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### CONVERGENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF LEGAL AID TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO JUSTICE: A STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BHILWARA DISTRICT OF RAJASTHAN

- Shashank Shekhar Singh & Dr. Vishwa Deepak Bhatnagar<sup>1</sup>

#### ABSTRACT

The present study evaluates the status and performance of free legal aid services in Rajasthan. Using secondary data from 2018 to 2024, it assesses settlement rates, case resolutions, and gaps in service coverage. The results show a significant increase in legal literacy camps, legal aid beneficiaries, and case resolutions. Legal aid for women rose, while for SC and ST groups, it saw declines. Legal Aid Clinics exhibited high settlement rates. Lok Adalats also demonstrated growing efficiency, with a sharp rise in cases disposed off and settlement amounts. Despite the free legal aid services continue to expand and address backlogs, it faces several challenges, which hinder the expansion and effectiveness of programs. Therefore, to enhance legal literacy and aid, digital platforms may be used to reach marginalized communities, and legal aid programs may be tailored for specific groups like people with

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<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, SOLS, Sangam University, Bhilwara & Emeritus Professor, SOLS, Sangam University, Bhilwara Respectively

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disabilities. Strengthening legal aid clinics, optimizing Lok Adalats, collaborations with NGOs, educational institutions, and media campaigns can further boost outreach and awareness.

*Keywords: Status, Performance, Free legal aid, Lok Adalat, Clinics*

## INTRODUCTION

Legal aid refers to providing free legal services to those who cannot afford the assistance of a lawyer to conduct a case or legal proceedings in any court, tribunal, or before an authority. It is a system designed to ensure that no one is denied professional legal help due to financial constraints. The primary objective is to make justice accessible to the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable sections of society. In this regard, Justice P.N. Bhagwati aptly remarked that (Bhagwati, 1971):

***"The legal aid means providing an arrangement in the society so that the missionary of administration of justice becomes easily accessible and is not out of reach of those who have to resort to it for enforcement of its given to them by law, the poor and illiterate should be able to approach the courts and their ignorance and poverty should not be an impediment in the way of their obtaining justice from the courts. Legal aid should be available to the poor and illiterate, who don't have access to courts. One need not be a litigant to seek aid by means of legal aid."***<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>P.N. Bhagwati, *Legal Aid as a Human Right* (1971).

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Legal aid must be made accessible to the poor and needy by establishing a system of government funding for those unable to afford the cost of litigation. The purpose of legal aid is to ensure that the constitutional promise of justice is upheld in both letter and spirit, making equal justice available to the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable segments of society. It is important to note that the Constitution of India mandates the State to ensure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice based on equal opportunity. Specifically, it requires the provision of free legal aid through appropriate laws, schemes, or other means to ensure that no citizen is denied access to justice due to financial or other disabilities. The Constitution further compels the State to guarantee equality before the law and a legal system that promotes justice on the basis of equal opportunity for all (Articles 14 and 22(1) of the Indian Constitution).

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "Legal Aid" refers to a system that offers free legal advice and practical assistance for individuals who cannot afford to pay for legal services. Traditionally, legal aid is understood as financial support provided to someone who wants to defend or assert their rights in court but cannot afford to do so due to financial limitations. Thus, the general meaning of "Legal Aid" involves offering legal support, social security, and a system designed to help disadvantaged individuals assert their legal rights through the legal process.

#### **HISTORY OF LEGAL AID IN INDIA**

The Indian Constitution serves as the supreme guide for governance in the country, with provisions covering every aspect. For general queries or to submit your research for publication, kindly email us at [ijalr.editorial@gmail.com](mailto:ijalr.editorial@gmail.com)

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of its functioning. Article 39A of the Constitution states that the State must ensure the legal system promotes justice based on equal opportunity, providing free legal aid to guarantee that every individual receives justice, regardless of their economic or social background. Additionally, Articles 14 and 22(1) make it mandatory for the State to uphold equality before the law and provide a legal system that ensures justice for all its citizens. Legal aid aims to fulfill this constitutional commitment, ensuring that equal justice is accessible to the poor, marginalized, and vulnerable groups in society (Narain, 1983).<sup>3</sup>

The concept of legal aid originated in France in 1851 when the government passed a law to offer legal assistance to those in need. In India, the idea of legal aid emerged in 1952 when the Government raised the issue of providing legal support to the poor at various Law Conferences. In 1980, a committee was established to oversee legal aid initiatives nationwide, chaired by Hon. Mr. Justice P.N. Bhagwati, then a Supreme Court Judge. This committee, known as CILAS (Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes), began working to ensure legal aid was accessible to those in need across India. Another significant development in legal aid was the creation of Lok Adalats, which helped expedite the trial process and deliver faster justice to citizens.

The Legal Services Authority Act was passed in 1987 to provide a statutory foundation and ensure uniformity for legal aid cells. Although it wasn't flawless, the act was fully enforced in 1995, largely due to the efforts of Hon. Mr. Justice R.N. Mishra. In

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<sup>3</sup>J. Narain, *Legal Aid - Litigational or Educational: An Indian Experiment* (1983).

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the same year, the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) was established, with Hon. Dr. Justice A.S. Anand, a Supreme Court Judge, becoming its Executive Chairman. A nationwide network was created, with NALSA serving as the central body. The organization primarily focused on ensuring that every individual has access to justice, formulating policies and principles in line with the Constitution to make legal services available to all.

Several initiatives were implemented to ensure the core objective of legal aid cells was achieved. The Central Authority took the following measures:

- Case disposal through Lok Adalats.
- Promoting Legal Aid Schemes and programs to raise awareness about legal aid services.
- Providing legal aid facilities in prisons.
- Accrediting NGOs and organizations to help spread legal awareness.

#### **CRITERIA FOR AVAILING FREE LEGAL AID SERVICES**

The criteria for availing free legal aid services can vary depending on the country and its legal system. In India, under the Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987, eligibility is primarily determined by the following factors:

- **Income Limits:** Individuals with an annual income below ₹1,00,000 (subject to regional variations) are eligible for free legal aid.
- **Vulnerable Groups:** People from Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC),

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and Minority Communities. Additionally, women, children, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities are also eligible.

- **Types of Legal Issues:** Free legal aid is available for various legal matters, including criminal and civil cases, family disputes, property issues, and cases involving labor rights, consumer rights, or discrimination.
- **Below Poverty Line (BPL) Status:** Individuals categorized as BPL can access free legal assistance.<sup>4</sup>
- **Detained Persons:** Individuals, who are detained, whether in civil or criminal matters, are entitled to legal aid.
- **Special Circumstances:** Victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, human trafficking, or mental illness can also avail of free legal aid.

Legal aid can be obtained through District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs), Taluka Legal Services Committees (TLSCs), and other authorized bodies, offering services like legal advice, representation, and assistance in navigating the justice system, particularly for those unable to afford legal fees.<sup>5</sup>

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Studying the status and performance of free legal aid services is crucial to improving access to justice, strengthening legal rights for marginalized communities, and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the justice system. Legal aid services play a vital role in ensuring that vulnerable groups, such as low-income individuals, women, children, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), persons with disabilities, and minority

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<sup>4</sup> J. Narain, Legal Aid - Litigational or Educational: An Indian Experiment, 25 J. Indian L. Inst. 88 (1983).

<sup>5</sup> P. Bhattacharya, Legal Aid in India: A Critical Review, 43 J. Indian L. Inst. 235 (2001).

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groups, can access justice despite financial constraints, lack of legal literacy, and systemic barriers like discrimination. Performance evaluations of these services can help measure their effectiveness in terms of resolution rates, timeliness, and the quality of legal assistance provided. Additionally, such studies identify gaps in coverage, especially in rural or underserved areas, and pinpoint inefficiencies like case backlogs, which delay justice. By ensuring equitable access to legal resources and evaluating resource allocation, these studies help improve legal aid outreach and effectiveness. They also ensure compliance with legal frameworks like the Legal Services Authorities Act, which governs the provision of free legal aid in India, and provide data for supporting legal reforms. Ultimately, by enhancing the performance of legal aid services, these studies help build public trust in the legal system, especially among marginalized communities that may feel disconnected from formal legal institutions.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Sampling Plan**

Rajasthan state of India has been selected purposively for the study. Rajasthan, with a population of over 80 million (2021 Census), faces significant socio-economic challenges, particularly in its rural areas, where about 70% of the population resides. Marginalized groups such as Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), Other Backward Classes (OBC), women, children, and persons with disabilities often face discrimination and systemic barriers to accessing legal aid. The state struggles with a high crime rate, around 269.8 to 276.2 cases per 100,000 people, including over 6,000 rape cases in

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2020 and around 2,000-3,000 missing children cases annually. Legal aid utilization is low, with only 1,200-1,500 cases resolved through legal aid in 2021, compared to tens of thousands in more urbanized states. Additionally, gender discrimination remains prevalent, with 60% of rural women illiterate, contributing to widespread gender-based violence and child marriages. The state's legal infrastructure is underdeveloped in rural areas, and the high case backlog—over 300,000 pending cases in the Rajasthan High Court—further delays justice, especially for economically disadvantaged individuals. These challenges underscore the need for increased investment in legal aid, infrastructure, and awareness programs to ensure equitable access to justice for all.<sup>6</sup>

### **Data Collection**

Secondary data from 2018 to 2024 were collected from Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA), National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) District Legal Services Authority (DLSA).<sup>7</sup>

### **Analytical Framework**

The core analytical method used is descriptive statistics, where the total number of events (legal literacy camps, legal aid clinics, Lok Adalats) and the number of legal aid beneficiaries are presented through annual summaries. To study the status of free legal aid services in the study area, total Legal Literacy Camps Organized in the Rajasthan was calculated. This helps to understand the legal awareness and legal literacy among the

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<sup>6</sup>Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority, <https://rlsa.rajasthan.gov.in/> (last visited July 27, 2025).

<sup>7</sup>National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), <https://nalsa.gov.in/> (last visited July 27, 2025).

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people of Rajasthan. Total number of individuals served or engaged in each category through free legal aid services was also calculated.

Performance of free legal aid services in the study area was evaluated through number of cases disposed or settled through legal aid clinics, lokadalats and permanent lokadalats.

*Settlement Rate Calculation:* The settlement rate for Legal Aid Clinics and Lok Adalats was calculated by dividing the number of cases settled by the number of applications received:

$$\text{Settlement Rate} = \frac{\text{Number of Cases Settled} \times 100}{\text{Number of Applications Received}}$$

#### **LEGAL AID CLINICS**

Legal Aid Clinics are designed to offer easy access to legal assistance for the underprivileged and marginalized sections of society. They function similarly to primary health centers, where doctors and medical staff deliver essential healthcare to people in rural areas struggling with poverty and social hardships. Just as doctors provide health services at primary health centers, lawyers at legal aid clinics offer legal services to local residents. The focus is on providing basic legal help, such as legal advice and assistance with drafting notices, replies, applications, and petitions. Lawyers working at these clinics also aim to resolve disputes before they escalate into formal litigation. This allows them to better understand the challenges people in remote villages face in accessing justice. Legal aid clinics are staffed by paralegal volunteers chosen by Legal Services Authorities, as well as

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lawyers who are committed, compassionate, and sensitive to the issues faced by ordinary people.

### **LOK ADALATS**

The authority is actively working to organize Lok Adalats in Revenue Courts as well. Under the direction of the Hon'ble Executive Chairman of RSLSA, a successful Mega Lok Adalat was held in June 2012 at the Revenue Board in Ajmer, where a significant number of cases were resolved, which is a positive outcome. Revenue cases can also be resolved through Lok Adalat, as the backlog in these cases often leads to an increase in crimes. However, no applications for legal aid have been submitted so far, indicating a need for greater legal awareness.

### **PERMANENT LOK ADALAT**

Another type of Lok Adalat is the Permanent Lok Adalat, which is established under Section 22-B of The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. These are permanent bodies consisting of a Chairman and two members, set up to provide a mandatory pre-litigation process for conciliation and settlement of cases related to Public Utility Services, such as transport, postal, and telegraph services. If the parties involved fail to reach a settlement, the Permanent Lok Adalat has the authority to resolve the dispute, provided that it does not involve any criminal offense. Additionally, the award given by the Permanent Lok Adalat is final and binding on all parties involved. The jurisdiction of Permanent Lok Adalats extends up to Rs. OneCrore. If the parties cannot agree on a settlement, the Permanent Lok Adalat has the authority to make a decision on the case. The award issued by the Permanent Lok Adalat is conclusive

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and must be followed by all parties. The proceedings are conducted in a way that the Lok Adalat considers appropriate, taking into account the specifics of the case and the preferences of the parties, such as requests to hear oral statements or to expedite the resolution of the dispute.<sup>8</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results are mentioned in the following sections.

### Status of Free Legal Aid Services in Rajasthan

Status of free legal aid services was studied by number of total legal literacy camps organized in the study area. Moreover, total number of beneficiaries in each category through free legal aid services was also calculated.

**Table 1: Legal Awareness/Literacy**

Year	Total Legal Literacy Camps Organized
2018	20568
2019	26805
2020	42337
2021	73611
2022	112463
2023	87285
2024	71035

Source: Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA)

The Table 1 provides information about the legal awareness and legal literacy in terms of total number of legal literacy camps organized each year from 2018 to 2024. These camps aim to

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<sup>8</sup> R. Moog, *Legal Aid and Lok Adalats in India: A Human Rights Perspective*, 35 Hum. Rts. Q. 94 (2013).  
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increase awareness and understanding of legal rights, responsibilities, and justice-related topics among people, which can be crucial for empowering citizens and promoting legal literacy. From the Table 1, it is clear that the total number of legal literacy camps organized in 2018 was 20,568. In 2019, there was an increase to 26,805 camps, showing a growth in the initiative to spread legal awareness. In 2020, there was a significant increase to 42,337 camps, possibly due to efforts to reach more people, especially in the wake of the pandemic, where virtual and other innovative approaches might have been used to deliver legal literacy. The number continues to rise, reaching 73,611 in 2021.<sup>9</sup> The trend shows that the initiative for legal literacy was growing rapidly, likely due to increasing demand and focus on legal education during challenging times. The growth reaches its peak in 2022, with 112,463 camps organized. This suggests a high level of commitment to promoting legal awareness across the country or region, with a strong drive to reach more citizens. In 2023, the number drops slightly to 87,285 camps. While, still a high number, it's less than the previous year, which could reflect various factors such as shifting priorities, resource allocation, or changing strategies. Finally, in 2024, the number further drops to 71,035 camps. This might indicate a continued decline, perhaps due to challenges in organizing such camps, shifting priorities or adjustments to how legal literacy is being spread such as a transition to digital platforms.

**Table 2: Legal Aid Beneficiaries of Rajasthan**

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<sup>9</sup>National Crime Records Bureau, <https://ncrb.gov.in/> (last visited July 27, 2025).  
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<b>Year Categories</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
<b>SC</b>	311	163	65	89	119	177	159
<b>ST</b>	257	86	47	39	51	138	55
<b>Women</b>	580	628	378	390	658	762	887
<b>Children</b>	86	8461	3931	5537	6763	6427	5383
<b>In Custody</b>	2847	2927	3841	6191	2757	4266	6152
<b>Persons with disability</b>	7	22	0	9	21	13	16
<b>Industrial Workmen</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Transgender</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Victims of Trafficking in human beings or beggar</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Victims of Mass Disaster, Violence, Flood, Draught, Earthquake and Industrial Disaster</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>General (persons whose annual income does not exceed</b>	466	321	139	163	307	460	480

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the prescribed limit)							
<b>Others</b>	284	146	32	42	36	3	1
<b>Total</b>	4838	12754	8433	12460	10712	12246	13134

Source: Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA)

Table 2 represents the Legal Aid Beneficiaries from 2018 to 2024, broken down by various categories. From the Table 2, it is clear that the SC and ST categories show a declining trend over the years. For example, SC beneficiaries decreased from 311 in 2018 to 159 in 2024, and ST beneficiaries dropped significantly from 257 in 2018 to 55 in 2024. Women beneficiaries increased notably over time. From 580 women in 2018, the number rose sharply to 887 in 2024, indicating growing access or awareness of legal aid among women. Children received a substantial amount of legal aid, with a significant spike in 2019 (8461 beneficiaries). This number then decreased in subsequent years but remained high (around 5,000 to 6,000 children) through 2024. In Custody numbers showed a sharp increase in 2021 (6191 beneficiaries), reflecting the high number of incarcerated individuals receiving legal aid. However, this number fluctuated, reaching 6152 in 2024.<sup>10</sup> Persons with disability had very low numbers of beneficiaries, with a sharp drop to zero in 2020, but slightly recovering afterward (13 beneficiaries in 2023 and 16 in 2024). Transgender individuals had no beneficiaries until 2024, when one person received legal aid. Victims of trafficking and mass disasters had zero beneficiaries

<sup>10</sup>Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, Census of India 2021: Provisional Population Totals, <https://censusindia.gov.in/> (last visited July 27, 2025).

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in all years, indicating either a lack of data or no legal aid cases for these groups. General category beneficiaries (low-income individuals) fluctuated over the years, but the number stayed consistent between 307 and 480 in the later years. Others show a marked decline in beneficiaries, dropping from 284 in 2018 to just 1 in 2024. The total number of beneficiaries fluctuated from 4,838 in 2018 to 13,134 in 2024, showing an overall increase in the number of people receiving legal aid over the years.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 3: Legal Aid Beneficiaries of Bhilwara**

Categories	Providing Panel Advocate	Advice/ Counseling	Other Services	Total
SC	3	0	0	3
ST	0	0	0	0
Women	1	0	0	1
Children	4	0	0	4
In Custody	6	0	0	6
Persons with disability	0	0	0	0
Industrial Workmen	0	0	0	0
Transgender	0	0	0	0
Victims of Trafficking in human beings or beggar	0	0	0	0

<sup>11</sup>*Id.*

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Victims of Mass Disaster, Violence, Flood, Draught, Earthquake and Industrial Disaster	0	0	0	0
General (persons whose annual income does not exceed the prescribed limit)	3	0	0	3
Others	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>

Source: District Legal Services Authority, Bhilwara (DLSA)

This Table 3 presents the distribution of legal aid beneficiaries in Bhilwara, categorized by various groups. A total of 17 beneficiaries received legal aid, with 3 from Scheduled Castes (SC), 1 woman, 4 children, and 6 individuals in custody. The remaining categories, such as Scheduled Tribes (ST), persons with disabilities, industrial workmen, transgender individuals, victims of trafficking, and others affected by mass disasters or industrial accidents, did not receive any legal aid. Additionally, 3 general beneficiaries, defined as those whose annual income does not exceed the prescribed limit, also received assistance. No beneficiaries received advice, counseling, or other services. The total number of legal aid beneficiaries is 17.<sup>12</sup>

#### PERFORMANCE OF FREE LEGAL AID SERVICES

<sup>12</sup>District Legal Services Authority, Bhilwara, *Legal Aid Beneficiary Report* (2024) (on file with author).  
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Performance of free legal aid services in the study area was evaluated through number of cases disposed or settled through legal aid clinics, lokadalats and permanent lokadalats.

### 1. Legal Aid Clinics

**Table 4: Applications disposed of through Legal Aid Clinics.**

Year	Total Number of applications received	Total number of settled off	Settlement rate
2018	75811	68935	90.93
2019	31769	36088	113.60
2020	10473	11743	112.13
2021	1664	1894	113.82
2022	2228	2177	97.71
2023	3450	3491	101.19
2024	6434	6378	99.13

Source: Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA)

The Table 4 provides information about the number of applications received and disposed of through Legal Aid Clinics over the years. It includes the total number of applications received, the number of applications settled, and the settlement rate, which shows the percentage of applications that were successfully settled.

In 2018, a total of 75,811 applications were received, and 68,935 were settled, resulting in a settlement rate of 90.93%. This is a high settlement rate, indicating effective resolution. In 2019, there was a sharp increase in applications settled (36,088 settled out of 31,769 received), with a settlement rate of 113.60%. This rate exceeds 100%, meaning some of the cases from previous years were also settled in this year, contributing

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to the higher settlement rate. For the year 2020, a similar trend to 2019 is observed, with 11,743 settled out of 10,473 received applications, resulting in a settlement rate of 112.13%.<sup>13</sup> This clearly indicates that the legal aid clinics are very efficient in resolving legal cases, possibly focusing on backlog clearing or rapid case resolutions. In 2021, a significant drop in the number of applications received (1,664) and an increase in applications settled (1,894), which gives a settlement rate of 113.82%. In the year 2022, the number of applications received was slightly higher (2,228) with a settlement rate of 97.71%, showing a decrease in the settlement rate compared to previous years. The number of applications received in year 2023 was 3,450, and 3,491 were settled, giving a settlement rate of 101.19%, indicating the resolution of cases from earlier years as well. In 2024, a slight decrease in the settlement rate (99.13%) was observed with 6,434 applications received and 6,378 settled.

Overall, the Table 4 reflects the effectiveness of the Legal Aid Clinics in resolving cases, with very high settlement rates across all years. This shows that the legal aid clinics are able to handle and resolve a significant proportion of the cases they receive. This is a sign of effective case management and a high level of service.

## 2. Lok Adalats

**Table 5: Cases Disposed off through Mega & National Lok Adalat**

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<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

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Year	Number of cases taken up	Number of cases disposed off	Number of cases disposed (more than 10 year old)	Settlement rate
2018	947802	119608	1442	12.62
2019	1525388	260512	2922	17.08
2020	571220	130430	791	22.83
2021	1100182	286890	2084	26.08
2022	6684410	4571652	4053	68.39
2023	19870331	16586071	2824	83.47
2024	15188298	12303117	4521	81.00

Source: Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA)

Table 5 shows data related to cases taken up, cases disposed of, cases disposed of that were more than 10 years old, and the settlement rate across the years 2018 to 2024. These metrics likely reflect the work of a legal or judicial system through Lok Adalats in resolving cases over time.

The Table 5 provides detailed data on legal cases over seven years (2018-2024). In 2018, 947,802 cases were taken up, and 119,608 were disposed of, with 1,442 cases over 10 years old being resolved, resulting in a settlement rate of 12.62%. In 2019, the number of cases taken up increased to 1,525,388, with 260,512 disposed of, and 2,922 cases older than 10 years settled, yielding a settlement rate of 17.08%. By 2020, the number of cases taken up dropped to 571,220, with 130,430 disposed of, including 791 long-pending cases, leading to a settlement rate of 22.83%. In 2021, cases taken up rose to

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1,100,182, with 286,890 disposed of, and 2,084 cases over 10 years old resolved, resulting in a settlement rate of 26.08%. In 2022, the numbers spiked dramatically, with 6,684,410 cases taken up, 4,571,652 disposed of, including 4,053 long-pending cases, and a settlement rate of 68.39%. By 2023, cases taken up surged to 19,870,331, with 16,586,071 disposed of, and 2,824 cases older than 10 years resolved, leading to a settlement rate of 83.47%. In 2024, 15,188,298 cases were taken up, 12,303,117 were disposed of, and 4,521 cases over 10 years old were resolved, with a settlement rate of 81%. These numbers indicate a significant increase in the number of cases addressed and resolved, with a clear trend toward improved efficiency in handling and settling cases over time.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Permanent Lok Adalat

Table 6 presents data on the number of court sittings, the total number of cases disposed off, and the efficiency of case disposal over several years (2018-2024). Efficiency is calculated by dividing the total number of cases disposed off by the number of sittings. In 2018, there were 3,670 sittings and 4,257 cases disposed of, resulting in an efficiency of 1.16. The efficiency remained constant at 1.16 in 2019 with 4,515 sittings and 5,249 cases disposed of. In 2020, there was a significant drop in sittings (1,544), and only 1,412 cases were disposed of, resulting in a lower efficiency of 0.91.<sup>15</sup> In 2021, the efficiency slightly improved to 1.11 with 2,638 sittings and 2,931 cases disposed of. The efficiency again increased to 1.13

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<sup>14</sup>Ministry of Law & Justice, Gov't of India, *Annual Report 2022–2023*, <https://lawmin.gov.in/> (last visited July 27, 2025).

<sup>15</sup>*Id.*

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in 2022, with 4,158 sittings and 4,707 cases disposed of. The highest efficiency was observed in 2023, where 4,246 sittings led to 5,881 cases disposed of, yielding an efficiency of 1.39. In 2024, despite a higher number of sittings (5,037), the number of cases disposed of (4,700) dropped, leading to a lower efficiency of 0.93. Overall, the data shows fluctuations in efficiency, with the highest efficiency observed in 2023, and a notable decline in efficiency in 2024 compared to previous years.<sup>16</sup>

**Table 6: Statement Showing Cases Disposed through Permanent Lok Adalat**

Year	Number of Sittings	Total No. of cases disposed off	Efficiency
2018	3670	4257	1.16
2019	4515	5249	1.16
2020	1544	1412	0.91
2021	2638	2931	1.11
2022	4158	4707	1.13
2023	4246	5881	1.39
2024	5037	4700	0.93

Source: Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority (RSLSA)

## CONCLUSION

The data presented over the years from 2018 to 2024 reflects significant progress and trends in various legal aid and judicial activities, demonstrating a growing commitment towards providing legal assistance and resolving disputes effectively

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<sup>16</sup>Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority, <https://rlsa.rajasthan.gov.in/> (last visited July 27, 2025).  
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across different sectors. Legal literacy efforts have seen an impressive increase, especially from 2018 to 2022, showing an expanding commitment to educating citizens about their legal rights and responsibilities. Although there was a decline in the number of legal literacy camps in 2023 and 2024, the overall numbers still reflect strong progress compared to the initial years, indicating that legal awareness initiatives have remained a priority. The total number of legal aid beneficiaries has increased over time, with notable growth among women and children, indicating a positive shift towards ensuring legal access for marginalized groups. However, there is a noticeable decline in the number of beneficiaries from Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in recent years, suggesting areas where targeted efforts may be needed to ensure inclusive legal access. No beneficiaries received advice, counseling, or other services. Additionally, the rise in the number of beneficiaries in custody and the continued low numbers for persons with disabilities and industrial workmen show the areas where legal aid may still have gaps that need addressing. Legal aid beneficiaries in Bhilwara include 3 SC, 1 woman, 4 children, and 6 in custody, while other categories received no aid. The efficiency and effectiveness of legal aid clinics are reflected in their consistently high settlement rates, with many years exceeding 100%, which indicates successful case management and the resolution of backlogged cases. Although the number of cases settled slightly decreased in 2022, the clinics continued to resolve cases at a very high rate, suggesting their crucial role in providing legal services to those in needs. The data on Lok Adalats, both Mega/National and Permanent, demonstrates a clear upward trend in the settlement rate, peaking at 83.47% in 2023, For general queries or to submit your research for publication, kindly email us at [ijalr.editorial@gmail.com](mailto:ijalr.editorial@gmail.com)

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with a steady increase in the number of cases taken up and disposed of over the years. The increase in sittings and cases handled shows a positive shift in the judicial system's ability to resolve cases, especially long-pending ones, although challenges remain in maintaining consistent efficiency. Overall, both Lok Adalats have played a crucial role in addressing case backlogs, improving access to justice, and enhancing case resolution rates.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data and analysis presented above, the following recommendations can be made to further improve legal literacy, aid services, and dispute resolution mechanisms:

- **Increase Awareness and Outreach:** Focus on using digital platforms and mobile programs to reach rural areas and marginalized communities.
- **Focus on Marginalized Groups:** Tailor legal aid programs for specific groups like people with disabilities and industrial workers, and train legal providers in gender and disability sensitivity.
- **Strengthen Legal Aid Clinics:** Allocate more resources to improve the infrastructure and staff of legal aid clinics, expand outreach to rural areas, and incentivize pro bono work from lawyers and paralegals.
- **Optimize Lok Adalats:** Address case backlogs, especially older cases, and make the dispute resolution system more accessible to the public.

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- **Improve Data Collection and Monitoring:** Implement a better tracking mechanism and use real-time data management systems to improve decision-making and resource allocation.
  - **Collaboration with NGOs and Educational Institutions:** Partner with NGOs and community groups for legal awareness and collaborate with educational institutions to include legal literacy in curriculums.
  - **Publicize Success Stories:** Highlight successful cases through media campaigns to encourage others to seek legal aid and raise awareness about available services.
  - **Financial and Policy Support:** Ensure continued funding for legal aid programs and advocate for legal reforms to reduce the cost of legal assistance and improve accessibility.
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