

WHAT  
DOES

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

MEAN

?

**ACCESS TO JUSTICE** is a  
vital part of development.  
Without it, people who  
live in poverty can be left  
behind, without a voice.



That's why the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for equal access to justice for all.

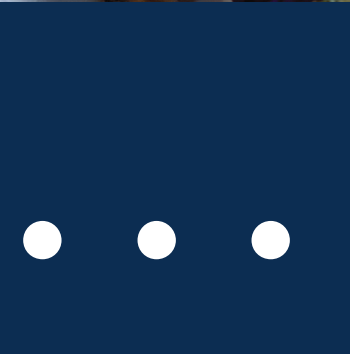
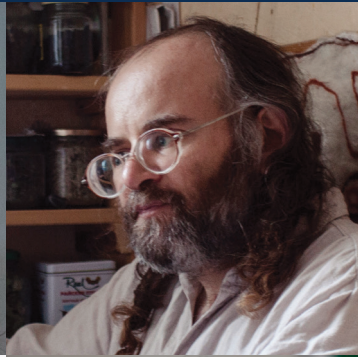
Already, there's a global movement to provide grassroots legal advice to communities that would otherwise be left out.

Read what just some of the people involved in that movement have to say—about how access to justice can protect the well-being of a farmer in Malawi, or give a Roma child in the Balkans access to proper healthcare, or help indigenous communities in the Philippines hold on to their traditional lands.

These are positive, measurable development outcomes.

Made possible by access to justice.

Access  
to  
Justice  
Means





...being treated  
fairly by the  
police and courts.

# VINTENGA GALITZI

## KANENGO, MALAWI

At the age of 21, after a dispute at his market stall, Vintenga Galitzi spent almost three months in jail in Malawi, awaiting trial on a minor charge of disturbing the peace.

“The first day I entered the prison cell, it was so congested, they piled us up like sacks of anything. We had no chance to get water. We had no chance to get food. And then that night I didn’t sleep; I spent the whole night standing. This was a very difficult moment for me, because I thought I might die at any time.”

Vintenga’s wife had to spend six hours a day travelling to prison and back to bring him food; she sold their TV, their bicycle, a bed and other items to cover the costs. Then his file was discovered by a paralegal working with Malawi’s Paralegal Advisory Service Institute, who applied for bail with the local magistrate and secured his release:

“My family had to sacrifice a lot for me. And for me to get out, it was because of these paralegal officers.”





...securing the  
ownership of  
traditional lands.

# NAPOLEON 'YOYONG' MERIDA JR.

## MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES

Yoyong's indigenous community in Sumilao staged a multi-year campaign to reclaim 144 hectares of community land that had been taken over for use by one of the Philippines most powerful business groups. After receiving instruction as a community paralegal, Yoyong now helps his neighbors understand the prevailing laws that affect and protect their daily lives.

"I'm a farmer who is also a paralegal. I can't say it's a safe life. Some people see us as being disobedient. But we're not. We are paralegals studying the law, because we want the law to be implemented."



...benefiting  
properly from  
government  
services.



# VITA KALAMBET

## VELYKA PAVLIVKA, UKRAINE

Vita Kalambet provides legal advice to rural communities in Ukraine. Her work focuses on using her knowledge of the law and regulations to help people negotiate the complex local bureaucracy—to claim child support payments, to adopt a child, or to secure pensions that are due to them.

“When people don’t have much education, they don’t know the law. But they need to know the law so that they can know their rights so they can defend themselves, so that nobody does them any harm. For instance, there was a woman who wanted child support for her three children, from her divorced husband who was in jail. So we helped her prepare the documentation needed by the implementation division of the family court.”



...protecting  
people who live  
on the margins.

# ARSENIY LEVINSON

MOSCOW, RUSSIA

Arseniy and his father run a Russian legal website, Hand-Help.ru, dedicated to providing publicly accessible, up-to-date data on current drug laws. The site helps drug users—one of the most marginalized groups in the country—secure fair treatment by the police, social services and health care providers. It also helps law enforcement officials and lawyers stay informed on the state of current law. People write in questions—answers are provided from a network of trained lawyers supporting the system.

“If you search the word ‘drugs’ on the Russian internet, our name is there among the first. Hand-Help.ru is the only website of its kind in Russia for legal issues associated with drugs. It could be questions not just connected with criminal law, but with civil law, such as taking away parental rights, or access to health services.”



...protecting the  
property rights  
of women and  
children.

# MERCY OWITI

## NYERI, KENYA

Mercy Owiti works with a rural hospice located about 100 miles north of the Kenyan capital Nairobi. In addition to providing nursing care to terminally ill patients in poor communities in the vicinity, Mercy has been trained to dispense legal advice on issues such as succession planning. In a typical case, by drawing up a will and getting local community leaders involved, she helped a dying grandmother ensure that her property was handed on to her young grand-daughters, and not seized by other, more powerful family members.

“Legal aid has really improved quality of life. Because when we give counseling about legal matters, when they are supported legally, they are able to divide their property. So when they are able to even transfer bank accounts to their spouse, to their children, they are happy, because they know, even when they are gone, life will still continue.”





...preventing  
illegal police  
detentions.

# BAINDU KOROMA

## BO, SIERRA LEONE

Baindu Koroma works as a paralegal with Timap for Justice, a group whose work includes providing free legal advice to people detained at local police stations. Sometimes that means getting people out of jail who just shouldn't be there, people like Abu Morgan. He was arrested by the police because his son had been accused of stealing some money from a relative. Baindu heard his story and got the police to set him free the next day; then she worked with the man's family to mediate the underlying family dispute.

"[Abu Morgan] has three wives and several children. And because he was detained for these two days, the children and the wives could not sleep, because he is the breadwinner. I discussed the case with the investigating officer, and I said that as far as the law is concerned, nobody should be held responsible for another person's actions."



...equal  
treatment for  
people living with  
HIV/AIDS.



# WILLIAM MULINDWA

## GAYAZA, UGANDA

William Mulindwa is a teacher who is also part of Uganet, a legal services network in Uganda that works alongside the medical system to support people living with HIV/AIDS. With more than eight people out of 100 living with HIV/AIDS in the country, the program offers poor communities tools for navigating the extra challenges that come with the AIDS epidemic. This approach has been endorsed by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS, which now says that access to justice programs like this should be part of every national AIDS program.

“Because of the spread of HIV and AIDS there’s a lot of violence within families, there’s a lot of divorce, and there’s a lot of things that are abusive. Some of these issues may be about land, or domestic violence, or succession planning. As a paralegal who has the basics of law, we empower them so they can seek their rights. We are also part of the community, and we are the road that links the community with the voices that are going to help them have their problems answered.”



...securing  
legal identity  
documents  
for all.

# LJUTVIA DEMEROVA

## DELČEVO, MACEDONIA

Ljutvia Demerova is the mother of a large family that is part of the Roma community of Delčevo, Macedonia. Like many Roma families in the region, her children lacked proper birth certificates, which in turn made it harder for them to access health care and other public services. Then she attended a workshop run by KHAM, a local Roma group, providing free legal services.

“My eldest daughter was seven years old, and she still had no identity documents. I gave them her personal details but they wouldn’t issue a birth certificate; they told me to wait. For one, two, three years. But then legal services people helped a lot; we got the certificate in one day. Now I want to get a health record booklet for her and her brothers and sisters.”



...helping  
minorities to  
secure health  
services.

## ROMINA KAJTAZOVA

### DELČEVO, MACEDONIA

In Macedonia, health care providers have been known to illegally charge Roma patients for services such as check-ups and vaccination certificates; others have confiscated Roma patients' identity cards if they were unable to pay their bills. Much of this malpractice is now being challenged by community-based paralegals such as Romina.

"I have come to realize how hard it is for people to exercise their rights, and that the right to health care is a very sensitive area that is essential for people's lives. When we visit people at home, or they come to our workshops they learn step by step how to fight for their rights themselves."





...strengthening  
the policing  
of polluting  
factories.

# MANISHA GOSWAMI

## VAPI, INDIA

Vapi is famous for being one of the largest industrial areas in Asia—and one of the most polluted places on the planet. Pollution from almost 500 local chemical plants in the area has poisoned the Kolak River, destroying the livelihoods of traditional fishing communities. Manisha Goswami is a mother whose daughter's serious asthma is attributed to the severe levels of local pollution. Now, using knowledge of environmental regulations, and her skills as a mediator and organizer, she uses right to information laws to help traditional communities ensure that factories are obeying the law.

“Somebody has to monitor these industries. If the government cannot do it, vigilant local people and communities and district level bodies can do it. Since these industries can't be closed down, the least I want is that they abide by the pollution laws.”



...ending  
discrimination.



# NAHID PARVIN

## BANGLADESH

20-year old Nahid Parvin is part of the 300,000-strong Urdu-speaking minority in Bangladesh—a community that traces its ancestry to outside Bangladesh, but has been in the country since before the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh's independence in 1971. Despite a 2008 High Court ruling that Urdu-speakers are Bangladeshi citizens, they find it difficult to navigate the discrimination from the majority Bengali community that prevents them receiving passports, ID cards and birth certificates. Armed with a basic knowledge of the law, Nahid now helps members of her community get the official documents they need. In under a year, a team of 10 paralegals has helped almost 1,400 people secure their identity rights for the first time.

“Now in one year as a paralegal I have helped 290 people to get identity documents. Although I am young, I have earned respect from the community. Everyone says ‘Salaam’ and calls me ‘Madame.’ It has inspired me to train as a social worker and do more development work.”

We will spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development.

— UN MILLENNIUM DECLARATION, SEPTEMBER 2000

In too many countries, the laws, institutions, and policies governing economic, social, and political affairs deny a large part of society the chance to participate on equal terms. The rules of the game are unfair.

— REPORT OF COMMISSION ON LEGAL EMPOWERMENT OF THE POOR, JUNE 2008

Poverty is not simply the lack of material goods and opportunities such as employment, ownership of productive assets and savings. It is also the lack of intangible assets and social goods, such as legal identity, good health, physical integrity, freedom from fear and violence, organizational capacity, the ability to exert political influence, and the ability to claim rights and live in respect and dignity.

— BAN KI-MOON, UN SECRETARY GENERAL, JULY 2009

The rule of law at the national and international levels is essential for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

— UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION, DECEMBER 2009

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda recognizes the need to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that provide equal access to justice and that are based on respect for human rights (including the right to development), on effective rule of law and good governance at all levels and on transparent, effective and accountable institutions.

— TRANSFORMING OUR WORLD: THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, 2015

## **OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS**

224 West 57th Street

New York, New York 10019 USA

[www.opensocietyfoundations.org](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org)

The Open Society Foundations work to build vibrant and tolerant democracies whose governments are accountable to their people. Working with local communities in more than 70 countries, the Open Society Foundations support justice and human rights, freedom of expression and access to public health and education.

## PHOTOGRAPHY

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“Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.”

— UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

GOAL 16.3



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