

A summary report on evidence for effective **Rule of Law**



Understanding effective rule of law

An estimated **5.1 billion people** have no access to effective justice, nearly **60 per cent** of justice problems remain unresolved, and **over 253 million people** live in situations of extreme injustice, including conditions of slavery, statelessness and high levels of insecurity.¹ Effective rule of law (ROL) ensures that laws and the **justice institutions, actors, and processes** that support them – are responsive to and inclusive of the needs of all people in society. ROL is often framed as a **means of ensuring or pursuing justice**. The conflation of ROL with justice institutions often leads to substantial overlap between interventions that aim to strengthen ROL and those aiming to strengthen justice systems.

There is currently **a large gap in understanding about what can effectively improve ROL**. Filling this gap requires evidence that can **quantify changes attributable to a program** – that is, after accounting for other factors. USAID commissioned 3ie to develop an **Evidence Gap Map (EGM)** of ROL interventions and outcomes. An EGM is a **visual representation** of completed and ongoing studies that provide this type of effectiveness evidence, structured around a **framework of interventions and outcomes**. The EGM thus represents an important, but not the only, slice of the available body of evidence that can inform USAID decision-making about where and how to invest resources for development.

Highlights



- This EGM includes over 700 studies that cross diverse geographic areas and rule of law and justice topics.
- Compared to low and middle-income countries (L&MICs), rule of law and justice has a much larger evidence base in high-income countries (HICs), with less than 20 per cent of the studies included taking place in L&MICs. More high-quality impact evaluations in L&MICs can help shed light on what works in rule of law interventions and under what conditions.
- Most included studies focused on interventions to reduce or prevent crime. There are notable gaps in rigorous evidence for rule of law and justice programs focusing on youth in L&MICs and on women and girls.
- More research is needed on rule of law interventions in L&MIC contexts. Researchers may consider qualitative and mixed methods approaches for interventions that are more challenging to experimentally evaluate. A broader set of strategies in rule of law and justice research could improve collective understanding of what works and why.
- High-confidence systematic reviews with evidence from high-income countries suggest that promising approaches to preventing or reducing crime may include selected police-led interventions and less punitive measures for those at risk for engaging in crime. Further study is needed to uncover the extent to which similarly positive outcomes could be achieved in L&MICs.



Conceptualizing and categorizing interventions and outcomes

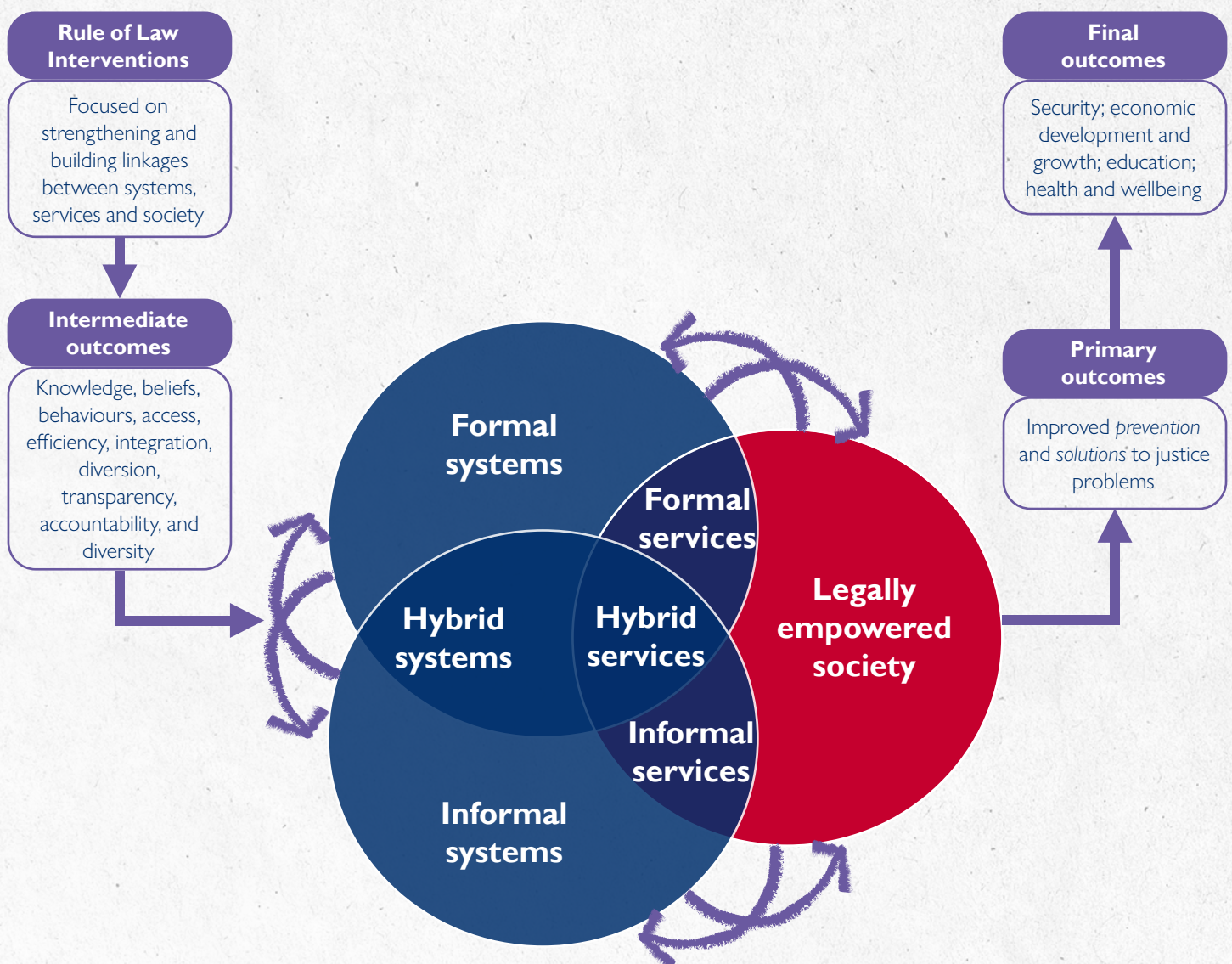
Our understanding of ROL and how to strengthen it is constantly evolving. For this report, **effective ROL** is conceptualized as relying on the function of **three different domains – systems, services, and society** – and the existence of supportive interactions and well-functioning feedback loops between them (Figure 1). Creating effective rule of law is a dynamic, evolving, and ongoing process that requires adaptation and responsiveness to the changing needs of society and the specific context in which it operates.

Systems in this conceptualization are the basis for providing effective ROL in a given context, and are the foundation for providing legal and justice services to society. **Services** are points of interaction wherein formal and informal legal and

justice institutions and actors come into contact with members of society to deliver legal support or protection, or to uphold the law. **Society** is a diverse sphere encompassing all the people, private entities, and non-governmental organizations within a particular context.

Using this framework, we categorized ROL interventions across the systems, services, and society domain areas and connected them to intermediate, primary, and final outcomes (Figure 2). Additional ROL practitioner briefs provide more detailed insight into findings and factors for successful implementation of interventions in the Systems, Services and Society domains.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework for the EGM



Source: Rule of Law and Justice: an Evidence Gap Map, 3ie

Main findings

After an extensive search and screening process, we included a total of 774 studies in the EGM: 118 systematic reviews and 656 impact evaluations.² Most studies were published after 2000, with an increase in those taking place in low- and middle-income countries (L&MICs) starting in 2009.

Compared to low and middle-income countries, rule of law and justice has a much larger evidence base in high-income countries. Most included studies took place in high-income countries (HICs), in particular the United States, and evaluated interventions in the “services” domain. Less than a fifth of included impact evaluations took place in L&MICs, the majority of which evaluated interventions within the “society” domain. Additional quality impact evaluations can help shed light on whether and under what conditions outcomes found in HICs are likely to be similar or diverge in L&MICs.

Most included studies evaluated interventions to reform legal and justice services or prevent crime.

Of the 29 intervention categories, most studies evaluate three interventions that create new services or expanding coverage, access or quality of existing legal and justice services (Figure 3).

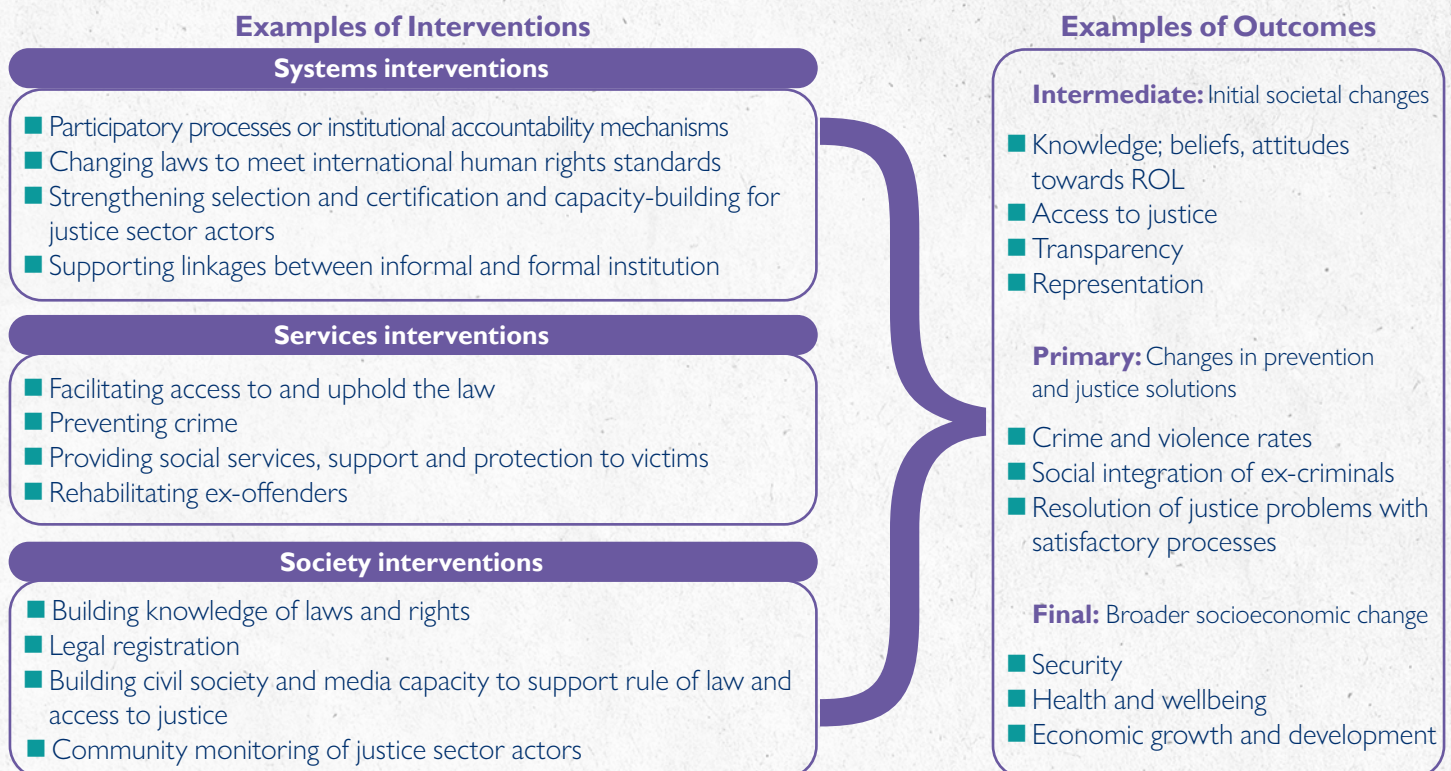
Eighty per cent of studies evaluated interventions in the “services” domain. The limited evidence base for “systems” and “society” interventions does not mean these areas are not worthy of implementation; rather, that interventions in these domains may be more challenging to evaluate, and should be accompanied by a robust research agenda.

By geography, in order of most included studies, programs in North America and Europe focused on:

- Capacity building and reform of police
- Diversion of populations out of the criminal justice system, such as into probation
- Rehabilitation of ex-offenders, such as through skills-building or other interventions to help prisoners integrate effectively into society
- Crime prevention, such as economic, mental health support or education for those at risk of engaging in crime.

Most studies in L&MICs also focus on police reform and engagement, though some also study legal registration. Outcomes measuring changes in crime, violence and prison population numbers were reported twice as frequently as any other outcome category (Figure 4).

Figure 2: Examples of rule of law and justice interventions and outcomes



Source: 3ie. Note: This table includes illustrative examples only. For the full list of interventions and outcomes studied, please see the full report, Sonnenfeld, A, Doherty, J, Kozakiewicz, T, Khan, L, Garcia, K, Eysers, J, Zalfou, R, Glandon, D, 2020. Rule of law and access to justice: an evidence gap map, 3ie Evidence Gap Map Report (forthcoming). New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie).

Main findings

Figure 3: Studies identified by intervention, income-group (IEs) and confidence level (SRs), by region and study type

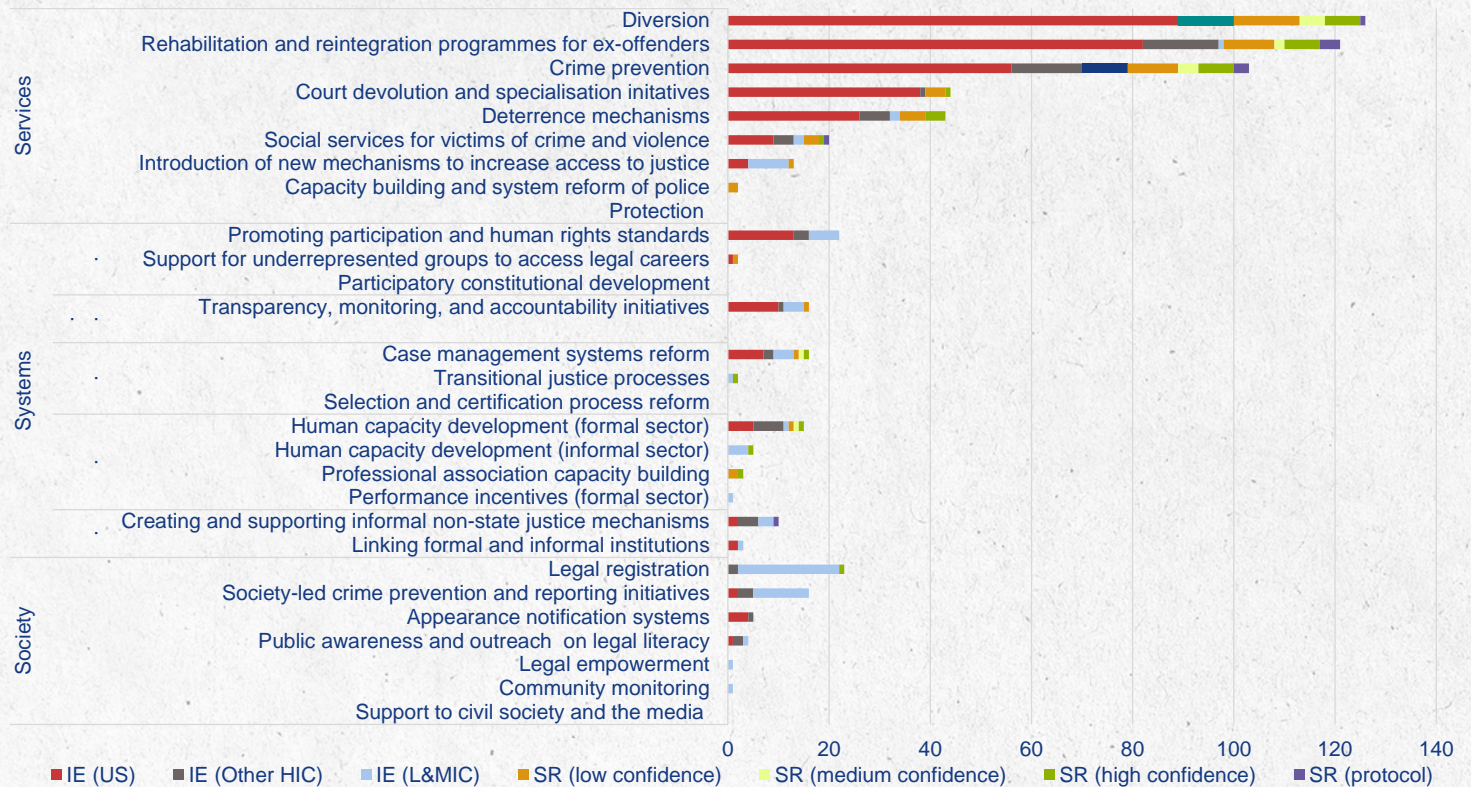
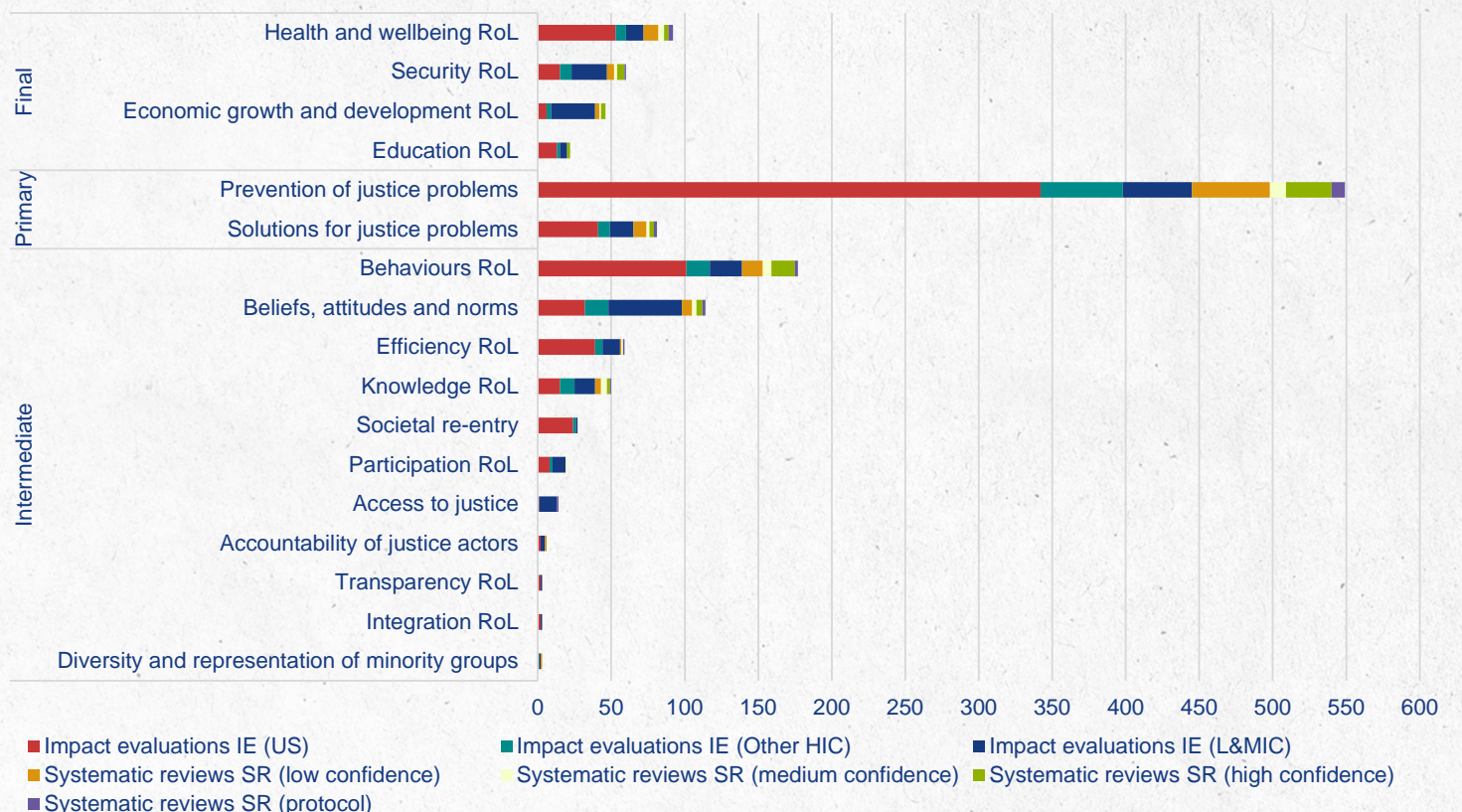


Figure 4: Frequency of outcomes reported by included studies, by country income group (for IEs) and confidence level (for SRs)



Main findings

Methodological gaps exist in the evidence base.

There is a need for more high-confidence systematic reviews from L&MICs, and with a focus on non-crime and longer-term outcomes.³ Other research strategies could also improve collective understanding of what works and why. For example, many qualitative studies reviewed for inclusion in this report did not address causal questions and/or did not use methods that could plausibly establish causal impact. Incorporating qualitative study designs that establish causality in future research could improve the generalizability of interventions to other contexts and add implementation information to the evidence base. Finally, building cost considerations into studies would help policymakers and practitioners make sense of trade-offs across effectiveness and resources.

High-confidence systematic reviews show promising interventions for preventing or reducing crime.

Potentially promising programs include problem-oriented policing, interventions to increase public legitimacy, policing disorder, street-level policing, and gun detection patrols in high-crime areas. Evidence from high-confidence systematic reviews also show that supportive interventions can be more effective than punitive approaches in preventing or reducing crime, especially among people at risk for engaging in it. For example, efforts to build positive support networks among at-risk individuals can be more effective than court- or detention-based strategies in preventing future justice problems, while mentoring can be particularly effective for preventing or reducing crime among youth. Cognitive-behavioral therapy has also been shown to be effective for preventing re-offending, but not for all types of offenders.



Promising areas for future research

Although this EGM is a reference tool to help stakeholders identify relevant literature, it also serves as a starting point for discussing how to build the evidence base. There is a significant opportunity for future impact evaluations and systematic reviews to meaningfully fill the gaps identified here. We suggest several key areas where future work could be useful, but stakeholders are encouraged to consider their own priorities and interests when reflecting on how to best utilize this tool (Table 1).

There are also practical and ethical constraints that may partially explain limited evidence for certain interventions and

outcomes. For example, for interventions such as witness protection, ethical considerations may limit the extent to which experimental or quasi-experimental research designs can be applied. Interventions that target a country-wide population may be challenging to evaluate against a valid control group. In other situations, such as where priority outcomes are longer-term, diffuse, or difficult to measure, stakeholders may struggle to identify measurable changes within often-short programmatic cycles. Nevertheless, the existence of studies across many intervention types and L&MICs, including fragile contexts, suggests that for some types of interventions, these studies are feasible.

Table 1: Gaps in the rule of law evidence base

Type of gap	Suggested area of research
Intervention gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Selection and certification process reform ■ Professional association capacity building ■ Participatory constitutional development ■ Protection for at risk legal actors, political prisoners, or witnesses ■ Support to civil society and the media ■ Legal empowerment among society
Outcome gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Integration ■ Diversity and representation of minority groups ■ Transparency ■ Accountability of justice actors
Specific population gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth and adolescents in L&MICs ■ Women, girls, and other genders
Synthesis gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Legal registration interventions with consistent and more recent measurement of outcomes ■ Effects of interventions promoting participation and human rights standards

Using the evidence patterns in the EGM

When interpreting the concentrations and apparent gaps in the evidence base identified through the EGM, it is important to consider these different possibilities. There are many ways in which users may draw on the patterns identified in the EGM to support future work:

1. Inform research agenda-setting processes. The EGM findings can help identify priority areas for future research investment, particularly where combined with expertise from diverse stakeholders in order to effectively interpret the different gaps.

1. Investments in new impact evaluations may be particularly beneficial where they target interventions for which limited evidence exists, such as 'systems' and 'society' interventions, or where there is limited evidence for the effects of the intervention on a population or context of interest.
2. Where large concentrations of primary evidence already exist, particularly for certain geographies such as the United States, investments in additional impact evaluations may not provide as much value as investments in evaluations of interventions and outcomes for which little or no effectiveness evidence exists.
3. Where there are concentrations of impact evaluation evidence, and existing systematic reviews are low-confidence, out of date, or do not cover populations of interest, new systematic reviews may help ensure policymaking and programming is informed by the best available evidence.
4. Investments in synthesis evidence may not be necessary where multiple high-confidence reviews exist, such as for the effects of diversion programs on outcomes of prevention of justice problems. Systematic reviews represent substantial investments of time and funding, and thus the EGM may enable more efficient allocation of research investments.

2. Support policy and program design. Where stakeholders are interested in targeting a particular outcome, they can utilize the EGM to identify which interventions may be likely to impact the outcome of interest. The hyperlinks within the online EGM enable easy access to rigorous evidence that can be consulted when designing new policies and programs, to identify which intervention approaches may be more or less effective at impacting the outcome of interest.

3. Identify the range of outcomes that have been theorized to be impacted by a particular intervention. This can support stakeholders in understanding all outcomes that may be influenced through their intervention. This is particularly important when considering potential adverse effects, which may be captured in outcomes related to wellbeing.

4. Identifying examples of impact evaluations undertaken in a particular context, or utilizing a particular method. Where multiple interventions have been undertaken to influence a particular outcome, stakeholders can use the filters in the EGM to identify which interventions may have been implemented for geographies or population groups of interest. Similarly, the EGM can enable stakeholders to identify which interventions have targeted a particular population group of interest, such as women and girls, or people with disabilities. This can be useful for identifying potential challenges and strategies applied to address challenges that may strengthen the quality of future research. For example, stakeholders interested in undertaking impact evaluations in fragile contexts may use the country filter to identify evidence from particularly fragile contexts, or to understand the methods, challenges and approaches utilized when undertaking impact evaluations in such complex environments.



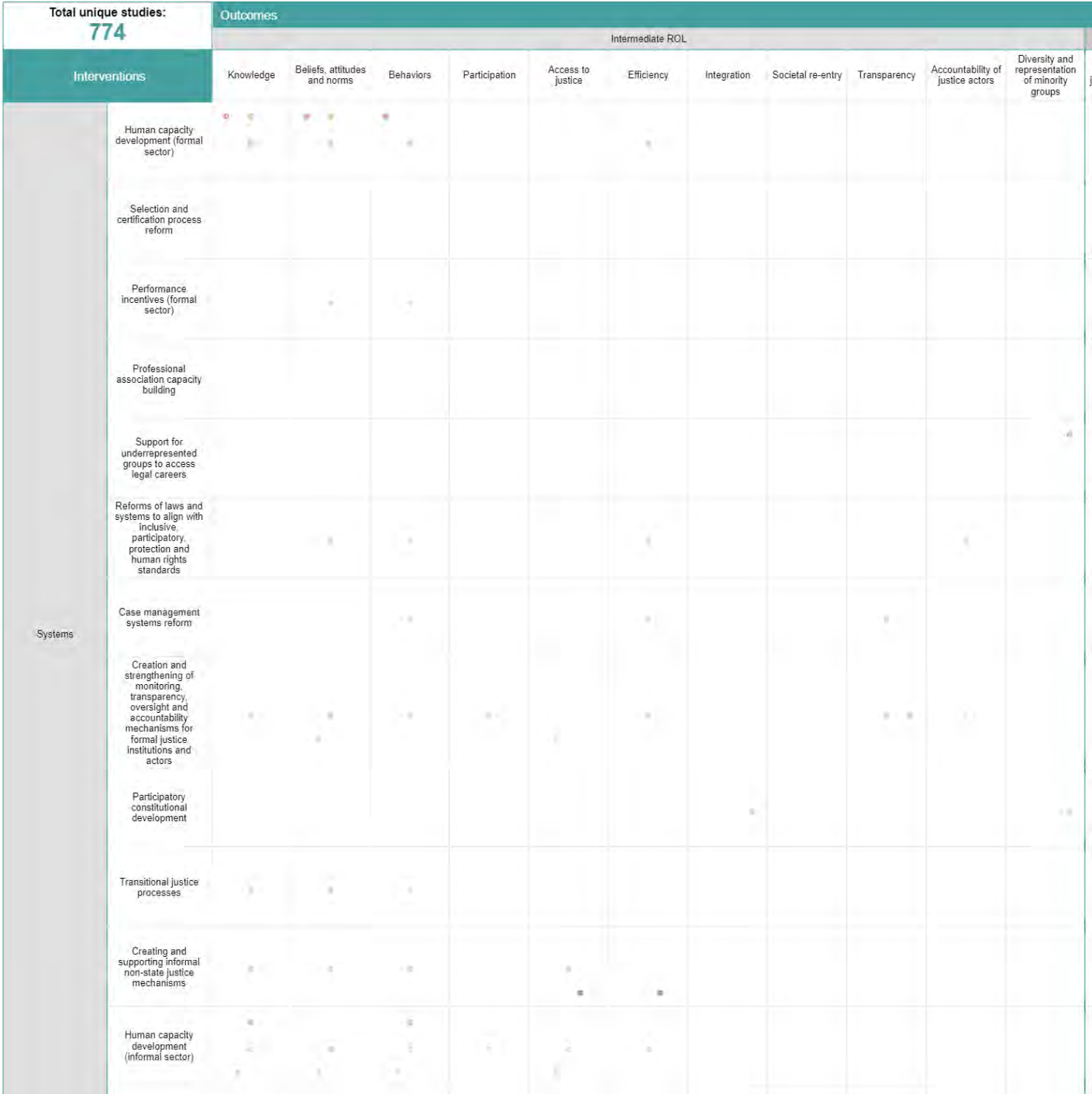
Accessing and engaging the evidence gap map

We present the results of the evidence gap map graphically on an interactive online platform.⁴ The main framework is a matrix of interventions and outcomes, with grey and colored circles representing impact evaluations and systematic reviews. The systematic reviews follow a traffic-light system to indicate confidence in their findings: green for high, orange for medium, red for low. The color blue indicates that the study is ongoing. The size of the bubble indicates the relative

size of the evidence base for that intersection of intervention and outcome. The interactive aspect of the EGM allows users to filter the results based on key variables, thereby facilitating efficient, user-friendly identification of relevant evidence. The evidence can be filtered by region, country, country income level, fragile, conflict and violence status, electoral democracy, study design, population, age of participants, setting, cost-evidence or theme.



Rule of law and justice evidence gap map



What is an EGM?

The evidence gap maps are collections of evidence from impact evaluations and systematic reviews for a given sector or policy issue, organized according to the types of program evaluated and the outcomes measured. They include an interactive online visualization of the evidence base, displayed in a framework of relevant interventions and outcomes. They

highlight where there are sufficient impact evaluations to support systematic reviews and where more studies are needed. These maps help decision makers target their resources to fill these important evidence gaps and avoid duplication. They also facilitate evidence-informed decision-making by making existing research more accessible.

About the report

The studies on which this report is based were identified through the Rule of Law Evidence Gap Map (EGM), by Ada Sonnenfeld and colleagues (forthcoming). The authors systematically searched for published and unpublished impact evaluations and systematic reviews through the third quarter of 2020 and then identified, mapped, and described the evidence base of interventions that aim to strengthen the rule of law and access to justice. The map contains 118 systematic reviews and 656 impact evaluations. The evidence's

characteristics are described and mapped according to a framework of 29 interventions and 17 outcomes, with 5 cross-cutting themes. The EGM can be viewed at : <https://developmentevidence.3ieimpact.org/egm/rule-of-law-evidence-gap-map>

This report was authored by Lina Khan and Jane Hamaker. They are solely responsible for all content, errors and omissions. It was designed and produced by Akarsh Gupta, and Tanvi Lal.



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Endnotes

¹ Taskforce on Justice, 2019.

² An impact evaluation measures how an intervention affects target outcomes. Systematic reviews extract data from multiple interventions to assess how they affect target outcomes.

³ A review classified as high confidence means that we determined that the methods undertaken in the review were in line with best practices. Appendix A provides links to summaries for each of the high-confidence reviews.

⁴ The map can be found here: <https://gapmaps.3ieimpact.org/evidence-maps/rule-law-egm>

Appendix A: Key links to summary of findings and recommendations from high-confidence systematic reviews

Services - Capacity building and system reform of police

Hot spots policing of small geographic areas effects on crime (Braga et al. 2019a)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effects-of-hot-spots-policing-on-crime.html>

Focused Deterrence Strategies and Crime Control: An Updated Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Empirical Evidence (Braga et al. 2018)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/focused-deterrence-strategies-effects-on-crime.html>

Disorder policing to reduce crime (Braga et al. 2019b)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/disorder-policing-systematic-review.html>

Legitimacy in policing (Mazerolle et al. 2013)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/legitimacy-in-policing-a-systematic-review.html>

Legitimacy policing of places: the impact on crime and disorder (Higginson and Mazerolle 2014)
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11292-014-9215-6> (no summary found)

Problem-oriented policing for reducing crime and disorder (Hinkle et al. 2020)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effects-of-problem-oriented-policing-on-crime-and-disorder.html>

Police strategies for reducing illegal possession and carrying of firearms (Koper and Mayo-Wilson 2012)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/policy-strategies-for-reducing-illegal-firearms.html>

Street-level drug law enforcement (Mazerolle et al. 2020)
https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/ti599_street-level_drug_law_enforcement.pdf (no summary found)

The effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies (Lum et al. 2006)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/meta-analytic-review-street-level-drug-law-enforcement.html>

Services – Deterrence mechanisms

Effects of closed circuit television surveillance on crime (Welsh and Farrington 2008a)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effects-of-closed-circuit-television-surveillance-on-crime.html>

Corporate crime deterrence (Simpson et al. 2014)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/corporate-crime-deterrence-systematic-review.html>

Making Public Places Safer: Surveillance and Crime Prevention (Welsh and Farrington 2009)(book)
<https://oxford.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195326215.001.0001/acprof-9780195326215> (book)

Effects of improved street lighting on crime (Welsh and Farrington 2008b)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effects-of-improved-street-lighting-on-crime.html>

Services - Diversion

Formal system processing of juveniles: effects on delinquency (Petrosino et al. 2010)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/formal-system-processing-of-juveniles-effects-on-delinquency.html>

Police-initiated diversion for youth to prevent future delinquent behavior (Wilson et al. 2018)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/policy-initiated-diversion-to-prevent-future-delinquent-behavior.html>

Drug courts' effects on criminal offending for juveniles and adults (Mitchell et al. 2012)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/drug-courts-effects-on-criminal-offending.html>

The effects on re-offending of custodial vs non-custodial sanctions (Villettaz et al. 2015)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/custodial-vs-non-custodial-sanctions-re-offending-effects.html>

The Effectiveness of Interventions for Drug-Using Offenders in the Courts, Secure Establishments and the Community: A Systematic Review (Perry et al. 2009)
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10826080802347560> (no summary found)

Services – Crime prevention

Effects of drug substitution programs on offending among drug addicts (Egli et al. 2009)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/drug-substitution-programs-offending-drug-addicts.html>

Opportunities provision for preventing youth gang involvement for children and young people (7-16) (Fisher et al. 2008)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/providing-opportunities-preventing-youth-gang-involvement.html>

'Scared straight' and other juvenile awareness programs for preventing juvenile delinquency (Petrosino et al. 2013)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/juvenile-delinquency-scared-straight-etc-programs.html>

Mentoring interventions to affect juvenile delinquency and associated problems (Tolan et al. 2013)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/mentoring-juvenile-delinquency-and-associated-problems.html>

Cross-border trafficking in human beings: prevention and intervention strategies for reducing sexual exploitation (Van Der Laan et al. 2011)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/trafficking-strategies-for-reducing-sexual-exploitation.html>

Preventing crime: What works for children, offenders, victims and places (Welsh and Farrington 2006) (book)
<https://www.springer.com/gp/book/9781402042430> (book)

Juvenile curfew effects on criminal behavior and victimization (Wilson et al. 2016)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/juvenile-curfew-effects-on-behavior.html>

Services - Rehabilitation and reintegration programs for ex-offenders

Court-mandated interventions for individuals convicted of domestic violence (Feder et al. 2008)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/domestic-violence-individuals-court-mandated-interventions.html>

Serious (violent and chronic) juvenile offenders: treatment effectiveness in secure corrections (Garrido 2007)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/serious-juvenile-offenders-treatment-effectiveness.html>

Effects of cognitive-behavioral programs for criminal offenders (Lipsey et al. 2007)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/criminal-offenders-cognitive-behavioral-programs.html>

The effectiveness of incarceration-based drug treatment on criminal behavior (Mitchell et al. 2012)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effectiveness-of-incarceration-based-drug-treatment.html>

Sexual offender treatment for reducing recidivism among convicted sex offenders (Shmucker and Loesel 2017)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/sexual-offender-treatment.html>

Restorative justice conferencing (RJC) using face-to-face meetings of offenders and victims: effects on offender recidivism and victim satisfaction (Strang et al. 2012)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/restorative-justice-conferencing-recidivism-victim-satisfaction.html>

Non-custodial employment programs: impact on recidivism rates of ex-offenders (Visher et al. 2006)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/non-custodial-employment-programs-ex-offenders-recidivism.html>

Effects of correctional boot camps on offending (Wilson et al. 2005)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effects-of-correctional-boot-camps-on-offending.html>

Services - Social services for victims of crime and violence

Effects of second responder programs on repeat incidents of family abuse (Davis et al. 2008)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/family-abuse-repeat-incidents-effects-of-2nd-responder-programs.html>

Society – Legal registration

The impact of land property rights interventions on investment and agricultural productivity in developing countries (Lawry et al. 2014)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/property-rights-interventions-investment-agriculture.html>

Society - Society-led crime prevention and reporting initiatives

The effectiveness of Neighborhood Watch (Bennett et al. 2008)
<https://campbellcollaboration.org/better-evidence/effectiveness-of-neighbourhood-watch.html>

The International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie) promotes evidence-informed, equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. We support the generation and effective use of high-quality evidence to inform decision-making and improve the lives of people living in poverty in low- and middle-income countries. We provide guidance and support to produce, synthesise and quality-assure evidence of what works, for whom, how, why and at what cost.

For more information on 3ie's evidence gap maps, contact info@3ieimpact.org or visit our website.

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