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Dedicated to people-centred justice

Measuring justice from the users' perspective: a first look at the Justice Services Measure

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The need for a Justice Services Measure

People-centred justice (PCJ) as an approach has now been widely embraced and integrated into international policy, and some national policies, around the world. Yet, it remains notoriously difficult to measure. Too often, "people-centred" is a title applied to any well-intentioned initiative. However, if every justice reform is labeled as people-centred, the term loses its ability to distinguish genuine, user-centred transformation. As a result, there is an urgent need to make this dimension of people-centricity measurable. By developing concrete measurement tools, we are better able to observe, evaluate, and compare justice systems, services, and outcomes.

This necessitates a measurement tool that can accurately capture the realities of justice journeys. Similar to the healthcare sector revolutionising its service delivery by adopting Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) to capture the lived experiences and actual health outcomes of patients, the justice sector must adopt similar user-centred metrics. PROMs are standardised, validated questionnaires designed to collect data directly from the patient on health outcomes, such as symptom severity and overall health-related quality of life[1]. Before their adoption, healthcare quality was mainly assessed using clinical or process indicators, for example blood pressure or mortality rates, which completely overlooked the patient's subjective experience[2]. While a patient may have survived an illness, this does not give insight into the quality of the care they received throughout the process, or the impact the outcome has had on their life. The integration of PROMs provided more valuable data for the healthcare sector by shifting the operational focus from the volume of services delivered to the actual value and health outcomes created for the patient. Practically, PROMs foster more dynamic patient-provider communication, facilitate shared

[1] Churruca, K., et al. (2021). *Patient-reported outcome measures (PROMs): a review of generic and condition-specific measures and a discussion of trends and issues.* Health Expectations. https://doi.org/10.1111/hex.13254

[2] Technical University Berlin, Department of Healthcare Management (2021). *Patient-Reported Outcome Measures – an International Comparison.* European Alliance for Value in Health. https://www.europeanallianceforvalueinhealth.eu/publication/patient-reported-outcome-measures-an-international-comparison/

decision-making, and enable the earlier detection of unaddressed symptoms[3]. Systemically, the aggregated data from PROMs allow healthcare institutions to benchmark quality of care, develop performance indicators, and shape health policies that ensure systems remain responsive to actual patient needs.

Historically, justice systems have measured their performance inwardly, focusing on institutional metrics such as case volumes and clearance rates. While these indicators are useful for internal management, they fail to reveal whether justice systems are effective in actually solving people's problems, whether the process is experienced as fair, or whether public trust is being built. A dedicated **Justice Services Measure (JSM)** bridges this gap by shifting the focus from institutions to the users: the people, businesses, and communities that the system is meant to serve.

A broader justice movement

The Justice Services Measure stems from and supports a broader international movement towards people-centred justice. Specifically, it aligns with the OECD Recommendation on Access to Justice[4] and the OECD Measurement Framework for People-Centred Justice Systems[5], which conceptualises justice measurement across three interconnected levels:

- **Government policy and system characteristics level:** This level represents the structural and foundational elements of the justice system. It encompasses the overarching governance mechanisms, including legislation, budgeting, planning, and interinstitutional coordination.

- **Justice services and interventions level:** Acting as the bridge between high-level policy and societal impact, this level captures the concrete processes and everyday interactions between service providers and the users experiencing legal needs. It includes the full diversity of the justice ecosystem, including both formal and informal justice institutions and actors. This level tracks how individuals and businesses experience the justice system as they attempt to resolve their disputes.

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[3] Jeyaraman, N., et al. (2025). Voices that matter: *The impact of patient-reported outcome measures on clinical decision-making. World Journal of Methodology.* https://doi.org/10.5662/wjm.v15.i2.98066

[4] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). (2023). *Recommendation of the Council on Access to Justice and People-Centred Justice Systems.* OECD/LEGAL/0498. https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0498

[5] de Langen, M., T. Teplova and G. Mulherin. (2026). *Towards a measurement framework for people-centred justice systems.* OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 92, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/f4c9dccb-en

- **Outcomes level:** This level measures the ultimate consequences and overarching contributions of the justice system to society and the economy. Rather than focusing on individual cases, it captures the population-wide effects, evaluating whether people are successfully preventing and resolving their justice problems and experiencing a sense of overarching trust and fairness in their communities and economic relationships.

While legal needs surveys and general user satisfaction studies are vital for capturing population-level data and systemic outcomes, the Justice Services Measure is positioned within the justice services and interventions level. It shifts the analytical focus from the broad concept of a generalised "justice journey" to specific service interventions, allowing us to measure the user's experience at the moment a justice service is delivered by a specific provider.

In the broader access to justice field, this measurement tool fills a critical knowledge gap. Random-sample populational legal needs studies are excellent at identifying the prevalence of problems, whether those problems are resolved, and giving a sense of satisfaction with the process and outcomes. However, they do not evaluate the mechanics and delivery of the resolution process itself.

The JSM narrows these methods down to the service level by systematically unpacking the specific dimensions of process quality: substantive outcomes, procedural fairness, user costs (both tangible and intangible), and usability. Rather than simply asking if a user was happy with the service, the tool breaks down the intervention to determine if the user felt heard, if the process was affordable, and if the resolution was durable. By doing so, it provides actionable, empirical data that justice providers and policymakers can use to directly improve the quality of justice delivered on the ground.

This is the first iteration of the JSM. Our intention is to learn and continuously improve it until it becomes a standardised framework for assessing the people-centricity of justice services.

Evaluating the effectiveness of justice interventions

By grounding measurement in well-defined steps of the justice process, the JSM allows us to evaluate the actual effectiveness of specific justice interventions. It enables stakeholders to answer practical, pressing questions: How do we determine which of two adjudication processes is more people-centred? How do formal and informal justice processes compare in their people-centricity? To what extent is a specific intervention genuinely making

a justice process more people-centred? By attributing findings to specific service providers, the resulting data becomes highly actionable, allowing for targeted recommendations and systemic improvements.

Audience and application

This report presents the initial version of the Justice Services Measure. It is written for a broad ecosystem of justice stakeholders. The primary audience includes national policymakers, justice service providers, system designers, researchers, and international development partners such as the OECD, the Justice Action Coalition, and the World Bank.

Because justice processes vary significantly across jurisdictions, legal traditions, and cultural contexts, no single instrument can serve as a rigid, one-size-fits-all model without local adaptation. Therefore, this initial version is designed as a foundational, adaptable framework intended for practical implementation and iterative refinement.

We invite readers to apply the Justice Services Measure, pilot it within their own operational environments, and share critical feedback.

Ultimately, the goal is not measurement for the sake of measurement. We want readers to use this tool to transform justice from a static, institution-centred model into a responsive public service. By deploying the JSM on the ground and providing a clear framework for evaluating outcomes, process fairness, costs, and usability, stakeholders can identify where justice journeys create avoidable burdens and implement user-centred designs that make pathways to justice smoother, clearer, and less costly to navigate. Through this collaborative testing and learning process, user feedback will directly inform future iterations of the JSM, sharpening its precision and ensuring it remains an effective driver of true, people-centred justice reform globally.

How do we understand the people-centricity of a justice service?

People-centred justice has been easy to define and praise but very hard to measure. The OECD measurement framework makes a step towards filling this void, while this document takes a further step towards developing a framework and a tool to measure how people-centred a justice service is. Hence, our aim is to turn PCJ from a value into a measurable property of a service. To do that, we have chosen the dispute resolution service as the level at which to measure people-centricity. We treat justice as a service, borrowing a measurement approach that other service sectors spent decades formulating and validating. We specify the structure of people-centricity at the service level: outcome, process, costs and usability. Furthermore, we draw the boundaries, stating plainly what we measure, what we leave out, and why.

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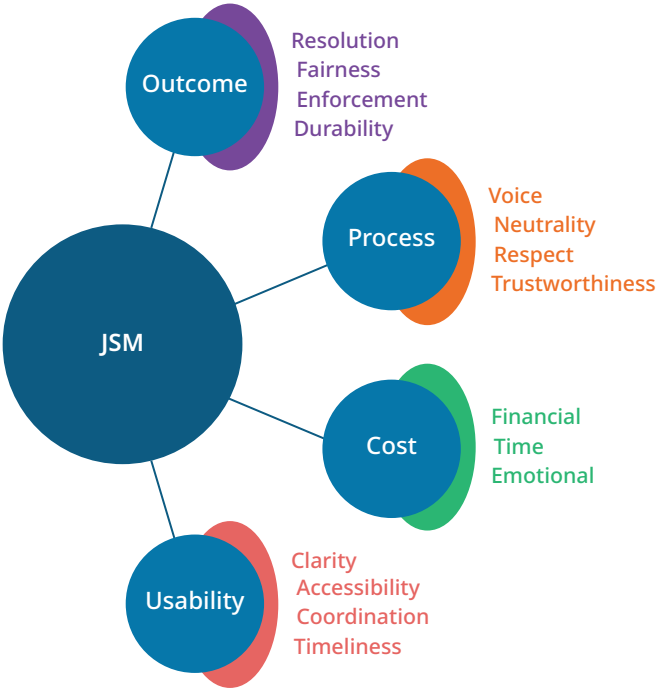
From a PCJ principle to service property

The first challenge to measurement is linguistic in nature. Too often "people-centred" is used as a slogan. It does not take long to see that "people-centred justice" is applied to whatever looks good, and almost nothing is ever called the opposite. A word that can describe anything ends up describing nothing. This is precisely the dilution risk the PCJ movement now faces; if every well-intentioned initiative is "people-centred," the term cannot distinguish genuine reform from "business as usual" dressed in a more modern language.

To move out of this trap we need to redefine people-centricity as a dimension of a service: a quality that a justice process possesses to a greater or lesser degree, that can be observed, measured, and compared. A divorce procedure, a land-dispute adjudication, a reconciliation between family members arguing over inheritance, a small-claims process, each justice service delivers an experience to its users. Once people-centricity is a property rather than a title, two processes can be placed side by side, and one can be shown to be more people-centred than the other.

Here again, in contrast with legal needs studies we shift our focus from the broad concept of a "justice journey" to specific service interactions. This allows us to measure user experience at the precise moment a service is delivered. By grounding the measurement in a well-defined step of the process, we can attribute findings to the specific provider responsible, thereby clarifying the unit of analysis and sharpening the measurement. Consequently, the resulting recommendations are more actionable and targeted.

The structure of the Justice Services Measure: outcome, process, cost and usability



If people-centricity is a measurable service property, what are its components? Our framework identifies four: **1:** a good outcome; **2:** a fair and **3:** navigable process; and **4:** a bearable cost. These dimensions form the core of our approach, with each grounding itself in established research and reflecting a key aspect of the user's experience.

Outcome: did it solve the problem?

The oldest view of justice is the utilitarian one: you went in with a problem and you either won or lost, the dispute was resolved or it was not. This matters. A process that resolves the problem is better than one that does not, and one that resolves it *fairly* is better still. But resolution at the moment of decision is not the end of the story. A judgment that is never enforced is a clap in the air; and many disputes have effects that ripple through families and communities long after the procedure ends. Thus the outcome considers four elements: whether the problem was resolved, whether the resolution was fair, whether it proved durable, and hether it was actually enforced.

Process: was the journey fair?

Decades of procedural-justice research establish that people evaluate a justice encounter not only by whether they won, but by how they were treated along the way. And they do so *even when they lose*. Four elements have been validated by studies in diverse contexts and cultures: **voice** (could I tell my side of the story?), **neutrality** (was the decision-maker unbiased?), **respect** (was I treated with dignity?), and **trustworthiness** (did I believe the authority was acting in good faith?).

This finding is what makes a service "people-centred", perhaps even more so than the user getting what they wanted. A process can rule against you and still be experienced as deeply fair; and a process can rule in your favour and still leave you feeling unheard and disrespected. Because procedural fairness drives whether people accept decisions, comply with them, and trust the institution next time, it is not a nicety layered on top of outcomes. It is the load-bearing wall of people-centricity, and it must be measured in its own right.

Cost: what did it take from you?

A process can resolve a dispute fairly and respectfully and still fail its user. Justice that bankrupts, exhausts, or terrifies the people it serves is not people-centred, however sound its outcomes and however fair its procedure. The cost dimension therefore captures real burdens: money and out-of-pocket spending, time and travel, and the emotional and psychological stress of going through the process.

Usability: how much effort it takes to use the service?

People receive justice by using justice services. Some services are easier to access and use than others. The data and interviews collected by the JSM showed us that a 4th dimension of people-centricity was emerging: we call it usability. Usability is part of online and offline justice services and it relates to how easy something is to use. An informal mediation that happens quickly, on the spot, with straightforward rules and with the village elder as an approachable member of the community is more usable than a highly technical and expensive court adjudication process.

Usability measures friction points. It does not measure the fairness of the process or the outcome—two other distinct dimensions of the framework focus on these aspects. The focus of the usability items is how easy or difficult it is for the user to go through the process.

A similar notion, more embedded in literature, is accessibility. Normatively, accessibility denotes the abstract right to access a justice service. From a positive perspective, accessibility refers to people's ability to overcome cognitive, linguistic, financial, geographical, and many other barriers to resolving their justice problems. Simplistically, this is the basic accessibility of the service: whether the building could be found, the website navigated, the proceedings understood in a language the user actually speaks.

Justice is not accessible when one needs highly specialised legal skills and qualifications to achieve success. In theory, people can hire private or legal aid lawyers but very often this option is prohibitively expensive. Geographical distance is another example of an accessibility problem. Furthermore, the digital divide is an area of growing inaccessibility of justice.

With the JSM we prefer to measure usability, with accessibility considered as a feature within this, because we believe that it captures the users' experiences better. Usability allows us to answer the question of how easy it is to navigate a path to justice, instead of asking how accessible the path is. Both questions are important. However, they have different purposes. Given the practical and improvement-focused nature of the JSM, revealing the usability dimension of a justice service fits the framework better. Users

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prefer faster, more effective, efficient, and easier-to-use services. Just like other users, justice users adopt easier services and avoid difficult-to-use ones. Justice services can be changed and improved in accordance with the needs, expectations and experiences of their users. Usability, together with the other three dimensions of the JSM provide a framework for evaluating and improving justice services.

Usability captures the everyday frictions of using a service: the wasted trips, the queues, the confusing referrals, the complicated forms that cannot be completed on the spot, the guidance that arrives too late or not at all. What unites these is that they are features of how the service is designed and delivered rather than of the legal process itself. These are the features that can be improved to make the experience more pleasant and worthwhile, more people-centred. That is the point of measuring usability: to show justice providers, stakeholders and system designers, concretely, where a justice journey creates avoidable burden and where it can be made smoother, clearer, and less costly to navigate.

As this dimension emerged after designing the first version of the JSM there was no specific section in the questionnaire devoted to it. Instead, we retroactively constructed it with questions asked in the costs and process dimensions. Thus usability is at the moment an incomplete dimension that future iterations of the JSM will develop further based on the following subdimensions:

- ***Physical, financial or digital reach:*** Can the person physically, financially, and practically get to the point where justice happens? People should be able to find and use justice services without requiring specialised knowledge and products.

- ***Clarity, information and user support:*** Does the justice service tell people what they need to know in an actionable and timely manner? Services should not be a puzzle to be decoded, they should not have people gambling on what documents they will need. Proper guidance makes it easier for people to move forward in a process.

- ***Move through the process:*** This sub-dimension tracks how people travel through the justice process. Very often, the justice problems are split and directed across several venues. A victim of domestic violence may need to go to the police to report the crime, to a community

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justice provider to reconcile, to a department of public prosecution to prosecute the crime, to a public office for custody, and to a family court for the divorce. From the users' perspective, this means unclear and wasteful referrals, restarts and confusions. Process fragmentation scatters one problem across separate, and often uncoordinated processes. The solution is user-centred integration that resolves the whole matter in one place. Sometimes this is called a "one-stop shop". Next, the procedural complexity makes even a single process hard to navigate. Often, there are too many steps, unclear sequencing, procedural restarts and forms that do not fit the needs and capabilities of the users. A well-designed procedure is organised around those needs and capabilities and can be travelled without much help.

- ***Speed and predictability:*** Can the person reliably know how long a justice process will take? Although speed is highly appreciated, even slow processes can be carried more easily if there is clarity on the real time it will take and that time is respected.

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Deploying the Justice Services Measure: piloting in Ethiopia and Nigeria

We tested the JSM by collecting data directly from the users of the Community Justice Centers (CJCs) in Nigeria and Ethiopia. We designed one quantitative questionnaire and one qualitative interview guide to apply in both countries, prioritising generalisability over contextual specificity to ensure that the JSM could be easily deployed in different contexts and for different services. It is important to know that the tool was not designed, nor implemented, to directly compare between services or to evaluate the services in their utility.

Naturally, there were differences in the collection process in each setting. We trust these differences did not have an impact on the reliability of the JSM and the implications we can derive from the exercise.

Data Collection

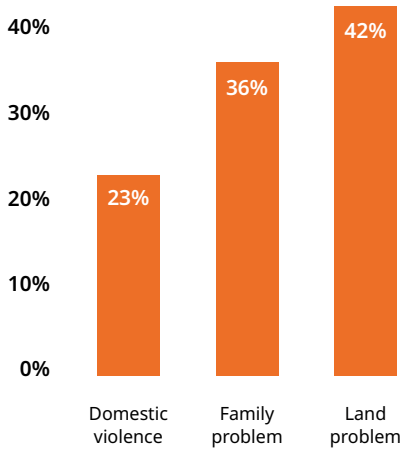
Nigeria

In Nigeria, data was collected in Imo State, where the sole CJC was being piloted at the moment of collection. We used the case log kept by the CJC administration as our population pool. After reviewing the case log and eliminating the cases that were out of the scope of the CJC and those that did not have contact information, we retained 152 potential respondents. With the help of Deepmark Insight Data Services, a Nigerian data collection company with previous experience in justice data collection, we contacted the potential respondents and applied the JSM, primarily over the telephone. At the end of the quantitative questionnaire, respondents were asked if they were open to participating in an in-depth interview to talk more about their experience; those who said yes entered a pool from which 15 people were randomly selected to conduct the interviews.

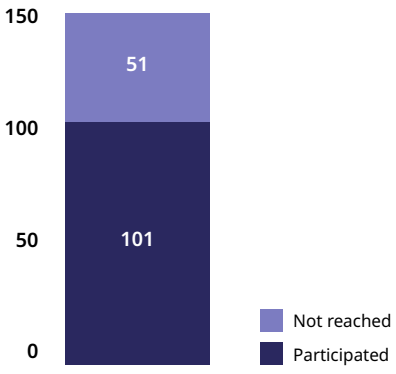
The data collection process took 2 weeks for the quantitative portion and a further 2 weeks for the qualitative side. It yielded 101 successful responses to the quantitative questionnaire, representing a 66% achievement rate, and 15 completed qualitative interviews.

For a non-probabilistic approach, the measurement in Nigeria yielded a relatively balanced population in terms of gender: 58% of respondents were women, with the remaining 42% being men. People went to the CJC mostly for land problems, but the CJC also treated family problems and domestic violence at important rates.

PROBLEM DISTRIBUTION
CJC Nigeria



PARTICIPATION IN THE JSM
Nigeria



People contacted = 152

Ethiopia

There are CJCs operating in various regions of Ethiopia. We selected the Sidama and Afar regions as well as the capital of Addis Ababa to test the JSM. As we had multiple geographical zones we opted out of a census approach that would try to reach all of the users in each region and instead surveyed 50 randomly selected CJC users in Afar, 49 users in Sidama and 24 users in Addis Ababa. Out of these participants, 15 people were interviewed in-depth in Sidama, 13 in Afar and 10 in Addis Ababa. The Destiny Ethiopia team and data collectors approved by the Regional Justice Bureaus conducted

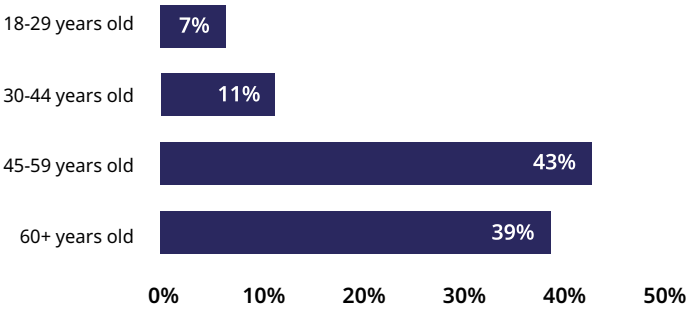
the interviews, while the Regional Justice Bureaus retain administrative responsibility for the CJCs.

The quantitative questionnaire was applied through a paper questionnaire, primarily due to the linguistic diversity in Ethiopia, which made translating and programming a digital questionnaire a less practical approach. The survey asked people to state the problem[6] for which they went to the CJC. In contrast to the Nigeria survey application no preloaded data from the case logs was used and instead we asked a larger battery of demographic questions. In Sidama the surveys and interviews were conducted at a traditional site to elicit trust in the respondents. In Afar and Addis Ababa the collection happened in or around the offices of the CJC. Surveys and in-depth interviews were conducted consecutively.

The data collection process took 1 month to complete across the different regions. It yielded 123 responses to the quantitative questionnaire, and 33 in-depth interviews.

Although the respondents for the JSM in Ethiopia were randomly selected, it was not a probabilistic sample. There was a noticeable skew in the gender distribution, with 75% of respondents being men and 25% women. Users lived primarily in rural areas (66%) and the majority of respondents were in older age groups, with less than 20% of respondents being 44 years old or younger.

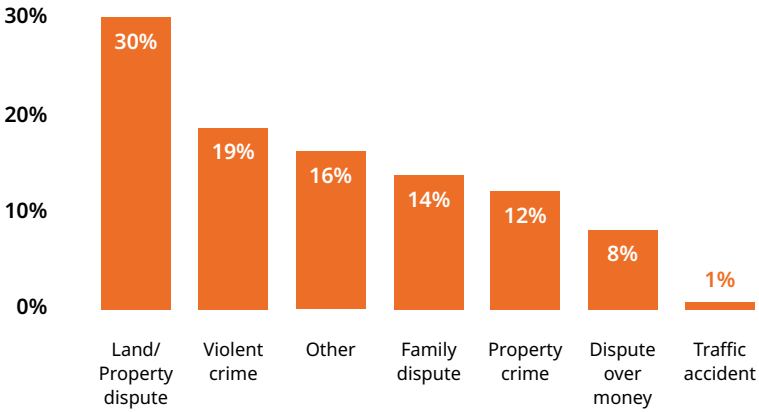
AGE GROUPS DISTRIBUTION
Ethiopia



[6] In Ethiopia the CJCs could offer services for six problem categories: disputes over land and property, family disputes, property crimes, violent crimes, disputes over money, and traffic accidents. The option "Other" was also included in the survey.

Ethiopian users mainly approached the CJCs for land or property disputes and for violent crimes. The greater variety in problems that Community Justice Centres in Ethiopia can know about seems to be justified, as no problem type aside from accidents is truly unrepresented in the measurement.

PROBLEM DISTRIBUTION
CJCs Ethiopia



Qualitative data

The qualitative portion of the JSM was considered and designed as a supplement to the core quantitative section. We believed it to be necessary to overcome two challenges identified in the quantitative data collection: a potentially small set of respondents and difficulties from respondents in recalling and properly assessing their experiences. The semi-structured interviews also allowed us to check the assumptions behind the quantitative instrument.

Qualitative data offers the opportunity to expand on the closed nature of quantitative survey questions. When time and resources allow, the evaluation of services should include a qualitative component that provides further insights on the experiences of users. Qualitative approaches are also a useful tool for combatting mistrust and reluctance to answering questions through the establishment of rapport.

Results

After a preliminary analysis of the data we realised that although the numeric scale for the quality assessment questions was helpful for respondents, it might create the wrong impression when presenting the results. A numeric scale can transmit the message that lower values represent "failing" processes. As the purpose of the JSM is not to judge or shame, we are presenting the results of the implementation in Ethiopia and Nigeria primarily as a demonstration of the measurement architecture.

The results are presented through the overall satisfaction with the process[7] and the aggregation of different questions into the 4 dimensions presented in the theoretical framework. As all of the questions used the same numeric scale, no further re-coding was needed.

[7] This was a single question posed at the beginning of the survey asking the respondent how satisfied they were with the process as a whole.

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Dimension	Questions included
Outcome quality	• How did the justice process affect your relationship with the other person in the dispute? • To what extent did the justice process effectively resolve your problem? • How fair is the resolution? • How confident are you that the result will be respected and followed by everyone involved?
Process quality	• Throughout the process, to what extent were you able to tell your side of the story? • Did you feel the justice provider was fair to you during the process? • How respectfully were you treated by the Community Justice Centre providers and staff? • How would you rate the information you received throughout the process? • To what extent would you trust the CJC to resolve other problems in the future?
Costs	• How do you rate the timeliness of the services you received? • How costly were the Community Justice Centre services for you?
Usability[8]	• How safe, welcoming, and accessible did you find the physical location? • How stressful was the process at the Community Justice Centre?

[8] In Nigeria the CJC also offered referral and psychological support services. Users of these pathways were asked conditional questions regarding the clarity, fit, and helpfulness of these specific services. While these items were mapped to the Usability dimension, they were excluded from the final calculations of usability. Out of the total sample, the number of people who received these specific services was quite low (8 for referrals and 3 for psychological lowest-ranked services). Including these conditional questions would have compromised the consistency of the aggregated scores; therefore, they were removed to keep the results uniform and focus on testing and demonstrating the tool itself.

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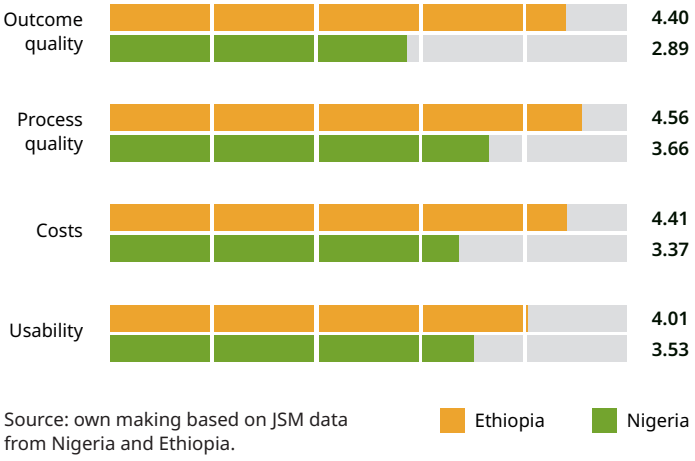
We stress once again that although the numeric scale is a subjective appraisal of services, it is not an evaluation of its success. Services that have dimensions with a lower score are not failing or bad. Lower scores represent services that may not be taking people's needs and wants into account to the degree a people-centred approach demands.

The CJCs had been operating for less than a year in Ethiopia and just over a year in Nigeria at the time of data collection, however, several dynamics are already visible in the data. The perceptions of the Ethiopian justice users are more positive than those of the Nigerian users. Users from both countries give the highest marks to the quality of the justice processes. Usability is the lowest-ranked dimension in Ethiopia, while the outcome quality is the lowest in Nigeria.

We note as well that the standard deviations in Nigeria were greater than in Ethiopia. Scores provided by Ethiopian CJC users were more clustered together than those provided by Nigerian users. In practice this points to the Nigerian CJC users having less uniformed experiences, while in Ethiopia despite measuring 3 different CJCs there seemed to be a more standardised appraisal across its users.

Although our purpose is not to directly compare results, we offer a possible explanation for the differences seen

AVERAGE SCORE PER DIMENSION
Ethiopia and Nigeria



Source: own making based on JSM data from Nigeria and Ethiopia.

between the two countries that are related to the implementation of the JSM. As stated, in Ethiopia, all interviews were conducted by Destiny Ethiopia and data collectors approved by the Regional Justice Bureaus. While this approach was favoured to ensure access to CJC users, it introduced potential methodological limitations. Despite established protocols, interviewers may have harbored a bias toward demonstrating the success of CJCs, and respondents were likely more inclined to provide positive feedback when interviewed by staff directly associated with the project.

The qualitative interviews offer insights on the dimensions as well. A man with a land conflict in Nigeria felt the CJC staff treated him well and listened to him, stating, "They listen to people, they welcome you very well, and I am always surprised by how they address people with all their mind, and they treat you as a human being." This man further expressed how respected he felt by the CJC lawyer assigned to his case, he shared, "You know he is older than me, and he has never called me by my first name. He usually puts Mr. in front of my name before he calls me, and even when he wants to call my name in our dialect, he uses respect to call the name." An Ethiopian man who was a victim of a violent crime praised the responsiveness of the Afar CJC stating, "When I came, I found the elders immediately. They also helped us straight away. They gave us a solution immediately (...). Why would you stand waiting at the police station or the court when you can find people here nearby who give you that service? The effort these elders put into mediation is tremendous". While both men seem to be satisfied with the CJC service, each places their appraisal in a different dimension of the service.

Obstacles and frustrations are also visible. A Nigerian man with a land issue complained that when he visited the CJC "nothing happened, and they keep on calling me sometimes, and I will come and meet lawyers (...) and we will talk and discuss, and they will say keep coming, and I believe that as I am coming, they have to do something and understand that I am human". The process of constantly moving and visiting a place is exhausting for users and marks a point of friction. Furthermore, another man with a family dispute in Nigeria expressed that while he found the CJC staff to be welcoming and that he was able to tell his story fully, the staff's own cultural biases kept them from being fully neutral in his case. As a result, he stopped pursuing his case with the CJC, sharing, "If I happen to see maybe another set of people (...) who will understand me more on the reason why, I can maybe still come but (...) with the explanation they gave to me, they discouraged me." Meanwhile, in Ethiopia a woman from Addis Ababa

with a neighbour dispute expressed overall satisfaction, but still wished for better resolution tools at the CJC sharing, "there should at minimum be a binding enforcement mechanism: if both parties have been seen and a shared determination made, that determination should have teeth — something that enforces compliance from both sides, not just one."

A testimony from a woman in Nigeria with a family dispute also showed how different elements of the process link together, saying "[she] was coming from Ikedi Road, so it was stressful for [her] to come [to the CJC], but (...) here [the CJC] they didn't give [her] any stress". Services themselves can be respectful and thoughtful, but people evaluate their justice journeys as a whole, not just when they cross a door. And in Sidama, a woman whose son was killed emphasised the importance of strengthening all dimensions of a service saying that she was thankful for the good treatment at the CJC, but "because the case has not yet reached a conclusion, there is a mutual waiting and suspicion between the two parties, and the relationship remains disrupted. The delay itself is the difficulty".

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Challenges and lessons learned

The primary lesson learned from piloting the JSM is that a tool capable of measuring the people-centricity of a service is feasible. The field experiences in Nigeria and Ethiopia show that the questions and the answer options are understandable. They also point to the JSM being flexible: allowing for scalable implementation, unproblematic translation, ability to apply through different media (digitally and paper-based), and to different profiles (direct users and representatives).

While this result is quite positive, we have not yet reached a finalised tool. Much more work is needed to make this a true measure of the people-centricity of justice services. The field testing revealed several challenges that must be addressed in future iterations.

Access to users and sampling

Sampling frameworks and randomisation are not always easy and available at the service level. The golden standard of systematic random sampling is not always achievable, introducing risks for various biases and reducing the certainty of the results. In the settings of informal and hybrid justice services it is particularly challenging to establish a clear populational framework and contact exactly the users whom you want to interview. To address this challenge the research teams must work closely with the providers of justice services. Gaining their trust and collaboration takes time and effort but this is the only way towards access to users who are willing to share sincerely and openly.

Mitigating the confirmation bias

Another critical challenge is to convince providers and users that honest results, even if revealing gaps, are more important than overly positive opinions. The confirmation bias is a challenge for self-reported measures of justice processes and outcomes.

We observed significant variance in the data distribution between the testing environments; there was much more variance in the Nigerian data, whereas the Ethiopian dataset is more homogeneous and positive. This discrepancy could be due to numerous factors, such as the real differences in the service and cultural factors. However, it could also point to a problem with the validity and reliability of the instrument. Particularly its failing to capture nuances, inherent biases, enumerator bias, or validity flaws. We will continue carefully monitoring future data collection exercises to ensure that the tool is accurately capturing people's real experiences with justice interventions.

This is related to another challenge around the validity and reliability of the results, particularly in Ethiopia where the data was collected by the same organisation that administers the CJCs. When the organisation that administers the justice service also collects the data, it can create a reliability challenge and an inherent incentive to prioritise "good" results, especially if the JSM is seen as an evaluation mechanism. Two strategies can mitigate this risk. First, people-centricity data can be gathered by external organisations that do not have stakes in the service delivery. Second, impartiality can be promoted and integrated into the culture and processes of providers of justice services by empowering and incentivising them to pursue evidence-based improvement. The latter takes longer but is the more scalable and sustainable strategy.

Operational and resource challenges

Implementing the JSM requires significant financial and human resources, whether the data collection is conducted by an independent organisation or the service provider themselves. Finding the users of the CJCs to survey and interview proved to be challenging, and without adequate planning, the process of sorting through cases, contacting people, and applying the survey can be extremely time-consuming.

Tracking down users days, weeks or even months after they use a service is notably difficult, and even more so when we need to ensure they have time available to answer our questions. Furthermore, the recalling ability of respondents poses a challenge; people tend to forget details of their experiences as time passes, especially for less severe problems. Future

implementations of the tool could consider integrating the feedback loop into the process by applying it immediately as a person leaves the justice service following the resolution of their problem in order to reduce the time spent simply finding users later on. However, this needs to be balanced with the ability to measure the durability of resolutions, which can often only be seen after some time has passed.

Adapting to contextual challenges

Another operational challenge that arose in these applications came from low case volumes. The CJCs in Nigeria and Ethiopia are relatively new, with the Nigeria CJC still being in its own pilot phase at the time of data collection. As a result, there are still few fully resolved cases. This resulted in a small pool of respondents. To tackle this challenge, we decided to expand the pool of respondents to include people with ongoing cases. Although these people could not answer certain questions in the JSM relating to the evaluation of the outcome, they still hold valuable information on the quality of the services of the CJCs.

Navigating linguistic diversity in Africa also presents immediate translation hurdles prior to starting data collection. This was particularly relevant in Ethiopia, where conducting the research in multiple regions meant a greater number of languages to consider. To address this we maintained a simplified language in our questionnaires, avoiding complex legal terminology that could be difficult for live translations. We also used a numeric scale for the majority of the questions related to quality.

Developing the Justice Services Measure: subject matter and interventions

To maximise the JSM's practical value, it must go beyond generic quality assessments and actively account for two defining characteristics of the measured process. Tracking these details increases the potential to compare the people-centricity of different types of problems and interventions:

- ***The subject matter of the problem:*** The JSM needs to record the specific type of legal issue the person is facing, for example a land conflict

or a family dispute. This can be captured through preloaded data from case logs or by asking users directly. Because people experience different problems very differently, capturing this context is essential to understanding their journey. A justice process might feel incredibly supportive and people-centred for a minor neighborhood dispute, but that exact same process might feel highly inadequate or insensitive for a severe family conflict. If the JSM doesn't record what the problem is, the data does not appropriately provide real-world context.

- ***The intervention (or set of interventions) used to resolve the problem:*** The JSM must also identify the specific method or set of services deployed to try and resolve the problem, for example, formal court adjudication or community mediation. This can also be preloaded from case logs or asked to the users directly. However, asking the users may not always provide accurate information, for example, a person might not realise that the service they received was mediation, they may see it as simply speaking with a village elder and not accurately report this.

Tracking these two specific details will increase the potential to compare the people-centricity of different types of problems and different types of interventions. By looking at exactly what the problem is and how the system attempted to fix it, service providers and policymakers can better identify clear patterns. This transforms the JSM from a general satisfaction survey into an actionable instrument that pinpoints exactly where justice services are succeeding or failing their users.

The usability dimension

Our conceptualisation revealed that certain elements of the user experience escape the categories of outcome, process and cost evaluation. We can ask questions on how fair a process is, how expensive it was or how just the outcome turned out, but there are other aspects of a justice journey that might be as impactful, if not more, that fall through the cracks of an exclusively procedural or outcome-based measurement. These elements cause friction, acting as stones along the way in the justice journey, and can render even the most fair justice service unusable. Some such obstacles include:

- Long queues;
- Confusing referrals to other services, providers, offices, etc.;
- Complicated documentation requirements;
- A lack of guidance or clarity;
- Obscure, complex, language, or a lack of provision in the local language.

We conceptualised and presented the usability dimension in this document, but a complete and specific measurement of it still needs to be developed. We believe that the qualitative portion of the JSM is well suited for obtaining rich details on where the obstacles are and why they cause friction. And the JSM can be further complemented on this dimension by direct field observations of conditions and practices in the sites where justice services are delivered.

Comparability and benchmarking

Although the JSM can be applied across services and jurisdictions without major adaptations, the results are not directly comparable across them. The JSM primarily supports internal measurement and benchmarking, rather than evaluation and comparison. We clarify and emphasise this point because the measure's purpose is not to state whether a service is failing, or if a service is better than any other, but to capture the scale at which it is responsive to people's needs. Two services can be equally (un)people-centred, but the reasons why will vary and may be unique to each service.

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Next steps

While the Justice Services Measure is taking shape, it requires further refinement and validation. The usability dimension, in particular, needs additional development. We must establish clear operational definitions and conduct cognitive testing for all items across the four dimensions to ensure the framework effectively assesses the people-centricity of justice services. Additionally, gathering data from a more diverse range of justice problems, interventions, and settings is essential to broaden the tool's applicability.

Data

Collecting data on the people-centricity of justice services is fundamental to our transformation efforts. While our initial iteration successfully utilized user surveys and semi-structured in-depth interviews, these represent only a starting point. Moving forward, we aim to explore more innovative data collection and analysis methods. Furthermore, we intend to integrate these data-gathering processes directly into the core design and delivery of justice services, ensuring that continuous insight and feedback loops becomes a standard feature of the justice landscape.

Learning

Service-level measurement must be embedded within a continuous learning cycle dedicated to improving the accessibility and fairness of justice. Data alone is insufficient; it must be converted into actionable knowledge. This cycle thrives only when justice providers possess both the incentive and the capacity to actively listen to users and implement improvements. Ultimately, measurement serves as the catalyst for this ongoing quest to deliver better justice services.

Collaborations and partnerships

A culture of constant service improvement requires the committed engagement of diverse stakeholders, which can only be achieved through carefully designed and implemented

consultations. True ownership of people-centred justice emerges when diverse voices and interests are heard. We must actively present the JSM and its results to key stakeholders, consulting with both the supply and demand sides. Ultimately, the justice systems must develop the incentives, as well as the organisational and business models, that encourage providers and institutions to measure honestly and improve continuously.

Integration

Service-level measurement is a critical component of the broader people-centred justice movement. To be effective, it must be integrated into the PCJ improvement cycle, reinforcing the system's focus on innovation and user empowerment. The entire system must function in coordination, with policies and political will ensuring that institutions remain anchored in user needs. By linking data and research to specific interventions, we can identify user needs, know the pathways taken, and highlight gaps between these needs and actual outcomes. In this ecosystem, innovative solutions are fostered by an enabling legal, regulatory, and funding environment, where data is continuously gathered to drive iterative improvements. Ultimately, measuring the people-centricity of justice services is essential to realizing a truly people-centred justice system.

In that way, measuring the people-centricity of justice services is part of a complex system intended to make people-centered justice a reality.

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Annex: The Justice Services Measure

Nigeria

What services did you receive at the Community Justice Centre for your problem?	
How satisfied are you with the services you received at the Community Justice Centre?	1=extremely dissatisfied 2=dissatisfied 3=neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4=satisfied 5=extremely satisfied
How safe, welcoming, and accessible did you find the physical location?	1=completely inaccessible 2=mostly inaccessible 3=somewhat accessible 4=mostly accessible 5=completely accessible
How did the justice process affect your relationship with the other person in the dispute?	1=made things much worse 2=made things somewhat worse 3=no change 4=made things somewhat better 5=made things much better
Throughout the process, to what extent were you able to tell your side of the story?	1=not able at all 2=barely able 3=somewhat able 4=mostly able 5=fully able
Did you feel the justice provider was fair to you during the process?	1=extremely unfair 2=somewhat unfair 3=neither fair nor unfair 4=somewhat fair 5=extremely fair

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How respectfully were you treated by the Community Justice Centre providers and staff?	1=very disrespectfully 2=somewhat disrespectfully 3=neutrally 4=respectfully 5=very respectfully
How would you rate the information you received throughout the process?	1=very poor 2=poor 3=adequate 4=good 5=excellent
How do you rate the timeliness of the services you received?	1=extremely slow 2=somewhat slow 3=acceptable 4=fairly timely 5=very timely
How costly were the Community Justice Centre services for you?	1=extremely costly 2=somewhat costly 3=manageable 4=fairly affordable 5=very affordable
How stressful was the process at the Community Justice Centre?	1=extremely stressful 2=very stressful 3=somewhat stressful 4=slightly stressful 5=not stressful at all
To what extent did the justice process effectively resolve your problem?	1=not resolved at all 2=somewhat resolved 3=partially resolved 4=mostly resolved 5=completely resolved
How fair is the resolution?	1=extremely unfair 2=somewhat unfair 3=neither fair nor unfair 4=somewhat fair 5=extremely fair
How confident are you that the result will be respected and followed by everyone involved?	1=not confident at all 2=slightly confident 3=somewhat confident 4=fairly confident 5=completely confident
To what extent would you trust the CJC to resolve other problems in the future?	1=no trust at all 2=slight trust 3=moderate trust 4=considerable trust 5=complete trust

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Referral Pathway *Note: These questions were only asked to users who were referred out to other services outside of the CJC (such as law firms or social work organisations).*	
To what extent do you feel the service you were referred to was the right match for your problem?	1=not a match at all 2=slight match 3=moderate match 4=fairly good match 5=the perfect match
How clear were the instructions on how to find or contact the person or service you were referred to?	1=very unclear 2=unclear 3=somewhat clear 4=clear 5=very clear

Psychological Services Pathway *Note: This question was only asked to users who received psychological services at the CJC.*	
To what extent did this service give you the help you were actually looking for?	1=not at all 2=slightly 3=a moderate amount 4=yes, helpful 5=yes, exactly the help I needed

Ethiopia

Data collection started in Nigeria prior to Ethiopia. After collection began, we realised that the accessibility question: *"How safe, welcoming, and accessible did you find the physical location?"* was ambiguous due to the use of a list of features. It was not clear to users whether we were asking about it being a safe, or welcoming, or an accessible physical location. These three concepts are quite distinct, a location could be very accessible but not welcoming. Therefore, for the Ethiopian application of the survey we separated this into two questions: *(1) How accessible did you find the CJC's physical location?* and *(2) How safe did you find the CJC?*. While ideally we aimed for these surveys to be identical, we determined that given this exercise was a pilot in order to validate and improve the JSM, it was beneficial to make this change in order to strengthen the tool in real time.

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What was the main issue that brought you to the CJC?	
How serious was the problem?	1=not serious at all 2=slightly serious 3=moderately serious 4=very serious 5=extremely serious
How satisfied are you with the services you received at the Community Justice Centre?	1=extremely dissatisfied 2=dissatisfied 3=neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 4=satisfied 5=extremely satisfied
How accessible did you find the CJC's physical location?	1=completely inaccessible 2=mostly inaccessible 3=somewhat accessible 4=mostly accessible 5=completely accessible
How safe did you find the CJC?	1=completely unsafe 2=mostly unsafe 3=somewhat safe 4=mostly safe 5=completely safe
How did the justice process affect your relationship with the other person in the dispute?	1=made things much worse 2=made things somewhat worse 3=no change 4=made things somewhat better 5=made things much better
Throughout the process, to what extent were you able to tell your side of the story?	1=not able at all 2=barely able 3=somewhat able 4=mostly able 5=fully able
How much do you feel your story and perspective were considered in the final decision of the Shimagale?	1=not at all 2=slightly 3=moderately 4=considerably 5=completely considered
Did you feel the Shimagales were fair to you during the process?	1=extremely unfair 2=somewhat unfair 3=neither fair nor unfair 4=somewhat fair 5=extremely fair

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How respectfully were you treated by the Shimagales (elders) and staff?	1=very disrespectfully 2=somewhat disrespectfully 3=neutrally 4=respectfully 5=very respectfully
How would you rate the information you received throughout the process?	1=very poor 2=poor 3=adequate 4=good 5=excellent
How do you rate the timeliness of the justice process?	1=extremely slow 2=somewhat slow 3=acceptable 4=fairly timely 5=very timely
How costly was the justice process for you?	1=extremely costly 2=somewhat costly 3=manageable 4=fairly affordable 5=very affordable
How stressful was the justice process?	1=extremely stressful 2=very stressful 3=somewhat stressful 4=slightly stressful 5=not stressful at all
To what extent did the justice process effectively resolve your problem?	1=not resolved at all 2=somewhat resolved 3=partially resolved 4=mostly resolved 5=completely resolved
How fair is the resolution?	1=extremely unfair 2=somewhat unfair 3=neither fair nor unfair 4=somewhat fair 5=extremely fair
How confident are you that the result will be respected and followed by everyone involved?	1=not confident at all 2=slightly confident 3=somewhat confident 4=fairly confident 5=completely confident
To what extent would you trust the [justice process] to resolve other problems in the future?	1=no trust at all 2=slight trust 3=moderate trust 4=considerable trust 5=complete trust

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