



DT Global

DT Global in Partnership with USAID

Three Principles to Rule of Law Programming

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DT Global believes the rule of law is a vital foundation for all aspects of a productive, inclusive, and peaceful society. The rule of law ensures equal access to meaningful justice, trusted avenues for redressing grievances, and a broader citizen confidence in public institutions. Meaningful adherence to the rule of law requires legal principles and institutions that reflect the conception of justice as understood by the population it serves while protecting universal principles of human rights.

Background

In April 2023, USAID released its first-ever [Rule of Law \(ROL\) Policy](#). The new policy highlights USAID's commitment to supporting the establishment of laws and systems that prevent and mitigate "[autocracy, corruption, impunity, discrimination, and a host of other societal ills](#)" that would otherwise go unchecked. In its new ROL Policy, USAID: 1) articulates its strategic vision, 2) defines the rule of law, 3) announces its new 'people-centered justice' approach, and 4) prioritizes knowledge and evidence. With this new policy, USAID is reestablishing its commitment to prioritizing ROL in democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programming and laying out clear parameters for optimal ROL programming premised on decades of ROL support.

Three Principles

Without people-centered, justice-oriented rule of law that is applied equally throughout the population, societies remain vulnerable to the erosion of democratic institutions, the rise of seeking justice through violence, and the corrosion of the social contract. As such, efforts to support the rule of law are efforts to strengthen democratic governance and promote inclusive peace. Relying on principles outlined in USAID's new ROL Policy and the [UN's Goal 16](#), DT Global has designed an approach to strengthening rule of law through USAID projects that recognizes the universal right to justice while accounting for the local dynamics and cultural norms that dictate meaningful access to justice, for all. With this broader understanding in mind, our USAID ROL approach is built on three principles:

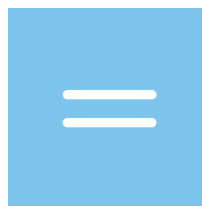
People-centered



Justice-oriented



Equally applied





People-centered

Leading up to the Summit for Democracy in 2023, USAID led the Rule of Law and People-Centered Justice Democracy Cohort in the publication of the [Joint Statement and Call to Action on the Rule of](#)

[Law and People-Centered Justice: Renewing a Core Pillar of Democracy](#).

As this statement highlights: “people-centered justice places the people and communities affected by the law...at the core of the policies, processes, and practices that provide a foundation for justice systems.” ROL programming often focuses too narrowly on justice institutions and processes that fail to account for the local dynamics and social norms that dictate everything from viable entry points to the accepted definition of justice. By taking a people-centered approach, programming can offer tailored ROL interventions to local context and ensure justice users are a part of setting the terms for progress. As stated in the USAID ROL Policy, “reform must engage those whom the law and its institutions are mandated to serve: communities and the people they comprise.”



Justice-oriented

Justice is a culturally understood concept. As noted in the people-centered principle, understanding the local conception of justice is necessary before implementing a meaningful effort to strengthen

the rule of law in any context. By first understanding how people define justice, projects ensure local relevance of programming objectives, along with the maximum number of viable pathways for justice system users to seek justice. If ROL programming fails to properly orient support toward a concept of justice that is widely understood and accepted by the target population, the program will fail to achieve meaningful, lasting success.



Equally applied

The rule of law cannot be properly understood and universally respected if it is not equally applied. Too often, countries establish excellent legal frameworks and even well-

funded legal institutions that align with global best practices. However, if the application of these laws and the practices of these institutions elevates one segment of the population or disproportionately hinders a specific demographic, the rule of law is immediately undermined. ROL strengthening must prioritize the equal application of the law in all facets of its ROL programming from partner selection and system mapping to learning and adaptation efforts and ultimate program objectives.

Principle in Action: Building People-Centered Justice Systems

In the Bangsamoro autonomous region of the Philippines, DT Global implements the four year Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation Subatra Justice and Society Project, which raises the capacity of the Bangsamoro justice system to provide multiple, contextualized entry points to accessing justice especially for women and indigenous populations. The project also builds the capacity of civil society to contribute to the peaceful transition of the region, including in conflict affected areas by ensuring grievances are properly understood and meaningfully addressed.

Principle in Action: Enhancing System-Wide Justice

In Papua New Guinea, DT Global is implementing the eight-year DFAT-funded Justice Services and Stability for Development (JSS4D) project to strengthen the quality of and access to justice through a systems-wide approach. JSS4D orients support to numerous social and political challenges, including gender-based violence, community safety, and anti-corruption. By taking the time to map target systems and account for the vast array of justice hurdles and broader public service challenges, DT Global is creating multiple entry points to more durable pathways to justice.