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United Nations Development Project

UNDP Global Programme on Strengthening the Rule of Law, Human Rights, Justice and Security for Sustainable Peace and Development

Justice Action Coalition Catalytic Fund in Ethiopia

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United Nations Development Project

Country: Ethiopia

Project Title:	**Justice Action Coalition Catalytic Fund**
Expected UNSDCF/CP 2025-2030 Outcome:	All people in Ethiopia, more specifically those who are left behind, live in a peaceful, just, and democratic society which upholds standards of rule of law, accountability, and human rights.
Expected CPD Output 2025 – 2026:	Strengthened institutions to promote sustainable peace and social cohesion.
Expected Project Outputs	People experience greater equality and are more empowered to access justice and exercise their rights; Justice and security systems, services and institutions are more people-centered and effective.
FW Duration Start/End Dates:	October 2025- September 2026
Implementing Partners	The Hague Institute for Innovative of Law (HiiL) in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and UNDP.

Brief Description

The main purpose of this one-year project **"Justice Action for Coalition Catalytic Fund"** is to further operationalize and scale Community Justice Centers beyond the pilot locations, which will provide stronger links between the informal and formal systems, better reflect people-centered justice, increase access to justice, enhance respect for the rule of law and promote human rights by deepening improved and accessible community-led justice mechanisms. This project will support inclusive human rights-based approaches in enhancing access to community-based justice that is aligned with national and international frameworks. The extension of the current pilot phase of the existing package of support to the CJCs will allow, with the JACCF additional resources, the time to reflect the lessons learned about the ongoing pilot, to engage directly with people at the grass roots, identify areas where improvements could be made.

Programme Period: October 2025-September 2026 Quantum Project Number: 01004162 Quantum Award Number: 1382393 Gender Marker: 2	Total Resource Required: 200,000 Total Allocated Resource: $200,000 Regular Donor: Global: $200,000

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UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

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Overview of Project Design

1. Problem and context analysis

The policy document *'Ethiopia: A New Horizon of Hope'*[1] articulates the Government's vision and policy priorities towards ensuring the effective and inclusive governance and the rule of law by building a fair and accessible justice system adapted to the needs and development level of all Ethiopians. It places clear emphasis on peace and inclusion, justice sector reform, democratization, public service delivery, transparency, accountability, and effectiveness. The ultimate objective of the reforms is to restore public confidence in the justice system and ensure the sector's contribution to the social and economic development of Ethiopia through democratic participation and accountable systems of governance. But currently, the formal justice system remains weak, lacks qualified personnel, and suffers from major institutional capacity gaps as well as institutional capacity deficits and inefficiencies; insufficient oversight of the justice and security sectors, including by civil society; and inadequate coordination among principal justice and rule of law actors. At the same time, legal pluralism and the lack of legal aid and legal literacy remain critical national-level issues. Responding to this, the Ethiopian Ministry of Justice has developed and is seeking to implement its Justice Sector Three-Year Transformational Plan (2023)[2] This specifically highlights the establishment of community justice centers (traditional courts) and the endorsement of a Free Legal Aid Strategy.

There is a long history in Ethiopia of traditional justice systems being led by community elders delivering justice within the community by mediating conflicts and seeking to maintain social cohesion. Given that history, such traditional justice systems are more popular and used in rural areas as they are more accessible, understand the local context, and are trusted by the local community. The Ethiopian government, by recognizing the value of community justice, wants to build upon an existing tried and trusted traditional system to enhance the capacities and resources needed to better align the traditional community justice law with human rights and the more modern justice systems. Ethiopia has struggled with the issue of integrating traditional justice mechanisms, which handle over 3 million legal disputes each year, into the broader formal justice system, despite the Constitutional recognition accorded to customary dispute resolution systems.[3].

Although the system is already effective in delivering justice, the challenge lies both in linking to the formal system as well as addressing weaknesses around human rights adherence and the need to standardize practices across the Regions. This underpins the need for and importance of creating stronger links between the traditional justice system with community-based justice mechanisms to ensure that such mechanisms are aligned with national, international laws and human rights standards. Community Justice Centers (CJCs) and traditional courts respond to the stated needs, focused on citizens being able to access justice. This requires targeted support, including capacity building of elders and service providers, greater awareness raising to ensure consistent access to such traditional mechanisms, which in turn will enable improved access to justice in Ethiopia for more citizens.

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[1] https://www.pmo.gov.et/democracy/

[2] http://justice.gov.et/en/initiatives/justice-sector-transformation-roadmap/

[3] https://www.hiil.org/research/legal-impact-assessment-oromia-customary-courts/

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2. Placing people at the center of justice

In 2019, the Federal Ministry of Justice (MoJ) used a data-driven approach and conducted a Justice Needs and Satisfaction (JNS) Survey.[4] Which revealed that most citizens preferred using their local community elders to solve disputes rather than formal courts, but despite this, millions of cases remain unaddressed. Those insights informed and shaped the MoJ Justice Sector Transformation Plan, which at its heart seeks to focus on enhancing community-level access to justice. The 2019 HiiL study, although undertaken some years ago, provides a strong evidence base, and the data and conclusions.[5] remains valid today.

This marked the start of the long-standing tripartite relationship between the MoJ, HiiL and Destiny Ethiopia which has been exemplified important developments following the 2019 Survey. That survey underscored the significant role that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms play in addressing justice needs across the country. Then working together, the Justice Transformation Lab (JTL) and Justice Innovation Lab (JIL) were created which sought to prioritize key justice issues in Ethiopia including suggested innovative solutions particularly about crime, land, and family disputes. These developments stressed the critical importance of community-level justice delivery - especially for resolving land and family-related disputes with a focus on improving access to justice by designing scalable models for community-based justice delivery.

Ethiopia has a large justice gap, and many people resort to traditional/informal justice systems (such as customary courts/ Shimagille) to have their justice problems resolved. The work-around community justice prioritized by the Ethiopian MoJ seeks to leverage and expand the positive value of the traditional justice systems for widespread community-level justice. As a result of the Survey findings, and successive key justice sector leaders' stakeholders' dialogues, which were followed by innovation labs, Community Justice Centers (CJCs) emerged as a locally owned means to address access to justice delivery, blending traditional practices with the formal legal system. As a result, a prototype model for Community Justice Centers (CJCs) was developed. This pioneering model is currently being piloted in three locations: Addis Ababa, Sidama, and Afar, under the ongoing Community Justice Center Pilot Project.

As an innovative Alternative Dispute Resolution mechanism, CJCs are helping to reduce the burden on conventional courts with a strong emphasis on preserving cultural values and respecting governance deeply rooted within local communities, which in turn helps to strengthen social cohesion at the local levels. Therefore, the project prioritizes Community Justice Centers (linking customary courts with the formal system.[6]) by taking advantage of the existing social trust, accessibility, and cultural relevance. The project design is deeply rooted within people-centered approaches and draws on the experiences and needs of the community members, especially rural populations, women, marginalized groups, youth representatives, as well as elders. It will build on the multi-stakeholder platform that convened both formal and informal justice actors to co-design practical solutions (the Justice Innovation Lab), which developed a community justice center model. The project will link to the existing pilot of community justice centers ongoing in 3 regions, Afar/Semera, Sidama/Hawassa, and Addis Ababa. These locations were selected for the pilot by the MoJ on the basis that the selected locations are not experiencing conflict. The MoJ believe that the pilot exercise of the CJCs is a key step towards strengthening access to justice,

[4] https://www.hiil.org/news/ethiopias-journey-towards-people-centred-justice/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20the%20Federal%20Ministry%20of%20Justice%20used,courts%2C%20yet%20millions%20of%20cases%20still%20went%20unaddressed.

[5] https://www.hiil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/JNS_Ethiopa_2020-1.pdf

[6] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RmeUmrEaguYA5MawwYKlwua8NjvmN_M6/view?usp=sharing

building on existing structures. Therefore, the project focus will align with and build upon that ongoing existing pilot and consider scaling the model to other Regions.

3. Desired change and impact of the project

The main purpose of this one-year project is to further operationalize and scale Community Justice Centers beyond the pilot locations, which will provide stronger links between the informal and formal systems, better reflect people-centered justice, increase access to justice, enhance respect for the rule of law and promote human rights by deepening improved and accessible community-led justice mechanisms. This project will support inclusive human rights-based approaches in enhancing access to community-based justice that is aligned with national and international frameworks. The extension of the current pilot phase of the existing package of support to the CJCs will allow, with the JACCF additional resources, the time to reflect the lessons learned about the ongoing pilot, to engage directly with people at the grass roots, identify areas where improvements could be made (for example adoption of more human rights based approaches, greater emphasis on addressing gender disparities) which can then be reflected in a scale up plan (to include a cost base/value for money/sustainable financing approach) to enable the CJC model to be launched in other locations. Creating this type of evidence base will ensure the long-term sustainability of the CJC model. This is one of the ambitions set out in the MoJ Transformational Plan.

There are good examples of community justice centers providing local access to justice and resolving local disputes in Ethiopia, which are both reflected in prior surveys/assessments. The MoJ has endorsed this approach and has committed funds to adopt more people-centered justice interventions. The community justice approaches through CJCs can be seen to be *"low-hanging fruit"* ripe to use as an entry point to develop further and adopt across the country. Therefore, through the support of the project with a people-centered focus, data will be collected to assess/test the effectiveness of the pilot CJCs to improve justice delivery. Using the evidence gathered, this will also provide evidence of those areas requiring improvement. Drawing on the evidence gathered, a plan to scale the CJC model will be developed, fully informed by community-based actors, where knowledge can be shared with the courts and CJCs with dialogues to share experiences and lessons learned about how to scale (including the basic/unit costs associated with the operation of CJCs) the CJC approach to other Regions. This will help strengthen the relationships between formal and informal justice systems. The project will contribute to the high-level Strategic Objective/GP Outputs:

- Objective/Output 1: People experience greater equality and are more empowered to access justice and exercise their rights.
- Objective/Output 3: Justice and security systems, services, and institutions are more people-centered and effective.

This funding proposal will achieve the following Outcome:

- **Increased community access to justice through promotion of the rule of law and human rights.**

Underpinned by two Outputs:

- **Output 1.** Community members' justice problems are resolved through enhanced access to inclusive community-based justice services.

- **Output 2.** Community justice roundtables supported promoting inclusive and people-centered justice.

To make sure, the project focuses on a people-centered impact, the following indicators will be utilized (see results framework for more details):

- Number of CJC effectiveness assessments conducted, including citizen experience surveys in Afar, Sidama, and Addis Ababa.
- Number of people-centered training modules developed based on CJC assessment findings, with specific focus on improving access to justice for women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Percentage of training participants who report improved access to justice following people-centered training sessions, disaggregated by region and demographic group.
- Number of roundtables and knowledge-sharing events conducted during which women, youth, and marginalized groups effectively shared perspectives on CJC effectiveness and justice delivery.
- Number of scaling strategies for CJCs co-developed with community input to promote people-centered justice and expand service availability.
- Percentage of surveyed citizens who report increased knowledge of access to justice as a result of project-funded, region-specific CJC information materials.

This people-centric design to enhance the capacity and reach of the community-based justice system will help foster more inclusive, human rights-based approaches, capable of delivering accessible, timely, and fair dispute resolution mechanisms. This will also help to improve coherence between the formal and informal justice systems. Drawing on the pilot CJC model and the evidence gathered, augmented by the knowledge exchange with community-based groups, the project informs the potential to scale (including cost implications) the model CJCs to other parts of Ethiopia. The key objective will be to foster greater trust within justice institutions/Rule of Law and help enhance social cohesion and reduce the potential for conflict if citizens feel unable to access justice or resolve disputes through community-based systems that are trusted and reflect the local context. Within the UNDP Ethiopia governance portfolio rule of law/access to justice is a key pillar of engagement that feeds into the upstream work to achieve the UNSDCF 2025-2030 Outcome 1: *All people in Ethiopia, specifically those who have been left behind, live in a peaceful, just, and democratic society that upholds standards of rule of law, accountability, and human rights.*

4. Gender equality, women's empowerment, and leave no one behind

Gender inequality in Ethiopia remains a significant challenge, driven by deeply entrenched patriarchal norms that limit women's access to education, economic resources, and decision-making. Women and girls disproportionately shoulder unpaid domestic work, face high rates of illiteracy, and experience widespread gender-based violence (GBV). This means that greater attention to inclusivity - gender, youth, people with disabilities, marginalized groups, including IPDs and refugees' needs is reflected in the project design and ensures adherence to the ***Leave No One Behind*** principle. Concerning gender justice, women's rights, and the elimination of gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs has initiated a revision of the 1993 National Policy on Women. The capacity building support for justice providers, elders, mediators, and others will place a heavy emphasis on integrating and promoting greater awareness about gender sensitive mediation, women's rights, and gender-based violence issues, which will seek to address bias, misconceptions that may have unconsciously framed the traditional mechanisms. The need to target and promote greater appreciation

and application to deliver fair outcomes for women and girls and marginalized groups will be integrated into the enhanced community justice processes. Throughout the project implementation, specific attention will be paid to actively recruiting and supporting women's participation in the traditional courts, panel discussions, and decision-making.

5. Human rights

The Secretary-General's vision for the future of global cooperation is more commonly known as "Our Common Agenda."[7] Calls for inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism to better respond to and deliver for the people and planet post-pandemic, accelerate efforts to achieve the SDGs, and push harder towards ensuring human rights are at the heart of all development assistance. Overall, this project is conceived on the premise that, where human rights protections are lacking, marginalized groups are often vulnerable to abuses and face significant challenges to realizing their rights, including within the formal justice system. Thus, the project, working with its partners, will seek to support efforts to improve the institutional processes that will allow individuals and communities to assert their rights.

Through the project interventions, institutions will offer better services, based on trust, efficiency, and integrity that recognizing that the justice systems/structures must be people centric. The premise is that the project will help support the work to nurture fairer, more accountable, and predictable justice systems, promoting greater transparency and strengthening the institutional frameworks that support and protect human rights in the country. This virtuous circle will help foster an enabling environment for sustainable development, with recognition of the importance of the rule of law and access to justice by the citizens. This project reflects and integrates a human rights-based approach in all activities, outcomes, and strategies that are aligned with internal and international human rights standards. Marginalized and vulnerable groups are at the center of justice delivery, so the project will promote active participation, inclusion, accountability, the rule of law, non-discrimination, equality, and accountability with the objective of achieving justice for all. This ensures that justice is not only accessible but also equitable, empowering, and protects human rights with a special emphasis on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable groups of the community based on regional, cultural, and situational contexts.

Operational Enablers

6. Integrated responses

The UNDP's Renewed Governance and Peacebuilding Framework for Africa 2022-2025: Pillar 4 presents a strong focus on the links between democracy, human development, and credible elections: "to contribute to strengthening democracy in Africa by promoting inclusive participation, strengthening electoral institutions and processes, and creating space for engagement between institutions and civil society.". The new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework Ethiopia (UNSDCF) 2025-2030 Outcome 1: All people in Ethiopia, more specifically those who are left behind, live in a peaceful, just, and democratic society which upholds standards of the rule of law, accountability, and human rights. Together with the UNDP CPD 2025-2030 Pillar 1: Democratic Governance, Sustaining Peace, Human Rights, and Rule of Law,

[7] https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

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ensures that the project achievements feed into the broader UN response to development in Ethiopia. These policy frameworks have informed the design of the project.

Currently, in Ethiopia there is ongoing violence and instability in various parts of the country, all of which continues to adversely impact the ability of justice and rule of law institutions to fulfil their constitutional functions. In places affected by conflicts, there have been serious violations of human rights, breakdowns of law and order, destruction of property, and internal displacements affecting the lives and livelihoods of millions of people across the country. Integrated responses in people-centered justice, which the project will pursue, require a comprehensive and coordinated approach that goes beyond legal procedures to address the broader needs of individuals and communities.

What this means in practical terms is ensuring justice services are not only accessible and fair but also responsive to social, economic, and cultural factors that influence people's ability to seek and obtain justice. Rather than focusing solely on formal legal processes, people-centered justice emphasizes the actual experiences and outcomes for individuals, ensuring that justice systems work for the people they serve. In practice, this involves aligning legal aid, dispute resolution mechanisms, and social services to create a seamless support system. For example, a victim of gender-based violence may need not only legal protection but also medical care, counseling, and economic support. By integrating these services, justice becomes more effective and sustainable, addressing root causes rather than just symptoms.

7. Partnership strategy

The project, through a well-structured partnership strategy, will work with a range of partners (both National & International) to deliver people-centered justice through supporting the CJCs in a coordinated and inclusive manner. Lead Partner for the JACCF project HiiL [8] together with local partner Destiny Ethiopia, as existing partners to the MoJ brings highly relevant knowledge and understanding through their grassroots work, supporting the MoJ to bring rich experiences on community-based justice services delivery. Destiny Ethiopia (DE) has proven skills and experience of the local context that spans a variety of sectors, addressing the root causes of conflict and fostering social cohesion. As the local partner, DE has successfully brought key actors from the justice sector (courts, police, prosecutors, ombudsman, Human Rights Commission) together to identify and prioritize people-centered issues for transformation in the justice sector. This included improving access to justice by designing scalable models for community-based justice delivery. As a result, a prototype model for Community Justice Centers (CJCs) was developed.

The project will be building on strong partnerships with government agencies, civil society organizations, traditional leaders, and community-based organizations to advance the work of the project. Each partner will be able to bring their unique strengths, whether in legal expertise, experience of CJC operations, community trust, social cohesion or resource mobilization, because all these partnerships are essential to achieve more holistic justice solutions through improved community-based approaches. The current pilot CJC model being championed by HiiL & Destiny Ethiopia will be the key entry point, which the project will build upon through the pilot CJC model already being implemented. The project will collect data about the effectiveness of the pilot CJC model, including evidence-based areas for improvement. The project will facilitate capacity-building training and community-based dialogues between the CJCs and the courts. These issues taken together will help to shape and inform a people-centered plan to scale up (including development of a sustainable financing plan) the presence of CJCs beyond the pilot target Regions. With such people-centered evidence from the pilot CJCs' efforts will inform the scale up plan to be submitted

[8] HiiL & DE partnership profiles to be annexed

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to the MoJ as they implement their Transformational Plan. The MoJ have indicated that with the information in the scaling plan including the numbers of cases dealt with, lessons learned and training plans for the CJCs, costs of setting up CJCs will then be submitted to the MoJ consideration to assess whether the CJCs model could be extended into another 3- 6 Regions (MoJ have not yet indicated which Regions will be considered). Ultimately, the outcome harvesting and evidence gathered by the project will help to inform the development of a household contribution model that can be considered for inclusion into the CJC legislation that will enable CJCs to become the norm and established across the country.

The project will ensure that there are clearly defined roles, mutual accountability, and a well-defined shared vision about the objective of the project. This means engaging local leaders to enhance community-based justice mechanisms while ensuring alignment with the national legal frameworks. In developing the scale-up plan then consideration of the potential for leveraging technology and innovation through private-sector collaborations to expand access to justice, particularly in remote areas, will be considered. By fostering strong, multi-stakeholder partnerships, justice systems can become more responsive, equitable, and capable of meeting the diverse needs of society within the country, irrespective of geographic location.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) and Innovation

8. MEL approach

A comprehensive MEL framework is fundamental for ensuring justice initiatives can be measured both quantitatively and qualitatively so they can remain effective, responsive, and adaptable to community needs. Given Ethiopia's complex justice landscape that blends formal, customary, and religious systems, this approach must be carefully designed to capture both quantitative results and qualitative improvements in people's access to justice. Given the duration of the project, means that the key first task will be to design and undertake the data collection to provide the evidence base of how the pilot CJCs are working, how effective they are, and recommendations to improve the services provided. The approach for this assessment will be to gather evidence about what works and where there is room for improvement.

The project will create feedback loops at the community level, with partners, implementers, and beneficiaries, to ensure the people-centered approaches remain constant throughout project implementation. Knowledge-sharing platforms will enable justice sector actors, both formal (courts) and informal, to exchange ideas and share successful practices (as well as identify where things did not work as intended). The community feedback mechanisms will ensure that the project remains responsive to the local needs. This learning cycle reflects Ethiopia's evolving justice landscape. The use of innovation will be considered, integrating technology and community-driven solutions where that makes sense. By systematically tracking progress, rigorously harvesting outcome-level impacts, and continuously learning from experience, justice stakeholders can make better informed decisions that genuinely improve access to justice for all Ethiopians, particularly the most vulnerable.

10. Knowledge strategy

The project will bring information together to ensure that the citizen focus thread flows throughout the implementation of the project. It will take the form of collecting both citizens centered knowledge and project implementation information. The citizen centered knowledge management approaches will

include regular stock taking exercises which will be undertaken on a regular basis taking views from justice providers, elders, mediators, community-based groups, women & marginalized groups and civil society, to monitor progress from a citizen's perspective. This will help to ensure local ownership and provide the means to share experiences both good and bad which will help inform the scale up plan. The scale-up plan will also include a sound cost benefit analysis drawing on the numbers of cases dealt with and resolved within the CJCs. This will help inform the upstream policy thinking in MoJ and will be helpful for MoJ to assess the potential need to amend existing legislation drawing on the evidence arising from the work of the CJCs.

From the project implementation perspective for the CJCs to truly enhance access to justice, they must develop and implement a robust knowledge strategy that systematically captures, shares, and applies critical insights, which in turn can help shape and inform the project implementation. Such a strategy serves as the foundation for improving service delivery, ensuring that justice solutions are both effective and responsive to community needs. As Ethiopia is a diversified state, the project will ensure that all training materials, panel discussions are made available in local languages and reflect the individual regional contexts to ensure inclusivity. The integration of local knowledge is essential for CJCs to remain grounded in the communities they serve. This means actively engaging with traditional justice systems, understanding cultural norms, and incorporating community perspectives into dispute resolution processes.

By documenting local practices alongside the formal legal frameworks, CJCs can bridge the gaps between customary and state justice systems that resonate with local populations. This requires establishing structured mechanisms for community feedback, training staff in cultural competency, and developing systems to preserve and apply this localized wisdom into the day-to-day operations of the project. Evidence-based decision-making can drive systemic improvements. CJCs need to implement strong monitoring and evaluation systems that track case outcomes, user satisfaction, and service delivery bottlenecks. By systematically evaluating what works and scaling those solutions, CJCs have the potential to dramatically increase their impact and reach, enabling CJCs to transform from service providers into learning organizations that continuously evolve to better serve the needs of citizens seeking access to justice. Taken together the citizen lived experiences of engagement with the CJCs can be used to inform and provide the evidence about the impact of the CJCs on improving access to justice. This in turn will be part of a broader advocacy tool to be used when decisions are made about the expansion of the CJC model to the additional Regions thus ensuring that the people-centered value addition can be widely shared in the country.

11. Strategic innovation

A. Does the project directly support the testing of technological, social, policy, and/or conceptual innovations that could foster or accelerate transformative change?

The project will pursue interventions that create multiplier effects, triggering broader systemic changes beyond immediate case resolutions. Unlike traditional legal aid (which helps individuals one by one), catalytic strategies shift power dynamics, influence policies, and transform justice ecosystems to benefit entire communities. The project is designed to foster transformative change through multiple innovative approaches. Using the knowledge sharing roundtable meetings, the project will also assess existing community-led paralegal networks and survivor-centered policing models that are available, and how vulnerable populations can access justice services. This will help inform the future direction of the CJCs and the possible use of technology, which will feature in the scale-up plan.

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B. What, if any, new ideas, approaches, tools, and/or practices (for example, systems thinking, behavioral insights, adaptive programming approaches) were tested during the project design phase or will be applied during project implementation? Will the project support digitalization, and if so, how will the project ensure digitalization is inclusive, rights-based, and sustainable?

To transform justice institutions and broaden the range of formal and informal justice actors to provide people with fair, inclusive, relevant, and timely justice solutions that respect human rights, the project will seek to embrace and focus on creating a sound evidence base which will assess the effectiveness of the CJCs and how best to address any areas which require improvement. The importance of outcome monitoring will also help inform the work of the CJCs, both at the individual level as well as an institutional response towards increasing access to justice at the community level.

The prior Justice Needs and Satisfaction Survey has provided a sound evidence base that has informed the design of the project. Bringing together the MoJ, Regional Justice Bureaus, existing CJCs, engagement with community-based groups, elders, women & marginalized groups, civil society, and national & international groups will help strengthen the links between the formal and traditional community-based systems. Adaptive programming techniques will be employed through quarterly learning loops that allow for continuous refinement of project activities with input from women's groups, rural communities, and disability rights organizations to address diverse needs. To guarantee long-term sustainability, the project will, as part of the scale-up plan, consider the potential to introduce the use of digital tools.[9]. This project will be nested in the UNDP Country Office governance portfolio supporting the Enabling Democratic Governance in Ethiopia (EDGE) project. Therefore, the project will contribute to the broader UNSDCF Outcome 1: *All people in Ethiopia, more specifically those who are left behind, live in a peaceful, just, and democratic society that upholds standards of the rule of law*.

C. What is the plan to document the experience and learning from innovation to promote its sharing, uptake, and upscaling? Please include any particular approach, tool, and process envisaged.

The project will devise a knowledge management framework that will ensure that all project interventions integrate community-based approaches and capture, share knowledge and information with all key partners, including MoJ, CJCs, community groups, women, youth, the elderly, and other marginalized groups, CSOs, and the media. There will also be specific attention to gathering information about the lived experiences from citizens who have used the CJC services. This will ensure that there is a comprehensive record of the work of the project, the lessons learned both good and bad, training support provided, guidance/information provided to enhance the CJC experience. Such information can be tailored to become an important advocacy tool to be used as part of the scale up efforts to expand the CJC coverage into additional Regions. This will also help to ensure that the awareness of the added value of CJCs is enhanced. The knowledge, lessons learned, and examples of best practice in the CJCs will also feed upwards into the MoJ Innovation Lab to encourage learning to be shared at the policy level. Such a systematic approach towards knowledge management will also help inform the content and recommendations in the CJCs scale-up plan.

[9] http://www.mint.gov.et/policy-and-strategy/-/document_library/CNIICzpide2L/view_file/169422

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Catalytic Impact and Sustainability

12. Catalytic impact

Available evidence suggests that a lack of effective and fair justice service delivery, coupled with limited trust in governance institutions, reinforces a culture of civic passivity, while the weak social cohesion feeds deeper societal divides, exclusion, and inequities along urban/rural lines. Further, a lack of an effective, efficient, and responsive justice system is likely to encourage corruption and undermine economic development by reducing investor confidence. This is particularly relevant at the subnational level in Ethiopia, where the levels of civic engagement and legal empowerment are low, the civil society organizations are weak or not adequately capacitated to ensure a proper monitoring and oversight of justice delivery within their communities and are least equipped to engage with the justice chain actors in the fair administration of justice.

Ethiopia's justice system stands at a critical juncture, where catalytic approaches offer transformative potential to address deep-rooted systemic barriers. The country's complex legal landscape, marked by both progressive reforms and persistent challenges, creates unique opportunities for interventions that generate multiplier effects. While Ethiopia has undertaken significant initiatives like the Justice Sector Reform Program (JSRP) and National GBV Action Plan, substantial gaps remain in rural access to justice, law enforcement capacity, and social acceptance of reporting gender-based violence. These challenges demand solutions that move beyond individual case resolution to create systemic, sustainable change across all levels of Ethiopia's justice ecosystem.

The project's catalytic approach focuses on strategic engagement with the country's hybrid justice system, which links formal justice and traditional justice systems. This recognizes the reality that many people, particularly in rural areas, continue to rely on customary systems for conflict resolution. By working simultaneously to strengthen formal legal frameworks and build bridges with informal justice structures, the project creates multiple entry points for systemic reform. The project will play an important role in expanding access to justice at the community level and also helps create pathways for gradually aligning traditional practices with national human rights standards. The project will integrate approaches addressing gender inequality in the administration and delivery of justice and will ensure that gender equality is consistently mainstreamed throughout project implementation. The project could provide the vehicle for more meaningful inter-institutional and even justice system transformation by encouraging women's greater engagement and representation at the community level.

The project will help to create multiplier effects through the creation of a strong evidence-based assessment of the effectiveness of the CJCs, where improvements are necessary, and by fostering greater buy-in for access to good quality community-based legal remedies. Exchanging knowledge and lessons learned from the CJC pilot exercise will also enhance the relationships between formal & informal justice actors - courts and CJCs. This, in turn, helps inform and support the broader MoJ Justice Transformation Plan by allowing community-based voices to help influence policy-level developments. This will help to trigger broader systemic changes beyond immediate case resolutions and will seek catalytic strategies to influence policies and transform justice ecosystems to benefit entire communities.

13. Sustainability

In Ethiopia, ensuring the sustainability of community- justice centers (CLCs) initiatives require approaches that are deeply rooted in local contexts while aligned with national systems. Unlike short-term projects that deliver temporary solutions, sustainable CJCs in Ethiopia must build on existing community structures,

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strengthen institutional capacities, and secure long-term financing mechanisms that outlive development partner funding. A key pillar of sustainability is local ownership, ensuring justice initiatives are led and managed by Ethiopian institutions and communities. The project will work with the MoJ (and implementing partners HiiL & Destiny Ethiopia), regional justice bureaus, kebele administrations, and traditional dispute resolution systems, rather than operating as parallel structures.

Finally, financial sustainability demands innovative funding models. As part of the work to devise the scale up plan the development of a financing plan for the sustainable financing of CJCs in Ethiopia will also be completed in line with the Justice Financing Framework. This will help ensure that there is a sound business case with the evidence collected during implementation to attract further investment in the CJC model. This will be an important feature to be considered in the expansion of CJCs to an additional 3-6 Regions which will require planning and budgeting of public sector budgets at Federal and Regional level. The MoJ has also expressed interest in the development of a household contribution model which is outside the scope of the JACCF project. Nevertheless, the lessons learned from the JACCF support can also feed into the discussions with the MoJ about the financial sustainability and potential expansion of the CJCs model. This includes advocating for government budgets to allocate resources to CCJ initiatives, such as integrating paralegal networks into regional social services, while exploring public-private partnerships with Ethiopian telecom firms (e.g., Ethio Telecom) to sustain digital justice platforms. By prioritizing local leadership, context-responsive tools, and domestic resourcing, Ethiopia can build a self-sustaining CCJ ecosystem that delivers lasting justice for marginalized communities.

Sustainability will be ensured through building upon the strong existing partner relationships between MoJ, HiiL, and Destiny Ethiopia, which will be enhanced further by establishing links with other key actors and partners, including community-based groups and Civil Society Organizations. By simultaneously working at the policy, institutional, and community levels, the project will help to create a reform culture that embraces formal and traditional justice mechanisms. This in turn will help support the broader Ethiopian justice system where legal protections are consistently enforced from urban centers to remote kebeles, where citizens actively participate in shaping the policies that affect them, and where CJCs could become standardized nationwide with consistency in how they operate, adhere to national and international justice standards and promote greater appreciation/adherence to human rights standards. This comprehensive approach ensures that impacts extend beyond the project's immediate scope, creating ripple effects that can be further scaled in support efforts to transform Ethiopia's justice landscape with a truly Ethiopian-developed/owned approach, building towards increased access to justice. Through this catalytic strategy, the project aims to support the creation of an enabling environment to ensure that the benefits of CJCs and their links to the formal justice systems are enhanced by using traditional solutions that deliver accessible, equitable justice that serves all Ethiopians, particularly the most vulnerable members of society.

Key Strategies:

- Build upon the existing strong partnerships between MoJ, HiiL, and Destiny Ethiopia
- Institutionalize CCJ training with specific attention on gender & social inclusion to ensure consistency within the CJCs
- Creation of platforms to support dialogue and ownership in the development and expansion of community-based justice centers.
- Ensure that the scale-up plan also considers the financing and sustainability of the CJCs.
- Secure line-item budgets for CJCs in the Regions.
- Leverage Ethiopia's CSO Proclamation to strengthen community legal aid funding.

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Other Requirements

13. Corporate quality standards and assurance

Checking this box verifies that this project meets (or will meet) all UNDP corporate Programming Standards: ☒

14. Project budget (please use template provided)

Checking this box verifies that a minimum of 15% of the project budget is dedicated to gender-specific activities: ☒

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ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2025/26 CURRENCY: USD

UNDP GLOBAL PROGRAMME ON STRENGTHENING THE RULE OF LAW, HUMAN RIGHTS, JUSTICE AND SECURITY FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT, JUSTICE ACTION COALITION CATALYTIC FUND IN ETHIOPIA

EXPECTED PROJECT OUTPUTS *And baseline, associated indicators, and annual targets*	**PLANNED ACTIVITIES** List activity and associated actions	**Timeframe (July 2025 - June 2026)**				**Responsible Party**	**Planned Budget**		
		2025	**2026**				**Funding Source**	**Budget Description**	**Amount**
		Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3				
Output 1: Community members' justice problems resolved through enhanced access to inclusive community-based justice services. ***Baseline:*** Low ***Indicators 1.1:*** Extent of community members' access to inclusive, community-based services. ***Targets:*** Medium ***Baseline:*** 0 ***Indicators 1.2:*** Number of training needs assessments conducted to identify capacity gaps in delivering inclusive	**Need Assessment and Capacity Development of CJC**								
	Activity 1.1: Undertake training need assessment and capacity gaps in 6 target Regions - 3 existing CJC-*Sidama, Afar and Addis Ababa plus new regions (Southwest Ethiopia, Amhara and B. Gumuz)* CJCs	25,000				HiiL	FW	Consultancy fee, Travel, Equipment, etc.)	**25,000**
	Activity 1.2: Develop centralized Training modules/materials for CJC	10,000				HiiL	FW	DSA, travel	**10,000**
	Activity 1.3: Validate training modules/materials- Revise the training modules, informed by the review and evaluation results		5,000			HiiL	FW	DSA, travel, hall rent	**5,000**
	Activity 1.4: Roll out of training modules (based on CJC need assessment) 3 existing +3 new regions- Provide comprehensive capacity-building training for elders and community justice service providers in the targeted regions (1 per region- total of 6)			10,000	10,000	HiiL	FW		**20,000**
	Activity 1.5: Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing CJCs in improving justice delivery at the community level (including outcome monitoring and evidence- based improvements		8,000			HiiL	FW	Consultancy fee, printing	**8,000**

community-based services, disaggregated by region. ***Targets:*** 6 assessments ***Baseline:*** 0 ***Indicators 1.3:*** Number of training modules developed and implemented to deliver comprehensive capacity-building for elders and community justice service providers, disaggregated by region. ***Targets:*** 6 training modules	**Activity 1.6:** Organize stakeholder platform regularly (*MoJ, Sidama, Afar, A. A, HiiLs, UNDP, CSO, Media*)- plus new regions (S. West Ethiopia, Amhara & BG)		6,000	6,000	6,000	HiiL	FW	DSA, travel, hall rent	**18,000**
	Output 1 subtotal	**35,000**	**19,000**	**16,000**	**16,000**				**86,000**
Output 2: Community justice roundtables supported to promoting inclusive and people-centred justice. ***Baseline:*** *TBC* ***Indicators 2.1:*** Number of Community Justice Centers established in the targeted regions. ***Targets:*** 3 Centers ***Baseline:*** *0* ***Indicators 2.2:*** Number of centralized Community Justice Center (CJC) information materials	**Awareness Raising, Regional Consultation and Scale up of CJC**								
	Activity 2.1: Undertake stakeholders' consultation to discuss and agree on the scaling up strategies and plan	8,000							**8,000**
	Activity 2.2: Scale up and establish new Community Justice Center in new target regions- *Southwest Ethiopia, Amhara and Benshangul-Gumuz* through the provision of essential equipment/materials (Tables, chairs, long bench, table and chair, rapporteur, chair 3 desk-top, printer)	15,000	15,000						**30,000**
	Activity 2.3: undertake awareness raising workshop in areas where the Community Justice Law has not been promulgated-- Somali, and Gambella regions		6,000	6,000					**12,000**
	Activity 2.4: Produce and disseminate Centralized CJC information materials to increase awareness (6 total / 1 per region)			4,000	5,000				**9,000**

produced and disseminated to enhance awareness, disaggregated by region. ***Targets:*** 6 information materials ***Baseline:*** 0 ***Indicators 2.3:*** Number of awareness-raising workshops organized to promulgate and promote the Community Justice Law, disaggregated by region. ***Targets:*** 2 workshops in 2 regions	**Activity 2.5:** Organize media panel discussion on CJC with key partners and stakeholders of the project			7,500					**7,500**
	Activity 2.6. Organize a High-level national conference on Community Justice				10,000				**10,000**
	Output 2- subtotal	**23,000**	**21,000**	**17,500**	**15,000**				**76,500**
	Printing, Translation costs -+ contingency				9,000				9,000
	Joint Monitoring and Review		1,000	1,000	2,000	UNDP			4,000
	communication and visibility			2,000	1,685	UNDP			3,685
	Total Programmable	**58,000**	**41,000**	**36,500**	**43,685**				**179,185**
	Direct Project Cost (DPC)-3%								**6,000**
	GMS (8%)								**14,815**
Total (EFY 2025/26)						**200,000**			

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES, FACILITIES AND PAYMENTS
(WORK PLAN)

YEAR: 2025/26

CURRENCY: USD

EXPECTED PROJECT OUTPUTS *And baseline, associated indicators, and annual targets*	**PLANNED ACTIVITIES** List activity and associated actions	**Timeframe (July 2025 - June 2026)**				**Planned Budget**		**Schedule of Payments by UNDP**			
		2025	**2026**								
Output 1: Community members' justice problems are resolved through enhanced access to inclusive community-based justice services. ***Baseline:*** ***Indicators:*** ***Targets:*** *Related CP outcome:*		**Q4**	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Budget Description**	**Amount**	**Q1**	**Q2**	**Q3**	**Q4**
	Need Assessment and Capacity Development of CJC										
	Activity 1.1 Undertake training need assessment and capacity gaps in 6 target Regions - 3 existing CJC-*Sidama, Afar and Addis Ababa plus new regions (Southwest Ethiopia, Amhara and B. Gumuz)* CJCs	x				DSA, travel, hall rent	25,000	X	X		
	Activity 1.2. Develop centralized Training modules/materials for CJC	x				Professional fee,	10,000	X	X	X	
	Activity 1.3. Validate training modules/materials- Revise the training modules, informed by the review and evaluation results			x		DSA, travel, hall rent	5,000	X	x	x	
	Activity 1.4. Roll out of training modules (based on CJC need assessment) in 3 new regions- Provide comprehensive capacity-building training for elders and community justice service providers in the targeted regions (1 per region- total of 3)			x	x	DSA, travel, hall rent	20,000	x	x	x	

	Activity 1.5. Organize stakeholder platform regularly (*MoJ, HiiL, UNDP, DE, Media* in the 3 new regions (S. West Ethiopia, Amhara & BG)		x	x	x	DSA, travel, hall rent	18,000	x	x	x	
	Programme, Coordination and Operational support Cost-HiiL						8,000				
	Output 1 subtotal						**86,000**				
Output 2 Community justice roundtables supporting and promoting inclusive and people-centred justice. *Baseline:* *Indicators:* *Targets:* *Related outcome:*	**Awareness Raising, Regional Consultation and Scale up of CJC**										
	Activity 2.1. Undertake stakeholders' consultation to discuss and agree on the scaling up strategies and plan	x	x			DSA, travel, hall rent	8,000	x	x	x	
	Activity 2.2. Scale up and establish new Community Justice Center in new target regions- *Southwest Ethiopia, Amhara and Benshangul-Gumuz* through the provision of essential equipment/materials (Tables, chairs, long bench, table and chair, rapporteur, chair 3 desk-top, printer)	x	x	x		DSA, travel, hall rent	30,000	x	x	x	
	Activity 2.3. undertake awareness raising workshop in areas where the Community Justice Law has not been promulgated-- Somali, and Gambella regions		x	x		DSA, travel, hall rent	12,000	x	x	x	
	Activity 2.4. Produce and disseminate Centralized CJC information materials to increase awareness (6 total / 1 per region)			x	x	Printing cost,	9,000	x	x	x	
	Output 2- subtotal						**59,000**				
Total (Out 1+2)							**145,000**				