



Bridging the Justice Gap

How technology and ethical
capital can accelerate
access to justice



Spotlighting real human stories will help investors understand what they are funding and what impact they can have.

“If implemented responsibly, AI can help bridge the justice gap, enabling legal professionals and organisations to serve more people, more effectively”.

– The BIICL’s report *Bridging the Justice Gap*

Executive summary

Every day, millions of people* face profound barriers to accessing justice, yet emerging technologies and a more robust legal infrastructure can accelerate the allocation of ethical capital into relevant social and environmental causes.

The justice system is deeply flawed. Many vulnerable individuals and groups, worldwide, face significant obstacles to accessing justice due to systemic barriers, not least the lack of access to funding and financial aid that has severe negative impacts on their rights. Recent research by the British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL) reveals that the inability to access quality legal services is exacerbated by systemic legal aid cuts, geographic isolation, and intersecting vulnerabilities, and calls for “enhanced legal services that meet the legal service needs of all”.

Technology can help bridge this justice inequality. BIICL’s report says enhanced legal services could draw on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and smart technologies to support providers of legal assistance by streamlining administrative tasks, improving document drafting, and enabling more efficient case management as well as having the potential for expanding reach to communities and overcoming language barriers. However, it cautions that “AI should be seen as a tool to augment, not replace, the human-centred delivery of legal services”. If implemented responsibly, AI can help bridge the justice gap, enabling legal professionals and organisations “to serve more people, more effectively”.

Finding a new source of capital is another way to close the justice gap,

particularly mission-aligned capital, such as donor-advised funds, philanthropic investment portfolios, private foundations, and impact investment funds, that are motivated by justice rather than solely return on investment. Technology can help here too by enabling trust and consistency; ensuring legal cases are evaluated to align with certification standards that match measurable reporting mechanisms on environmental, social, and governance performance.

This White Paper shows that solving the justice gap will require collaboration between funders, technologists, regulators and local practitioners to make the most of emerging technologies combined with more robust, locally available, scalable legal infrastructure to ensure the allocation of ethical capital is mobilised into investible assets for social and environmental causes. As it is often desperate human predicaments that are at the heart of such cases, spotlighting real human stories is essential to help investors truly understand what they are funding and what impact they can have.

Such an innovative approach positions alternative legal funding mechanisms such as litigation financing not as opaque, risky bets, but as an opportunity for a new category of investible impact assets that not only provides competitive financial returns but also measurable social returns. ■

This white paper is presented by:

 EDENREACH

Edenreach: Transforming Justice Through Purpose-Driven Funding

Edenreach opens new pathways for investors and legal professionals to advance causes that matter, using technology to accelerate access to justice while delivering meaningful societal impact and positive financial returns.

Based on research from:

 BIICL British Institute of International and Comparative Law

BIICL’s report *Bridging the Justice Gap – How Smart Technology Can Support Access to Legal Advice for Underserved Communities*, by Iris Anastasiadou and Dr Jean-Pierre Gauci. See the full report at <http://bit.ly/4qYjyop>

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* <https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/measuring-justice-gap>

IN FOCUS

The Justice Gap today

Significant obstacles prevent marginalised groups and individuals gaining access to justice due to economic hardship, geographic limitations and systemic discrimination that have severe negative impacts on their rights.



The British Institute of International and Comparative Law (BIICL)'s report *'Bridging the Justice Gap – How Smart Technology Can Support Access to Legal Advice for Underserved Communities'* reveals that vulnerable individuals and groups face significant barriers to accessing legal services, which it says, "can severely impact legal outcomes and compound existing vulnerabilities". Barriers range from economic hardship and geographic limitations to systemic discrimination that are "exacerbated by systemic legal aid cuts, geographic isolation, and intersecting vulnerabilities". For these inequalities to be addressed, BIICL calls for "enhanced legal services that meet the legal service needs of all".

Identifying and mapping underserved communities

BIICL identified three specific "axes of exclusion", which often intersect, "creating compounded challenges for vulnerable communities":

- **Situational:** through economic hardship, imposed vulnerability and geographic isolation
- **Issue-based:** due to certain areas of law rendering individuals without the support for complex and interconnected legal issues
- **Group-Based:** where a range of communities and groups face serious barriers in accessing legal services, often due to intersecting vulnerabilities, systemic discrimination, and gaps in the provision of legal aid.

Who is currently trying to plug the Justice Gap?

While law firms offer some support, eligibility restrictions, narrow issue coverage, and limited funding have reduced their availability and capacity. NGOs, law clinics, law centres, and generalist advice providers like Citizens Advice, have stepped in to try to address this, but these organisations may specialise in certain issues or groups, or offer just broader support. Most are also limited to providing initial consultations or advice letters. BIICL's report says, "Despite their essential role, these organisations face growing demand and shrinking resources, making it increasingly challenging to meet the legal needs of under-served communities." ■

"We hear a lot about the crisis in the justice system, but not enough about implementing workable solutions. This report shines a light on two of the most important opportunities to bring about real improvements for vulnerable people with legal problems. If we can increase available funding through accessing ethical capital and materially improve service delivery through effective use of technology, we can transform access to justice."



Clare Carter,
CEO Access to Justice Foundation

"Without mission aligned financing, important cases aren't being pursued, meaning fewer positive social and environmental causes getting the attention, and outcomes we need."



Melina Gisler,
Edenreach co-founder

"Parliamentarians constantly pass new laws without reflecting how they will be enforced in practice. As a result, millions of citizens are denied fundamental rights every day, in large part because pursuing justice is often prohibitively expensive. And yet, if we give up, then too many government departments and commercial bodies will simply continue to fail in their duties to the public and to the environment. We need real-world solutions to connect those seeking justice with the funds to make it possible."



Stephen Kinsella,
Founder Law for Change

"Ethical capital pools exist. Case pipelines and legal structures exist. What's missing is the infrastructure to channel the capital towards impactful justice outcomes."



Kayee Cheung,
Edenreach co-founder



The opportunities...

...for engaging Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Smart Technologies

BIICL's report says the integration of AI and smart tools "has the potential to transform how legal services are delivered to under-served populations, with significant impacts on access to justice for vulnerable communities" through releasing access to funding and financial aid, "by streamlining administrative tasks, improving document drafting, and enabling more efficient case management, as well as having the potential for expanding reach to communities and overcoming some language barriers".

However, BIICL cautions that AI should be seen as a tool to augment, not replace, the human-centred delivery of legal services. If implemented responsibly, it says "AI can help bridge the justice gap, enabling legal professionals and organisations to serve more people, more effectively".

...for mission-aligned funding

Mission-aligned capital, such as donor-advised funds, philanthropic investment portfolios, private foundations, and impact investment funds, has enormous potential to plug the justice gap. Especially funders and investors that are motivated by justice and environmental and social positive impacts, rather than solely return on investment.

...to align legal funding mechanisms to UN Sustainable Development Goals

Technology can also enable trust and consistency; ensuring legal cases are evaluated to align with certification standards that match measurable reporting mechanisms on environmental, social, and governance performance. Alignment with frameworks already familiar to impact investors and ethical funders, such as those provided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, would unlock funding and enable ethical reporting.

...to spotlight real human stories

As it is often desperate human predicaments that are at the heart of such cases, spotlighting real human stories is essential to help investors truly understand what they are funding and the potentially transformative, life-changing impact they can have.

Connect ethical finance with real-world justice

Connecting ethical funds and impact investors with those who are working on cases with potential for positive societal and environmental outcomes will help bring justice to underserved groups and individuals, and create a new asset class aligned with existing ESG reporting frameworks.



The benefits of connecting ethical capital to claimants seeking justice – at the intersection of impact investment and legal finance – will create a new frontier of justice-led innovation on a global scale.

Edenreach founders Kayee Cheung and Melina Gisler call this Justice Finance: “We want to empower ethical funds and impact investors to drive high-impact environmental and societal change, all the while achieving financial returns. Justice Finance will allow lawyers to secure funding for aligned cases, helping to further causes that matter”. The use of AI and smart technologies can help drive this step change in the justice system, streamlining case assessment and funding applications enabling faster funding from impact investors and ethical funds.

Simplifying purpose-led funding will also unlock and accelerate impact funding that’s aligned with interconnected reporting frameworks, such as those provided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including inequality, accountability, and economic inclusion. It will create a pioneering new justice infrastructure for a more equitable legal future. ■

How this new asset class aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

ESG	Environmental (E)						E+S		Social (S)					S+G		Governance (G)		E+S+G
SDG	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES			1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	5 GENDER EQUALITY	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
Outcomes from impact investing	Coal-power plant halted following lawsuit Kenyan judges have halted plans to construct the country’s first coal-powered plant near the coastal town of Lamu, a Unesco World Heritage Site, after campaigners successfully challenged inadequate environmental assessments. The ruling protected the area, demonstrating the power of grassroots’ activism.						Lead poisoning case reaches supreme court An appeal hearing has opened in South Africa on whether a subsidiary of British-based mining company Anglo American PLC was responsible for lead poisoning over decades that affected an estimated 140,000 people in Zambia. The class action lawsuit by women and children is asking South Africa’s Supreme Court of Appeal to overturn a judgment by a lower court.		Johnson & Johnson talcum powder cancer case In 2018, the US pharmaceutical giant Johnson & Johnson (J&J) was ordered to pay \$4.7bn (£3.6bn) in damages to 22 women who alleged that its talc products caused them to develop ovarian cancer. Since then, a major legal claim has been filed in the UK against J&J, accusing the firm of knowingly selling baby powder contaminated with asbestos. J&J denies the allegation as well as any claims it knowingly sold baby powder contaminated with asbestos.							Halt to “Climate-smart Beef” claims In 2025, US meat company Tyson Foods settled a lawsuit brought by an environmental group that accused it of misleading consumers over claims it will reach “net-zero by 2050” and marketing beef as “climate-smart”.		
	Corporation held to account over water pollution Erin Brockovich’s advocacy led to an historic \$333 million settlement against Pacific Gas & Electric in 1996 for the alleged contamination of water with hexavalent chromium in the Californian town of Hinkley. Though many residents relocated, cleanup continues today, while Brockovich continues to champion safe water access across the USA.								Toxic workplaces In 2023, a toxic culture of sexual assault, harassment, racism and bullying was alleged by more than 100 UK staff at outlets of the fast-food chain McDonald’s prompting the UK equality watchdog ‘The Equality and Human Rights Commission’ to launch a dedicated email hotline. McDonald’s has since agreed a set of measures with the watchdog to protect its staff from sexual harrasment.					Workers secure equal pay rights Over 3,500 predominantly female shop workers at Next won their six-year equal pay battle for equal pay. The tribunal ruling said store staff should not have been paid at lower rates than employees in warehouses, where just over half the staff are male. Lawyers said the amount of back-pay owed could amount to more than £30m, though Next intends to appeal against the ruling.				



Join the justice finance movement

Connect conscious capital to claimants seeking justice

Be part of progress

Get involved at www.edenreach.com