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Local Justice Systems in Colombia

THE ROAD TO COLLABORATIVE
JUSTICE THAT PRIORITIZES PEOPLE



Edgar Ardila
Laura Ospina

PATHFINDERS
FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES
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About the Authors

Edgar Ardila-Amaya is an attorney with a PhD in Human Rights. Throughout his three decades of professional experience, he has combined his leadership in access to justice programs with government and international cooperation agencies with his work as a professor at the Faculty of Law of Universidad Nacional of Colombia. He has authored several books and articles on the subject.

Laura Ospina is an attorney with over 16 years of experience working in the public and private sectors on development projects and initiatives aimed at designing and implementing public policies. She has led strategies to strengthen local and global, formal, non-formal, and community-based justice initiatives, to build the capacity of justice actors to deliver more effective, people-centered services, and to foster private sector engagement to enhance access to justice. She currently serves as Senior Program Officer for the Justice team at Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies at New York University's Center on International Cooperation (CIC).

About the Pathfinders Grand Challenge on Justice

With 5.1 billion people—two-thirds of the global population—lacking meaningful access to justice, it is imperative to achieve SDG 16+ and ensure equal access to justice for all by 2030. We must put people at the center of justice systems and move from words and planning to action and implementation.

The Pathfinders Grand Challenge on Justice serves as an impact hub where countries, civil society, and multilateral and regional organizations converge to bridge the justice gap by expediting action on people-centered justice. The Grand Challenge provides a platform for the exchange of innovative practices in data collection, evidence-based policymaking, and effective use of resources. The aim is to overcome fragmentation and transform justice systems to prevent and address the most prevalent justice issues that people face.

Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies is a cross-regional impact hub of 46 United Nations (UN) Member States, alongside partners from international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. They are committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goal targets of peace, justice, inclusion, and equality (SDG16+). Pathfinders is hosted by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University.

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Acronyms

CAB	Community Action Boards
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DANE	Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadísticas (National Administrative Statistics Department)
DJC	Departmental Justice Committee
DNP	Departamento Nacional de Planeación (National Planning Department)
DV	Domestic violence
GBV	Gender-based violence
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other people with sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics that are perceived not to conform to social norms.
LJC	Local Justice Committee
LJS	Local Justice System
LRJM	Local and Rural Justice Models
MJB	Mobile Justice Brigades
MoJ	Ministry of Justice and Law
PDET	Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial (Development Programs with a Territorial Approach)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UARIV	Unidad para las Víctimas (Victims' Unit)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

Glossary

Campesino: A person from a rural Latin American area who can sometimes be a farmer or farm laborer.

Community Action Boards: a non-profit civic corporation composed of residents of a neighborhood who come together to seek solutions to specific needs of the community.

Corregidor: A supporting state authority at the municipal (rural) level, whose primary function is to foster peace and harmony within the community. They are tasked with reconciling and resolving issues that impact peaceful public coexistence.

Department: Colombia is divided into 33 departments (corresponding to states or provinces in other countries), each of which has dozens of municipalities.

Departmental Justice Committee (DJC): is the promoter and guiding body of the LJS at the department (provincial) level. Its objective is to facilitate interaction in a diverse relational environment, serving as the main dialogue space within the system, where guidelines for access to justice in the territory are formulated.

Family Commissioner: an administrative justice actor who addresses intra- or inter-family conflicts.

Local Justice System (LJS): a strategy and a platform that aims to foster institutional collaboration among diverse justice actors (formal/administrative/non-formal) and other community and private actors to harmonize efforts to effectively serve communities in their territories.

Local Justice Committee (LJC): is the promoter and guiding body of the LJS at the municipal level. Its objective is to facilitate interaction in a diverse relational environment, serving as the main dialogue space within the system, where guidelines for access to justice in the territory are formulated.

Mobile Justice Brigades: are part of a national and local mobile justice strategy between the MoJ and municipal administrations. They offer justice services to vulnerable populations in rural areas, such as access to information on justice procedures and services, legal and psychological orientation, workshops on violence prevention, conciliations and mediations, and services related to social and civic programs.

Police Inspectors: a local justice authority that manages public coexistence matters and enforces local regulations. They do not belong to the national police but answer to the local mayor.

Executive Summary

Colombia's aspiration to revolutionize and enhance access to justice has culminated in the establishment of Local Justice Systems (LJSs)—a strategy and a platform that aims to foster institutional collaboration among diverse justice actors and to harmonize efforts to effectively serve communities in their territories.

True access to justice requires tailored responses to the specific needs and dynamics of individuals and communities within local contexts.

The prevailing approach to tackling this challenge has hitherto been to bolster the presence of formal justice entities and to restructure existing offices while introducing new specialized branches of justice administration. Regrettably, this approach often overlooks the capabilities developed within local communities and has failed to address the real needs of people on the ground.

Often, in conflict and post-conflict contexts, genuine access to justice cannot be achieved if justice entities lack the authority to assert themselves in the face of actors wielding de facto powers. Individuals are unlikely to engage with legal institutions if they perceive them as ineffective or powerless against influential entities. LJS, positioned within the community, possess a unique capacity to analyze and address local challenges, empowering the most vulnerable. By operating in alignment with community needs, they facilitate a shift in the relationship between the state and its people, initiating what could be termed an incremental grassroots reform of the justice system.

One of the key priorities of the Pathfinders program is to champion and profile national and local efforts to accelerate the achievement of SDG 16.3 and ensure universal access to justice. It also seeks to build global support for people-centered justice, advocating justice for groups most at risk of being left behind while fostering a robust and empowered justice for all movement.

In pursuit of these goals, this study describes the consolidation and implementation of Colombia's LJS strategy, which exemplifies a people-centered approach to justice. It also discusses how the LJSs have evolved into a national strategy championed by the government in collaboration with various justice stakeholders, communities, and international donor organizations and rolled out across more than 100 municipalities.

Methodology

To trace the path of the LJS strategy, we conducted a review of the relevant literature and interviewed key stakeholders, including justice actors, academics, members of the LJS, community authorities, and international donor delegates who have participated in the process or monitored the policy. These efforts were supplemented by attending LJS coordination sessions and a review of documents capturing the firsthand experience of people engaging with the LJS.

Access to Justice Challenges in Colombia

Justice administration in Colombia is marked by diverse contexts across the nation. However, certain common threads emerge that permeate the national landscape. These include challenges in accessing justice stemming from geographical and budgetary constraints, which contribute to a disparity between the demand for justice and the coordinated response of the institutional framework. The concentration of justice services in limited areas of certain municipalities, often dictated by budgetary constraints, leaves vast rural areas bereft of security

guarantees since justice is neither institutionally sustained nor supported.

The marked difference in people's ability to access justice is particularly noticeable in rural areas, which exacerbates community distrust in the justice system. Consequently, individuals may seek alternative avenues for resolving disputes. At the local level, actors wielding de facto power, often operating outside the bounds of legality, exert authoritarian control and impose their own rules through coercive means. However, communities exhibit resourcefulness by resorting to their own communal leaders who help maintain peace and legitimacy within their respective contexts.

Alliances are frequently forged at different points between community authorities and state agencies, enhancing their capacity to address justice needs within a territory. This effort contributes to the creation of synergies among state bodies that recognize the importance of coordinated action beyond formal boundaries. These collaborative dynamics between entities and their engagement with communities form the foundation of LJSs, offering valuable lessons to other relevant contexts.

Emerging Opportunities: Local Justice Systems

An LJS operates as a network where state bodies, private entities, and community authorities interact to address the justice needs in a municipality. The fundamental element of the system is the coordinated provision of solutions to uphold rights and manage conflicts. Through established pathways, each stakeholder contributes to a collective effort aimed at delivering comprehensive, relevant, and timely responses in the local context. This approach relies not only on the response of state entities but also on the contributions of non-state justice actors, particularly community leaders.

The framework for these pathways is provided by local and departmental (subnational level) justice committees, which serve as platforms for coordination, visibility, and development. Members of the LJS engage, based on a four-year strategic plan, to coordinate various pathways of action, strengthen institutions, and enhance their capacity to have an impact on the community. Each local justice committee (LJC) is supported by a technical secretariat dedicated to internal strengthening, sustainability, and outreach to the wider population.

The scope of the LJS extends beyond the confines of individual territories. The establishment, reinforcement, and sustainability of LJSs depend on the coordination with other territorial levels, such as the subnational and, above all, the national level. At each level, there is a political commitment and allocation of resources and capacities to foster and support local initiatives. At the national level, the leadership of the Ministry of Justice is paramount, advocating for LJSs among various central bodies responsible for justice administration and spearheading efforts to ensure their implementation across all municipalities nationwide.

Learnings and Recommendations

Colombia is at a decisive moment with many pressing and ongoing justice challenges, but initial signs are encouraging that its leaders appear to be showing political will to make the justice system more accessible and equitable. In its goal to fulfill the 2030 agenda, the country has defined multiple pathways of action through various National Development Plans, its Ten-Year Justice Plan (2017-2027), and ongoing justice reform initiatives. These endeavors are aimed at enhancing access to justice and ensuring the fulfillment of legal needs throughout the country. LJSs are a critical part of this effort.

Through the conception and implementation of the LJS strategy, Colombia is a clear example of how countries can fulfill international commitments to equal access to justice and restructure institutions to prioritize people-centered approaches. Below, insights from the Colombian experience offer invaluable lessons for governments, justice actors, civil society, international donors, and other stakeholders seeking to integrate collaborative

systems like LJS into their people-centered justice policies.

National level

- Ensure sustainability of the LJSs**
A strategy based on collaboration and coordination, such as that of the LJSs, should be a state policy to ensure its scalability and sustainability. To guarantee the sustainability of the initiative and secure adequate resources, national authorities must warrant that it is not a stand-alone initiative but forms part of the National Development Plans. A national program for LJSs should be consolidated, financed, and institutionally robust so that all municipalities can aspire to an LJS.
- Ensure coordination between justice programs**
The national justice public policy authority must ensure effective coordination between all existing access to justice programs to address local needs from different fronts. All ministries or decentralized bodies with a broad mandate around justice issues (such as security, migration, human rights, etc.) must coordinate their efforts around a comprehensive strategy (like the LJS), strengthening and nurturing each other.
- Respond to local needs**
An LJS strategy should not be built solely from the central level. LJSs are a tool to strengthen and disseminate local responses produced by the communities and the entities present in each territory. Likewise, there is a need for constant dialogue between ethnic authorities (where relevant), community leaders, and the ordinary justice system to discuss coordination between the different justice practices that may coexist in a given context.
- Support and guide local processes**
Central-level support is essential for local processes, providing guidance and momentum for their implementation and aiding the distribution of local budgets to address the justice needs of each territory.
- Employ and retain competent staff**
National authorities must work closely with local authorities to design the profile of staff to be hired and institute a transparent and competitive system to engage and retain an effective team.

Sub-national level

- Political buy-in is a must**
The leadership of the governors/sub-national leaders is fundamental in the coordination bodies at the sub-national and local levels. This is because they provide political support to the strategy and help broaden the strategy's impact through mayors and other leaders in the various municipalities of the sub-national government.
- Coordinate to secure funding**
Governments at the subnational level must secure adequate resources to operate the LJSs in their territories through coordination between the national and local governments, as well as ensuring municipalities' access to various territorial funds.
- Judiciary must be on board**
The participation in LJSs of subnational branches of the judiciary helps foster an understanding of the

importance of the judicial procedures as well as constraints of the judiciary, thus fostering better trust with local leaders and communities.

Local level

- **Allocate and distribute adequate resources**
Local governments must allocate adequate resources to programs seeking to improve access to local justice within local development plans and ensure their effective distribution to operate the LJSs in their territories.
- **Build strong LJS teams in the municipalities**
Devise budgetary strategies to minimize staff turnover and create incentives and tools to foster long-term commitment among officials. The quality and effectiveness of the LJSs are significantly enhanced when staff have deep roots within the community and receive organizational support.
- **Recognize and support community conflict resolution authorities**
Provide specific pathways that allow community leaders to be supported, advised, and trained.
- **Prioritize local needs and be mindful of local capacities**
Focus on the promotion of action pathways that prioritize local needs based on a realistic assessment of local resources (both human and financial).
- **Ensure sustainability at the local level**
To guarantee their sustainability, LJSs must be enshrined in local laws or regulations. They must be backed by effective commitment and active participation by local authorities and the various actors that comprise the coordination bodies (LJC and DJC).

Introduction

“By placing people at the center of justice systems, the dialogue between civil society and justice authorities opens doors to find solutions that respond to people’s justice needs.”¹

People-centered justice puts people and their needs at the center of justice policies, programs, and services. Starting by understanding their most common problems and experiences in trying to resolve them, people-centered justice takes a data-driven and evidence-based approach to prevent and resolve people’s problems. Through its focus on fair outcomes for people, people-centered justice is different than current approaches to justice, which tend to focus on processes and institutions and seem to serve a few rather than all.²

Colombia’s Local Justice Systems (LJSs) are a good example of a people-centered approach to justice. Their success hinges on effective coordination and collaboration among various justice actors,³ spanning national and local levels. The strategy did not emerge from a policy established by a particular entity but, rather, from the convergence of various initiatives in an organic way over a period spanning more than two decades in different regions of the country.⁴

This case study seeks to put a spotlight on Colombia’s LJSs and their contribution to the 2030 Agenda, particularly focusing on the target of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.3, which aims to facilitate universal access to justice through effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. The study analyzes the convergence process that has shaped the current state of the LJS, aiming to identify its constituent elements and assess the evidence of its impact across various levels and institutional structures within the Colombian justice system, as well as its role in bridging the gap in access to justice. It highlights successful experiences and lessons learned in the strategy’s implementation which may be useful for other contexts.

To thoroughly understand the initiative, the study begins by discussing key challenges to access to justice in Colombia and shows how the LJSs emerged as a response to these local hurdles. Given the multifaceted nature of the LJSs evolution, the study emphasizes how state actors at different levels, supported by international cooperation, converge with community experiences. In doing so, it offers important lessons on the importance of collaboration and coordination at the local level for improving people’s access to justice.

1. Access to Justice Actors and Challenges in Colombia

To understand the dynamics of justice administration in Colombia, it is important to understand the roles played by the diverse actors tasked with delivering and overseeing justice in a landscape marked by social conflicts, pronounced inequality, and vast geographical disparities. The relationship between the people and the justice institutions and actors is constrained by the State’s limitations in exerting authority throughout the country. The pervasive impunity and limited institutional efficacy in conflict management underscore people’s distrust of authorities,⁵ resulting in segments of society feeling unprotected and vulnerable. This is sometimes due to their

own vulnerability but can also be attributed to the limitations of those called upon to protect them.

The State is mindful of its limitations and is committed to reducing the justice gap through a series of policies of the highest level, including understanding people's justice problems and creating long-term justice plans. The Legal Needs Surveys conducted in Colombia (2016, 2020, and 2022), on behalf of the national government, for example, are a critical tool that has revealed a complex situation regarding access to justice across the nation. The 2020 Survey⁶ revealed that 65% of respondents opt not to seek assistance from formal justice authorities, having little expectation of receiving a satisfactory and timely response if they do. Faced with a substantial number of perceived legal needs, 35% turn to non-formal justice actors, religious leaders, social organizations, the private sector or other influential actors in their communities.

Notably, these findings highlighting the disparity between legal needs and the state's capacity to satisfy them are not unique to Colombia.⁷ For instance, in criminal justice, the system's shortfall in investigating and prosecuting crimes is very apparent. This is evidenced by the fact that only 29% of the 3.5 million⁸ individuals required to report their cases to authorities, with the majority choosing not to do so. It appears that citizens anticipate that the authorities will be unable to address their problem if they seek help.

Colombia has used this data to guide the development of its policies and services. It is worth noting that in recent years, progress has been made in addressing justice issues, as the proportion of those reporting that their needs have been met has increased from 22% to 32% from 2020 to 2022.⁹ This is confirmed in the last survey conducted in 2024 led by the HiiL Institute and USAID. Although it had a smaller population sample (representativeness in 16 municipalities), the survey evidenced that 33% of the people interviewed stated that their legal needs were resolved. However, this figure is reduced and exacerbated with people interviewed who are part of populations in conditions of vulnerability or marginalization (22% for people with lower incomes and 31% for people in situations of displacement).¹⁰

1.1 Ineffective response to crimes and conflict

Despite a noticeable expansion in resources and coverage within the official justice system, there is a disparity between the demand for the resolution of legal needs and the state's capacity to meet it. Prosecution and punishment rates for criminal behavior remain very low, which include crimes against life, personal integrity, property, or sexual freedom.¹¹ The rates of prosecution and punishment for crimes/illegal acts by public officials like corruption, which significantly impact societal harmony and erode the credibility of justice operators, are minimal.

1.2 Inequity in the institutional justice response

The lack of institutional responses to justice needs is particularly acute in peripheral municipalities, where the distances undermine the efficacy of national legal norms in regulating social interactions, leading to a diminished state capacity to address citizen demands.¹² Colombia has more than 1,100 municipalities, of which only 100 have more than 70,000 inhabitants. However, despite their relatively small populations, many of these territories have complex conflicts due to their internal diversity;¹³ some municipalities have vast geographical expanses comparable to entire departments (provinces),¹⁴ and many face high levels of social unrest and conflict.¹⁵

The challenge of inadequate institutional response to justice needs extends beyond a shortage of officials. Almost all of Colombia's 1,100 municipalities are equipped with at least one combined civil/criminal judge,¹⁶ a family commissioner,¹⁷ a police inspector,¹⁸ and a municipal overseer.¹⁹ However, creating these roles does not guarantee sufficient support from the state in terms of the resources necessary for them to effectively carry out their duties.²⁰

The presence of a judge in a municipality often serves more as a symbol of the state's territorial presence than a practical tool for addressing justice needs. Often, these justice actors express grievances regarding inadequate working conditions at their offices.²¹ Some feel isolated from other institutions and without the necessary support from the central level.²² They report a lack of security guarantees for both justice actors and individuals involved in judicial processes, especially in conflict-prone areas.

1.3 Lack of state presence in rural areas

Formal justice officials tend to concentrate on urban areas due to security, logistical, and physical access challenges. In roughly a quarter of the country's municipalities, which includes around 250 areas impacted by armed conflict, institutional presence is confined to the capitals and their surrounding regions,²³ resulting in inadequate responses to community needs. Despite having some autonomy and resources, administrative justice actors such as local elected representatives, family commissioners, and police inspectors (support authorities that are not part of the police, who promote peaceful and harmonious relations in the community) face significant limitations in extending their reach to rural areas, and their authority falls short of addressing substantial portions of legal needs.

Large territories of the country grapple with violence and the presence of armed actors.²⁴ State authorities often fail to penetrate these areas, and community authorities frequently assume responsibility for resolving disputes.

In some rural areas of the country, there is the figure of the *corregidor*. As a supporting state authority, the *corregidor's* primary function is to foster peace and harmony within the community. They are tasked with reconciling and resolving issues that impact peaceful public coexistence.²⁵ However, *corregidores* often feel a profound sense of powerlessness, frequently encountering challenges in gaining support from justice actors. They are also vulnerable to the influence of *de facto* powers in the territory. In practice, their ability to address community needs is primarily derived from the legitimacy they receive from the local community.²⁶

1.4 Lack of mechanisms that allow for coherent responses

Formal justice institutions operating in municipalities sometimes encounter difficulties working together on matters of common interest. Judges, prosecutors, and public defenders operate with their own priorities. Police inspectors and family commissioners, although part of the municipal administration, face limitations in their efforts to improve access to justice, as local governments do not usually prioritize providing them with resources and support.²⁷ As a result, potential users frequently find themselves dissatisfied with the responses from these actors, often receiving insufficient information or struggling to comprehend the outcomes of their cases.

The high turnover of officials further exacerbates the disconnect between the justice actors and the people. When hiring justice actors such as police inspectors and family commissioners, political party affiliations have historically been a more important consideration than having the requisite qualifications, resulting in skewed hiring practices offering limited stability or job security to these actors. As a result, pressing problems often become part of a group of disjointed approaches from successive officials managing the same cases, frequently ending in a lack of substantive decisions. Their understanding of the issues and people they encounter tends to be limited.²⁸ In recent years, some municipalities have tried to counteract this practice by relying on merit-based competition.

1.5 Lack of trust in justice institutions

Although most municipalities have formal justice institutions, people do not often approach them because they do not believe that institutional response will be satisfactory. There are several reasons of this lack of trust: officials and actions that clash with local culture, language and values; lack of security of tenure for public officials resulting in lost information; limited resources—both human and financial—to respond to people’s needs; people’s inability to get relevant information; distance from public offices; and a fear of reporting.

Additionally, social inequalities contribute to a perception among many that justice serves the interests of the elite.²⁹ Significant imbalances³⁰ exist between people in terms of capabilities, accessibility, financing, and security,³¹ potentially tipping the scales of justice before any legal considerations come into play.

1.6 Justice needs and community authorities

When it is impossible for the state to protect rights, individuals often turn to actors within their communities who are recognized for their special capacity to address justice needs. These community authorities wield influence and represent their respective groups, acting based on established group consensus to achieve justice outcomes with a certain level of legitimacy.³²

The authorities of ethnic communities are more visible at the national level and have constitutional recognition and some standing in the legal system. Indigenous peoples,³³ for example, maintain and develop their own systems of authority and procedures that are constitutionally recognized.³⁴ The diversity of forms of political organization in indigenous communities, such as indigenous councils, reflects a mixture of traditions and adaptations to Western society. Afro-descendant communities, for their part, have also been able to build their own regulations and institutions rooted in their traditions. Since 1993, many have been established as Community Councils and have been transforming their management systems, which are based on ancestral norms but seeking an increasing value in the national legal system.³⁵

Campesino³⁶ authorities, while often as entrenched in their communities as ethnic authorities, tend to operate less visibly, and their actions are often not recognized within the legal system. The Peace Communities and the Campesino Reserve Zones,³⁷ among other social authority projects and rural development strategies, are defined as autonomous territories by communities that declare themselves neutral before state bodies and armed actors. They adopt consensual conflict management, focusing on solidarity to protect themselves from violence and promote reconstruction efforts. Despite the challenges, some of these communities have maintained autonomy and long-term sustainability.

In addition, community mediation and conciliation in equity³⁸ mechanisms have emerged in response to deficiencies in or as a complement to state intervention. These mechanisms are led by community leaders in rural areas and populated centers where local authorities are recognized³⁹ for their role in conflict management and behavior regulation in their respective communities. Community Action Boards,⁴⁰ faith communities, and teachers in educational centers also serve as essential figures in conflict resolution, owing to their presence in the community and ability to influence local dynamics.

The effectiveness of community authorities in conflict management is constrained by power dynamics within the community and their standing vis-à-vis state entities and other influential actors in the territory. While they have the support of the community, the authorities tend to be effective and quick in generating responses that are within their reach. However, there are times when national and local state entities do not recognize their authority. They are often trivialized, belittled, stigmatized, and even repressed.

2. Justice Systems: From the Local to the National

Over the past few decades, Colombia has witnessed a steady expansion of its justice system. Still, despite efforts to extend and intensify state involvement in dispute resolution, the growing presence of justice institutions has struggled to keep pace with the people's demands. The justice apparatus only covers part of the national territory and a limited range of matters.⁴¹

For over twenty years, local state institutions with national affiliations have collaborated with community authorities to analyze the problems in their territories, identify and respond to local needs, and tailor their efforts to each area's unique conditions. This approach has laid the groundwork for the establishment of LJSs, which seek to respond to the community's needs.

2.1 Expansion of justice services

Following the enactment of the 1991 Constitution and the appointment of the Superior Council of the Judiciary to administer the judicial branch, access to justice became a central priority for the Colombian government, spearheaded by the Ministry of Justice and Law. However, corresponding justice programs have had difficulty making inroads into public policy. Consequently, as is the case in many contexts around the world, addressing people's justice needs occupies a minimal place within administrative policies and institutional priorities.⁴²

Over the past few decades, collaborative agreements at the local level have emerged among various actors and institutions to improve access to justice and address the needs of people within local territories. It is common for judges, prosecutors, inspectors, commissioners, and other justice actors to establish mutually supportive relationships with community authorities. On the one hand, because they find that these connections enable effective community summons and outreach efforts. On the other hand, for the people of such regions, it is important to have the channels, when required, that allow their priorities to be attended to by state institutions.

The depth and strength of these relationships have yielded favorable outcomes in some communities.⁴³ However, the absence of sustainable and widespread mechanisms for coordinated action among municipal justice actors has been evident. Instead, there has been a tendency for each institution to operate independently, only seeking collaboration when legally required. Moreover, interactions with community authorities have primarily relied on personal dialogues, varying based on the individual official's disposition.⁴⁴

This is where the LJSs represent a significant advancement in meeting the demands for justice. Their presence makes it possible for progress to be consolidated and made visible, for each actor to increase their capacity for impact, and for failures to be neutralized and successes propagated.

2.2 Towards a local justice national strategy, 2001-2011

Since the early **2000s**, the LJS strategy has been gradually consolidated as a strategy within the national government. At that time, it was considered as a means of mitigating the territorial limitations of other access to justice programs, such as the Justice Houses⁴⁵ and the Conciliation in Equity.⁴⁶ The LJSs were conceived as an umbrella that would integrate these programs into their apparatus and ensure greater institutional support at the local level.

Throughout these institutional efforts, there has been concerted local coordination among justice actors and community authorities in dialogue with territorial, academic, and international donor entities. The LJS emerged as a beacon of hope, presenting an opportunity for a qualitative shift that could effectively become a tool for access to justice and rights protection. Both the national government and international donors saw in this strategy the potential to achieve the objectives of their respective programs.⁴⁷

In **2001**, the Ministry of Justice and the Law (MoJ) introduced the National Justice Program to foster coordination within the justice sector. A significant aspect of this program was the emphasis on consolidating LJSs, which encouraged collaboration between judges, prosecutors, public defenders, local administrative justice actors, and community justice representatives.

In **2006**, the concept of LJSs was first included in the 2006-2010 National Development Plan, recognizing its essential role as part of the country's justice system. This recognition continued into the subsequent 2010-2014 National Development Plan, where LJSs were included as part of the "regional approach to justice" strategy, particularly within the context of territorial disputes arising from the armed conflict. The executive branch collaborated closely with the judiciary to develop a justice map, enabling the identification of existing services and needs within specific territories.

In **2011**, the consolidation of the Local Justice Committees (LJC) (LJS coordination entities) commenced, drawing on successful experiences of equity-based justice in regions heavily affected by violence.⁴⁸ These committees aimed to collaboratively address people's justice needs through non-formal justice actors, formal institutions, and community authorities.

2.3 Local justice systems as a territorial action strategy, 2012-2017

Around **2012**, the LJSs were defined as a territorial action strategy within Colombia's peace process. This approach continues today in municipalities significantly impacted by the armed conflict and grouped under the banner of PDET municipalities (Development Programs with a Territorial Approach—PDET is its acronym in Spanish), which successive governments have prioritized for responses in all development areas, including justice.⁴⁹

The MoJ initiated a program to establish an effective and comprehensive presence of justice actors across municipal territories, removing access barriers, and optimizing available resources. This initiative advocated for a proactive approach, encouraging the planning and scheduling of justice actors' activities rather than taking a reactive stance towards justice needs.

The strategy prioritized the presence of various types of justice actors, particularly equity conciliators and municipal corregidores, linked to communities. They were recognized for their close ties to communities and ability to address justice needs in geographically dispersed populations. Moreover, there was a strong emphasis on fostering legitimacy and behavioral changes in pursuit of justice. The proposal involved coordinating justice actors with other actors across three territorial levels of municipalities—urban centers, populated areas, and rural regions—highlighting the imperative to expand service coverage throughout the territory. The program also emphasized the need for training both justice actors and the people, promoting effective communication between them to overcome cultural and geographical barriers, thereby mitigating the risk of re-victimization of people at the hands of justice institutions.

In **2014**, with the support of USAID,⁵⁰ the MoJ launched the implementation of LJSs in 46 municipalities, concentrating its efforts on promoting the formalization of the first LJs (one per municipality), for which all justice actors⁵¹ were invited to build, define, and follow a common action plan.

As a regulatory basis for the above, municipal agreements or decrees creating these committees were promoted. At that time, two risks to access to justice were identified: 1) that coordination in the committee be reduced to a ritual of sharing information on the progress made and that 2) in mere formalism, the work would not go beyond an administrative act.⁵²

To avoid this, the MoJ established the guidelines of the current LJS strategy, aimed at delivering social support to the peace process in communities impacted by the armed conflict and institutionalizing and providing sustainability to the LJSs. Thus, the following were established:

- Objectives
- Institutional actions
- Actors at the national and local levels
- Implementation methodologies
- Resources to begin the implementation of LJS in 120 municipalities.

A national coordination team was formed within the MoJ, with support from the European Union (EU).

In **2016** the EU Delegation initiated work supporting the MoJ in 47 new municipalities, although their involvement lasted only two more years. Meanwhile, USAID continued to support the strengthening and sustainability of the 42 LJSs it had supported since 2012. Additionally, the UN Multi-Donor Fund, operated by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), prioritized the creation of 13 new LJSs. In 2017, USAID launched a new program⁵³ announcing the inclusion of 45 new municipalities in the program.

According to the reports of each agency and the MoJ, by **2018**, they accounted for 91 municipalities where the strategy was developed.

At the same time, the *Ten-Year Justice Plan (2017-2027)* was introduced as a guiding instrument implementing affirmative actions to enhance individual and collective capabilities of justice actors and reduce inequality gaps and inequity in access.

Notably, the Ten-Year Plan identifies the development of LJSs as a priority for ensuring access to justice in territories affected by armed conflict and other forms of systematic violence.

2.4 Redefinition and consolidation of the local justice systems strategy, 2018-2021

In **2018**, a reform of the LJS strategy was proposed to align with the changing direction of the peace process. The MoJ, in collaboration with the National Planning Department (DNP), took on institutional leadership to implement a monitoring system for existing LJSs. On July 24, 2018, the directors of the diplomatic delegations of the EU, the UN, and the United States signed a document committing to continue supporting the strategy as part of their backing for the peace process. At the end of the period, the public policy design of the LJS strategy was more consolidated and coordinated between the government and donors.

With the arrival of the new government in August 2018, the LJSs were included as part of the commitments in the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace (Peace

Agreement—Havana 2016). An agreement was signed with the UN Multi-Donor Fund for Sustaining Peace in Colombia to promote different lines of access to justice and adopt LJSs. Additionally, the regions most affected by the internal armed conflict were prioritized.⁵⁴

By **2020**, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the MoJ's monitoring and support work of the LJSs declined. Nevertheless, the MoJ was able to provide technical assistance to municipalities that still had the political will to continue, with differences in the degree of intensity of interventions. Moreover, terms of understanding were developed between the MoJ, USAID, and UN agencies to address the specific justice needs that arose during the pandemic.

Despite the difficulties, this was a period in which, with national momentum, formalization documents were drafted, creating new LJSs that became activated at the end of **2021**.

In early **2022**, USAID's new program⁵⁵ continued to support the national and local governments in the implementation and strengthening of 71 LJSs by integrating strategies to enhance initiatives addressing various types of conflicts.

2.5 A national policy to strengthen local access to justice, 2022-2026

Currently, the MoJ's biannual strategy rests on three key pillars:⁵⁶

- (i) Preparation of a justice map showing the supply capacities in the territories;
- (ii) Development of a model of articulation and coordination between the National Justice System and the LJSs;
- (iii) Implementation of a differentiated strategy to strengthen the institutional, technical, and technological capacities of local justice service providers.

The 2022-2026 National Development Plan aims to transform the justice system by shifting its focus from top-down service provision to one centered on the needs of individuals, communities, and territories, seeking to ensure that the response is relevant, tailored, and timely. The development plan outlines a set of guiding principles, including 1) empowering individuals and enhancing their legal skills and competencies; 2) promoting effective conflict resolution in communities and formulating, implementing, and evaluating evidence-based interventions and policies, prioritizing people's needs; 3) recognizing the importance of justice and the different territorial needs.⁵⁷ It emphasizes strengthening the Justice Houses, family commissaries, and transitional justice, as well as promoting alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. The plan proposes an approach coordinated between the overall justice system and local justice systems, as well as a differentiated strategy for strengthening the institutional, technical, and technological capacities of service providers.

Similarly, Bill 475 of 2021, known as the new Statutory Law of the Administration of Justice, incorporates elements that offer a legal foundation to justify the adoption and institutionalization of the LJS strategy at the territorial level, namely:

- **Local coordination from two perspectives:**
 - a. Between the national and local levels of the institutional supply of justice, for which all entities responding to justice needs must coordinate in local management, regardless of whether they are local or national, to make human beings and their requirements the ultimate goal of legal action.
 - b. Between state entities and community bodies to act with relevance, timeliness and quality in

matters that arise, for which the community's contributions and synergies with state entities are promoted and propagated.

- **Contextual analysis and articulated action plans:**
 - a. A contextualization exercise is required that allows us to understand not only existing needs but also the capacities developed to establish the necessary links to act most effectively to guarantee people's rights.
 - b. A planned exercise that makes it possible to identify and enhance existing resources and capacities in the territory through the coordination of the different actors and the establishment of action pathways that are understandable and accessible to the community.

Provided the bills passes examination by the Constitutional Court. If approved, this will pave the way for the continued promotion of a regulatory proposal for LJSs. This regulatory framework is expected to facilitate the expansion of the strategy, not only within local entities affected by armed conflict, with institutional weaknesses, and with a significant presence of a far-flung rural population but also in those in urban areas. Additionally, it is anticipated that the framework will lead to an increase in budget allocations to the local entities for the promotion of access to justice.⁵⁸

To date, the LJSs are primarily financed by the municipal and departmental governments (provinces). At the national level, through the leadership of the MoJ, support is provided to local governments to ensure the proper implementation of the local systems, as well as to help monitor their progress and effectiveness. In addition, international cooperation agencies provide resources to procure the sustainability of the strategy, by helping improve justice actors and institutional capabilities and promote community outreach.

Interview: Alcibiades Madroñero

Corregidor, Municipality of San Miguel, Putumayo

"(With the LJS) it has been possible to make visible the need to work in an articulated manner, to generate more responsibility for what each institution must comply with (...). The committee meetings have managed to improve the relationship between the institutions, and have managed to raise the need, for example, (in this municipality) of forensic medicine investigators. The committee has made visible the problems and the need for their presence in the municipality. It took a year for this task to be achieved."

3. Local Justice Systems Strategy⁵⁹

LJSs seek to serve as conduits for communities to access comprehensive justice solutions. Achieving this goal requires establishing a robust framework in each municipality and leveraging the best available capacities, resources, and competencies.

3.1 Approach

By leveraging the expertise and resources of each stakeholder, promoting collaboration, and avoiding redundant efforts, municipalities can translate national norms and guidelines into much-needed actions on the ground. This approach can lead to three significant changes in the way justice impacts society:

[Local Justice Systems in Colombia: The road to collaborative justice that prioritizes people](#)

1. Incremental reform

The coordinated work can lead to incremental justice reform at the local level, accumulating achievements with gradual, constant, and lasting advances.⁶⁰ This allows LJSs to capitalize on opportunities to provide optimal care to individuals while enabling institutions to implement coherent policies based on data and evidence. Resources can then be allocated, leading to increasingly beneficial outcomes for the most vulnerable

2. Shift in power relations

Collaborative efforts empower justice actors as they forge stronger and broader ties, enabling them to deliver more effective responses tailored to the community's needs. Building communication and support networks among actors enhances their ability to uphold rights with less interference and delays.

3. Relationship between institutions and communities

Through enhanced access to justice, communities recognize that justice revolves around individuals rather than remote and incomprehensible regulatory frameworks or government directives. Authorities consistently demonstrate their commitment to protecting rights and fostering peaceful coexistence by addressing the community's most pressing issues. As a result, institutions assume a more significant role in people's lives.

LJSs revolutionize the approach to conflict resolution by making justice more accessible through less formal procedures, employing everyday language, and leveraging the involvement of community actors. This does not always require new resources but rather a strategic redistribution, enhancing their usability and impact.

Moreover, engaging community actors in LJSs enables them to intervene preventively or complementarily, averting rights violations and de-escalating conflicts.

LJSs represent collaborative efforts between the state and the community, acknowledging legal needs in each territory to facilitate prompt and efficient responses, thereby enhancing access to justice for the population.⁶¹

The collaborative essence of LJSs is rooted in joining up efforts to identify the diverse legal needs and challenges in accessing justice in each territory, aiming for effective, timely, and feasible solutions for the people while being mindful of the available resources. Each territory possesses unique characteristics; therefore, the challenges in each are different. While there may be commonalities, the differences are what present challenges. The collaborative and participatory nature of LJSs lies in their capacity to gather information, analyze municipal or regional realities, and determine the most suitable differentiated alternatives through a planning process.

A LJS is not simply a program with a group of employees and a budget allocation. It is, above all, a system, a commitment to organize and strengthen responses to real or potential justice needs. Thus, they aim not to introduce new institutions or incur additional costs but rather to provide a channel for existing structures and enhance their efficacy.

Although fulfilling requirements may sometimes necessitate increased personnel and resources, LJSs primarily focus on bolstering response capabilities through coordinated action within the territory.

In line with this objective, LJSs aim to revolutionize the relationships and impacts of the various actors, approaches, and practices involved in conflict resolution and justice needs. To achieve this, they are structured around the following pillars:

Key Pillars of the Local Justice Systems



Reflection as well as coherent and harmonious action between local entities, complemented by extending this coherence to national entities involved in the process;



Articulated management of institutions, including those with external influence on the municipality, through actions that promote harmony and consistency;



Community involvement in decision-making and guiding institutional capacity in justice administration; and



Recognizing and harnessing the community's potential to address its own justice needs.

Unlike traditional organizations, LJSs are designed as models where actors interact without rigid hierarchies, considering diverse interests and possibilities to generate responses as needed and feasible.⁶²

3.2 Structure

The LJSs have emerged as a tool for promoting, strengthening, and propagating access to justice initiatives at the local level. The MoJ, in support of local authorities, has been defining its own role and has convened international cooperation organizations, academia, and local entities to agree on the drafting of the strategy, aimed at 1) designing and establishing a framework for the structure of an LJS and its components; 2) defining the accompanying actions by the ministry and the different external entities as well as creating an information and monitoring system;⁶³ 3) institutionally establishing the program within the ministry; 4) producing a formal framework of the strategy and an implementation manual to be translated into a national public policy backed by law. The structure of the LJS differs from territory to territory, considering the characteristics of each (population, income level, geographical location, and state of public order) as well as the justice actors present.

The LJS's coordination bodies⁶⁴ are the Local Justice Committees (LJC) or Departmental Justice Committees (CDJ). The technical secretary of the committees is the head of the municipal mayor's office or the governor's office (sub-national level).

The Local Justice Committee / Departmental Justice Committee is the promoter and guiding body of the LJS. Its objective is to facilitate interaction in a diverse relational environment, serving as the main dialogue space within the system. Here, guidelines for access to justice in the territory are formulated.⁶⁵ During the committee meetings (at least four a year), an analysis of conflicts and the local context is conducted, generating directives on the course of action across the various components of the LJS. The LJC is at the municipal level; the DJC is at the department (provincial) level.

In addition to the leader of each municipality or department (province), committee meetings comprise all formal justice actors at the national level operating in the municipality or department, administrative justice actors, non-formal justice actors, and representatives of campesino, ethnic, communal organizations, and other community representation and organization forms.⁶⁶ For example, in intermediate municipalities (around 50,000 inhabitants), participation includes over twenty representatives from national and municipal administration entities, the judicial branch, and civil society organizations (CSOs). Through mutual agreement, these stakeholders identify actions⁶⁷ required to meet people's justice needs.

Figure 1. Local Justice Committee

Ministry of Justice and Law, 2023



The committee defines a four-year strategic plan, preparing various coordination mechanisms of the LJS. Resources are designated for it and are to be adopted by the Municipal or Departmental Development Plans.⁶⁹ Therefore, the committee reviews the progress and directions of the pathways and coordinated actions among different system actors every year. The committees receive and analyze reports on action pathways and agreements, define progress indicators for the system, and evaluate conflicts and access to justice in the municipality. This ensures that actions related to access to justice find a common meeting point and support.

The main results derived from a committee are:

- Analysis of conflicts, barriers to access to justice, and legal needs to provide effective, participatory, pluralistic, and differential responses at the local level;
- Presentation, discussion, and approval of the LJS Strategic Plan and the assigned justice budget;
- Monitoring of the plan, promoting activities that have not been adequately executed;
- Influence on the allocation of municipal justice budgets;
- Planning and implementation of mobile access to justice brigades;
- Planning and implementation of training processes for justice actors;
- Strengthening and planning communication strategies for action pathways;
- Adoption of the committee's internal operating regulations.

The technical secretariat of an LJS serves as the central hub where information from the local system is circulated, and all efforts are leveraged with administrative and legal support. It is the responsible party for keeping the information on the operation of the LJS in the municipality/department (province) updated and for reporting on the actions carried out, the achievements realized, and the difficulties presented concerning the management of local conflict and with the administration of justice in the territory. This role is typically assumed by secretariats of mayor's offices (in the case of DJC, the secretariats of the governor's offices), which function as specialized bodies with the authority and competence to ensure horizontal interaction with all municipal-level operators.⁷⁰

The secretariat's primary role is to guarantee transparency, coordination, and effectiveness in the management of justice at the local level. It collects and systematizes essential information for both the system's members and the general population. This information is essential for providing timely and clear access to the LJS's progress, processes, and results.

The secretariat's responsibilities involve managing documentation, including 1) an updated registry of system members; 2) local agreements, constitution decrees, and LJS regulations; 3) strategic action plans of the LJS; 4) competencies of justice operators; 5) defined and ongoing action pathways; 6) ongoing initiatives; 7) annual reports from participating institutions compiled by the LJS; 8) meeting minutes and related documents; 9) the annual report of the committee; and 10) information on the progress of agreed justice indicators.

The secretariat is also responsible for providing technical support, including:

- ① advising the committee on the analysis and proposals related to access to justice;
- ② providing guidance and technical knowledge to make informed decisions;
- ③ supporting the preparation and monitoring of action pathways;
- ④ collaborating in creating efficient and effective processes to appropriately address conflicts;⁷¹
- ⑤ training for community officials and authorities in conflict management;
- ⑥ identifying and informing LJS members of the resources and tools available to strengthen the capacities of relevant actors;
- ⑦ managing logistical and financial resources for the effective functioning of the LJS.

These functions are crucial for the LJS's sustainability and impact in making access to justice in the municipality a reality. However, collecting, organizing, and disseminating information and providing technical support can be challenging.

3.2.1 Action pathways - technical working groups

An LJS is only useful for people if it improves access to justice and protects rights through coordinated actions. LJSs, based on people-centered justice, aim to integrate state and non-state efforts to effectively resolve conflicts and protect rights, avoiding bureaucratic hurdles and legal formalities that may alienate people. The action pathway is the most refined tool for enacting the changes envisioned by LJSs. These pathways ensure that outcomes align with people's expectations and values, enabling institutional actions to overcome obstacles and fostering alliances to establish new approaches to addressing disputes.

Interview: Yady Cuesta

Family Commissioner, Municipality of Carmen del Darien, Chocó

(The committee) has changed a lot of people's perception of justice. In the local justice committee, the training that has been provided to the actors that make up the committee has led people to have more confidence in them and have thus requested more services from the (justice) entities. Through the committee we have achieved:

- *Capacity building.*
- *Visibility to the population of the entities available to solve their justice needs.*
- *Improvement in the quality of attention to the user.*

The action pathways are based on agreements among two or more formal and non-formal justice entities and community actors, delineating their organized involvement in addressing justice needs in specific matters. These pathways are tailored to the unique needs and capacities of each municipality. Typically, they begin with preventive or reactive pathways for conflicts arising in neighborly, intra-family, commercial, and employment relationships.

The MoJ has directed that, as a first step, the committees should work in thematic working groups to address conflicts according to the typology identified in each municipality, from which permanent action pathways can be derived.⁷² Coordination efforts extend to the establishment of technical support working groups for gender issues, conflict victims, environmental issues, ethnic matters, and conflict resolution methods.

Under the MoJ's directive, the technical working groups are tasked with establishing guidelines that govern the actions of each actor involved in addressing justice needs, going beyond strict legal regulations or narrow interpretations of rights. By crafting protocols collaboratively, the participating actors aim to facilitate seamless interaction and maximize the contributions of each. This approach seeks to broaden the scope of conflict resolution and promote comprehensive action, using available municipal resources efficiently to address justice needs comprehensively while adhering to regulatory boundaries.

First Departmental Justice Committee Nariño, Colombia

The inaugural subnational initiative developed in the Department (Province) of Nariño in 2017 with the establishment of the Departmental Justice Committee (DJC). This committee serves as a node to advocate for the LJS strategy across all municipalities within the department, akin to the role of Local Justice Committees (LJC). It convenes regional heads of relevant institutions and organizations dedicated to addressing people's justice needs.

The DJC of Nariño emerged in response to the governor's call for all justice sector actors in the department (province) to unite and spearhead the LJS strategy. Its establishment owes much to the leadership and cooperation of regional heads from the Prosecutor's Office, the Ombudsman's Office, the Family Welfare Institute, and notably, the Sectional Council of the Judiciary, mobilizing their agents to participate in LJS initiatives and action plans defined by the committees.⁷³

The departmental committee has also set up thematic working groups. One of the most consistent working groups has been indigenous justice, which facilitates horizontal dialogue between ethnic authorities and judges regarding their respective roles, responsibilities, regulatory frameworks, institutions, and sanctions. Practical matters, such as the implementation of decisions by indigenous authorities regarding the treatment of community members in prisons⁷⁴ or support for their own restorative justice systems in dedicated spaces like harmonization centers,⁷⁵ have been discussed within this working group. Additionally, working groups focusing on gender issues and justice for black populations have been established and are led by the Sectional Council of the Judiciary (CSJ)—the subnational representation of the National Superior Council of the Judiciary.⁷⁶

The DJC has supported and facilitated decisions made by LJsCs regarding the creation or filling of roles in LJSs. The DJC has also been instrumental in fostering community engagement and mutual recognition of justice operators⁷⁷ during mobile justice brigades. The magistrates who participate in the DJC recognize that the LJS strategy gives much more meaning to their work in delivering justice because it helps them understand the territory in which it is located.⁷⁸

The leadership and financial support from the governor's office have proven invaluable for the success of Nariño's DJC since it possesses the resources and political backing necessary to amplify the strategy's impact through collaboration with mayors and local and national justice authorities.

4. Main Achievements

According to the MoJ, a LJS is considered active if there is a formal act of constitution, an action plan, and continuity in quarterly meetings. Compared to the 91 LJS in 2018, Colombia has seen an increase, with 152 of the country's 1,100 municipalities now having formal acts of constitution. The LJS are spread across 16 of the country's 32 departments (provinces). Official reports indicate that 57% of these 152 LJS are currently active, while an additional 15% are in the process of reactivation through collaborative efforts involving local entities, the MoJ, USAID, and UNDP. In the remaining 27% of municipalities where LJSs are inactive, efforts to reactivate them have been hindered by the lack of willingness from local authorities. With the change in local government leadership in January 2024, there is a new opportunity to forge relationships in both inactive and newly added municipalities.⁷⁹ In addition, seven departments (provinces)—Antioquia, Cauca, Córdoba, Chocó, Meta, Nariño, and Putumayo—have a DJC.

Figure 2: Territorial distribution of the 152 formalized Local Justice Systems

133 are located in municipalities prioritized by the Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (PDET)⁸⁰



(Map Ministry of Justice and the Law, 2024)

The MoJ, as the governing body of public justice policy, has announced that it will target quality more than quantity, that is, work together with the incoming local governments so that they not only commit to the reactivation of existing committees but also maintain and proactively use those that are active. By 2023, the government's initial goal, with allocated resources, was to consolidate 15 new LJS⁸¹ (13 in PDET municipalities), which the municipalities themselves have requested. The MoJ has committed to achieving implementation in the remaining 35 PDET municipalities by 2026 (completing presence in the 170 PDET municipalities).

By characterizing the current period as post-pandemic, the ministry aims to refocus efforts on bolstering access to people-centered justice. It seeks to enhance the coordination of LJSs to better meet individuals' needs. This approach not only aims to enhance accessibility but also foster sustainable, enduring policies while maintaining collaboration with central authorities and international partners.

Between 2021 and 2023,⁸² several achievements can be highlighted that contribute to the sustainability of local coordination through the LJS strategy.

At the national level, in the final quarter of 2023, the MoJ, supported by USAID, conducted a comprehensive review of the achievements, scope, challenges, and opportunities stemming from the 10-year implementation of the LJS strategy nationwide. This review involved a detailed examination of the strategy's trajectory across 152 municipalities and consultations with seasoned experts in the field. The insights from this analysis have yielded recommendations that, in 2024, will be analyzed and incorporated into the LJS Implementation, Operation, Monitoring, and Sustainability Manual, thus enhancing the efficacy of national-level public policy.

At the department level (provincial), the DJCs formulated and endorsed their four-year action plans, alongside the appointment of their presidents and technical secretariats. They increased their resources and promoted the consolidation of new LJSs in more municipalities, as well as the design and implementation of departmental public policies on access to justice to improve responses to victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and femicides. The planning process welcomed the inclusion of new voices from civil society, with representatives from youth CSOs. An LJS Experiential Exchange Meeting (2022) showcased the accomplishments and effective practices of DJCs in departments (provinces) of Cauca, Nariño, Chocó, and Putumayo, paving the way for replication in other regions. Emphasis was also placed on data collection tools to create justice actor maps, currently used for formulating department/subnational level public justice policies. Collaborative efforts between committees, CSOs, local universities, the MoJ, and USAID were instrumental in promoting capacity-building pathways to support the operation and sustainability of LJSs. This involved awareness sessions on local justice matters to ensure alignment with committee action plans. A series of sessions and thematic working groups were convened to implement activities established in the action plans, address bottlenecks in justice access pathways, and foster collaborative approaches to gender, GBV, ethnic justice, and conflict resolution methods.

By the end of 2023, strides were made in training judicial personnel of the LJSs in three departments (provinces) on the Pacific coast of the country (Cauca, Chocó, Nariño) and in two in the western part of Colombia (Antioquia-Urabá⁸³ and Córdoba), focusing on collaborative work dynamics. As a tangible outcome, coordination protocols were established to effectively address GBV cases, offer guidance on land matters, and facilitate referral agreements between formal and non-formal justice actors. Ten facilitators from the Department (Province) of Cauca underwent training in community mediation implementation and are poised to replicate this method across seven new municipalities in the department. Furthermore, the DJC in the Department (Province) of Nariño successfully integrated a gender approach into the justice chapter of its public policy on Peace and Human Rights. The DJC of Chocó designed its strategic plan with the inclusion of new civil society actors, particularly representatives from youth CSOs. By 2024, there are plans to consolidate DJCs in two new departments (provinces), Sucre and Bolívar.

At the municipal level, efforts were made to monitor cases and situations of gender-based and sexual violence, as well as discrimination against the LGBTQI+ population, under the purview of the LJC, training workshops were held in nine regions of the country, targeting 115 mayor' offices, planning secretaries, contractors, and personnel with roles related to justice or mission activities in municipal mayors' offices, to bolster the capacities of the technical secretariats of the LJC by providing them with both conceptual and practical tools for strategic planning, administrative management, local justice coordination dynamics, and advocacy for municipal budget allocations.

Interview: Juvenal Alvarez

Family Commissioner, Municipality of Bojayá, Chocó

To make changes and improve things, always requires a lot of availability on the part of the institutions. Not only in Colombia, everywhere, there is always the barrier of what we are going to do, so in the Local Justice Committees we seek that people can have access to justice, by for example, having mobile justice brigades, but in the municipal centers, facilitating the communities so 10, 20, 30 families can come, from five or six communities; we help subsidize some resources and offer other services than the traditional justice services, such as those of the Victims Unit, or health services.

The MoJ encourages enhancing the participation of local justice authorities in the LJC through organizing training sessions, updating action plans, and reviewing/revising legal instruments created to set up these. Within the LJC framework, training pathways were established for CSOs and community leaders, equipping them with the skills to identify barriers to access to justice, formulate proposals to enhance the coverage and efficacy of justice services in line with those needs and foster improved engagement between justice actors and the people. This was achieved by adopting a differential approach to delivering justice services grounded in a vision shaped by communities, their narratives, and perspectives.

The LJC continued its efforts to promote Mobile Justice Brigades (MJB),⁸⁴ with services provided by family commissaries, police inspectors, and the Unit for Comprehensive Attention and Reparation to Victims, among other justice entities dealing with various types of conflicts such as family matters, civil, or neighbor disputes. During these events, liaisons from local mayors' offices and representatives of the LJC offered assistance to individuals with visual and hearing impairments, physical disabilities, and cognitive limitations, providing specialized personnel proficient in sign language and other communication skills to facilitate interaction between justice operators and citizens.

Likewise, services were offered to ethnic communities, guaranteeing a tailored approach in consultation with their own authorities. Thematic MJBs were also carried out, where specialized attention was provided to 1) cases of GBV, including domestic violence, and 2) case management in land matters, with a methodology adapted by local authorities for its development and replication within the framework of local committees and department committees.

5. Learnings, Challenges, and Recommendations

Colombia is at a decisive moment where its leaders are committed to creating a more just, accessible, and reliable justice system for all people. On its path towards compliance with the 2030 agenda, the country has proposed several action pathways through its successive National Development Plans, its Ten-Year Justice Plan, and the current justice reform movement, which seeks to improve the population's accessibility to justice and satisfy their legal needs.

Through the development and implementation of the LJSs strategy, Colombia exemplifies how countries can advance their efforts to fulfill international obligations aimed at enhancing equal access to justice and reshaping institutions to prioritize people-centered justice. The following points highlight insights from Colombia's experience and offer considerations for governments, justice actors, civil society, international donors, and other stakeholders seeking to integrate collaborative systems into their policies to foster people-centered justice.

5.1 National level

- Ensure sustainability of the LJSs**
 A strategy based on collaboration and coordination, such as that of the LJS, should be a state policy to ensure its scalability and sustainability. To guarantee the initiative's sustainability and secure adequate resources, national authorities must warrant that it is not a stand-alone initiative but part of the National Development Plans. A national program for LJSs should be consolidated, financed, and institutionally robust so that all municipalities can aspire to an LJS.
- Ensure coordination between justice programs**
 The national justice public policy authority must ensure effective coordination between all existing access to justice programs to address local needs from different fronts. All ministries or decentralized bodies with a board mandate around justice issues (such as security, migration, human rights, etc.) must coordinate their efforts around a comprehensive strategy (like the LJS), strengthening and nurturing one another.
- Respond to local needs**
 An LJS strategy should not be built solely from the central level. LJSs are a tool to strengthen and disseminate local responses produced by the communities and entities present in each territory. Likewise, there is a need for constant dialogue between ethnic authorities (where relevant), community leaders, and the ordinary justice system to discuss coordination between the different justice practices that may coexist in a given context.
- Support and guide local processes**
 Central-level support is essential for local processes, providing guidance and momentum for their implementation and aiding the distribution of local budgets to address the justice needs of each territory.
- Employ and retain competent staff**
 National authorities must work closely with local authorities to design the profile of staff to be recruited and institute a transparent and competitive system to engage and retain an effective team.

5.2 Sub-national level

- **Political buy-in is a must**
The leadership of the governors/subnational leaders is fundamental in the coordination bodies at the subnational and local levels. This is because they provide political support to the strategy and help broaden the strategy's impact through mayors and other leaders in the various municipalities of the subnational government.
- **Coordinate to secure funding**
Governments at the subnational level must coordinate between the national and local governments to secure adequate resources to operate the LJSs in their territories and ensure municipalities' access to various territorial funds.
- **The judiciary must be on board**
Participation of the subnational branches of the judiciary in the LJSs helps foster an understanding of the importance of judicial procedures and constraints, thus fostering better trust with local leaders and communities.

5.3 Local level

- **Allocate and distribute adequate resources**
Local governments must allocate sufficient resources to programs seeking to improve access to local justice within local development plans and ensure their effective distribution to operate the LJSs in their territories.
- **Build strong LJS teams in the municipalities**
Devise budgetary strategies to minimize staff turnover and create incentives and tools to foster long-term commitment among officials. The quality and effectiveness of the LJSs are significantly enhanced when staff have deep roots within the community and receive organizational support.
- **Recognize and support community conflict resolution authorities**
Provide specific pathways for supporting, advising, and training community leaders.
- **Prioritize local needs and be mindful of local capacities**
Focus on the promotion of action pathways that prioritize local needs based on a realistic assessment of local resources (both human and financial).
- **Ensure sustainability at the local level**
To guarantee their sustainability, LJSs must be enshrined in local laws or regulations. They must be backed by effective commitment and active participation by local authorities and the various actors that comprise the coordination bodies (LJC and DJC).

Endnotes

- 1 “Local Justice Systems: People-Centered Justice,” USAID Inclusive Justice Program, Chemonics International, July 2023, <https://chemonics.com/video/local-justice-systems-people-centered-justice>.
- 2 Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, “Task for on Justice – Justice for All,” Center on International Cooperation, NYU, 2019, <https://www.sdg16.plus/resources/justice-for-all-report-of-the-task-force-on-justice/>.
- 3 Justice actors here are understood broadly to include all actors working on justice, whether in formal or informal settings.
- 4 U.S. Agency for International Development – USAID, “Final Report - Experience of Local Justice Systems 2013-2017,” USAID Access to Justice Project, 2017, 111; United Nations Development Program UNDP, “Local Justice Systems, Guide for their Implementation,” 2018, 19–20. Edgar Ardila and Arturo Suarez, “Arauca: A Community Justice School for Colombia,” UNIJUS - UNAL, 2021, 89; 140.
- 5 NARP Communities Results Report: Results of the 2018 National Population and Housing Census” National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), accessed June 18, 2023, <https://www.dane.gov.co/files/investigaciones/boletines/grupos-etnicos/informe-resultados-comunidades-narp-cnpv2018.pdf> (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística -DANE- 2021).
- 6 “Coexistence and Citizen Security Surveys (ECSC) National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE),” accessed June 18, 2023, <https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/seguridad-y-defensa/encuesta-de-convivencia-y-seguridad-ciudadana-ecsc>.
- 7 World Justice Project, “Global Insights on Access to Justice 2019,” 2019, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP-A2J-2019.pdf>.
- 8 “Coexistence and Citizen Security Surveys (ECSC).”
- 9 “Coexistence and Citizen Security Surveys (ECSC);” “Resultados de la Encuesta de Necesidades Jurídicas,” Colombia Ministry of Justice, <https://www.minjusticia.gov.co/transparencia/Paginas/SEJ-Acceso-a-la-Justicia-RENJ.aspx>.
- 10 USAID and the Hague Institute for Legal Innovation, “Innovation in Law - HiiL. Needs and Satisfaction with Justice in Colombia 2024 - Justice in Everyday Life,” HiiL, April 2024, https://www.hiil.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/HiiL_Colombia_JNS_digital.pdf.
- 11 “Coexistence and Citizen Security Surveys (ECSC);” Two thirds of people (or 64.92%), prefer not to go to formal justice administration bodies and those who do conservation so have no expectations of receiving a satisfactory and timely response;” See, “Presentation of the main results of the study and analysis of legal needs in Colombia,” National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), National Planning Department (DNP), Ministry of Justice and Law (MoJ), Virtual event, 2021.
- 12 The organization Dejusticia explains that in territories impacted by the armed conflict, demand and the number of judicial actions is reduced. See Mauricio García, *Jueces sin Estado: La justicia colombiana en zonas de conflicto armado* (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre, Editores SA, 2008,) 226 y S.S.
- 13 For example, the municipalities in the north of the Department (Province) of Cauca, such as Santander de Quilichao, Caloto or Suárez house Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and other peasant groups, with their respective authorities.
- 14 Colombia is divided into 33 departments (corresponding to states or provinces in other countries), each of which has dozens of municipalities, very unequal in territory. For example, the municipality of Puerto Gaitán, Meta, is larger than the Department (Province) of Atlántico (which has 23 municipalities) and the municipality of Tame is larger than the Department (Province) of Risaralda (which has 14 municipalities).
- 15 There are disputes mainly over land, and there is armed pressure from guerrillas, paramilitary, and illegal groups fighting over lands or for control of drug trafficking or illegal mining.
- 16 Judge with jurisdictional powers in various legal areas.
- 17 A family commissioner is an administrative justice actor that addresses intra- or inter-family conflicts.
- 18 A police inspector manages coexistence issues and enforces local regulations. It is a local justice authority and does not belong to the national police but answers to the local mayor.
- 19 A municipal overseer functions as a public ministry in various matters and guarantor of fundamental rights.
- 20 Dejusticia coined the expression “Judges without a State.” “The fact that there are courts is not enough for there to be justice (...) it is necessary that there be a State behind them,” García, *Jueces sin Estado*, 250.

- 21 A common complaint today is that court officials have to obtain Internet access by themselves to be able to work.
- 22 For example, a judge from Puerto Gaitán in 2018 said that it had taken two years for any entity to resolve a problem with a leak in the ceiling of his office. “Judge Puerto Gaitán” interview by the School of Community Justice of the National University of Colombia (EJCUN), 2018.
- 23 The Corregidor of Puerto Colón, a town in San Miguel de Putumayo, mentions the population’s fear of the intervention of judges and prosecutors and the risk for them if they chose to have an effective presence in compliance with their powers. Alcibiades Madroñero, “Corregidor Puerto Colón, San Miguel, Putumayo,” interview by author, 2023.
- 24 There is even permanent confinement of entire communities that are prohibited from any movement outside of specific local territories. In the municipality of Tame, 22 communities are currently victims of confinement. Juan Carlos Villate, “Municipal Overseer of Tame Arauca,” interview by author, 2023.
- 25 “Functions of the country’s police inspectors and corregidores,” Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiygmFgT6Ft8>
- 26 Madroñero, interview, 2023.
- 27 FIP, Institucionalidad Socavada, 427–28.
- 28 However, family commissaries and police inspectors, even with their limitations, have been able to establish closer links with the community and play an important role in conflict management in these areas. This may be because their appointment, linked to electoral structures, requires them to be connected to the problems, but offers them networks of social capital lacked by other operators.
- 29 Corregidor Madroñero of San Miguel Putumayo observes that it is very difficult to change the widespread idea in the community that judges and prosecutors have no interest in protecting people’s rights. Madroñero, interview.
- 30 Dejusticia maintains that the provision of justice is reduced in the midst of the armed conflict. García, *Jueces sin Estado*, 246.
- 31 It must be taken into account that people, in order to report, sue, or testify, must not only overcome remote distances but also the fear caused by the stigma of being identified as an informant or ally of the state.
- 32 There are different factors that generate authority to process disputes in their environment: 1) their position within organizational structures, such as an Indigenous council, a peasant union or a community action board; 2) the recognition of the wisdom, values, or experience of a person; and 3) the commitment with which the guidelines adopted by the community are implemented, especially those related to the positioning of common interests and resistance to external powers and factors of violence.
- 33 “Indigenous territories in the midst of armed conflict, confinement, famine and extermination,” Truth Commission, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://web.comisiondelaverdad.co/actualidad/noticias/los-territorios-indigenas-en-medio-del-conflicto-armado-el-confinamiento-la-hambruna-y-el-extermio>.
- 34 Although they are not exempt from collision with the agents of the national legal and political system.
- 35 Legally, 115 Indigenous peoples are recognized with 1.9 million people, approximately 3 percent of the national population. There are approximately 2,000 Afro-descendant community councils, which bring together around 1.6 million Afro-Colombians, 2.6 percent of the national total, and live in dispersed rural areas or populated centers. “Presentation of the main results of the study and analysis of the legal needs in Colombia.”
- 36 A person living in a Latin American rural area, that can sometimes be a farmer or farm laborer.
- 37 There are 64 campesino reserve zones. “The Campesino Reserve Zones and their contributions to forest conservation,” WWF, accessed May 25, 2023, www.wwf.org.co/?379190/Las-Zonas-de-Reserva-Campesina-y-sus-aportes-a-la-conservacion-de-los-bosques#:~:text=En%20Colombia%20existen%2064%20Zonas,reconocidas%2C%20en%20tr%C3%A1mite%20o%20proyectadas.
- 38 Conciliation in Equity is a voluntary service carried out by individuals (endorsed by the Ministry of Justice), where the exercise is not remunerated by the state or by users who access equity conciliation to resolve their conflicts. It is conducted without formal procedures and in the context of the daily relationships of people in their own livelihood. The Conciliator in equity encourages the parties to reach an agreement, taking into account community customs on conflict resolution and common sense. Law 23 of 1991 and Law 2220 of 2022, Colombia Ministry of Justice and Law, <https://www.minjusticia.gov.co/programas-co/MASC/Paginas/conciliacion-en-equidad.aspx>, 2023.
- 39 A vereda is a rural administrative subdivision of a municipality in Colombia.
- 40 A Community Action Board is a non-profit civic corporation composed of residents of a neighborhood, who come together to seek the solution of specific needs of the community. Participedia, “Colombia Community Action Boards (JACs),” 2023, <https://participedia.net/case/5729>.

- 41 Mauricio García, *Justicia, mercado y democracia: Un examen crítico de las teorías económicas sobre el (in)cumplimiento del derecho y su relación con el desarrollo, la justicia y la democracia* (Bogotá: Dejusticia. ¿Justicia para todos?, 2006), 86.
- 42 Cesar Rodríguez and Rodrigo Uprimny. *¿Justicia para todos o seguridad para el mercado? El neoliberalismo y la reforma judicial en Colombia* (Bogotá: Dejusticia. ¿Justicia para todos?, 2006), 117.
- 43 “In Saravena, Arauca, Judge Carlos Londoño ruled in 2010 that in all types of cases, they had to act hand in hand with conciliators in equity, prioritizing consensual management, but reinforced with coercion, when required,” Direct Observation of the author, February to July 2018. In Toribio, domestic conflicts are handled through a system of authorities that starts from the home itself and, if it escalates, it is processed in the Family Council, where the Family Commissioner is based. Sebastián Jaramillo, *Ejerciendo la justicia indígena en un contexto de conflicto armado. El uso estratégico de la ideología armónica entre autoridades indígenas del Cauca* (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2016), 107.
- 44 A very notable case is in the municipality of Caloto. Prosecutor Albeiro Tobar built a horizontal and sustained relationship with the community authorities. With his rise in position due to his merits, the institutional link of the Prosecutor’s Office with the communities declined.
- 45 The Houses of Justice in Colombia are conceived as a model of care (infrastructure and equipment) for access to justice where information, guidance, conflict resolution services are offered, and existing formal and non-formal justice mechanisms are applied and implemented in the municipality, through national and local entities; Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, *Programa Nacional de Casas de Justicia. La Justicia entra por Casa* (Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional de Colombia, 2012).
- 46 *Ibid.*, “Conciliation in Equity,” Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, 2023, <https://www.minjusticia.gov.co/programas-co/MASC/Paginas/conciliacion-en-equidad.aspx>, Conciliators in equity are figures who, due to limitations in legal frameworks and implementation programs, are few in number and are concentrated in urban areas and, only exceptionally, have a sustainable presence in conflict management in rural areas. Corporación Excelencia en la Justicia, *Justice how are we doing. Report 2018-2019. X-ray of access to justice in 17 cities* (Bogotá: CEJ, 2020.)
- 47 Each of these programs has focused significantly on the objectives, methodology, location, and financing of international cooperation, especially having been included as a complement to the packages in which greater investment and institutional accents have been placed on other objectives such as the fight against terrorism, the fight against the cultivation and trafficking of psychoactive and economic development. Cesar Rodríguez, *Globalización, reforma judicial y Estado de derecho en Colombia y América Latina: el regreso de los programas de derecho y desarrollo* (Bogotá: Dejusticia. ¿Justicia para todos?, 2006), 448 and ss.
- 48 Ardila y Suarez. Arauca.
- 49 With 32,808 PDET initiatives, for COP 19 trillion (USD 1.009 trillion), the Justice and Law sector registers 454 initiatives, 1.4 percent of the total initiatives, 121 initiatives under “Social Regulation of Rural Property and Land Use” and 333 under the pillar “Reconciliation, Coexistence and Peace Building.” 132 refer to initiatives for access and administration of justice in a total of 88 municipalities in 16 of the subregions. Specific initiatives of the local justice system, which are a total of 19 (14.4%), house of justice initiatives a total of 28 (21.3%), conciliation in equity a total of 52 (39.3%) and others related to the latter for a total of 33 (25%); “What are the PDET?” Territory Renewal Agency, accessed May 18, 2023, <https://centralpdet.renovacionterritorio.gov.co/conoce-los-pdet>.
- 50 “USAID Access to Justice Activity – AJA, 2012-2017.”
- 51 Judges, prosecutors, family commissioners, police inspectors, corregidores, public and family defenders, ombudsmen, conciliators in equity and law, among others, according to the existing institutional offer in the municipality.
- 52 U.S. Agency for International Development - USAID. *Proyecto Justicia para una paz sostenible - Sistemas Locales de Justicia, Orientación Técnica*. (Bogotá, 2014).
- 53 “USAID Justice for a Sustainable Peace Program – JSP, 2017-2021.”
- 54 Ministry of Justice and the Law, ADR Directorate, “written communication,” 2024.
- 55 “USAID Inclusive Justice Activity 2022-2027.”
- 56 Ministry of Justice and the Law, “written communication.”
- 57 Gustavo Petro and Francia Márquez, “Government Plan, Presidency of Colombia: National Development Plan,” 2022, 106.
- 58 Ministry of Justice and the Law, ADR Directorate, written communication, 2023.
- 59 Ministry of Justice and the Law, “written communication.”
- 60 Sheelagh Stewart, “The Relationship Between Justice and Equality,” NYU Center on International Cooperation, June 1, 2022, <https://cic.nyu.edu/resources/the-relationship-between-justice-and-equality>, 22.

- 61 Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, Implementation, Operations, Monitoring and Sustainability Manual of the Local Justice Systems, (Bogotá: MoJ, ADR Directorate, 2020).
- 62 United Nations Development Program, Local Justice Systems Toolkit (Bogotá: UNDP, 2017), Book 1.
- 63 Consolidated progress in 2018 between the MoJ, Planning, International Cooperation and academia.
- 64 Such mechanisms were agreed upon in an extensive process of joint analysis of progress and possibilities, between the technical teams of UNDP, EU and USAID together with the MoJ, led by the Vice Ministry of Promotion of Justice and the Directorate of Justice, Security and Government of the National Planning Department on July 24, 2018.
- 65 UNDP, Local Justice Systems Toolkit.
- 66 When community organizations do not have a presence in the LJC, they lose the possibility of influencing LJS; “Equity Conciliators In-Person Event,” Assistance of 21 conciliators and the Tame Municipal Judge, May 2023.
- 67 The local committee is not only the most appropriate body to make a concrete evaluation of the need for support from entities external to the municipality, but it is also the most legitimate because it enjoys institutional and community recognition’ Genith Vitteri, “Magistrate Sectional Council of the Judiciary – Nariño,” interview by the author, 2023.
- 68 Colombian Institute of Family Welfare.
- 69 The frequency of committee meetings has two important limitations that tend to wear them out quickly: 1) the actors are part of other committees that force them to participate in dozens of long meetings each year in which these actors do not perceive that they lead to concrete actions, beyond receiving some reports; 2) very exceptionally the national authorities present in the territory (such as prosecutors, judges, defenders) and even those of the territorial entity itself have the endorsement of their hierarchical superiors in the promotional commitments that are usually made in the Committee. For this reason, the frequency of meetings is minimal: maximum of four a year.
- 70 The presence of the judge and all justice actors in each session of the local committee and the assumption of their responsibilities in the LJC and on the pathways varies; “Coordinator of the Santander de Quilichao Justice House,” interview 2023 and interview by Felipe Morales. *El Espectador*, 2023.
- 71 LJS Manual, 41–54.
- 72 Juanita López, Technical Director of the USAID Inclusive Justice Program and former Vice Minister of Access to Justice, Ministry of Justice and Law of Colombia, interview, 2023.
- 73 Ítalo Pantoja, “Undersecretary of the Government of the Government of Nariño, 2016-2019,” Interview, 2023 and Vitteri, Interview, 2023.
- 74 It has been called, “Patio Prestado (Borrowed Courtyard)” which is established for the application of sanctions by the indigenous justice system.
- 75 Pantoja, interview; Vitteri, interview.
- 76 Vitteri, interview.
- 77 Orlando Zambrano, interview by Felipe Morales, *El Espectador*, 2023.
- 78 Vitteri, interview; Zambrano, interview.
- 79 Delgado Gaitán, interview.
- 80 The Development Programs with a Territorial Approach (PDET) are a participatory national strategy, contemplated in the 2016 Peace Agreement, which promotes the structural transformation of the Colombian countryside in the 170 municipalities most affected by the armed conflict between 2017 and 2027.
- 81 Delgado Gaitán, interview. To prioritize the municipalities to implement LJS, the Global Conflict Index, the climate of peace, whether it is a PDET municipality, political will, capacity, and possibility of implementation are taken into account.
- 82 U.S. Agency for International Development – USAID. Annual Report 2022 (Bogotá: USAID Inclusive Justice Program, 2022); U.S. Agency for International Development – USAID. Final Report July 2021 (Bogotá: Justice Program for a Sustainable Peace USAID, 2022).
- 83 Urabá is a region within the Department (Province) of Antioquia, one of the most affected by the armed conflict.
- 84 As part of the mobile justice strategy, the Ministry of Justice and Law, in alliance with municipal administrations, offers justice services to vulnerable populations in rural areas of the country. During the MJBs, people can access information on justice procedures and services, receive legal and psychological orientation, participate in workshops on violence prevention, carryout conciliations, and access services related to social programs and civil coexistence. Ministry of Justice and the Law, 2022.

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