



## Key Takeaways

Frequent civil justice problems in the Sahel include commercial issues, disputes over land and natural resources, trouble with landlords and neighbors, and divorce or other problems within the family. WJP found relevant justice solutions focused on women and youth, reinforcing customary justice, expanding self-help and legal education, building law-technology through social entrepreneurship, localizing justice services, and creating legal frameworks for access to justice.

### Research Questions

1. What everyday barriers prevent citizens from accessing justice?
2. How have unresolved civil disputes contributed to violence and fragility?
3. What practical interventions have improved outcomes for civil justice?
4. Where are they generalizable to other fragile and conflict-affected contexts?

Our findings reflect a review of the extant literature, consultations with relevant experts working in the region, and qualitative interviews with implementers in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal.

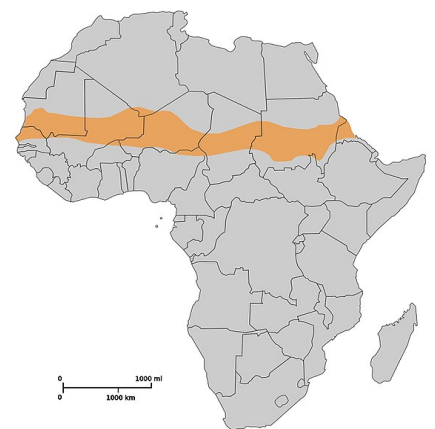
### Key Recommendations

- **Empower local authorities** to resolve everyday justice problems, especially regarding land use and labor disputes, in alignment with national statutes and human rights law.
- **Localize justice** using community paralegals, student clinicians, and one-stop legal service providers.
- **Target efforts at systemic failures** that undermine state legitimacy – especially judicial corruption, youth unemployment, discrimination against women, and forced labor.
- **Leverage social impact investments** to incubate novel approaches for legal service delivery, such as information technologies that streamline contracts or automate self-help.
- **Deploy media and the arts** to foster behavior change: for example, programs that represent diverse cultural norms or shift expectations about government and the law.
- **Coordinate implementation** through pooled donor funds, multilateral organizations, legislative monitoring committees, and independent human rights commissions.

### About

Access to Justice in the Sahel is a project of WJP's [Rule of Law Solutions Initiative](#), a qualitative research program which identifies, documents, and promotes effective practices for strengthening rule of law around the world. This program is a registered [Acceleration Action Commitment](#) for UN Sustainable Development Goal 16.3, which aims to “promote the rule of law at the national and international levels, and ensure equal access to justice for all.” The Rule of Law Solutions Initiative is supported by an ACLS-Mellon Public Fellowship.

### The Sahel



An arid region on the southern edge of the African Sahara, which has seen a sharp increase in violence and state fragility.