu's happen every day, all around the world—except many people don't have legal help on hand. Instead, four billion people globally live outside the reach of the law. Their own run-ins with abusive power, like Kadiatu's, often go unnoticed and unaddressed, but can have a huge impact on their lives. Without redress, people are unable to secure livelihoods, lose their income, and can fall deeper into poverty and despair.

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As the world works out how to combat poverty in the next generation of development goals, new strategies are needed. Justice is one of them. Not only does justice help individuals like Kadiatu, but increasingly it is recognized by scholars, practitioners, and governments alike as having a broader positive effect on development. In fact, it has already been helping to achieve the current **Millennium Development Goals** reach their targets. Here are a few examples:

MDG IMPACT 1: ERADICATING EXTREME POVERTY AND HUNGER

Justice underpins efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Access to justice programs give farmers and marginalized communities the tools they need to improve their tenure security, which has been shown to lead to more productive investment. Similarly, the ability to access and enforce regulatory frameworks helps to determine whether contracts and labor and environmental standards are respected in practice: all of which are critical for fair development outcomes. In the **Philippines**, survey results showed that in communities with legal support, regulatory reforms resulted in residents with higher levels of productivity, higher income, more disposable income, and more investment in their farms.

MDG IMPACT 2: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN

Access to justice helps translate legal guarantees of gender equality into real improvements in the daily lives of women. Access to justice projects have included support to women in handling domestic violence, sharing in benefits from natural resources, retaining control over loans taken out in their name, and accessing inheritance to which they are entitled or property upon divorce. In **Bangladesh**, an evaluation found that efforts that provided access to justice for women reduced the illegal practice of paying dowries and increased women's cash savings for emergencies, compared to other communities without legal help.

MDG IMPACT 3: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Justice and governance can help preserve the environment. **Globally**, a study of 80 forest areas across Asia, Africa, and Latin America found that greater local autonomy in making rules about forest management was associated with high carbon storage and many livelihood benefits, measured in the contributions of firewood, fodder, fertilizer, and timber to the basic subsistence needs of local users. The findings suggest that when local users perceive insecurity in their rights, they consume more forest products; but when their tenure rights are secure, they conserve biomass and use their forest commons in a more sustainable manner. Access to legal help can assist communities to secure rights over common land, giving them more control over their livelihoods and greater incentive to preserve their environment.

**LET'S MAKE ACCESS TO JUSTICE
PART OF THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA.**

