



Project 1

Committing to universal legal empowerment: Understanding causality, enhancing impact and promoting innovation

Objective: Empowering civil society and other key actors with the knowledge, skills and tools to develop effective legal empowerment strategy, programmes and policy.

Timeframe: 36 months (Jan 2015 - December 2017)

Background

The people of the WANAINSTITUTE region face unprecedented and interlaced challenges. These include unequal access to essential resources, weak entrepreneurial opportunity, protracted conflict, political instability and displacement. These events have aggravated chronic development problems and placed pressure on public goods such as water, electricity, health care and education. A common thread in each of these challenges is that the legal systems of many countries in the WANAINSTITUTE region do not afford equal opportunity and legal protection to large segments of the population, most of whom are poor and marginalised. In some situations, laws and institutions impose barriers and biases against these groups. In others, low rights awareness, lack

of affordable legal services, and inefficient or opaque institutions, mean that justice is inaccessible. Such exclusion from the rule of law has negative implications for economic growth, livelihoods, social equity and stability.

In response to these challenges, the development community has traditionally focused on strengthening state justice apparatus, such as legislative reform, training judges, and equipment provision. Over the last decade, however, there has been a shift away from such 'top down' approaches towards strategies that enable the poor and marginalised to use the law to advance their rights and interests, and exercise increased control over their lives. Such approaches are broadly referred to as legal empowerment. Initiatives might include migrant workers using the powers of association to achieve income security, NGOs assisting poor people to access the courts, and parents learning about birth registration in order to facilitate access to education and health services. Legal empowerment is an inter-sectoral strategy that reaches beyond the law to address the causes of poverty, injustice and exclusion. The rationale is that where a population is empowered, entrepreneurialism is encouraged, growth patterns

are equitable and inclusive, and cycles of exploitation and rights violations are interrupted, providing the marginalised with the opportunities and knowledge required to lift themselves out of poverty.

Problem analysis

While legal empowerment approaches have gained traction and support in many countries, in the WANA region, the concept remains broadly misunderstood and there is little comprehensive data on the legal empowerment environment in individual countries. Furthermore, little is known about the impact of interventions that do take place. Evaluation is piecemeal, organisations lack skills in impact assessment methodologies, and

results are not shared. Consequently, there is little evidence on the interconnections and causality between legal empowerment and other development problems.

The extent to which such approaches can be value-adding and what supporting measures or sequencing needs to be set in place requires further analysis. Until such questions are answered, legal empowerment represents a missed opportunity for addressing specific challenges confronting the region, including fostering equitable economic growth, facilitating responsive political reform, poverty alleviation and promoting conflict resilience.

<p>Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development, testing and analysis of legal empowerment performance indicators in five WANA countries. • Comparative impact evaluation of 20 legal empowerment programmes in five countries that measures impact, highlights common challenges and identifies opportunities for enhanced performance. • Investigation into the potential utility of paralegal models as a means of enhancing access to justice for poor and marginalised groups. • Outputs: Findings and recommendations disseminated to 2,500 stakeholders, research reported in three academic journals, research presented at three conferences, interview vignettes with HRH Prince Hassan and Professor Steve Golub, one animated video, three infographics, and three opinion editorials.
<p>Conferences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-day regional conference for 75 policy-makers, civil society practitioners and justice sector actors on enhancing the impact of legal empowerment programming and to launch a Regional Legal Empowerment Charter. • Two-day regional conference 75 policy-makers, civil society practitioners and justice sector actors on paralegal programming and working with informal justice systems. • Output: 150 civil society practitioners, policy-makers and donors attend conferences, Legal Empowerment Charter endorsed by 5,000 civil society practitioners, legal stakeholders and individuals.
<p>Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two-day practical training for 40 civil society practitioners from ten WANA countries on legal empowerment programme design, monitoring systems and impact evaluation, e-learning modules launched. • Two-day practical training for 40 civil society practitioners from ten WANA countries on paralegal models and programming for engagement with informal legal systems, e-learning modules launched. • Output: 80 civil society actors from ten WANA countries participate in training workshops; 300 participate in e-learning programmes.
<p>Results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civil society practitioners use evidence-driven methods to amend, design and evaluate legal empowerment programmes for enhanced impact.