

2025 | Background Brief 3.3

Justice Financing Framework

A Guide to Budgeting and Financing for
People-Centered Justice for the Justice Sector





BACKGROUND BRIEF 3.3

3.3 Financing Ambition #3: Information, Advice, Assistance, and Informal Dispute Resolution



Introduction

The JFF establishes that in addition to adopting a minimum spend on primary front line justice services (Financing Ambition #2), countries should, within this allocation, prioritize information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution. Financing Ambition #3 advises:



Within primary front line services, countries should prioritize information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution, with a minimum spend of 2.5 percent of total justice expenditure.

This background brief:

- Defines information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution.
- Explains the reasons for Financing Ambition #3 and why this aspect of primary front line justice services should be prioritized.
- Explains how Financing Ambition #3 was derived.
- Notes areas where further research is required.

1. What is Information, Advice, Assistance, and Informal Dispute Resolution?

Financing Ambition #2 is based on the premise that all countries should have universal coverage of primary front line justice through nationwide services. As explained further in [Background Brief 3.1](#), primary justice front line services are universally available services that deal with people's most pressing justice needs at the local or community level.

Primary front line justice service functions and service providers are detailed in Table 1 below, and in [Background Brief 3.1](#).

Table 1: Primary Front line Justice Service Providers

Function	Primary Front Line Service Provider
1. Information 2. Advice and assistance	Usually provided by non-lawyer community justice workers ⁷⁶ (e.g., community-based paralegals, mediators, advice centers, community leaders, judicial facilitators). Includes national information (e.g., websites, radio soaps). Providers may be state or non-state.
3. Informal dispute resolution	Informal justice systems (e.g., community/village/customary/market courts). Should fulfill most (but not necessarily all) of the following criteria: • Jurisdiction: Relatively low value or less serious for everyday justice problems. • Accessibility: Local or community-based. • Headed or presided over by non-lawyer or non-expert (but lawyer could provide general training and/or support). • Procedures: Informal, flexible, often non-adversarial. • Enforcement: Limited powers of enforcement, operating in the shadow of the law.
4. Formal, state dispute resolution	First-tier formal civil and criminal courts, tribunals, ombuds services, community police, public prosecutors, probation services, correction services.

As can be seen from Table 1, for the purpose of Financing Ambition #3 the JFF delineates the **information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution functions**, and omits the formal ‘state’ resolution elements of primary front line justice services.

2. Reasons for Financing Ambition #3: Why this aspect of primary front line justice services should be prioritized

2.1 Why Financing Ambition #3?

Financing Ambition #3 recognizes that change can take time, and it may not be possible to allocated resources to achieve Financing Ambition #2 immediately. This is particularly true for lower-income countries where affordability of nationwide primary front line justice services is an issue. Even if these countries maximized their tax take, they would be unable to afford even half the costs of a primary front line justice system (see [Background Brief 3.2](#)).

Financing Ambition #3 recognizes that transitioning to funding the totality of universal coverage of primary front line justice services may not be feasible in the medium term. The reasons for privileging the information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution elements of these services are discussed below.

⁷⁶ See Jessica Bednarz. “i4J Develops New Tool for Leaders Interested in Developing Community-Based Justice Worker Programs.” *Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System*, September 5, 2024, <https://iaals.du.edu/blog/i4j-develops-new-tool-leaders-interested-developing-community-based-justice-worker-programs> for Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System discussion of community-based justice workers in the US.

2.2 Imbalance within primary front line justice services

The costing analysis detailed below identifies how much needs to be spent on information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution. ODI Global's best estimates of the current share of spending are much lower, on average between 3–7 percent of the amount needed (see Table 2 in following section).

By contrast, spending on front line community police—by far the largest element of the formal first-tier primary justice service mechanism—is currently at required levels in OECD and middle-income countries, as the number of police is already higher than the UN target. It is only in low-income countries where spending on police is below required levels, on average only at 40 percent of the UN target. Nevertheless, the ratio is still much greater than the current 3–7 percent share of the spending target for information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution.

2.3 Prevention and early intervention

The Task Force on Justice's 2019 *Justice for All* report promotes early intervention and notes the analogy with the health sector, with its focus on public health and primary health services. Similarly, information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution—with their focus on early intervention, prevention, and de-escalation of disputes—are recognized as highly effective, low-cost approaches. Early access to legal information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution can provide an early gateway to resolution.^{77,78}

2.4 Enabling currently unaddressed justice problems to be resolved without overloading the formal system

The scale of currently unmet justice needs suggests that were they to enter the formal justice system, they would be likely to overwhelm it. Information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution can address these needs in a low-cost and appropriate way, offering the potential to bridge a justice gap that is too wide to be tackled through traditional approaches.⁷⁹

There are good examples of the rapid transformational impact that information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution—all of which are highly local, context specific, and strongly people-centered—can have on improving access to justice (see **Background Brief 3.4**, Box 2 for examples).

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- 77 See Task Force on Justice. "Flagship report of the Task Force on Justice." *Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*, 2019, <https://www.sdg16.plus/resources/justice-for-all-report-of-the-task-force-on-justice>; "SDG 16.3 indicator metadata document," *UN Stats*, March 31, 2023, <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/files/Metadata-16-03-03.pdf>, which notes the importance of accessing these services; and Richard Griggs, "Evaluation of PASI's Access to Justice Project 01 October 2009 – 30 September 2010," The Paralegal Advisory Service Institute's pilot program for adult pre-trial detainees originating at Kanengo and Mangochi police stations in Malawi; *Open Society Justice Initiative*, January 2011, Unpublished, 6–7.
- 78 For example, UNDP's innovative Collaborative Dispute Resolution program in Kachin and Shan states in Myanmar in the post-coup context. This improved the ability of village leaders and civil society organizations to negotiate dispute resolution fairly, including land and labor disputes. The program also showed the potential to improve the quality of access to justice at the village level, particularly in enhancing women's participation and influence in community-based dispute resolution processes. For more, see UNDP Rule of Law and Human Rights Programme, "Myanmar Annual Report," 2023, <https://rolhr.undp.org/annualreport/2023/asia-pacific/myanmar.html>.
- 79 Task Force on Justice, "Justice for All: The Report of the Task Force on Justice."

2.5 Proven to offer high value for money

Information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution offers excellent value for money. Robust academic studies point to these alternatives as some of the strongest evidenced-best value-for-money activities in the justice sector—and indeed across all sectors globally (see [Background Brief 3.4](#)).

3. How Financing Ambition #3 Is Derived: Costing Information, Advice, Assistance, and Informal Dispute Resolution

The costing estimates which form the basis for Financing Ambition #3 are based on a standardized model of information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution. They draw on the functional analysis set out in [Background Brief 3.1](#); World Justice Project (WJP) data on the number of severe justice problems; and the assumption that community justice workers would be paid the statutory minimum wage. The full calculations are set out in Annex A.

Data on current spend on information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution is rarely recorded, especially when provided by civil society and not funded by the government. Where it is government-funded, it is most likely to be captured as part of spend on civil legal aid. Current legal aid expenditure therefore provides the current best estimate of the maximum possible spend on information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution. The table below compares the estimated cost with current levels of spend on noncriminal legal aid and assistance (further analysis of this spend is provided in Annex B). As the table notes, this spend is only 3–7 percent of the estimated cost of information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution.

Table 2: Cost and Current Funding of Information, Advice, Assistance, and Informal Dispute Resolution

Cost and Current funding of information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution (all figures are median for income group)	LIC	LMIC	UMIC	OECD
Cost of CJF as percent of total justice expenditure	6%	5%	5%	9%
Non-criminal legal aid and assistance spend as percent of total justice expenditure			0.13%	0.6%
Non-criminal legal aid and assistance spend as percent cost of CJF			3%	7%

In view of the gap between costs and current funding, Financing Ambition #3 recommends as a first step that the minimum level of information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution expenditure should be 2.5 percent of total justice spending. This would be ambitious, implying a four-fold increase in spending in OECD countries. While spending on information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution would still only be a small proportion of total justice outlay—and still far short of what is needed—it would enable a major scaling up of these services. In Argentina, the initial development of a system of justice centers across the country was achieved with just 0.25 percent of total justice expenditures.⁸⁰ And the remarkable scaling up of information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution work in Sierra Leone was achieved with 2 percent of total justice spending.⁸⁰

5. Area for Further Research

As discussed above, further research is needed on both the current and required level of spending in countries to achieve universal coverage of information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution services.

80 Clare Manuel et al., “Front-line justice services with the potential to scale up: evidence from low- and middle-income countries.” *ODI Global*, June 2025. <https://odi.org/en/publications/front-line-justice-services-with-the-potential-to-scale-up-evidence-from-lmics/>.

81 Clare Manuel and Marcus Manuel. “Cost-effective front-line justice services in Sierra Leone: a case study in frugal innovation and domestic resourcing.” *ODI Global*, June 19, 2024. <https://odi.org/en/publications/cost-effective-front-line-justice-services-in-sierra-leone-a-case-study-in-frugal-innovation-and-domestic-resourcing/>.

Annex A

A1. The standardized model for information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution⁸²

The first step in arriving at a standardized model is to estimate the number of hours of community justice worker (CJW) facilitation time required to resolve a typical pressing justice problem. This is based on different types of required intervention, as noted in the table below.

In order to develop a realistic funding target, we use the concept of a community justice worker. In some form, every country has CJWs, resolving issues close to where people live, work, and interact. They may function formally as paralegals; small firm lawyers; judicial facilitators; employees of legal expenses insurance companies; legal aid organizations or NGOs; justices of the peace; social workers; family therapists; youth protection specialists; social lawyers; or legal/health workers. Sometimes they work informally as mediators, elders, scribes, or members of community courts.

Their professional background may be different, but most of them work on similar tasks, so we can define their role for purposes of costing on the basis of one general job description. Each of these functions can be turned into a task for which resources are required, including the number of hours of the CJW in question.

This obviously can (and should) be refined for individual professions, for the types of conflicts they work on, and for the average severity of these conflicts. For a first approximation, however, we use the following assumptions:

- CJWs need to be able to prevent and resolve the number of justice problems (conflicts) by facilitating agreements, supported by adequate regulation.
- CJWs have evidence-based tools and methods to achieve win-win outcomes and distributive solutions.
 - These can be provided by evidence-based “resolution guidelines” and model agreements similar to the ones used in the health care sector.
 - These guidelines are also available for self-helpers (user-friendly information).
- CJWs can refer conflicts to a neutral decision maker (informal/local court, authority) as a backup when agreement is not achieved, provided that neutral party is also applying these methods effectively and efficiently.

82 This section was developed by Hiil

CJWs on average perform the following resolution services per 100 problems:

- Of the 100 problems, 95 lead to some kind of action by the client.
- Of these 95 problems, 25 are resolved through self-help by the client without any involvement of the CJW.
- The remaining 70 problems need diagnosis by the CJW, which enables a further 10 problems to be solved by the client in agreement with the other party without further intervention.
- The remaining 60 problems need information and tailored advice by the CJW, which enables another 20 problems to be solved by the client in agreement with the other party.
- The remaining 40 problems need neutral facilitation by the CJW using mediation and other skills to overcome barriers to conflict resolution, leading to another 30 problems to be resolved by agreement.
- The remaining 10 problems need to be prepared and transferred by the CJW to an authority for a decision. A decision is accepted by the parties in 7 of those cases.
- The remaining 3 problems remain unresolved. The CJW may need to be available for de-escalating these problems.
- The CJW needs to provide some aftercare in order to ensure that the 67 agreements and decisions are complied with and adjusted if needed.

Table 3 below estimates the total number of hours required.

Table 3: Estimating the Number of Hours of Community Justice Worker (CJW) Facilitation Time Required to Resolve a Typical Pressing Justice Problem

Interventions required for every 100 problems	Problems requiring intervention at this stage	Problems solved through this intervention	Number of hours of CJW input required	
			Per intervention	Per 100 problems
Solved by client	100	5	0	
Self-help by the client without any involvement of the CJW	95	25	0	
Diagnosis by the CJW, which enables problems to be solved by the client in agreement with the other party without further intervention	70	10	1	70
Information and tailored advice by the CJW	60	20	2	120
Neutral facilitation by the CJW using mediation and other skills to overcome the barriers to conflict resolution	40	30	6	240
Case prepared and transferred by the CJW to an authority for a decision	10	10	10	100

Additional activities				
De-escalating when decision by authority not accepted (3 out of 10 cases transferred)	3		10	30
Aftercare in order to ensure that the 67 agreements and decisions are complied with and adjusted if needed	67		2	134
Total CJW hours required for 100 problems				694
Total hours required for 70 problems that require CJW support (= nontrivial problems)				694
Memo				
Total CJW hours required to solve one nontrivial problem				9.9
Total person years required for one nontrivial problem (based on 40 hours/ week and 46 working weeks a year)				0.0054
Implied number of problems resolved per CJW each year				186

A2. Costing⁸³

To cost legal information, advice, assistance and informal dispute resolution, the above data on the number of hours required per problem is combined with WJP data on the number of problems requiring information, advice, assistance, and informal dispute resolution⁸⁴ and ODI-estimated wage costs for a CJW in each country. The latter are based on minimum wage rates.

⁸³ This section was developed by ODI Global.

⁸⁴ Assumed by ODI to be problems with WJP severity level of 6 or higher on a scale of 0 to 10. On March 14, 2025, WJP provided ODI with data on the average number of disputes respondents reported having experienced in the two years prior to being surveyed. This data originates from the WJP Global Legal Needs Survey, which covers 103 countries surveyed between 2017 and 2022. For further details on the sampling methodology, see World Justice Project, "Dissecting the Justice Gap in 104 Countries: WJP Justice Data Graphical Report I," specifically the Methodology section, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-justice-data-graphical-report-i>. The descriptions and statements made here are based on WJP data, but these descriptions and statements are attributed to ODI, not the WJP. The WJP does not confirm the accuracy of any statement/claim based on third party analysis of data. ODI combined this WJP data with UN data on the number of adults to calculate the median number of nontrivial disputes every year per total population for each country income group.

Table 4: Estimating Costs

Costing	LIC	LMIC	UMIC	OECD
Total hours required to resolve 100 problems	694	694	694	694
Number of problems requiring CJW support (out of total 100 problems)	70	70	70	70
CJW hours required for every 100 nontrivial problems	991	991	991	991
Implied number of CJWs required for every 100 nontrivial problem	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Average number of nontrivial disputes every year per total population (WJP data)	0.11	0.13	0.20	0.46
Number of CJWs required per person	0.00061	0.00071	0.00110	0.00249
Wage unit cost of CJW as percent of gross domestic product (GDP) per person	93%	65%	50%	48%
Percentage uplift for non-wage costs	33	33	33	33
Total unit cost of CJW as percent of GDP person	124%	86%	67%	64%
GDP per person	573	2,831	9,260	43,682
Monthly CJW salary	59	202	513	2,326
Total CJW cost per person as percent of GDP per person	0.08%	0.06%	0.07%	0.16%
Total CJW cost as percent of GDP	0.08%	0.06%	0.07%	0.16%
Justice spend as percent of GDP (median)	1.3%	1.4%	2.3%	1.7%
CJW spend as percent of justice spend	6%	5%	3%	9%
Noncriminal legal aid and assistance spend as percent of justice spend			0.13%	0.6%

A3. Further Work

The figures in Table 3 contain rough estimates of the number of hours for every single function/task. Data to test and improve these estimates can be collected in the following way:

- Through operators of existing seamless pathways.
- By focus groups of community justice professionals who already execute these tasks.

Next versions will also have to look into the following tasks and interfaces:

- Community justice workers (community paralegals) may also provide assistance/representation to the entire community, standing up for rights of people living there in their relationship with major corporations, the national government, or other powerful groups.

- Criminal justice is already provided by community policing.
 - Community Justice workers can facilitate restorative and retributive justice.
 - To be effective, they will then also need a criminal justice decision mechanism as a backup.
- Community Justice workers also facilitate agreements between people and government agencies.

In addition, Table 4 does not include costs of alternative ways of providing information such as national helplines. Total costs will therefore be even higher.



Annex B: Current Spend on Noncriminal Legal Aid

B1. Key points on current spend on noncriminal legal aid as percent of total justice expenditure

- Median level of spend in OECD countries on noncriminal legal aid is 0.6 percent of total justice expenditure.
- The comparable figure in UMICs is 0.13 percent.
- There is insufficient data to estimate the median for LMICs and LICs.
- Median level of spend in the five highest spending OECD countries is 2 percent (including Netherlands at 2.1 percent and UK at 1.7 percent).
- Median for three LICs—Malawi, Rwanda and Sierra Leone (all of which are known to invest in legal aid)—is 0.13 percent.

B2. Additional details

This analysis, prepared by ODI Global, covers sixty-seven countries. The data is compiled from multiple sources including the International Monetary Fund's Government Finance Statistics,⁸⁵ the Council of Europe Commission for the efficiency of justice (CEPEJ),⁸⁶ national reports prepared for the International Legal Aid Group 2023 conference,⁸⁷ and ODI analysis of national budget data. The full detail of the analysis is available from ODI on request. Not all countries provide a split between criminal and noncriminal legal aid. Where the split was not available, ODI estimated this using the median for the peer country income group. Table 5 presents the median spending levels for each country income group.

Table 5: Legal Aid Spending Data

Medians	Percent Total Justice Expenditure			Percent Total Legal Aid	
	Total Legal Aid Budget	Criminal Cases Budget	Non-Criminal Cases Budget	Criminal Cases Budget	Non-Criminal Cases Budget
LICs	0.74		0.13	82%	18%
LMICs	0.30		0.05	82%	18%
UMICs	0.41	0.21	0.13	82%	18%
OECD	1.15	0.65	0.62	53%	47%
All	0.76	0.56	0.35	57%	43%

⁸⁵ International Monetary Fund, "ACCESS TO ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL DATA," last accessed March 2025, <https://data.imf.org/>.

⁸⁶ Council of Europe European Commission for the efficiency of justice (CEPEJ), "Dynamic database of European judicial systems," last accessed March 2025, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/cepej/cepej-stat>.

⁸⁷ International Legal Aid Group, "National Reports Database," last accessed March 2025, <http://www.internationallegalaidgroup.org/index.php/conferenecs/harvard-usa-2023/national-reports>.

Count	Numbers of Countries Reporting Data			Total Number of Countries
LICs	3			26
LMICs	9			52
UMICs	17	3	3	54
OECD	34	18	18	38
All	67	22	22	

Figure 1 shows the level of spend on legal aid in each country and Figure 2 shows the actual/estimated spend on noncriminal legal aid in each country.

Figure 1: Legal Aid as Percentage Share of Total Justice Expenditure

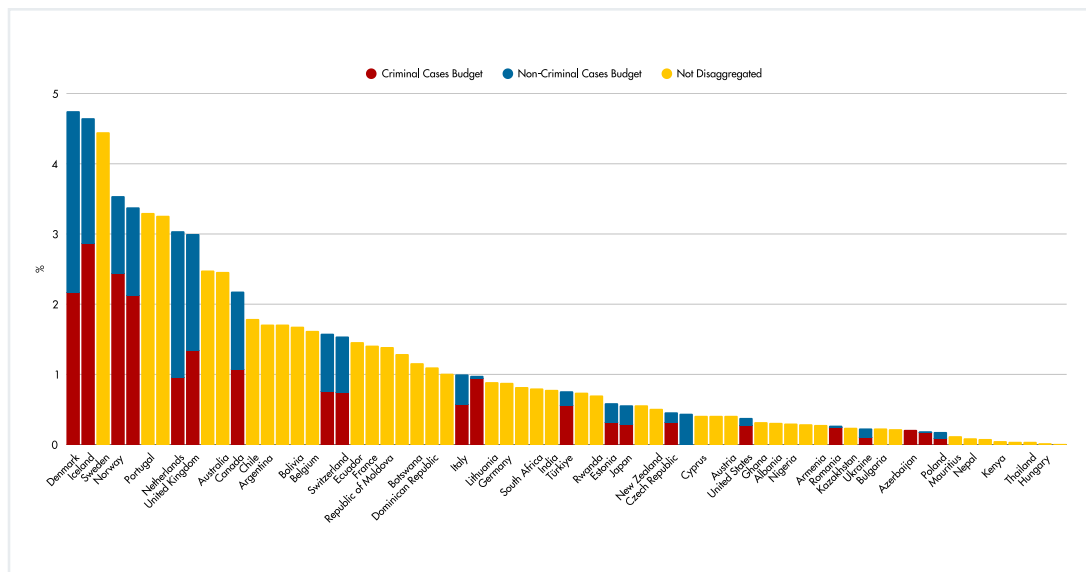
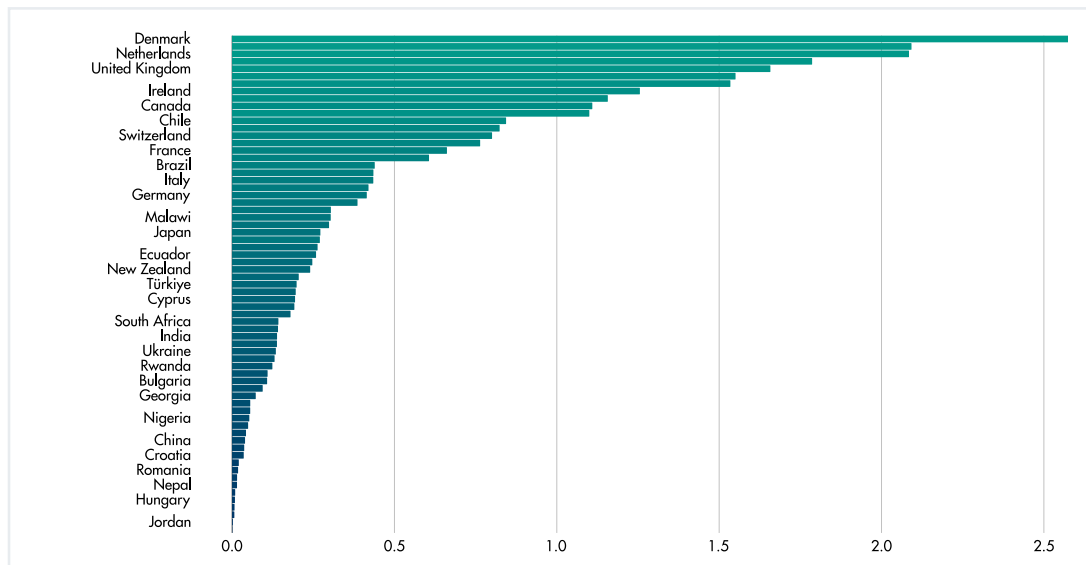


Figure 2: Non-Criminal Legal Aid as Percentage Share of Total Justice Expenditure



Appendix of Background Briefs

Introduction and Purpose

0.1 Justice Financing Framework: Introduction and Purpose

0.2 Lessons for Justice Financing from the Health Sector

People-Centered Culture and Purpose

1 Setting High-Level People-Centered Justice Objectives

1.1 Outcomes Focused on the Resolution of People's Justice Problems

"More Money for Justice"

2 Assessing the Scope for Increasing Resources

2.1 Financing Ambition #1: Justice Sector Share of Total Government Expenditure

2.2 Judicial System Share of Total Government Expenditure

2.3 Contributions to Costs by Beneficiaries

2.4 Private Sector Investment in Justice

2.5 Financing Ambition for Countries in Receipt of Significant External Development Support

"More Justice for the Money:" More Justice Outcomes from Available Resources

3 Setting Spending Priorities in Line with People-Centered Justice Objectives

3.1 Defining Primary Front Line Justice Services

3.2 Financing Ambition #2: Primary Front Line Justice Services

3.3 Financing Ambition #3: Information, Advice, Assistance, and Informal Dispute Resolution

3.4 Scalable Best Value-for-Money Activities

4 Improving Efficiency and Effectiveness of Spending

4.1 Governance and Regulation of Justice Services

4.2 Financing Ambition #4: Research, Development, Governance, Evidence-Based Practice, and Continuous Improvement

4.3 Systematic Efficiency and Effectiveness Expenditure Reviews

Implementation

5 Developing Achievable, Costed, Prioritized, Transparent, and Accountable Plans

5.1 Achievability, Costing, and Prioritization

5.2 Transparency and Accountability



This Background Brief is an excerpt from the Justice Action Coalition Workstream IV, "Justice Financing Framework," November 2025. For more information, see www.sdg16.plus/justice-financing-framework.