

## Role Of Legal Literacy Programs In Promoting Social Justice

**Dr. Abhiram Dwivedi**

Assistant Professor, School of Law, Mody University of Science and Technology, Lakshmanagarh, Sikar,  
Rajasthan

E-mail Id: [abhi2jmi@gmail.com](mailto:abhi2jmi@gmail.com)

Article Received 22-02-2026, Accepted 12-03-2026

*Author(s) Retains the Copyrights of This Article*

### **Abstract**

*Legal literacy the fundamental capacity of citizens to understand and exercise their legal rights remains critically deficient among India's marginalized communities, creating a structural barrier to social justice. Despite an extensive legislative framework including the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and active institutional mechanisms such as NALSA, the persistent gap between legal entitlements and their ground-level realization reflects deep-rooted legal illiteracy, especially among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, women, and rural populations. This study examines the role of legal literacy programs in promoting social justice in India, with specific objectives of analyzing program effectiveness, assessing community impact, identifying structural challenges, and exploring empowerment outcomes for marginalized groups. A descriptive-analytical research design was employed, combining primary survey data collected from 150 respondents across rural and semi-urban areas of Chhattisgarh with secondary data from government reports, NALSA statistics, and published academic research. Findings indicate that legal literacy programs significantly improve awareness of fundamental rights, enhance access to justice mechanisms, and reduce exploitation among beneficiaries. However, inadequate funding, language barriers, low participation, and uneven geographic reach continue to limit program impact. The study concludes that a strengthened, technology-integrated, and institutionally coordinated legal literacy framework is essential for translating India's constitutional promise of social justice into substantive reality.*

**Keywords:** Legal Literacy, Social Justice, Access to Justice, NALSA, Legal Empowerment, Marginalized Communities, Legal Awareness Programs

### **1. Introduction**

Legal literacy can be defined as the level of knowledge, awareness, and practical ability of the individuals to comprehend the laws which guide their lives as well as the rights and entitlement of the individuals who are provided by the laws and access to the legal institutions and legal processes once the rights are breached or threatened. It is not only the academic knowledge of the legal statutes; it is the ability to manoeuvre the justice system, to oppose injustice, and make a sound decision in situations that are legally consequential. In legal literacy, legal literacy and social justice In legal literacy is not indifferent, as it favors those already in power and leaves the vulnerable vulnerable to exploitation, discrimination, and abuse of rights, which they are incapable of recognizing, describing, and resisting. Social justice the fair allocation of right, resources, dignity and opportunities, cannot be attained unless the citizens understand, as well as they can enjoy, the rights that are guaranteed to them by law. This connection is even enshrined in the Indian Constitution, Art. The State shall see to the working of the legal system in such a manner that it upholds the

principle of justice based on the equality of opportunity; in particular, by providing free legal assistance to persons not able to access justice because of some economic or other disability. Articles 14, 21 and 38 also emphasise the constitutional obligation to equality, dignified life and a welfare state. However, as the India Justice Report 2025 indicates, just 15.5 lakh individuals have used legal aid in 2023-24 out of almost 80% of the Indian population being eligible a gap suggesting not merely the failure of the institutions to work, but the underlying crisis of legal awareness in the community.

Legal literacy has been identified by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international human rights tools as the core in developing rule-of-law systems that are truly inclusive in the global context. SDG 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions is a cross-cutting goal of the United Nations 2030 Agenda of Sustainable Development and the access to justice is defined as one of the enablers. In the case of India, a nation of more than 1.4 billion inhabitants with 22 officially spoken languages, bridging socioeconomic heterogeneity to the extremes, and

rural-urban disparities of enormous proportions, this SDG 16 vision will need to be fulfilled based on a legal literacy infrastructure of locally based, linguistically accessible as well as institutionally supported nature. It examines a question and how legal literacy programs operationally translate into social justice in terms of effect within women, Dalit rights, bonded labour, and access to government welfare schemes and democracy. It also finds out the structural impediments that reduce program efficacy providing evidence-based recommendations to a revised, more effective national legal literacy structure.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The scholarly and policy-based literature regarding legal literacy and social justice in India demonstrates that the significance of the field is increasingly acknowledged and that there has not been a systematic empirical study of the issue, especially at the community level (Yadav and Yadav 2021). Their study observed that although the concept of legal literacy has been granted as a tool of qualitative change, the process where awareness is converted to behavior change and access to justice has been poorly theorized and measured. They cited gaps in governance as a key reason as to why there has been a continued disconnect between the intent of the legislation and legal awareness at the grassroots, concluding that, decades of a legal assistance program still left large segments of the population unaware of seminal welfare legislations.

In a research supported by Article 39-A of the Constitution, Sharma (2025) observed how the Indian judiciary has contributed to the legal literacy and legal assistance to the marginalized groups. The study showed the judicial interventions that have taken the form of Public Interest Litigations, liberalization of the processes, and landmark decisions like *HussainaraKhatoon v. State of Bihar* (1979) and *M.H. Hoskot v. Maharashtra State* (1978) have gone a long way in broadening the normative framework of legal aid. Nonetheless, persistent implementation gaps were observed in the study due to infrastructural and administrative challenges, and the ultimate conclusion to the study was that institutional reforms and structured legal education is an urgent requirement in a bid to turn legal aid, which is a formal right in India, into a substantive one. It recorded that the budget of NALSA decreased between 2017-18 and 2022-23 by 42.54 crores to 169 crores, that Para-Legal Volunteer (PLV) density had reduced by 38 % between 2019 and 2024 and that although 4.30 lakh legal awareness programmes were held in 2023-24 and were attended by 4.49 crore persons, actual legal aid uptake was far worse. The report revealed a structural conflict of output dominated measures (number of camps delivered, people reached) and

outcome dominated reality (cases closed, rights realized in actual practice) and indicated a measurement and accountability crisis at the core of the Indian legal literacy machinery.

In their study of the issue of gender justice in India, Sinha and Pandey (2023) discovered that the legal literacy programs have been effective in raising the level of awareness of women and equipping them with instruments to confront inequality but that the structural gender biases in the legal system still work against the empowerment results. In a study of legal aid clinics as service-learning research projects, Tushaus, Gupta and Kapoor (2015) found that women in rural communities, marginalized communities and underprivileged strata remain systemically marginalized despite the expansive legislative provisions, and argued that the widespread legal literacy coupled with cultural change in attitude towards women rights would be the missing critical link in the Indian gender justice agenda. Their study registered that the involvement of legal aid clinical administrators resulted in the quantifiable enhancement in the awareness of rights and the access to justice systems, especially in cases of domestic violence, property entitlement, and the violation in labour legislation. The National Sample Survey and some of the NALSA annual reports have documented that SC/ST communities, women and rural populations continue to record the lowest rates of legal awareness and highest rates of rights violation. There has been a major research vacuum however in longitudinal research studies which trace the outcomes of exposure to legal literacy program whether the outcome is long-term behavioral change and long-term outcome of access to justice as opposed to short-term awareness which decays with a lack of institutional follow-through. The proposed research paper will fill this gap by conducting primary survey research in Chhattisgarh.

## **3. Research Objectives**

1. To analyze the role and functioning of legal literacy programs including NALSA initiatives, NGO activities, and government-sponsored legal awareness camps in disseminating legal knowledge among marginalized communities in Chhattisgarh.

2. To assess the extent to which legal literacy programs improve access to justice and contribute to social justice outcomes, including empowerment of women, protection against exploitation, and effective use of welfare entitlements.

## **4. Research Questions and Hypothesis**

### **Research Questions:**

- Do legal literacy programs effectively increase legal awareness and knowledge of fundamental rights among marginalized communities in rural Chhattisgarh?

- Does exposure to legal literacy programs demonstrably improve access to justice and reduce vulnerability to legal exploitation among program beneficiaries?
- What structural, linguistic, and institutional challenges most significantly limit the reach and impact of legal literacy programs in promoting social justice?

**Hypotheses:**

**H1:** Legal literacy programs significantly improve legal awareness and access to justice mechanisms among marginalized communities in Chhattisgarh.

**H2:** Increased legal awareness generated by legal literacy programs positively contributes to measurable social justice outcomes, including reduced exploitation, better access to government welfare schemes, and enhanced rights-claiming behavior.

**5. Research Methodology**

This is because the study used a descriptive-analytical research design that incorporates both primary and secondary data instruments to produce a multi-dimensional picture of the importance of legal literacy program in advancing social justice. The descriptive dimension identifies the present state of legal literacy programs and their coverage of community, whereas the analytical one studies causal links between exposure to the program and social justice outcomes.

**Research Design:** Mixed-methods, descriptive-analytical.

**Data Sources:** A structured questionnaire survey was used to collect primary data by involving 150 participants who were selected with purposive and stratified sampling in three districts of Chhattisgarh Raipur, Durg, and Bastar according to urban, semi-urban, and rural settings and guaranteeing the representation of SC, ST, women, and economically weaker section (EWS) demographics. The secondary data were obtained in NALSA annual reports and statistical data (2021-25), the India Justice Report 2025, releases of the Ministry of Law and Justice PIB and published research papers in Google Scholar and government policy documents regarding the DISHA scheme and NALSA programs.

**Sampling:** The stratified sampling was used purposely, whereby the SC/ST respondents (40%), women (45%), and BPL households (50%), were oversampled to make the data pertinent to the social justice orientation of the study. The sample included 80 and 70 female and male respondents respectively, 18-65 years.

**Tools:** Instruments: The legal awareness, program exposure, experiences of access to justice and perceived outcomes of empowerment were measured using a 25-item validated questionnaire. Semi structure interview schedule was conducted among 15 key informants, namely, the officials of

the DLSA, workers of NGOs, and Para-Legal Volunteers, and to triangularize the survey results with the institutional view.

**Data Analysis:** Data Analysis: SPSS 25.0 was used to analyze quantitative data by using percentage analysis and cross tabulation. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative interview data to find patterns of effective programs and structural barriers. Results are made in the form of descriptive statistics, frequency distribution tables and comparative analysis and chi-square tests are used to test association between program exposure and awareness results at a level of significant of  $p < .05$ .

**6. Role of Legal Literacy Programs**

The legal literacy programs in India are based on a multi-tiered institutional structure at national, state, district level and sub-district level. These are the NALSA that organizes the national framework at the top, and the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and District Legal Services Authority (DLSAs) and Taluk Legal Services Committees (TLSCs) execute needs on the ground. In 2023-24 alone, over 4.30 lakh legal awareness campaigns were held in India with 4.49 crore persons participating a significant institutional investment in the legal literacy as a civic good.<sup>1</sup> The most visible part of NALSA community outreach is the Legal Awareness Camps, which are organised in villages, schools, prisons, and other open places to educate citizens on their rights, welfare programmes, family legislation, women rights, and redressal systems. These camps are main areas of legal contact amongst those who have never had any legal contact before. The operating network of NALSA extends to 703 DLSAs and 2,390 TLSCs giving rise to an institutional delivery infrastructure that, although enormous in its design, is disproportionate in its performance.

Court and community based Legal Aid Clinics offer direct legal advice and counselling services, which allow beneficiaries to put the understanding into practice. The Legal Literacy Clubs run by NALSA in schools and colleges impart legal understanding to the younger generations before they get to come into contact with the justice system in their adulthood, thereby establishing a legal-conscious citizen pipeline. The Tele-Law section of DISHA scheme (2021-26), with a budget of 250 crore, has linked the citizens to lawyers via mobile applications and toll-free numbers and an estimated 2.10 crore beneficiaries will be reached by February 2025 and overcome the geographic access barrier that has historically marginalized the remote population.<sup>2</sup> Legal literacy has increasingly

---

<sup>2</sup> Government of India, Press Information Bureau. (2025, March). *DISHA scheme coverage: Tele-*

been institutionalized by Government Initiatives. The Error DISHA Legal Literacy and Legal Awareness Programme (LLLAP) provides citizens with the power to be aware of, comprehend and access legal rights, obligations, and entitlements. In 2025 NALSA further instituted the JAGRITI Scheme specifically to enhance the awareness of the law among the grassroots, with a 200 crore grant on FY 2025-26 to be given to NALSA, with 144.65 crore already spent meaning further investment by the government in the legal literacy infrastructure.<sup>3</sup>

The NGO Activities are a supplementary action to the government plans in terms of legal empowerment at the community level. Organizations that deal with women Self-Help Groups, Dalit rights networks and the tribal communities incorporate legal literacy in their wider development initiatives so as to establish the embedded, long term, legal awareness that lasts beyond the one time awareness campaigns. An example of this model of rights-integrated community development is the CECOEDECON project in Rajasthan that is training 200 Sabla girls in legal literacy in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

### 7. Impact on Social Justice

The net effect of legal literacy programs on the social justice outcomes may be traced in four dimensions.

**Empowerment of Marginalized Communities:** Marginalized Community Empowerment: The legal literacy programs have proven to be effective to raise rights-claiming behavior among the SC/ST population and women. Participants of survey who had attended NALSA or NGO-mediated legal awareness workshops showed much greater confidence in going to the police stations, LokAdalats, and district courts to claim their rights in accordance to the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, Domestic Violence Act, and MGNREGA. In 2022-23 to 2024-25, more than 39.44 lakh persons accessed free legal services under the NALSA network increase by 28% compared to the prior year showing an upward trend in the justice services demand.<sup>4</sup>

---

*Law, NyayaBandhu and LLLAP beneficiaries up to February 2025.* Ministry of Law and Justice. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2118245>

<sup>3</sup> The News Strike. (2026, February 6). *Legal aid expansion: Tele-Law reaches 1.12 crore people; NALSA rolls out 4 key schemes in 2025 with ₹200 crore grant.* <https://thenewstrike.com/legal-aid-expansion-tele-law-reaches-112-crore-people-nalsa-rolls-out-4-key-schemes-in-2025-with-200-crore-grant>

<sup>4</sup> PWOlyIAS. (2025). *Legal aid system in India: NALSA, LADCS, DISHA and reform needs — India*

**Protection of Human Rights:** Legal literacy programs have also led to greater reporting and prosecution of human rights violations especially domestic violence, bonded labour and atrocities against SC/ST groups. According to Sinha and Pandey (2023), legal literacy programs equip women with the means to contest gender-based inequality and claim their property rights and the difference in knowledge and confidence on women who have attended legal awareness camps was also measured.

**Reduction in Exploitation:** Less Exploitation: Since agricultural labourers and migrant workers are well informed about labour rights, entitlement to minimum wages, provisions of MGNREGA and anti-bonded labour laws, there has been a lesser vulnerability to exploitation to both in areas where there has been a consistent maintenance of legal literacy programs. The interviews with key informants in Bastar district affirmed the fact that the presence of the PLV in the villages has brought about informal deterrence to the bonded labour practices that would go unreported because the people had not known of their illegality. The lack of procedural guidelines in LokAdalats, in particular, was reported by Yadav and Rai (2024), as the wider involvement of weaker groups in society helps to provide an inclusive dispute resolution environment where even unfamiliar with the law have no fears to raise their grievances.<sup>5</sup>

**Improved Access to Justice:** LokAdalats which are one of the pillars of NALSA alternative dispute resolution architecture settled 1.45 crore cases in the 4th National LokAdalat of 2024 in a single event and a total of 1.45 crore settlement cases related to criminal compoundable offences, motor accident cases, labour disputes and consumer cases.<sup>6</sup> The Tele-Law aspect of DISHA that had reached out to about 2.10 crore beneficiaries by February 2025 especially reached the remote population of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and the Northeast.

---

*Justice Report 2025 analysis.*  
<https://pwoonlyias.com/current-affairs/legal-aid-system-in-india/>

<sup>5</sup> Yadav, S. K., & Rai, O. P. (2024). LokAdalat and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms: Bridging the gap between informal and formal justice systems. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(2), 984–996. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i2.2024.3913>

<sup>6</sup> ANI. (2024, December 14). *4th National LokAdalat 2024: 1.45 crore cases resolved, ensuring quick and affordable justice.* ANI News. <https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/4th-national-lok-adalat-2024-resolving-145-crore-cases-ensuring-quick-affordable-justice-for-all20241214220412/>

### 8. Challenges in Legal Literacy Programs

Regardless of the great success, the legal literacy programs in India have structural deficiencies that have constrained their potential of transforming.

**Lack of Awareness:** The India Justice Report 2025 is categorical on the fact that although most of the population in India is qualified under the free legal aid provision of Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, only 15.5 lakh persons actually accessed the services in 2023-24, which is a very low utilization rate.<sup>7</sup> This gap between eligibility and uptake is an indication of a serious and self-perpetuating lack of awareness 2% of the eligible population: the people who are most prone to legal literacy programs are at the same time those who are least inclined to know that such programs exist or are open to them.

**Limited Resources:** The NALSA funds dropped to 169 crore in 2022-23 with the footprint of fund utilization also decreasing to 59% as opposed to 75% in 2017-18 with strict expenditure guidelines that do not provide state authorities with the opportunity to make flexible decisions on the allocation of allocated funds. Legal aid is under 1% of the total justice budget structural under-investment which renders ongoing, high quality program provision, in 703 districts, operationally unsustainable. Although 53,000 PLVs were trained in 2023-24, there was only 14,000 to be deployed, meaning a deployment gap of 73.6% which leaves a continual lack of trained community resource available at the very grassroots level that has most urgently required legal literacy to operate.<sup>8</sup>

**Low Participation:** PLV density the vanguard indicator of legal literacy infrastructure on a community basis declined by 38% between 2019 and 2024. The honorariums many states pay PLV are often less than the minimum wage which creates poor incentive systems to retain and actively deploy. This in turn detracts program attendance due to event based, one time model of most legal awareness camps, which creates temporary awareness but lacks the institutional follow through to ensure awareness translates into rights claiming behavior.

**Language and Education Barriers:** The linguistic diversity in India poses a dire point of accessibility in legal literacy provision. UNESCO has listed 197

tribal languages of India as endangered, and those tribal districts of Chattisgarh where Gondi, Halbi, and Chattisgarhi are the main languages of the communities are now provided with NALSA materials in Hindi or English, which is practically inaccessible without specific linguistic modification. Most of the tribal communities in India have been recorded to have their own mother tongues that are not represented in the official/regional language of instruction, and that the language differences between legal texts and community understanding is an operation of structural exclusion which cannot be overcome by the frequency of the camp by itself, unless intentionally developed multilingual materials are used.

### 9. Findings and Discussion

This part is based on empirical data of a primary survey of 150 respondents in Raipur, Durg and Bastar districts of Chhattisgarh. The data presented in the analysis are arranged in five correlated data tables that include the following respondent profile and program exposure, legal awareness outcomes, access-to-justice behavioral change, perceived program benefits, and structural challenges. There is an interpretive discussion per table which puts findings in a theoretical and policy framework built in previous sections. Collectively, these tables provide an entire empirical image of the ground to the sky, the translation or lack of translation of the legal literacy programs into calculable social justice outcomes on the marginalized communities in Chhattisgarh.

The demographic profile of the 150 respondents that were surveyed in three Chhattisgarh districts is given in Table 1. The sample is well represented by the SC/ST respondents (53.3% total) and the rural residents (53.3%), which implies the intentional consideration of the most legally vulnerable groups in the study. Interestingly, 61.3% of the sampled had attended some sort of legal literacy program either a NALSA awareness camp or NGO-organized workshop or school-based session on legal education that offered a useful point of reference in comparing the outcomes of awareness and access between the exposed and non-exposed sub-groups. The exposure rate was relatively high and this may be attributed to the urban and semi-urban bias in the delivery of the programs since the respondents at the rural areas in Bastar recorded considerably lower rates of program participation.

Table 2 shows statistically significant and substantively huge differences in legal awareness among all the five indicators between program-exposed and non-exposed respondents. Exposed respondents awareness rates about the right to free

<sup>7</sup> Insightsonindia / Tata Trusts. (2025). *India Justice Report 2025: Legal aid in India — NALSA challenges, PLV shortage, budget constraints*. <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2025/08/01/legal-aid-and-nalsa/>

<sup>8</sup> PWOlyIAS. (2025). *Legal aid system in India: Para-legal volunteer shortage, fund utilization decline, and uneven state-level allocations*. <https://pwoonlyias.com/current-affairs/legal-aid-system-in-india/>

legal aid are 91.3% as opposed to only 31.0% at the non-exposed position which is a gap of 60.3 percentage points that supports H1. Each of the five chi-square tests is very important ( $p < .001$ ) and they can be taken as a strong empirical evidence to the hypothesis that legal literacy programs enhance legal awareness significantly. The results are in line

with those of Yadav and Yadav (2021), who have reported legal literacy as the key driver of rights awareness among the disenfranchised citizens, and with those of Sharma (2025), who have established that the constitutional right to free legal aid finds its way to the beneficiaries at the ground level through awareness programs.

**Table 1: Respondent Profile and Program Exposure (N = 150)**

Characteristic	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	80	53.3
	Male	70	46.7
Caste Category	SC	42	28.0
	ST	38	25.3
	OBC	38	25.3
	General	32	21.3
Residence	Rural	80	53.3
	Semi-Urban	45	30.0
	Urban	25	16.7
Legal Literacy Program Exposure	Attended at least one program	92	61.3
	Never attended	58	38.7

Source: Primary Data, 2024–25

**Table 2: Level of Legal Awareness by Program Exposure Status**

Legal Awareness Indicator	Exposed Group (n=92)	Non-Exposed Group (n=58)	Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ )	p-value
Aware of right to free legal aid	84 (91.3%)	18 (31.0%)	61.4	<.001
Aware of LokAdalat mechanism	76 (82.6%)	14 (24.1%)	59.2	<.001
Aware of MGNREGA entitlements	72 (78.3%)	22 (37.9%)	26.8	<.001
Aware of Domestic Violence Act	70 (76.1%)	16 (27.6%)	37.4	<.001
Aware of SC/ST Atrocities Act	68 (73.9%)	12 (20.7%)	44.6	<.001

Source: Primary Data, 2024–25

**Table 3: Access to Justice Outcomes by Program Exposure**

Access to Justice Action	Exposed Group (n=92)	Non-Exposed Group (n=58)
Approached DLSA/legal aid clinic	38 (41.3%)	7 (12.1%)
Filed complaint at police station	44 (47.8%)	11 (18.9%)
Participated in LokAdalat	31 (33.7%)	4 (6.9%)
Availed welfare scheme benefits	62 (67.4%)	24 (41.4%)
Reported rights violation formally	29 (31.5%)	5 (8.6%)

Source: Primary Data, 2024–25

Table 3 converts awareness differentials into actual access-to-justice behavioral outcomes. The differences in exposed respondents were more than three times higher to have approached a DLSA or legal aid clinic (41.3% vs. 12.1%), more than two and a half times higher to have filed a police complaint (47.8% vs. 18.9%), and almost five times higher to have attended a LokAdalat (33.7%

vs. 6.9%). These data not only confirm H2 that legal literacy programs do not only produce quantifiable social justice effects, but also show that even exposed to the programs respondents (a minority) move the awareness into actual rights-claiming action, which proves that, without institutional follow-through and social support, awareness alone is not sufficient.

**Table 4: Perceived Benefits of Legal Literacy Programs (Respondents Who Attended, n=92)**

Perceived Benefit	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Improved understanding of fundamental rights	58 (63.0%)	26 (28.3%)	5 (5.4%)	3 (3.3%)
Greater confidence in approaching legal institutions	49 (53.3%)	30 (32.6%)	8 (8.7%)	5 (5.4%)
Better knowledge of welfare scheme entitlements	54 (58.7%)	24 (26.1%)	10 (10.9%)	4 (4.3%)
Reduced fear of police and courts	41 (44.6%)	33 (35.9%)	12 (13.0%)	6 (6.5%)
Empowerment to resist exploitation	43 (46.7%)	34 (36.9%)	10 (10.9%)	5 (5.4%)

Source: Primary Data, 2024–25

Table 4 records the subjective experience of benefits of legal literacy program by respondents. More than 91% of the respondents who were exposed to programs agreed or strongly agreed that programs enhanced their knowledge of the basic rights, and more than 85% said that the programs increased their confidence when approaching legal institutions. More importantly, the outcome of programs in the most direct measure of social justice was over 83% in agreement that programs

enabled resistance to exploitation. Such self-reported empowerment results compare with reports of Sinha and Pandey (2023) on gender justice, and Tushaus et al. (2015) on the empowerment dividends that embedded legal aid clinic models produce, which shows that programs create both subjective and objectively measurable dignity and agency gains, as well as the objectively measurable positive effects on behavior reported in Table 3.

**Table 5: Key Challenges Identified by Respondents and Key Informants**

Challenge	Respondents Citing (%)	Key Informants Citing (out of 15)
Language and literacy barriers	72.0	14
Infrequent program organization	68.7	12
Lack of follow-up after awareness camps	63.3	13
Insufficient information about where to access legal aid	61.3	11
Fear of social reprisal when asserting rights	57.3	13
Distance from DLSA/legal aid offices	54.7	10

Source: Primary Data, 2024–25

Table 5 compiles challenge findings between two groups' survey respondents and key informants, and finds that two factors, language barriers (72.0% of respondents; 14 of 15 informants) and program infrequency, are identified by both the groups as the most important structural constraints. The fact that the lack of follow-up (63.3%) came out as the key ones supports the India Justice Report 2025 that found that output-intensive measures hide outcome-light facts. The fear of social reprisal mentioned by 57.3% of respondents is a dimension of structural vulnerability that is especially pertinent to SC/ST communities in tribal districts, in which there is a social and economic risk of exercising the legal rights against members of the dominant caste or employment, which is not covered by legal awareness programs. Particularly in Bastar district informants reported that since virtually no villages of their district had PLV there is no institutional channel between awareness and action.

**Discussion:**

The combination of the five tables affirms that the role of legal literacy programs in India is a truly significant mechanism in the Indian social justice ecosystem, and produces statistically significant and practically meaningful changes in legal awareness and rights-claiming behavior. The results confirm the two research hypotheses. But the results also show a critical threshold effect: programs increase the awareness but do not independently bring about social justice. Awareness to action needs follow-up and availability of legal institutions, materials of

language adaptation, and social set-ups whereby rights assertion do not create disproportionate personal cost. The outreach is structurally uneven with 38% of the non-exposure rate in a sample which was purposely taken out of the populations most targeted by NALSA programs, indicating that the outreach focuses the available resources on more readily reachable regions and leaves the most remote and vulnerable communities behind.

**10. Suggestions and Policy Recommendations**

Based on the empirical findings of the present research and the evidence specified in the literature, it is possible to propose the following recommendations to improve the legal literacy programs as the instrument of social justice.

- 1 **School Incorporation:** Introduce the legal literacy in the secondary school curriculum through standardized, multi-lingual, age-sensitive and structured curriculum.
- 2 **PLV Strengthening:** Pay Para-Legal Volunteers minimum wage rates will ensure that the national density of 38% drop is immediately reversed.
- 3 **Digital: Reach:** Grow Tele-Law through mobile applications in regional languages, CSC kiosks and community radio in regions of low connectivity.
- 4 **Institutional Collaboration:** Sign NALSA-NGO contractual agreements to offer the alternative of sustainable outreach services in tribal and remote areas on the last-mile basis.

**11. Conclusion**

This paper has helped to give the systematic empirical evidence that legal literacy programs make a meaningful and measurable contribution to the promotion of social justice in India. The results of the survey carried out in Chhattisgarh confirm that respondents who were exposed to the program exhibit significantly higher levels of legal awareness in all the indicators of such knowledge, a greater probability of accessing the justice mechanisms such as LokAdalats and legal aid clinics, and an increased level of self-reported empowerment directly in support of both hypotheses of the research. Structural obstacles such as language inaccessibility, infrequent programs, ineffective following up, PLV shortages and fear of being socially reprimanded still hinder the translation of legal knowledge into lived justice especially among SC/ST communities and women in remote localities. The clear-cut recorded gap between the eligibility (80% of Indian population) and uptake (15.5 lakh beneficiaries in 2023-24) implies that the legal literacy architecture in India needs not to be improved but to be re-invented on a grander scale, more linguistically accommodating, technologically enhanced and results-oriented. The next step in the research should be to conduct a longitudinal study of program models that monitor behavioral change and consider the temporal state under which legal awareness is most effectively transformed into rights-claiming behavior, namely the conditions that are social, institutional, and psychological. The comparative research with high and low performing models of SLSA across states would provide a practical benefit to national policy reform.

#### References

- 1 Alam, A., Nandani, Sharma, S., & Shruthi, M. (2025). Enhancing legal literacy and empowerment of children through digital platforms. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2025.70920>
- 2 Chaara, I., Falisse, J.-B., & Moriceau, J. (2022). Does legal aid improve access to justice in 'fragile' states? *World Development*, 152, 105795. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105795>
- 3 Government of India, Press Information Bureau. (2024, July). *Legal awareness programmes and free legal services under NALSA (2023–24)*. Ministry of Law and Justice. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2037349>
- 4 Government of India, Press Information Bureau. (2025, March). *Legal literacy and legal awareness programmes: DISHA scheme coverage and beneficiaries (upto February 2025)*. Ministry of Law and Justice. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2118245>
- 5 Insightsonindia. (2025). *Legal aid in India: Challenges, NALSA initiatives and way forward — India Justice Report 2025*. <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2025/08/01/legal-aid-and-nalsa/>
- 6 Journal of Political Science. (2025). *Significance and role of legal literacy and awareness in India*. *Journal of Political Science*, 7(6), 13. <https://www.journalofpoliticalscience.com/uploads/archives/7-6-13-565.pdf>
- 7 Mahmood, M. S. (2021). *Access to justice for marginalized people in India*. Michigan State Law Review Pub Hub, 1(1). <https://mslr.pubpub.org/pub/ii7rd56v>
- 8 National Legal Services Authority. (2024). *Frequently asked questions — Legal awareness and literacy*. NALSA, Government of India. <https://nalsa.gov.in/faqs/>
- 9 PWOlyIAS. (2025). *Legal aid system in India: NALSA, challenges and reforms*. <https://pwoonlyias.com/current-affairs/legal-aid-system-in-india/>
- 10 Sharma, R. (2025). Legal literacy and awareness for accessing justice: Judicial role in India. *International Journal of Social Science Research*, 7(1), Part I. <https://www.socialsciencejournals.net/archives/2025/vol7issue1/PartI/7-1-125-765.pdf>
- 11 Sinha, S., & Pandey, S. (2023). Gender justice in India: The constitutional promise and the lived reality. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 4(2), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v4.i2.2023.5019>
- 12 Tata Trusts. (2025). *India Justice Report 2025: Measuring the performance of justice delivery in India*. Tata Trusts & Centre for Social Justice. <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2025/08/01/legal-aid-and-nalsa/>
- 13 Tushaus, D. W., Gupta, S. K., & Kapoor, S. (2015). India legal aid clinics: Creating service learning research projects to study social justice. *Asian Journal of Legal Education*, 2(2), 100–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2322005814568341>
- 14 United Nations. (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development — SDG 16: Peace, justice and strong institutions*. United Nations General Assembly. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal16>
- 15 Yadav, M., & Yadav, S. (2021). Legal literacy. *International Journal of Law*

- Management and Humanities*, 4(3), 46–50.  
<https://doi.org/10.1732/IJLMH.26698>
- 16 Drishti IAS. (2025). *Legal aid in India: NALSA, LADCS, DISHA and reform needs*.  
<https://www.drishtias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/legal-aid-in-india>
- 17 Legal Service India. (n.d.). *Access of justice by marginalized people of India — NALSA schemes and SC/ST provisions*.  
<https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-1103-access-of-justice-by-marginalized-people-of-india.html>
- 18 Cooke, E. (2022). The working culture of legal aid lawyers: Developing a 'shared orientation model'. *Social & Legal Studies*, 31(5), 704–724.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639211060809>
- 19 International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research. (2023). *An empirical research on legal aid system in India*. *IJFMR*, 5(5).  
<https://www.ijfmr.com/papers/2023/5/7833.pdf>
- 20 Ghosh, S., et al. (2025). Gamified platform for children's rights to increase legal literacy. *International Journal of Engineering Innovations and Management Strategies*, 1(10), 1–13.  
<https://www.ijraset.com/research-paper/enhancing-legal-literacy-and-empowerment>