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Between ideals and needs: is Malian customary justice incompatible with international human rights standards?

Providing access to justice is a fundamental component of any functioning legal system and enabling such access is a state obligation under international human rights law. In the case of Mali, where the state has never been the primary justice provider, customary justice mechanisms are central to the provision of justice for the majority of the population. However, some policy debates juxtapose oversimplified pictures of customary justice systems with the ideals of Western justice systems. This brief will argue that efforts to improve access to justice should not be driven by assumptions that customary justice systems are incompatible with international human rights standards. These efforts should rather be led by the needs of local communities and individuals and aimed at addressing the challenges faced by customary justice systems. The brief makes recommendations for policy makers and practitioners who aspire to support customary systems in overcoming their weaknesses and to remedy the profound need for justice in Mali.

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 2012 security crisis, the conflict in Mali has deepened, leading to international concern over the deterioration of security and consequent violations of human rights. The people of northern Mali have fallen victim to international crimes, including murders, summary executions, rapes, forced disappearances and torture. In central Mali, radical groups have perpetrated attacks and other violent actions against state officials, peacekeepers and local populations. In some instances, physical threats have been made by Malian armed forces who have arbitrarily detained village chiefs and locals during military operations in the centre

of the country.¹ This pandemic of violence is coupled with protracted local conflicts regarding access to and management of land and natural resources and to inter-communal differences.²

The legacy of atrocities committed by armed groups in the north and centre of Mali calls

- 1 Human Rights Watch. 2017. *Mali: Unchecked abuses in military operations*. 8 September.
- 2 Ursu, A.E. 2018. *Finding justice amidst insecurity: Policy initiatives to strengthen customary systems and mitigate conflicts in central Mali*. The Hague. Conflict Research Unit. Clingendael Institute.

for a response that should set access to justice and the mediation of conflict as its main priorities. Often the fragile security situation, the lack of resources, the extent and gravity of crimes committed and their politically sensitive nature prevents the formal judiciary from fulfilling its role.³ Although the challenges that confront the Malian government and its international partners in their efforts to strengthen justice provision are daunting, it is of utmost importance to continue investing resources to ensure that the people of Mali have access to justice. This is particularly important since, as argued elsewhere, ‘poor-quality justice reduces the ability of Malians to resolve their disputes peacefully, undermines the social contract between state and citizens, and acts as a barrier to development’.⁴

Given that the Malian state is not the only provider of justice – more so in rural areas, where the majority of the population lives – it is important to investigate the key role of customary mediation as an alternative pathway to guarantee access to justice. Traditionally, customary authorities are charged with settlement and reconciliation in civil disputes, including family issues, resource-use conflicts and inheritance. In recent years, these authorities have had to operate in an increasingly violent environment and have witnessed the expansion of the scope and type of disputes brought before them. However, although rule of law practitioners might understand that in conflict-affected countries such as Mali customary systems are the primary source of justice, reform endeavours have tended to focus on reconstruction of the formal justice.⁵

This brief will argue that customary justice systems are able to provide justice, as they can mediate in civil conflicts thanks to the legitimacy derived from their social and cultural embeddedness. In the short run, customary justice may be the only feasible option for most people, and development partners and donors could strengthen its positive aspects while also working to address traditional exclusionary and discriminatory practices. Convinced that any justice reform should work with ‘the grain of local culture and political realities’,⁶ this brief will propose recommendations for policy makers, donors and rule of law practitioners that take into account local justice needs rather than focusing only on international legal ideals.

Legal pluralism and access to justice in Mali

In Mali, formal and customary systems of justice coexist within the frame of legal pluralism. The complex relationship between the two systems is often oversimplified by separating the state legal system, composed of laws and judicial institutions emanating from and enforced by the state, from non-state systems, such as religious and customary systems, deriving legitimacy from their social and cultural embeddedness.⁷ This separation does not always reflect reality or user perspectives. What a purely legal analysis fails to take into account is that legal systems, whether formal or informal, do not exist ‘in isolation from the underlying socio-economic, cultural and political context’ and that ‘justice institutions and processes are a reflection of the fundamental inequalities in society’.⁸

3 International Federation for Human Rights. 2017. [Mali: Choosing justice in the face of crisis](#). 8 December.

4 Van Veen, E., Goff, D. and Van Damme T. 2015. [Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali](#). The Hague. Conflict Research Unit. Clingendael Institute. 3.

5 Chopra, T. and Isser, D. 2012. ‘Access to justice and legal pluralism in fragile states: the case of women’s rights’. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*. Vol. 4, Issue 2. 337-358.

6 British Council. 2015. [Access to Justice and the Rule of Law: the British Council approach](#). 4.

7 Chiongson, R.A., Desai D., Marchiori, T. and Woolcock, M. 2011. [Role of Law and Justice in Achieving Gender Equality](#). World Bank. 8.

8 *Op.cit.* Chopra.

Customary law tends to reflect social hierarchies and inequalities. Additionally, customary systems provide few – if any – mechanisms for challenging or changing the social norms they reflect, particularly for those with the least social power.⁹ Yet formal systems also replicate asymmetric power relations. Even if the effectiveness of formal justice systems is not hindered by external factors such as conflict, rule of law practitioners may erroneously label them as ideal justice providers. But in reality, while formal systems may reproduce some functions and principles of the rule of law, they might simultaneously operate in ways that reflect dominant social norms and biases of the societies they serve. According to a study by the International Council on Human Rights, ‘virtually every criticism levelled at non-state orders for failing to match the characteristics of an “ideal” justice system has also been levelled against formal state legal systems, often in the same national context’.¹⁰

In Mali, the reflection of unequal powers by justice providers is felt directly by users of both customary and formal systems. According to the Afrobarometer, Malian citizens tend to avoid the court system, as they expect it to favour the rich and powerful, and the courts are too far away from their community.¹¹ Citizens also indicate that they do not expect fair treatment in the courts, and that barriers such as delays in the adjudication of cases, excessive costs and the system’s complexities make it hard to access formal justice.¹² Overall, trust in the

judiciary is low and perceptions of corruption are high. Of the 36 countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer between 2014 and 2015, Mali registered some of the lowest contact rates between the formal judicial system and the citizens. Among Malians, people living in rural communities, women, young people and those with no formal education had the least contact with formal justice.

In light of these negative perceptions of, and obstacles to, accessing the formal system, many Malians rely on customary authorities to provide justice.¹³ Of the Malians surveyed by Afrobarometer, 80 percent trust religious and traditional leaders, and when asked why they avoid the court system, 32 percent said they preferred to go to traditional local leaders.¹⁴ This evidence corroborates Clingendael’s earlier research findings, according to which, customary systems and religious figures, despite the challenges they face, still play a prominent role in providing justice throughout the country.¹⁵ Yet, customary systems fall short of perfection. Corruption and political interests were identified as two of the main negative factors, among others, affecting the delivery of satisfactory outcomes through customary mediation.¹⁶

Nevertheless, customary law in itself is an integral aspect of the traditional way of life for many Malians, with well-established principles that are widely recognised, respected and observed. Customary leaders have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of traditional principles, and the majority of adults have a good knowledge of how customary mediation functions. The shared frame of reference between the users and the providers of customary justice is, in itself, a source of legitimacy for customary leaders. They are perceived as part of society, not as external actors seeking to impose a different order on

9 Lubkemann, S.C., Kyed, H.M. and Garvey, J. ‘Dilemmas of articulation in Mozambique: customary justice in transition’, in Isser, D. (ed.). 2011. *Customary Justice and the Rule of Law in War-Torn Societies*. USIP Press Books. 34.

10 International Council on Human Rights. 2009. [When Legal Worlds Overlap Human Rights, State and Non-State Law](#). 145. See also Luccaro, T. 2016. [Customary Justice: An introduction to basic concepts, strengths, and weaknesses](#). International Network to Promote the Rule of Law. 24.

11 *Ibid.*

12 Afrobarometer. 2017. [In Mali, citizens’ access to justice compromised by perceived bias, corruption, complexity](#). 19 October. 7.

13 *Ibid.* 2.

14 *Ibid.* 4, 7.

15 Goff, D., Diallo, M. and Ursu, A.E. 2017. [Under the Microscope: customary justice systems in northern Mali](#). The Hague. Conflict Research Unit. Clingendael Institute.

16 *Ibid.* 19-24.

the community and its activities. This might explain the sidelining of formal justice, as its legal framework fails to provide ‘an answer to the psychological and cultural expectations governing the confidence of litigants and the (formal) law.’¹⁷ The existing divide between the formal justice offered and the justice sought by the Malian people should be taken into account when crafting new initiatives aimed at enhancing access to justice. Only a deep understanding of the values underpinning the relationship between those who seek justice and the system providing them with a ‘sense of justness’ can help advance access to justice in Mali.¹⁸

A human rights-based approach to customary systems

The question remains whether customary systems can live up to the ‘rule of law guarantees’¹⁹ sought by the international community – including compliance with human rights. Human rights concerns with respect to the functioning of customary justice systems are three-fold. First, during the mediation process, the accused is not always granted opportunities to express their views or appeal decisions – in contrast to international notions of fair trials. Second, some decisions issued by customary systems perpetuate discrimination against women and marginalised groups. Lastly, during a trial and at the sentencing phase, customary and religious leaders might impose cruel or inhumane forms of punishment that conflict

with basic human rights.²⁰ The following section looks at the extent to which such instances occur in customary mediation in Mali.²¹

Lack of fair and due process

Basic international standards for a fair trial include the right to a public hearing before an impartial, independent and competent body, the right to a speedy process, access to legal counsel, and equality before the judging bodies and between the parties involved in the case.²² Interviews in Mali with customary authorities and users of customary justice in 2016 and 2017 revealed that during the mediation process chiefs make their decisions in a public manner after having allowed the litigants to confront each other and speak freely. Their decisions often benefit from the input or vote of a council of advisers, and ‘the debates are open to the public, for anyone who wishes to attend’.²³ In that sense, customary systems do not seem to be in breach of the right to a public hearing; on the contrary, the public dimension is at the heart of the mediation process. Moreover, the public forum produces a local type of governance and ownership of justice, which gives agency to both customary chiefs and disputants over their own local conflicts.

To continue, the outcome of customary mediations is achieved within reasonable speed – sometimes much more quickly than occurs in the formal justice system. This is partly due to the proximity of customary chiefs to the disputants, who do not have to travel to a different location to solve their conflicts. Yet while some perceive the direct interaction between disputants and

17 Mbaye, A. 2010. *Pour une nouvelle ingénierie institutionnelle qui codifie la pluralité des légitimités. Des propositions pour refonder l’État*. Gouvernance en Afrique. 74.

18 Albrow, M. and Seckinelgin, H. 2011. *Global Civil Society. Globality and the Absence of Justice*. Palgrave Macmillan. 140-141.

19 The term ‘rule of law guarantee’ is here used from a political and legal-sociological perspective and includes the ways in which political and legal institutions should govern security, guarantee safety and handle conflicts, while simultaneously protecting the rule of law in a democratic society.

20 United Nations Women, UNICEF, UNDP. 2009. *Informal justice systems. Charting a course for human rights-based engagement*. 11. Luccaro, *op.cit.* 22-26.

21 This analysis is centred around customary figures that use the *dina* principles to adjudicate disputes and less so around those who employ strictly religious principles.

22 African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. 2003. *Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa*.

23 Goff, *op.cit.* 3; 12.

customary chiefs as a way to guarantee speedy procedures, others question the lack of support from a legal adviser during the mediation process. It should be acknowledged that access to a legal adviser – for example, a barrister – is particularly important in formal legal systems as users receive advice on complex legal matters and interpretation. However, it is highly questionable whether such a person would be of use in customary systems, as all adults have a good understanding of customary norms and principles, and are able to navigate the system on their own.

Finally, independence is one of the core principles of a well-functioning judiciary, but it may not be held in similar fashion when it comes to customary justice. In Mali, as in any political system, customary norms are used as an instrument of power to regulate relations between people through dispute mediation, promoting values such as social cohesion and managing access to and use of resources. But although customary chiefs may live up to the expectations of litigants, they are nevertheless guardians of traditions and dominant cultural beliefs. Hence, through their decisions they may maintain a conservative social order often characterised by patriarchal hierarchy and social inequality.²⁴ As an anthropological view of customary systems reveals, the mediation outcome is ‘what the stronger is willing to concede and the weaker can successfully demand’²⁵ – thus leading to discriminatory practices against individuals with less social capital.

Discrimination towards women

Some in the rule of law community are concerned that customary justice systems often exclude women. Indeed, our previous studies do reveal discrimination against women, in particular at leadership level. Few

women are allowed to participate directly in customary justice provision, for example in the role of council or jury.²⁶ Some accounts also indicate that women might – at times – be deterred from seeking redress before customary leaders. According to a very experienced customary mediator, this is the case not because of direct prohibition but because of certain cultural and traditional boundaries that women are very well aware of.²⁷ There is a similar normative dynamic in the formal justice system, where women face even more obstacles to access. For example, taking a family dispute before a state judge is perceived as a hostile act that threatens the social cohesion of the family and the entire community.²⁸ At the same time, it would be wrong to assert that all customary processes discriminate against women. Evidence shows that in a number of cases women were treated fairly and equally in alignment with international standards.²⁹

Access to both customary and formal justice systems can be determined by communal norms and values, meaning that the potential exclusion of women from justice follows from their generally more restricted position in society. Exclusion is not a symptom of the justice system per se but of the wider social context. Genuine reform of access to justice can therefore only come about through measures aimed at the social empowerment of women and vulnerable and marginalised groups. Current efforts to improve access to customary justice for women through capacity-building measures do not fully

24 It should be noted that the judiciary can also be seen as guardian of the formal law and tends to be conservative and uphold patriarchal structures and ideas.

25 Merry, S. 1982. ‘The social organization of mediation in non-industrial societies: implications for informal community justice in America’, in Abel, R. (ed.), *The Politics of Informal Justice*. New York. Academic Press. 23.

26 Goff, *op.cit.* 4.

27 Phone interview with the founder of RECOTRADE. The Netherlands, The Hague. 2 March 2018.

28 American Bar Association. 2012. [Access to Justice Assessment for Mali](#) 2-3.

29 For instance, in 2001 the head of a Songhay family in Gao passed away, leaving behind a wealth of land parcels. Both the daughters and the brothers of the deceased claimed ownership over the land, but according to Songhay tradition women are not entitled to inherit land. The chiefs of Gao, their councillors and various imams sat together to find a solution that would satisfy all the parties. As customary justice seeks to preserve social cohesion and peace, the leaders proposed a proportionate distribution of the land, to which the parties agreed. See Mbaye, *op.cit.* 83-4.

address the underlying problem.³⁰ Such efforts could be enhanced through working with movements for change that may exist within these systems themselves. Literature drawing on experiences of customary law around the world shows that these systems are indeed subject to calls for social change, including the erosion of traditional values. This implies that the transition out of traditional hierarchies has the power to trigger reactions to the inequalities of customary justice systems.³¹

Our research indicates that the time is ripe for such change. Out of 57 respondents across three regions in Mali, 22 believed these customary systems could become more inclusive of women, 18 believed that would not be possible, and 17 were uncertain.³² However, it is the local context that should determine ‘what development activities occur when, how and in what order, as the provision of justice and security is based upon historical legacies, cultural value systems, political calculations and intricate balances of power’.³³ An experienced customary mediator similarly explained that, while traditional practices are often used to justify subordination of women, culture is dynamic and can change through training, public education, and access to new information.³⁴

Inhumane punishment and the use of Islamic law

Inhumane punishment inflicted by customary justice systems is mainly linked to the infamous ‘trials by ordeal’. These trials determine guilt or elicit confessions through harmful practices, including physical abuse or violence. However, the use of truth ordeals or trial by ordeal are becoming less and less common.³⁵ During an extensive series of interviews conducted in Mali in late 2016, only one respondent expressed a wish to see the reinstatement of ‘the proof of fire’, which consists of asking the accused to walk on burning coals to determine guilt – if the accused is not guilty, their feet will not hurt.³⁶

In addition to trials by ordeal, rule of law practitioners have expressed concern about the imposition of harsh corporal punishments. Following the 2012 security crisis, northern regions and some central areas have witnessed the extensive use of sharia law to resolve local disputes. In certain cases, sentencing has been accompanied by corporal punishment including stoning, whipping and hand amputations.³⁷ This development is linked to the growing presence of radical groups that enforce sharia law rather than to any changes in customary justice systems.³⁸ In fact, resistance to the demands of radical groups by some chiefs has resulted in their abduction or murder by presumed jihadist groups who maintain control over the territory and target those who do not abide by their dictates.³⁹

30 Chopra, T. and Isser, D. 2012. *Women’s Access to Justice, Legal Pluralism and Fragile States*. World Bank. 24.

31 Barfield, T., Nojumi, N. and Thier, J.A. 2011. ‘The Clash of Two Goods. State and Nonstate Dispute Resolution in Afghanistan’. ‘The Cross Fire of Sudan’s War of Identities’, in Isser, D.H. 2011. *Customary Justice and Rule of Law in War-Torn Societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press. 163.

32 *Op.cit.* Goff.

33 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2007. *Enhancing the Delivery of Justice and Security: Governance, Peace and Security*. 6.

34 Phone interview with the founder of RECOTRADE. The Netherlands, The Hague. 2 March 2018.

35 Penal Reform International. 2000. *Access to justice in sub-Saharan Africa – the role of traditional and informal justice systems*. November. 31.

36 Interview with NGO representative. Sevare, Mali. September 2016.

37 Niarela. 2017. *Charia: Une Réalité malienne* and The National. 2012. *Sharia law enforced in Mali*. August 1.

38 Maliactu. 2012. *Mali: le chef d’Aqmi appelle à imposer la charia graduellement au nord*. 24 May.

39 *Op.cit.* Ursu. 8.

Rule of law and international communities that want to help strengthen customary justice systems so as to improve access to justice should avoid generic assumptions. For example, although the Malian population adheres predominantly to Islam, they do not necessarily agree with the imposition of harsh punishments derived from sharia law. In describing the conservative lifestyle advanced by radical groups, one respondent explained that, in his opinion, ‘this is not religion, it is extremism’.⁴⁰ Though radical groups might demand that chiefs use sharia law in customary processes of mediation, a Mopti-based village chief explained that chieftaincies are not inclined to incorporate such principles in traditional mediating processes: ‘Mali is a secular country, we are secular authorities. We use the *dina*’.⁴¹

This is not to say that customary systems do not follow Islamic law at all. Islamic law is sometimes incorporated into customary processes of mediation and reconciliation, often through the active participation of the Islamic clergy.⁴² In Mali today, about 90 percent of inheritance claims are solved before a *marabout*, and the application of sharia legal principles to solve civil law disputes is recognised by the state.⁴³ However, while many Malian religious leaders invoke sharia, it must be acknowledged that this is an old practice and relatively few citizens want sharia to become state law.⁴⁴ To put it differently: not all customary justice

systems apply sharia law and those systems that do apply it generally tend to do so in a moderate manner following traditional rather than radical points of view.

Recommendations for promoting effective access to justice

Some international actors may regard customary justice systems as desirable only to the extent that they provide accessible mediation in ways that do not contradict internationally sanctioned principles. As such, interventions aimed at reforming customary systems have tended to follow theories of reform that focus on the mechanisms of customary systems rather than on empowerment-based approaches.⁴⁵

The question which the rule of law community faces is not whether customary systems need support but rather what is the best way of sustaining them. As this brief has shown, justice provision should be seen as a competence but not exclusive prerogative of the state, as the legality of a justice system does not guarantee its legitimacy before the people. For local communities, a just outcome resulting from a mediation process is not necessarily one that conforms to the law but rather one that preserves the interests of all parties to the dispute and offers them mutual satisfaction.⁴⁶

Initiatives aimed at improving access to justice through customary systems be aimed primarily at fulfilling the needs of users. They should likewise create a space for the development of better justice provision that reflects a sense of justice among the population as a whole and not of a small elite. To achieve this, international donors should solicit ideas and user perspectives from local communities and tap into their knowledge and resourcefulness. Finally, international actors should aim

40 Phone interview with a forester from Mopti. The Netherlands, The Hague, 9 November 2017.

41 The *dina* is a set of social rules based on local practices and beliefs originating from the reign of Sekou Hamadou, the Macina Fulani Empire. Phone interview with a customary chief from Mopti. The Netherlands, The Hague, 9 November 2017.

42 Phone interview with a Malian academic. The Hague, 1 November 2017. For a discussion on the interplay between sharia and customary principles see *Op.cit.* Van Veen. 31-3.

43 Personal interview with a Malian academic. The Netherlands, The Hague. 10 November 2017. Soares, B.F. 2005. ‘Islam in Mali in the neoliberal era’. *African Affairs* 105/418. 83-4.

44 Soares, B.F. 2005. ‘Islam in Mali in the neoliberal era’. *African Affairs* 105/418. 84-5, 93. Personal interviews in Gao, Mopti and Tombouctou. October 2016.

45 International Development Law Organization. 2013. *Customary Justice: Challenges, innovations and the role of the UN*. 57.

46 Mbaye, *op.cit.* 75.

for a modest pace of change rather than an overly ambitious one that hastens the process but jeopardises the outcome. Ultimately, successful programming would use dialogue as a tool for the exchange of views and information rather than imposing international norms and principles.

Left unattended, the justice vacuum could herald a much broader political crisis and violent conflict.⁴⁷ Among the concrete steps that the international community could take, the following merit attention:

1) Look beyond the legalistic framework

Policies aimed at aligning customary systems with rule of law are desirable and progressive but could bring unintended consequences that might undermine their objectives.

To avoid this, practitioners and donors should create a more holistic analytical framework capable of looking beyond legalistic aspects. This would ideally include social, cultural and historical analysis of different justice systems (customary, religious, formal) to form a picture of the entire justice landscape and how the systems relate to each other. The framework should also include a political economy analysis to map the main actors engaged in power relationships (e.g., justice seekers and justice providers), the practices and exchanges that affect these relationships and the contexts within which they occur, with a focus on ensuring that women and vulnerable groups within communities are also given due attention. Eventually this would allow for the identification of areas ripe for engagement in a sustainable and context-sensitive manner.

2) Disseminate knowledge about human rights

Low literacy rates and levels of education, as well as hierarchical/patriarchal power structures, prevent the uptake of information by the population, despite numerous campaigns to raise awareness of human rights principles. But the need to know more and to better understand these principles is reflected in requests from communities

⁴⁷ Ursu, *op.cit.*

themselves who would like to become more familiar with international legal standards.⁴⁸ To encourage inclinations to implement human rights norms, they could be presented not as end goals but as instruments to help the development of the community. Perhaps one way of triggering community uptake of human rights principles would be to support the elaboration of 'local conventions', commonly used for the harmonious resolution of conflict and to prevent the escalation of conflict.⁴⁹ Such a consultative process is an ideal entry point for a human rights approach. If those involved in the elaboration of the conventions can see the benefits to be derived from international principles and their interpretation, they might be more keen to incorporate them into local practices. This would create a solid base of knowledge about human rights values, and these values would gain legitimacy within local communities, as they would be presented as a home-grown initiative.

3) Increase the social power of women and vulnerable groups

Patriarchal culture and heavy reliance on tradition to justify discrimination against vulnerable groups, and exclusion of these groups in decision-making processes, remain the most challenging aspects of customary justice systems. To help ensure that these groups are treated fairly by customary authorities, international donors could work towards increasing the social power of the most vulnerable members of society. That is to say, donors might examine ways to extend the influence that vulnerable groups have within society as a whole, based on input from the groups themselves. This requires the identification of social mechanisms that empower women and marginalised people and help 'foster power in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Assemblée malienne des citoyens. 2009. [Cahier de Propositions du Cercle de Kati](#).

⁴⁹ Assemblée malienne des citoyens. 2010. [Cahier de Propositions du Cercle de Kolokani](#).




⁵⁰ Page, N. and Czuba, C.E. 1991. 'Empowerment: what is it'. *Journal of Extension*. Vol. 37, No. 5.

The empowerment of women and vulnerable groups is necessary if customary justice systems are to become more responsive to the needs of the community, and it mitigates the risk that prevalent customary values continue to discriminate against certain marginalised groups. However, customary systems should not be treated in isolation from other aspects of community life and development. Rather, customary systems could be strengthened and brought into compliance with international standards through proxy programming rather than through treating justice as an isolated sector that requires reform; entry points for discussion could be health, education or livelihood issues. Finally, engagement with these systems should be a component of wider development initiatives that address the social, cultural, political and economic contexts in which these systems operate.

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