



POCKET HANDBOOK
FOR
DLSA SECRETARY

Empowering Access to Justice



MAHARASHTRA STATE
LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
MUMBAI

**MAHARASHTRA STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY,
MUMBAI**

**Under the aegis of
NATIONAL LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY,
NEW DELHI**



MOTTO

Access to Justice for all.

VISION

To promote an inclusive legal system,
in order to ensure meaningful justice to the marginalised
and disadvantaged sector.

MISSION

To legally empower the marginalised and excluded groups
of society by providing effective legal representation,
legal literacy and awareness and bridge the gap between
legally available benefits and the entitled beneficiaries



Hon'ble Shri Justice Ravindra V. Ghuge,
Acting Chief Justice, High Court of Bombay
and Patron-in-Chief, Maharashtra State
Legal Services Authority, Mumbai..

Foreword..

Article 39A of the Constitution of India enshrines a constitutional pledge of equal justice. The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 is a statutory obligation to provide free and competent legal services to the disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the society. Legal Services Institutions have been established under the 1987 Act to provide legal services at National, State, District and Taluka levels. It is the constitutional duty of these institutions to ensure that access to justice reaches out to every member of the society.

The District Legal Services Authority ("DLSA") performs the function of delivering legal services to the disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the society at the district level. The DLSAs perform responsibilities such as establishment of Legal Services Clinics, provision of legal representation, implementation of Legal Aid Schemes and various NALSA schemes as well. DLSAs are also active in organization of Legal Awareness Camps and Lokadalats as also facilitate

ADR. The DLSAs are also responsible for securing humane conditions in jails by monitoring the release of Under Trial Prisoners who are granted bail. By performing their constitutional and statutory responsibilities, the DLSAs enhance the credibility of the justice delivery system at the grassroots level.

This Pocket Handbook will be helpful in understanding the procedures relating to administration of legal services by the DLSAs. This handbook will provide accessible inputs to the DLSAs in fulfilling their constitutional mandate of delivering effective legal services to every individual of the society. The DLSAs should make use of this Handbook to regulate the appropriate procedures for handling everyday operations and implementing various NALSA schemes and administering legal services.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority for bringing out this Pocket Handbook and wish them a fulfilling and satisfying experience in all endeavours.



(Justice Ravindra V. Ghuge)



M. Salman Azmi

Member Secretary,
Maharashtra State Legal Services
Authority, Mumbai

Acknowledgment / Message

It is with great pride that we unveil the Pocket Handbook for the Secretaries of DLSA in the State of Maharashtra. This activity is, only possible due to the motivation and support of the Hon'ble the Acting Chief Justice, Bombay High Court and Patron- in –Chief, MSLSA Hon'ble Shri Justice Shri Ravindra V. Ghuge. We acknowledge the parental support and relentless guidance of His Lordship. I acknowledge the consistent efforts of the MSLSA team in compiling this Handbook. I hope and believe that this Handbook will help and guide all of us to achieve the aim and goal set by the Constitution and the NALSA as well. Let us jointly strive to warrant that no voice remains unheard and no right remains unenforced because justice must not only be delivered, but also be understood, claimed and lived.

ضمیمہ ہے۔

(M. Salman. Azmi)

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Introduction

Overview of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987

The Constitution of India envisions a justice system that is fair, accessible and equal for every citizen. The Preamble to the Constitution secures to all citizens Justice, social, economic and political, along with Equality of status and opportunity. To achieve these constitutional ideals, the State has a duty to ensure that no individual is deprived of justice due to poverty, illiteracy or any other disadvantage.

In furtherance of this objective, Article 39A, one of the Directive Principles of State Policy, mandates the State to promote justice on the basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid through suitable legislation, schemes or other means, ensuring that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

To give effect to this constitutional mandate, Parliament enacted the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Act came into force to establish a nationwide institutional framework for providing free and competent legal services to eligible persons and to organize Lok Adalats for the speedy, inexpensive and amicable settlement of disputes.

The Act establishes Legal Services Authorities at different levels to ensure that legal assistance reaches every section of society. These authorities work together to provide legal aid, legal awareness, mediation, victim support and other access-to-justice initiatives throughout the country.

Constitution of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)

Chapter III of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 provides for the constitution of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).

NALSA is the apex statutory body responsible for laying down policies, principles and guidelines for making legal services available throughout the country. It also frames schemes for effective and uniform implementation of legal aid programmes and co-ordinates the functioning of the State Legal Services Authorities.

The Patron-in-Chief of NALSA is the Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India, while the Executive Chairman is a serving Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India. NALSA functions through its Member Secretary and officers appointed under the Act.

The Legal Services Authorities established under the Act function in the following hierarchy:



Together, these institutions strive to ensure that justice is accessible, affordable and effective for every citizen, particularly the weaker and vulnerable sections of society.

Legal Services Authorities – Structure & Functions

District Legal Services Authority (Section 9)

Every State Government constitutes a District **Legal Services Authority (DLSA)** for each district in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court. The DLSA is headed by the **Principal District & Sessions Judge**, who serves as its Chairman. The DLSA is responsible for implementing legal aid programmes and performing the functions assigned under the Act.

Functions of the District Legal Services Authority (Section 10)

The DLSA performs the functions delegated by the State Legal Services Authority, including:

- Providing free legal aid and legal advice to eligible persons.
- Organising Lok Adalats and legal awareness programmes.
- Implementing legal aid schemes and welfare initiatives.
- Coordinating with government departments, institutions and voluntary organisations to promote access to justice.
- Taking legal services to rural and underserved communities.

Coordination by the District Authority (Section 11)

The DLSA works in coordination with government agencies, local authorities, voluntary organisations and other institutions. It functions under the guidance and directions of the **State Legal Services Authority (SLSA)** to ensure effective implementation of legal aid programmes.

Taluka Legal Services Committee (Section 11A)

The **State Legal Services Authority** constitutes a **Taluka Legal Services Committee (TLSC)** for each taluka or a group of talukas. The Committee is headed by the **Senior Civil Judge** or another Judicial Officer designated by the State Authority as its Chairman. It serves as the grassroot institution for delivering legal services at the taluka level.

Functions of the Taluka Legal Services Committee (Section 11B)

The TLSC performs functions assigned by the State Authority, including:

- Providing free legal services to eligible persons.
- Organising legal literacy and legal awareness programmes.
- Conducting Lok Adalats and pre-litigation conciliation.
- Assisting people in accessing legal aid at the local level.
- Acting as the first point of contact for legal services in rural and remote areas.

Persons Entitled to Free Legal Services (Section 12)

The following categories of persons are entitled to free legal services under the Act:

- Members of Scheduled Castes (SC) or Scheduled Tribes (ST)
- Victims of trafficking in human beings or beggar
- Women and children
- Persons with disabilities or mental illness
- Victims of mass disasters, ethnic violence, caste atrocities, floods, droughts, earthquakes or industrial disasters
- Industrial workmen
- Persons in custody, including those in protective homes, juvenile homes or prisons
- Persons whose annual income is below the limit prescribed by the Central or State Government, as applicable. States have identified different income amounts for assigning eligibility. The State of Maharashtra has fixed annual income of Rs. 3,00,000/-.

Important Legal Framework & Reference Material

The Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA), District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) and Taluka Legal Services Committees (TLSCs) function in accordance with the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, the Rules, Regulations, Schemes, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and landmark judgments of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. These instruments provide the legal and operational framework for delivering free and competent legal services across the State.

A. Important Supreme Court Directives

1. Women and Children

- **Nipun Saxena v. Union of India** – W.P. (C) No. 565/2012
Protection of identity and privacy of victims of sexual offences.
- **Environment and Consumer Protection Foundation v. Union of India (Vrindavan Widows Case)** – W.P. (C) No. 659/2007
Welfare, rehabilitation and protection of widows.
- **Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. Union of India & Ors.** – W.P. (C) Nos. 75/2012 & 427/2022
Protection of missing and trafficked children.

Directed circulation of the **Delhi State Legal Services Authority Scheme for Empanelment**

of Para Legal Volunteers in Police Stations for Missing Children as a model for all States and Union Territories.

- **Sampoorna Behura v. Union of India** – W.P. (C) No. 473/2005

Effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act and child protection mechanisms.

2. Victims of Human Trafficking & Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Budhadev Karmaskar v. State of West Bengal & Ors.

Protection, rehabilitation and legal assistance to victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

3. Victims of Mass Disaster, Ethnic Violence & Caste Atrocities

Tehseen S. Poonawalla v. Union of India

Protection of victims of mob violence and coordinated rehabilitation measures.

4. Persons in Custody

- **In Re: Inhuman Conditions in 1382 Prisons**
Prison reforms and strengthening legal aid in prisons.
- **Imtiyaz Ramzan Khan v. State of Maharashtra**

Speedy disposal of criminal cases and protection of undertrial prisoners.

- **Shankar Mahto v. State of Bihar**
Legal assistance to prisoners and safeguarding constitutional rights.
- **In Re: Policy Strategy for Grant of Bail**
Streamlining bail procedures and reducing unnecessary incarceration.

5. Victims of Acid Attack

- **Laxmi v. Union of India**
Regulation of acid sale, victim compensation and rehabilitation.
- **Parivartan Kendra v. Union of India**
Rehabilitation, education and dignity of acid attack survivors.

6. Vulnerable Witnesses

In Re: Children in Street Situations

Protection, rehabilitation and access to justice for street children and vulnerable witnesses.

B. NALSA Rules & Regulations

Regulations

- Supreme Court Legal Services Committee Regulations, 1996
- NALSA (Lok Adalat) Regulations, 2009

- NALSA (Free and Competent Legal Services) Regulations, 2010
- NALSA (Legal Services Clinics) Regulations, 2011

Rules

- NALSA Rules, 1995
- Supreme Court Legal Services Committee Rules, 2000
- Permanent Lok Adalat (Other Terms and Conditions of Appointment of Chairman and Other Persons) Rules, 2003

C. NALSA Guidelines

- Front Office Guidelines, 2019
- Guidelines for Functioning of Mentoring and Monitoring Committees at District Level, 2018

D. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

- SOP on Access to Legal Aid Services to Prisoners and Functioning of Prison Legal Aid Clinics, 2022
- SOP for Under Trial Review Committees (UTRC), 2018
- SOP for Redressal of Complaints/Public Grievances
- SOP for NALSA Legal Assistance Centre
- SOP on Premature Release, Parole and Furlough of Prisoners, 2022

National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) Schemes

- Legal Services to Disaster Victims through Legal Services Authorities Scheme, 2010
- Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Scheme, 2015
- Legal Services to Workers in the Unorganised Sector Scheme, 2015
- Child-Friendly Legal Services for Children Scheme, 2015 *(updated as LSUC, 2024)*
- Legal Services to the Mentally Ill and Mentally Disabled Persons Scheme, 2015 *(updated as LSUM, 2024)*
- Effective Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Schemes, 2015
- Protection and Enforcement of Tribal Rights Scheme, 2015
- Legal Services to Victims of Drug Abuse and Eradication of Drug Menace (DAWN) Scheme, 2015 *(updated as DAWN, 2025)*
- Legal Services to Senior Citizens Scheme, 2016
- Legal Services to Victims of Acid Attacks Scheme, 2016
- NALSA Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/ Survivors of Sexual Assault and Other Crimes, 2018
- Early Access to Justice at Pre-Arrest, Arrest and Remand Stage Scheme, 2019
- Model Scheme for Legal Aid Counsel in all Courts of Magistrates, 1998

- Legal Aid Defence Counsel (LADC) Scheme (*Modified 2022*)
- Scheme for Para Legal Volunteers (Revised)
- NALSA JAGRITI Scheme, 2025
- NALSA SAMVAD Scheme, 2025
- Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana Scheme, 2025
- NALSA Scheme on Access to Justice for Victims of Human-Wildlife Conflict, 2025

Mediation

Mediation is an effective Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism that enables parties to resolve disputes amicably with the assistance of a neutral mediator. In Maharashtra, **District Mediation Centres and Taluka Mediation Centres function** under the supervision of the District Judiciary and the Legal Services Authorities.

Mediation in the State is governed by:

- **The Civil Procedure Code (Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation) Rules, 2006**
- **The Bombay High Court Mediation Scheme (for District and Taluka Courts and Other Courts)**

These Mediation Centres facilitate voluntary, confidential and cost-effective settlement of civil, matrimonial, commercial, family and other disputes, thereby reducing litigation and promoting speedy access to justice.

Schemes Implemented by MSLSA under the Directions of NALSA

The **Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA)** implements various schemes formulated by the **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)** to ensure access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized sections of society. These schemes provide legal assistance, awareness, counselling, rehabilitation support and facilitate access to government welfare benefits.

The major schemes implemented by MSLSA are:

1. **NALSA Supporting Potential and Resilience of the Unseen, Held-back and Affected (SPRUHA) Scheme, 2025**
2. **NALSA Scheme on Access to Justice for Victims of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC), 2025**
3. **Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana, 2025**
4. **NALSA (JAGRITI) Scheme, 2025**
5. **NALSA (DAWN) Scheme, 2025**
6. **NALSA SAMVAD Scheme, 2025**
7. **NALSA (Child-Friendly Legal Services for Children) Scheme, 2024**
8. **NALSA (Legal Services to Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities) Scheme, 2024**
9. **NALSA (Legal Services to Senior Citizens) Scheme, 2016**

10. **NALSA (Legal Services to Victims of Acid Attacks) Scheme, 2016**
11. **NALSA (Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation) Scheme, 2015**
12. **NALSA (Legal Services to the Workers in the Unorganized Sector) Scheme, 2015**
13. **NALSA (Effective Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Schemes) Scheme, 2015**
14. **Scheme for Legal Services to Disaster Victims through Legal Services Authorities**
15. **Scheme for Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs)**
16. Legal Aid Defense Counsel System (LADCS), 2022
17. Early Access to Justice at Pre-Arrest, Arrest and Remand Stage
18. Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault & Other Crimes, 2018
19. NALSA (Protection and Enforcement of Tribal Rights) Scheme, 2015

Note: The following pages provide a brief overview of each scheme, including its objectives, beneficiaries, key services and the role of the Legal Services Authorities in its implementation.

NALSA (SPRUHA) Scheme, 2025

Supporting Potential and Resilience of the Unseen, Held-back and Affected

Objective

- To provide legal aid, counselling, rehabilitation support and access to welfare schemes for vulnerable persons who are affected by incarceration, crime, social stigma, or other adverse circumstances, thereby promoting their dignity, resilience and social inclusion.

Beneficiaries

- Families of prisoners and undertrial prisoners
- Families of victims of crime
- Women, children, senior citizens and dependents affected by incarceration
- Other vulnerable and marginalized persons requiring legal and social support

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal advice
- Counselling and psychosocial support
- Assistance in accessing government welfare schemes
- Rehabilitation and social reintegration
- Referral to appropriate government departments and NGOs

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), prison authorities, police, NGOs and community outreach.
- Provision of legal assistance and counselling through panel advocates and counsellors.
- Coordination with Government Departments and welfare agencies for rehabilitation and access to social security benefits.
- Regular monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access to justice for vulnerable families and individuals.
- Enhanced rehabilitation and social reintegration of affected persons.
- Better access to government welfare schemes and social support services.
- Increased awareness of legal rights and available assistance.

Key Challenges

- Identifying beneficiaries who remain unnoticed due to social stigma or lack of awareness.
- Coordination among multiple departments and stakeholder agencies.
- Limited awareness about the scheme in remote and marginalized communities.
- Ensuring sustained rehabilitation and long-term follow-up of beneficiaries.

NALSA Scheme on Access to Justice for Victims of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC), 2025

Objective

To provide legal assistance, facilitate access to compensation and rehabilitation and ensure that victims of human-wildlife conflict receive timely justice and support through the Legal Services Authorities.

Beneficiaries

- Persons injured in human-wildlife conflict
- Families of persons who lose their lives due to wildlife attacks
- Farmers and rural communities affected by crop or property damage
- Forest-dependent and tribal communities residing in wildlife-prone areas
- Other persons affected by human-wildlife conflict

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Assistance in obtaining compensation and rehabilitation benefits
- Legal awareness on rights, procedures and government schemes

- Facilitation of documentation and filing of claims
- Coordination with Forest Department and other Government agencies

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of victims through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Forest Department, Police and local authorities.
- Establishment of coordination with the Forest Department, Revenue Department and District Administration for prompt assistance.
- Conduct of legal awareness programmes in wildlife-affected areas.
- Monitoring of compensation claims and follow-up until relief is provided.
- Periodic review by Legal Services Authorities to ensure effective implementation.

Expected Outcomes

- Timely legal assistance and access to compensation for victims.
- Increased awareness of legal rights and available government support.
- Improved coordination among Legal Services Authorities and Government Departments.
- Enhanced access to justice and rehabilitation for affected communities.

- Reduction in procedural delays in processing compensation claims.

Key Challenges

- Lack of awareness among victims regarding their legal rights and entitlements.
- Delays in assessment and disbursement of compensation.
- Difficulties in reaching remote and forest areas.
- Coordination among multiple departments and agencies.
- Documentation and verification issues in compensation claims.

Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana, 2025

Objective

To provide timely legal assistance and facilitate access to welfare measures for serving and retired Armed Forces personnel, ex-servicemen, veterans and their families, particularly the families of martyrs, ensuring that they receive the benefits and entitlements available under law.

Beneficiaries

- Serving Armed Forces personnel
- Ex-servicemen and veterans
- Widows, dependents and family members of martyrs
- Disabled defence personnel
- Families requiring legal assistance relating to service, pension, compensation, property, or welfare matters

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Legal advice and counselling
- Assistance in obtaining pension, ex-gratia, compensation and other service benefits
- Support in matters relating to property, family disputes, succession and documentation
- Facilitation of access to Central and State Government welfare schemes

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Sainik Welfare Departments, Zilla Sainik Welfare Offices, Armed Forces establishments, Ex-Servicemen Associations, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) and NGOs.
- Coordination with the Department of Sainik Welfare, Defence Authorities, Revenue Authorities and other Government Departments.
- Conducting legal awareness and outreach programmes for defence personnel and their families.
- Providing legal aid through panel advocates and ensuring regular monitoring of beneficiaries.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced access to justice for defence personnel and their families.
- Timely resolution of legal issues relating to pension, compensation and service benefits.
- Increased awareness of legal rights and government welfare schemes.
- Improved coordination among Legal Services Authorities, Defence Authorities and Government Departments.
- Better rehabilitation and social security for martyrs families and veterans.

Key Challenges

- Lack of awareness regarding legal entitlements and available welfare schemes.
- Procedural delays in processing pension, compensation and service-related claims.
- Coordination among multiple departments and authorities.
- Reaching beneficiaries residing in remote and rural areas.
- Addressing complex service and documentation-related disputes efficiently.

NALSA (JAGRITI) Scheme, 2025

Justice Awareness for Grassroots Information and Transparency Initiative

Objective

To promote legal awareness and empower citizens with knowledge of their legal rights, duties and available legal remedies, ensuring that justice reaches every section of society, especially those in rural, remote and marginalized communities.

Beneficiaries

- Rural and urban communities
- Women and children
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities
- Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other marginalized groups
- Students, youth, workers and the general public

Key Services

- Legal awareness and legal literacy programmes
- Information on free legal aid and welfare schemes
- Awareness on constitutional and legal rights
- Community outreach through Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs)
- Distribution of legal awareness materials and use of digital platforms

Implementation Mechanism

- Legal awareness camps organized by MSLSA, DLSAs and TLSCs.
- Community outreach through Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Panel Advocates, Educational Institutions, NGOs and Government Departments.
- Use of print, electronic, social media and digital platforms for dissemination of legal information.
- Special awareness drives in villages, schools, colleges, prisons, workplaces and vulnerable communities.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of awareness activities by Legal Services Authorities.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased legal awareness among citizens.
- Better access to free legal aid and welfare schemes.
- Empowered communities capable of asserting their legal rights.
- Enhanced public trust in the legal services delivery system.
- Reduction in legal illiteracy and improved access to justice.

Key Challenges

- Low levels of legal literacy in rural and remote areas.
- Language, cultural and digital barriers in dissemination of information.
- Reaching vulnerable and socially excluded communities.
- Ensuring continuous engagement beyond one-time awareness programmes.
- Measuring the long-term impact of legal awareness initiatives.

NALSA (DAWN) Scheme, 2025

Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation

Objective

To prevent drug abuse through awareness, facilitate access to legal aid and rehabilitation services and support individuals affected by substance abuse in leading a healthy, drug-free life.

Beneficiaries

- Persons affected by drug and substance abuse
- Children and youth vulnerable to addiction
- Families of persons suffering from substance dependence
- Educational institutions and communities in high-risk areas
- Individuals seeking rehabilitation and reintegration

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal counselling
- Awareness programmes on prevention of drug abuse
- Referral to de-addiction, rehabilitation and counselling centres
- Assistance in accessing government welfare and rehabilitation schemes

- Community outreach through schools, colleges, prisons and local communities

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), educational institutions, police, healthcare institutions, NGOs and de-addiction centres.
- Conducting legal awareness campaigns, workshops and outreach programmes in schools, colleges, prisons and communities.
- Coordination with Health Departments, Social Justice Departments, law enforcement agencies, rehabilitation centres and NGOs.
- Referral of affected persons for counselling, treatment, rehabilitation and legal assistance.
- Continuous monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure effective rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness regarding the harmful effects of drug abuse.
- Improved access to legal aid, counselling and rehabilitation services.
- Reduction in substance abuse through preventive interventions.
- Better coordination among Legal Services Authorities, Government Departments and rehabilitation agencies.

- Successful rehabilitation and reintegration of affected individuals into society.

Key Challenges

- Social stigma associated with substance abuse.
- Lack of awareness about rehabilitation and legal support services.
- Limited availability of de-addiction and rehabilitation facilities in some areas.
- Relapse and the need for sustained follow-up and counselling.
- Effective coordination among multiple stakeholders for comprehensive rehabilitation.

NALSA SAMVAD Scheme, 2025

Strengthening Access through Mediation, Vulnerable Groups, Assistance and Dispute Resolution

Objective

To promote dialogue, mediation and collaborative dispute resolution by providing legal assistance, counselling and support services, with special focus on vulnerable sections of society, thereby ensuring timely and amicable resolution of disputes.

Beneficiaries

- Women and children
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities
- Victims of domestic violence and family disputes
- Marginalized and vulnerable communities
- Individuals seeking pre-litigation dispute resolution

Key Services

- Pre-litigation counselling and mediation
- Free legal aid and legal advice
- Referral to appropriate support and welfare services
- Legal awareness on rights and dispute resolution mechanisms
- Facilitation of amicable settlement of disputes

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification and referral of suitable cases through DLSAs, TLSCs, Front Offices, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), police stations, Family Courts, educational institutions, NGOs and Government Departments.
- Counselling and mediation conducted by trained mediators, panel advocates and counsellors.
- Coordination with Government Departments, welfare agencies and community organizations for comprehensive support.
- Awareness programmes promoting mediation and peaceful dispute resolution.
- Periodic monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure effective implementation.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased use of mediation and pre-litigation settlement mechanisms.
- Reduction in avoidable litigation and court burden.
- Timely, cost-effective and amicable resolution of disputes.
- Improved access to legal aid and counselling services.
- Strengthened community participation in peaceful dispute resolution.

Key Challenges

- Limited public awareness and acceptance of mediation as an effective dispute resolution mechanism.

- Social and cultural barriers to dialogue in sensitive disputes.
- Need for trained mediators and counsellors in all districts.
- Coordination among multiple stakeholders for holistic support.
- Ensuring compliance with mediated settlements and sustained follow-up.

NALSA (Child-Friendly Legal Services for Children) Scheme, 2024

Objective

To ensure that every child has access to child-friendly, accessible and effective legal services, while safeguarding the best interests of the child through legal aid, counselling, protection, rehabilitation and access to welfare services.

Beneficiaries

- Children in need of care and protection
- Children in conflict with law
- Child victims and child witnesses
- Missing, abandoned, orphaned, or trafficked children
- Children residing in Child Care Institutions (CCIs), Observation Homes, Special Homes and Places of Safety
- Any child requiring legal assistance or protection

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Child-friendly legal counselling and guidance
- Assistance before the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) and courts
- Support for rehabilitation, restoration, education and welfare benefits
- Awareness programmes on child rights and child protection laws

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification and referral of children through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), Child Care Institutions (CCIs), schools, police, NGOs and District Child Protection Units.
- Appointment of trained child-sensitive panel advocates and legal aid counsel.
- Coordination with the Department of Women and Child Development, Police, Education Department, Health Department and other stakeholders.
- Regular visits to Child Care Institutions and monitoring of children's legal needs.
- Continuous follow-up to ensure rehabilitation, restoration and access to welfare services.

Expected Outcomes

- Child-friendly access to justice for every child.
- Timely legal assistance and protection of children's rights.
- Improved rehabilitation, restoration and social reintegration of children.
- Greater awareness of child rights and legal entitlements.
- Enhanced coordination among institutions working for child protection.

Key Challenges

- Identifying vulnerable children at an early stage.
- Ensuring child-friendly procedures across all institutions.
- Lack of awareness among children and caregivers regarding legal rights.
- Coordination among multiple child protection agencies.
- Ensuring long-term rehabilitation and follow-up for affected children.

NALSA (Legal Services to Persons with Mental Illness and Persons with Intellectual Disabilities) Scheme, 2024

Objective

To ensure access to justice and protect the legal rights of persons with mental illness and persons with intellectual disabilities by providing free legal aid, legal representation, counselling and assistance in accessing healthcare, rehabilitation and social welfare services.

Beneficiaries

- Persons with mental illness
- Persons with intellectual disabilities
- Caregivers, guardians and family members requiring legal assistance
- Residents of mental health establishments, rehabilitation centres and care institutions
- Any eligible person requiring legal support under the scheme

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Legal counselling and rights awareness
- Assistance in matters relating to healthcare, guardianship, property, employment, education and welfare benefits

- Facilitation of access to rehabilitation and social security schemes
- Coordination with mental health professionals and welfare institutions

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Mental Health Review Boards, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, NGOs and Government Departments.
- Appointment of trained legal aid counsel and sensitized Para Legal Volunteers.
- Coordination with the Health Department, Social Justice Department, Department of Women and Child Development and other stakeholders.
- Legal awareness programmes and outreach activities in mental health institutions and communities.
- Periodic monitoring and follow-up to ensure effective implementation and access to services.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access to justice for persons with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.
- Protection of legal, healthcare and human rights.
- Enhanced access to rehabilitation, treatment and welfare schemes.
- Increased awareness among families, caregivers and institutions regarding legal rights and entitlements.

- Strengthened coordination among Legal Services Authorities and mental health service providers.

Key Challenges

- Social stigma and discrimination associated with mental illness and intellectual disabilities.
- Lack of awareness regarding legal rights and available support services.
- Limited availability of specialized legal and mental health professionals in certain areas.
- Difficulties in identifying and reaching vulnerable individuals.
- Ensuring long-term rehabilitation, community integration and continuous legal support.

NALSA (Legal Services to Senior Citizens) Scheme, 2016

Objective

To safeguard the rights and dignity of senior citizens by ensuring access to free legal aid, legal representation, welfare benefits and effective redressal of issues relating to maintenance, healthcare, property, abuse, neglect and social security.

Beneficiaries

- Senior citizens (aged 60 years and above)
- Destitute and abandoned senior citizens
- Elderly persons facing abuse, neglect, or exploitation
- Senior citizens requiring legal assistance in property, maintenance, or welfare matters
- Residents of old age homes and care institutions

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Legal advice and counselling
- Assistance in maintenance, property, succession and inheritance disputes
- Facilitation of access to government welfare schemes and social security benefits
- Legal awareness programmes on the rights of senior citizens

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Senior Citizen Associations, old age homes, NGOs, police and local authorities.
- Coordination with the Department of Social Justice, Maintenance Tribunals, Police, Health Department and other Government agencies.
- Organization of legal awareness camps, legal aid clinics and outreach programmes for senior citizens.
- Appointment of panel advocates and counsellors to provide legal assistance and support.
- Regular monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure timely resolution of grievances.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access to justice and legal protection for senior citizens.
- Timely resolution of disputes relating to maintenance, property and welfare.
- Increased awareness of the legal rights and entitlements of senior citizens.
- Better access to government welfare schemes and social security benefits.
- Enhanced dignity, security and well-being of elderly persons.

Key Challenges

- Lack of awareness among senior citizens regarding their legal rights and available remedies.
- Elder abuse, neglect and financial exploitation often remaining unreported.
- Delays in resolving maintenance and property disputes.
- Limited mobility and accessibility for elderly persons in accessing legal services.
- Ensuring effective coordination among stakeholders for comprehensive support.

NALSA (Legal Services to Victims of Acid Attacks) Scheme, 2016

Objective

To provide comprehensive legal assistance, facilitate access to compensation, medical treatment, rehabilitation and social reintegration for victims of acid attacks, while ensuring the protection of their legal and human rights.

Beneficiaries

- Survivors of acid attacks
- Families and dependents of acid attack victims
- Victims requiring medical, legal, psychological, or rehabilitation support

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Assistance in obtaining compensation and medical treatment
- Legal support in criminal proceedings and related matters
- Counselling, psychological support and rehabilitation assistance
- Facilitation of access to government welfare schemes and vocational training

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification and referral of victims through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), hospitals, police, One Stop Centres, NGOs and Government Departments.
- Appointment of trained legal aid counsel to assist victims at every stage of legal proceedings.
- Coordination with Health Departments, Social Welfare Departments, District Administration and rehabilitation agencies for medical care, compensation and rehabilitation.
- Conducting legal awareness programmes regarding the rights and entitlements of acid attack survivors.
- Continuous monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure timely delivery of legal and rehabilitation services.

Expected Outcomes

- Timely access to justice, compensation and medical treatment for acid attack survivors.
- Improved rehabilitation, psychological recovery and social reintegration.
- Enhanced awareness regarding the legal rights and entitlements of victims.
- Effective coordination among Legal Services Authorities, healthcare institutions and Government agencies.
- Restoration of dignity and empowerment of acid attack survivors.

Key Challenges

- Delays in compensation, medical treatment and rehabilitation.
- Social stigma and discrimination faced by survivors.
- Long-term physical, psychological and financial challenges.
- Lack of awareness regarding legal rights and available support services.
- Ensuring sustained rehabilitation and livelihood opportunities for survivors.

NALSA (Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation) Scheme, 2015

Objective

To provide comprehensive legal aid, protection, rescue, rehabilitation and access to justice for victims of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, ensuring their dignity, safety and reintegration into society.

Beneficiaries

- Victims of human trafficking
- Victims of commercial sexual exploitation
- Women and children rescued from trafficking or exploitation
- Survivors requiring rehabilitation and legal assistance
- Families and dependents of victims, wherever necessary

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Assistance during rescue, investigation and trial
- Counselling, rehabilitation and psychosocial support
- Facilitation of compensation and access to welfare schemes
- Vocational training, education and livelihood support through convergence with Government Departments and NGOs

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification and referral of victims through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Anti-Human Trafficking Units (AHTUs), Police, Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), NGOs, Shelter Homes and other stakeholders.
- Appointment of panel advocates to provide legal assistance at every stage of the proceedings.
- Coordination with Women and Child Development Department, Social Justice Department, Police, Labour Department, Health Department and rehabilitation agencies.
- Ensuring timely legal aid, compensation, rehabilitation and access to welfare benefits.
- Regular monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to prevent re-trafficking and facilitate successful reintegration.

Expected Outcomes

- Timely access to justice and legal protection for victims.
- Effective rescue, rehabilitation and social reintegration of survivors.
- Increased access to compensation, education, livelihood opportunities and welfare schemes.
- Prevention of re-trafficking through sustained legal and institutional support.
- Greater awareness regarding the rights of victims and available legal remedies.

Key Challenges

- Social stigma and fear of retaliation from traffickers.
- Difficulty in identifying and rescuing victims.
- Delays in investigation, prosecution and rehabilitation.
- Risk of re-trafficking due to economic vulnerability and inadequate support.
- Need for effective coordination among multiple Government Departments, law enforcement agencies, NGOs and rehabilitation institutions.

NALSA (Legal Services to the Workers in the Unorganized Sector) Scheme, 2015

Objective

To ensure access to justice and protect the legal and labour rights of workers in the unorganized sector by providing free legal aid, legal awareness and facilitating access to welfare schemes and social security benefits.

Beneficiaries

- Workers engaged in the unorganized sector
- Domestic workers
- Construction workers
- Agricultural labourers
- Street vendors, gig and platform workers and other informal sector workers
- Migrant and contract workers

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Legal advice on labour rights, wages, employment and social security
- Assistance in accessing welfare schemes and statutory benefits
- Legal awareness programmes on labour laws and workers' rights

- Facilitation of dispute resolution through mediation and Lok Adalats, wherever applicable

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Labour Departments, trade unions, employers, NGOs and local bodies.
- Conducting legal awareness and outreach programmes at workplaces, industrial areas, labour camps and rural communities.
- Coordination with the Labour Department, Social Welfare Department, Building and Other Construction Workers' Welfare Boards and other Government agencies.
- Providing legal assistance through panel advocates and facilitating access to welfare benefits and social security schemes.
- Regular monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure effective implementation.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access to justice for workers in the unorganized sector.
- Increased awareness of labour rights and legal entitlements.
- Enhanced access to social security, welfare schemes and statutory benefits.
- Timely resolution of labour-related disputes through legal aid and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

- Strengthened protection of the rights and dignity of unorganized sector workers.

Key Challenges

- Low awareness among workers regarding their legal rights and welfare schemes.
- Absence of formal employment records and documentation.
- Exploitation due to insecure employment and poor working conditions.
- Difficulty in reaching migrant and seasonal workers.
- Ensuring effective coordination among Government Departments, employers, welfare boards and Legal Services Authorities.

NALSA (Effective Implementation of Poverty Alleviation Schemes) Scheme, 2015

Objective

To facilitate access to justice by ensuring that eligible persons benefit from various poverty alleviation and social welfare schemes of the Central and State Governments through legal awareness, legal aid and institutional support.

Beneficiaries

- Persons living below the poverty line (BPL)
- Economically weaker sections (EWS)
- Rural and urban poor
- Women, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities belonging to poor households
- Other vulnerable and marginalized persons eligible for government welfare schemes

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal advice
- Legal awareness on poverty alleviation and social welfare schemes
- Assistance in obtaining identity documents, certificates and entitlements
- Facilitation of access to government welfare benefits and grievance redressal mechanisms

- Coordination with Government Departments for effective implementation of welfare schemes

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Gram Panchayats, Urban Local Bodies, NGOs and Government Departments.
- Organizing legal awareness camps and outreach programmes in rural, tribal and urban slum areas.
- Assisting beneficiaries in applying for welfare schemes and resolving issues relating to denial of benefits.
- Coordinating with departments such as Rural Development, Social Justice, Women and Child Development, Labour, Food and Civil Supplies and Revenue.
- Periodic monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure effective delivery of benefits.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased awareness and utilization of poverty alleviation and social welfare schemes.
- Improved access to legal aid and government entitlements for vulnerable communities.
- Reduction in exclusion from welfare schemes due to lack of awareness or procedural barriers.
- Enhanced coordination between Legal Services Authorities and Government Departments.
- Strengthened socio-economic empowerment of disadvantaged sections of society.

Key Challenges

- Lack of awareness regarding eligibility and available welfare schemes.
- Difficulties in obtaining necessary documents and completing application procedures.
- Administrative delays and procedural bottlenecks in sanctioning benefits.
- Limited outreach in remote, tribal and underserved areas.
- Ensuring effective coordination among multiple Government Departments and implementing agencies.

Scheme for Legal Services to Disaster Victims through Legal Services Authorities

Objective

To provide timely legal aid, assistance and support to victims of natural and man-made disasters, ensuring access to relief, rehabilitation, compensation and other legal entitlements while coordinating with Government agencies for effective disaster response and recovery.

Beneficiaries

- Victims of natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, droughts, cyclones and landslides
- Victims of man-made disasters, including industrial accidents, fires, ethnic violence and caste atrocities
- Families of deceased and injured victims
- Women, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities affected by disasters
- Persons displaced or rendered homeless due to disasters

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Assistance in obtaining compensation, relief and rehabilitation benefits
- Legal awareness programmes in relief camps

- Assistance in reconstruction of lost documents and obtaining government entitlements
- Counselling and facilitation of healthcare, education, insurance claims and livelihood restoration

Implementation Mechanism

- Constitution of **Core Groups** by DLSAs comprising judicial officers, panel advocates, medical professionals and accredited NGOs for immediate response.
- Coordination with the State and District Disaster Management Authorities, Government Departments, local administration and voluntary organizations.
- Organization of Legal Aid Clinics in disaster-affected areas and relief camps.
- Monitoring the distribution of relief materials, temporary shelters, healthcare, sanitation, rehabilitation and restoration of essential services.
- Regular follow-up and reporting by DLSAs to the State Legal Services Authority to ensure effective implementation.

Expected Outcomes

- Timely legal assistance and protection of the rights of disaster victims.
- Improved access to relief, compensation, rehabilitation and welfare benefits.
- Faster restoration of essential documents, housing, livelihoods and social security.

- Better coordination among Legal Services Authorities, Disaster Management Authorities and Government Departments.
- Strengthened disaster resilience and rehabilitation of affected communities.

Key Challenges

- Immediate identification and outreach to victims in disaster-hit areas.
- Disruption of communication, transport and essential services during disasters.
- Delays in disbursement of relief, compensation and rehabilitation assistance.
- Loss of identity and property documents by victims.
- Coordinating multiple stakeholders while ensuring long-term rehabilitation and psychosocial support.

Scheme for Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs)

Objective

To strengthen access to justice by creating a network of trained Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs) who act as a bridge between the community and Legal Services Institutions, spreading legal awareness, facilitating access to free legal aid and assisting vulnerable persons in securing their legal rights and entitlements.

Beneficiaries

- Women and children
- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities
- Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other marginalized communities
- Workers in the unorganized sector
- Victims of crime, trafficking, domestic violence and disasters
- Prisoners, undertrial prisoners and other persons requiring legal assistance
- General public seeking legal guidance

Key Services

- Legal awareness and legal literacy programmes

- Guidance on free legal aid and government welfare schemes
- Assistance in accessing DLSAs, TLSCs, Lok Adalats, Mediation Centres and Legal Aid Clinics
- Identification and referral of eligible beneficiaries for legal aid
- Assistance to vulnerable groups in obtaining legal remedies and government entitlements
- Support in organizing legal awareness camps, Front Offices, Legal Aid Clinics and ADR activities

Implementation Mechanism

- Selection and training of PLVs by DLSAs and TLSCs through structured orientation, induction and refresher programmes.
- Deployment of PLVs in villages, urban communities, courts, police stations, prisons, hospitals, Child Care Institutions, Front Offices and Legal Aid Clinics.
- Guidance and supervision by DLSAs, TLSCs and designated mentors.
- Coordination with Government Departments, educational institutions, NGOs, local bodies and community organizations.
- Regular monitoring through monthly reports, periodic review meetings and continuous capacity building.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased legal awareness and legal literacy at the grassroots level.

- Improved access to free legal aid and welfare schemes for vulnerable communities.
- Early identification and resolution of legal problems through counselling, mediation and referral.
- Enhanced outreach of Legal Services Authorities to remote and underserved areas.
- Greater public participation in promoting access to justice and legal empowerment.

Key Challenges

- Ensuring continuous training and skill upgradation of PLVs.
- Maintaining motivation and active participation of volunteers.
- Reaching remote and geographically inaccessible areas.
- Increasing public awareness about the role and services of PLVs.
- Strengthening coordination between PLVs, Legal Services Authorities and stakeholder departments for effective service delivery.

Legal Aid Defense Counsel System (LADCS), 2022

Objective

To provide **free, professional and effective legal representation** in criminal cases through dedicated full-time Legal Aid Defense Counsels, ensuring quality legal services for eligible persons at every stage of the criminal justice process.

Who Can Benefit?

- Persons eligible for free legal aid under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**
- Accused persons in criminal cases who cannot afford a lawyer
- Undertrial prisoners and convicted persons requiring legal assistance
- Persons requiring legal aid from the pre-arrest stage up to appeals

Services Provided

- Free legal advice and consultation
- Legal representation in criminal courts
- Assistance in bail, remand, trial and appeal proceedings
- Legal assistance at the pre-arrest stage
- Prison visits and legal aid to inmates
- Guidance on legal rights and criminal procedures

Implementation

- Dedicated **Legal Aid Defense Counsel Offices** are established at the district level.
- Each office comprises a **Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel**, Deputy Counsels, Assistant Counsels and supporting staff.
- The offices function under the supervision of the **District Legal Services Authority (DLSA)** and **State Legal Services Authority (SLSA)**.
- Counsels work exclusively on legal aid matters and do not undertake private practice during their engagement.

Key Benefits

- Ensures timely, competent and professional legal representation.
- Improves access to justice for economically weaker and vulnerable persons.
- Provides continuous legal assistance from arrest to appeal.
- Strengthens the criminal justice system through dedicated full-time legal aid professionals.
- Promotes accountability, quality legal services and regular client interaction.

Early Access to Justice at Pre-Arrest, Arrest and Remand Stage

Objective

To ensure that every person who is arrested, detained, or called for police questioning has timely access to free legal aid, safeguarding their constitutional and legal rights from the earliest stage of the criminal justice process.

Who Can Benefit?

- Persons issued notice by police for questioning (Pre-arrest stage)
- Persons who have been arrested or detained
- Persons produced before a Magistrate for remand
- Individuals who are unable to afford legal representation

Key Services

- Free legal assistance during police questioning, arrest and remand proceedings
- Legal advice on rights, arrest procedures and bail
- Assistance in filing bail applications and furnishing bail bonds
- Protection against illegal detention, coercion, torture and procedural violations
- Legal representation before Magistrates during remand proceedings

Implementation

- DLSAs appoint **Duty Lawyers** to provide immediate legal assistance at police stations and courts.
- Close coordination is maintained between Legal Services Authorities and Police Authorities.
- Legal awareness materials on the rights of arrested persons are displayed at police stations.
- Duty Lawyers and PLVs assist eligible persons from the earliest stage of the criminal justice process.

Rights of an Arrested Person

Every arrested person has the right to:

- Know the grounds of arrest.
- Consult and be represented by a lawyer.
- Receive free legal aid if unable to afford a lawyer.
- Inform a family member or friend about the arrest.
- Be medically examined where required.
- Be produced before a Magistrate within **24 hours** of arrest.
- Apply for bail in accordance with law.

Key Benefits

- Ensures legal assistance from the earliest stage of criminal proceedings.
- Protects constitutional rights and promotes fair investigation.
- Reduces the risk of unlawful detention and procedural violations.
- Facilitates timely legal representation and access to bail wherever applicable.

Compensation Scheme for Women Victims/Survivors of Sexual Assault & Other Crimes, 2018

Objective

To provide financial compensation, rehabilitation and immediate support to women victims/survivors of sexual assault and other specified crimes, enabling their physical, emotional and social recovery.

Who Can Benefit?

- Women victims/survivors of rape and gang rape
- Victims of acid attacks
- Victims of sexual assault and other specified offences
- Victims of burns, grievous physical injuries, or permanent disability caused by specified crimes
- Dependents of deceased women victims

Key Benefits

- Financial compensation for rehabilitation
- Interim compensation for immediate needs
- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Medical assistance and counselling support
- Assistance in rehabilitation and restoration of livelihood
- Compensation may also be granted to eligible dependents in case of the victim's death

Implementation

- Applications may be submitted before the State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) or the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA).
- DLSAs may also initiate proceedings suo motu upon receiving information from the police in deserving cases.
- Compensation is awarded after considering the nature of the offence, severity of injury, medical expenses, rehabilitation needs, loss of livelihood and other relevant factors.

Compensation

Compensation is awarded based on the nature and gravity of the offence. Under the Scheme:

- **Loss of life / Gang rape:**¹ 5 lakh –¹ 10 lakh
- **Rape / Unnatural sexual assault:**¹ 4 lakh –¹ 7 lakh
- **Acid attack and burn injuries:** Up to ¹ 8 lakh
- **Permanent disability, grievous injuries, loss of foetus, pregnancy due to rape and other specified injuries:** Compensation is awarded as per the Schedule to the Scheme.

Key Features

- Immediate interim relief for urgent medical and rehabilitation needs.
- Special provisions for minor victims and acid attack survivors.
- Compensation is in addition to free legal services available under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- Appeals against compensation orders can be filed before the competent Legal Services Authority.

NALSA (Protection and Enforcement of Tribal Rights) Scheme, 2015

Objective

To protect and enforce the legal and constitutional rights of Scheduled Tribes by ensuring access to free legal aid, safeguarding their land, forest, livelihood and cultural rights and facilitating access to justice and government welfare schemes.

Beneficiaries

- Members of Scheduled Tribes (STs)
- Tribal communities residing in Scheduled and tribal areas
- Forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers
- Tribal women, children and other vulnerable persons
- Tribal communities affected by displacement, land alienation, or denial of legal rights

Key Services

- Free legal aid and legal representation
- Legal assistance in matters relating to land, forest, livelihood and tribal rights
- Legal awareness on constitutional safeguards and welfare legislations

- Assistance in accessing government welfare schemes and entitlements
- Facilitation of dispute resolution and protection against exploitation

Implementation Mechanism

- Identification of beneficiaries through DLSAs, TLSCs, Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs), Gram Sabhas, Tribal Development Department, Forest Department, NGOs and community-based organizations.
- Organizing legal awareness camps in tribal and remote areas.
- Providing legal assistance through trained panel advocates and PLVs.
- Coordinating with the Tribal Development Department, Forest Department, Revenue Department and District Administration to safeguard tribal rights.
- Periodic monitoring and follow-up by Legal Services Authorities to ensure effective implementation.

Expected Outcomes

- Improved access to justice for tribal communities.
- Better protection of land, forest and livelihood rights.
- Increased awareness of constitutional and statutory rights among tribal populations.
- Enhanced access to government welfare schemes and legal entitlements.
- Strengthened institutional support for the protection of tribal rights.

Key Challenges

- Limited awareness of legal rights among tribal communities.
- Geographical remoteness and difficulty in accessing legal services.
- Land and forest-related disputes involving multiple authorities.
- Language and cultural barriers in delivering legal services.
- Ensuring effective coordination among Government Departments and sustained outreach in tribal areas.

**Meetings Orgaized by Secretaries
District Legal Services Authority**

Sr. No.	Committee/Authorities	Meetings Organized
1.	District Legal Services Authority	Quarterly
2.	Monitoring and Mentoring Committee	Monthly
3.	Under Trial Review Committee (UTRC)	Monthly
4.	Mediation Monitoring Committee (MMC)	Monthly
5.	Manodhairya	As per requirement
6.	Victim Compensation	As per requirement

Landmark Judgements

Important Judicial Pronouncements Guiding Legal Services Authorities

The Legal Services Authorities function in accordance with the Constitution of India, the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 and the principles laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. The following landmark judgments have significantly strengthened access to justice, protection of fundamental rights and the delivery of free legal services.

1. *Satender Kumar Antil v. Central Bureau of Investigation & Anr.*

(2022) 10 SCC 51

Background

The case addressed the issue of unnecessary arrests and prolonged detention of undertrial prisoners. The Supreme Court reaffirmed the principle that **"Bail is the rule, jail is the exception"** and issued comprehensive directions to ensure uniform and timely consideration of bail applications, thereby protecting the fundamental right to personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

Key Directions for DLSAs

- Identify undertrial prisoners eligible for bail and provide timely legal assistance.
- Strengthen the functioning of **Prison Legal Aid Clinics (PLACs)** and ensure regular interaction with inmates.

- Coordinate with **Undertrial Review Committees (UTRCs)** to review cases of prolonged detention and facilitate the release of eligible prisoners.
- Provide legal representation through **Panel Advocates** and **Legal Aid Defence Counsels (LADCs)**.
- Conduct legal awareness programmes in prisons on bail rights and availability of free legal aid.
- Monitor compliance with the Supreme Court's directions in coordination with prison authorities and courts.

Maharashtra-Specific Directions

The Supreme Court directed the **State of Maharashtra** to ensure effective implementation of the *Satender Kumar Antil* guidelines and submit a compliance report. The **Bombay High Court** was directed to monitor implementation, identify eligible undertrial prisoners, strengthen compliance by District Courts and ensure that the principles laid down in *Satender Kumar Antil* are incorporated into judicial training programmes and consistently applied in bail matters.

Significance

The judgment serves as the foundation for the functioning of **Prison Legal Aid Clinics, Jail Visiting Lawyers, Undertrial Review Committees** and the **Legal Aid Defence Counsel System**, ensuring timely legal aid and protection of the rights of undertrial prisoners.

2. Aureliano Fernandes v. State of Goa & Ors.
(2023) 1 SCC 632; Further Directions dated
03.12.2024 & 02.05.2025)

Background

The Supreme Court observed that despite the enactment of the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act)**, many workplaces had failed to constitute Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) and Local Committees, resulting in inadequate protection for women against workplace sexual harassment.

Key Directions for DLSAs / Legal Services Authorities

- Assist women in filing complaints under the **POSH Act, 2013** whenever they approach Legal Services Institutions.
- Conduct legal awareness and outreach programmes on workplace sexual harassment laws and available legal remedies.
- Coordinate with District Officers, Local Committees and other authorities to facilitate access to justice for aggrieved women.
- Extend free legal aid and legal representation to eligible women under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- Facilitate access to counselling, mediation (where legally permissible) and victim support services.
- **Directions to State Governments**
- Appoint **District Officers in** every district.

- Ensure constitution or reconstitution of **Local Committees** and **Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs)** in all Government departments, public sector undertakings and other establishments under their control.
- Appoint **Nodal Officers** under Section 6(2) of the POSH Act and publish their details on official websites.
- File compliance affidavits before the Supreme Court demonstrating effective implementation of the POSH Act.

Significance

The judgment reinforces the effective implementation of the **POSH Act, 2013** and highlights the important role of **Legal Services Authorities** in ensuring that women have timely access to legal aid, complaint mechanisms and institutional support against workplace sexual harassment.

3. Acid Survivors Saahas Foundation (NGO) v. Union of India & Ors.

W.P. (C) No. 1252 of 2023 (Order dated 03.02.2026)

Background

The petition was filed to ensure effective implementation of the rights of acid attack survivors, particularly regarding timely payment of victim compensation, rehabilitation and access to legal aid. The Supreme Court noted delays in disbursement of compensation and directed all States, Union Territories and Legal Services Authorities to take immediate corrective measures.

Key Directions for DLSAs / Legal Services Authorities

- Receive and process applications from acid attack survivors without insisting on court orders, unless legally necessary.
- Ensure speedy processing of victim compensation claims under the Victim Compensation Scheme.
- Coordinate with State Government departments for timely release of sanctioned compensation.
- Regularly monitor pending and disposed compensation cases to ensure effective implementation of the Court's directions.
- Extend free legal aid, counselling, rehabilitation support and legal assistance to acid attack survivors.
- Facilitate access to medical treatment, rehabilitation and other welfare benefits through coordination with the concerned authorities.

Significance

The judgment reinforces the role of Legal Services Authorities in ensuring prompt victim compensation, rehabilitation and access to justice for acid attack survivors, while strengthening the implementation of the NALSA (Legal Services to Victims of Acid Attacks) Scheme, 2016.

4. Shaheen Malik v. Union of India &Anr.

W.P. (C) No. 1112 of 2025 (Order dated 27.01.2026)

Background

The petition highlighted the need for speedy trial, effective rehabilitation and adequate victim compensation for

survivors of acid attacks. The Supreme Court observed that a large number of acid attack cases remained pending across the country and emphasized the need for coordinated action by the judiciary, State Governments and Legal Services Authorities.

Key Directions for DLSAs / Legal Services Authorities

- Ensure timely processing of victim compensation and facilitate access to medical treatment, rehabilitation and legal aid for acid attack survivors.
- Review and strengthen the implementation of the NALSA (Legal Services to Victims of Acid Attacks) Scheme, 2016 and submit compliance reports where required.
- Coordinate with State Governments and other authorities to ensure survivors receive compensation, rehabilitation and other statutory benefits without delay.
- Monitor pending cases involving acid attack survivors and provide continuous legal assistance throughout the trial and rehabilitation process.
- Conduct legal awareness and outreach programmes to inform survivors about their rights and available legal remedies.

Directions to High Courts and States

- High Courts were requested to ensure expeditious disposal of acid attack trials, preferably in a time-bound and out-of-turn manner.
- State Governments and Union Territories were directed to furnish details regarding:
 - Acid attack incidents reported.

- Filing of charge sheets.
- Pendency and disposal of trials.
- Pending appeals.
- Rehabilitation measures, victim compensation, medical treatment and expenditure incurred.
- State Legal Services Authorities were directed to submit reports on the implementation of rehabilitation schemes and, where no specific scheme existed, to formulate appropriate rehabilitation measures.

Significance

The judgment strengthens the role of Legal Services Authorities in ensuring speedy justice, victim compensation, rehabilitation, medical assistance and long-term support for acid attack survivors through effective implementation of NALSA schemes and coordination with State authorities.

5. Bachpan Bachao Andolan v. Union of India & Ors. (2016) 12 SCC 154

Background

The Bachpan Bachao Andolan filed a Public Interest Litigation under Article 32 highlighting the alarming rise in drug, alcohol and substance abuse among children in India. The petition sought comprehensive measures to protect children through prevention, rehabilitation, awareness, de-addiction and coordinated government action.

The Supreme Court recognized substance abuse among children as a serious threat to their health, education and overall development and emphasized that protecting children is a constitutional and international obligation.

Key Directions of the Supreme Court

- Directed the Union Government to conduct a national survey and create a reliable database on substance abuse.
- Directed formulation of a comprehensive National Action Plan for prevention of substance abuse among children.
- Directed inclusion of drug awareness and prevention education in the school curriculum.
- Emphasized establishment and strengthening of de-addiction and rehabilitation centres.
- Directed effective implementation of the Juvenile Justice Act, particularly provisions punishing those supplying intoxicants or using children for drug trafficking.
- Stressed coordinated action by the Union, States, educational institutions, health authorities and child protection agencies.

Directions Relevant to Legal Services Authorities (DLSA/SLSA)

Although the judgment does not specifically issue directions to Legal Services Authorities, it creates important responsibilities that LSAs are expected to support in furtherance of access to justice:

- Conduct legal awareness programmes in schools, colleges and communities on the dangers of drug and substance abuse.

- Provide legal assistance to children affected by substance abuse or exploitation under the Juvenile Justice Act.
- Coordinate with Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), District Child Protection Units, Police and NGOs for rehabilitation of affected children.
- Facilitate access to de-addiction, counselling and rehabilitation services through appropriate referrals.
- Protect children involved in drug abuse or trafficking as children in need of care and protection, ensuring legal representation wherever required.
- Support implementation of child protection laws by assisting vulnerable children and monitoring access to legal remedies.

Significance

- Recognized substance abuse as a major child protection issue.
- Shifted focus from punishment to prevention, rehabilitation and reintegration.
- Strengthened the role of legal aid institutions in safeguarding children's rights.
- Laid the foundation for later initiatives such as NALSA DAWN (Drug Awareness and Wellness Navigation) Scheme, 2025, under which Legal Services Authorities actively conduct awareness, counselling and rehabilitation programmes for persons affected by substance abuse.

**6. Shankar Mahto v. State of Bihar
(Decided on 16 April 2026)**

Background

The Supreme Court took note of the recurring delays in filing appeals and Special Leave Petitions (SLPs) on behalf of prisoners receiving legal aid. Observing that procedural and administrative delays were denying prisoners their constitutional right to access justice, the Court laid down a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to streamline the legal aid process and ensure timely coordination among Legal Services Authorities, jail authorities, High Court Legal Services Committee and NALSA.

Key Directions for State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)

- Ensure effective implementation of the SOP relating to prison legal aid and legal aid appeals across all districts.
- Transfer adequate funds to High Court Legal Services Committees (HCLSCs) for translation, preparation and processing of appeal documents before forwarding them to the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC).
- Strengthen and regularly monitor the functioning of Prison Legal Aid Clinics (PLACs) and establish monitoring committees to ensure accountability.
- Maintain updated data on legal aid applications, appeals and PLAC functioning and periodically review performance.
- Coordinate closely with DLSAs, HCLSCs, jail authorities and NALSA to ensure timely filing of appeals and SLPs.

- Ensure prompt translation, digitisation and transmission of case records, while adhering to the timelines prescribed under the SOP and the centralized digital tracking system.

Significance

The judgment strengthened the institutional framework for legal aid by introducing clear timelines, better coordination, financial support mechanisms and continuous monitoring. It reinforces the constitutional mandate under Article 39A by ensuring that prisoners and other vulnerable persons receive timely and effective legal representation without being prejudiced by administrative delays.

7. Alana Golmei v. Union of India

W.P. (C) No. 53 of 2015

Background

The case was filed to address incidents of racial discrimination, harassment and violence faced by persons from the North-Eastern States across India. Reaffirming the recommendations of the M.P. Bezbaruah Committee and its earlier decision in Karma Dorjee v. Union of India, the Supreme Court directed the Monitoring Committee to ensure effective implementation of measures for preventing racial discrimination and protecting the rights of North-Eastern citizens.

Key Directions for State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)

- Provide free and effective legal aid to victims of racial discrimination, harassment and violence.

- Strengthen access to legal services through Legal Aid Clinics, Front Offices, Helplines and Para Legal Volunteers (PLVs).
- Coordinate with Police, State Governments, educational institutions, Human Rights Commissions and NGOs for prompt assistance to victims.
- Conduct legal awareness and sensitization programmes in schools, colleges, hostels and workplaces on constitutional rights and anti-discrimination laws.
- Ensure timely legal representation, maintain records of complaints, monitor case progress and facilitate counselling, rehabilitation and victim compensation wherever applicable.
- Publicize the availability of free legal aid and periodically review implementation at the State and District levels.

Significance

The judgment reinforced the constitutional guarantee of equality and dignity by strengthening institutional mechanisms to combat racial discrimination. It highlighted the role of Legal Services Authorities in ensuring accessible legal aid, victim support, awareness and coordinated action for protecting the rights of persons from the North-Eastern States.

Suhas Chakma v. Union of India

Background

The Hon'ble Supreme Court in *Suhas Chakma v. Union of India*, along with NALSA's communication dated 1 June

2024, issued comprehensive directions to strengthen access to legal aid for prisoners and ensure effective implementation of the SOP on Access to Legal Aid Services to Prisoners (2022). The judgment emphasized timely legal assistance, effective Prison Legal Aid Clinics (PLACs), coordinated institutional mechanisms and continuous monitoring to uphold prisoners' constitutional right to free legal aid under Article 39A.

Key Directions for State Legal Services Authorities (SLSAs)

- Ensure effective implementation of the SOP on Access to Legal Aid Services to Prisoners (2022) across all prisons through coordination with DLSAs and Prison Legal Aid Clinics (PLACs).
- Regularly monitor and strengthen the functioning of PLACs to improve the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of legal aid services.
- Coordinate with DLSAs, Prison Authorities, Jail Visiting Lawyers and Legal Aid Defence Counsels to ensure timely legal assistance and regular jail visits.
- Facilitate timely filing of appeals and ensure prisoners are informed of their rights relating to appeals, remission, parole, furlough, bail and other statutory remedies, while forwarding eligible cases to the High Court Legal Services Committee (HCLSC) or Supreme Court Legal Services Committee (SCLSC), wherever required.
- Maintain and analyse data relating to legal aid services, pending appeals, prisoner applications and PLAC functioning to identify deficiencies and improve service delivery.

- Strengthen monitoring, accountability and quality control of Legal Aid Defence Counsels, Jail Visiting Lawyers and Prison Legal Aid Clinics.
- Conduct regular legal literacy and awareness programmes in prisons regarding free legal aid, Prison Legal Aid Clinics and prisoners' legal rights.
- Compile district-wise information, submit quarterly compliance reports to NALSA and supervise implementation of the Supreme Court's directions across all DLSAs.
- Continuously identify operational gaps and adopt corrective measures to improve the accessibility, efficiency and effectiveness of prison legal aid services.

Significance

The judgment strengthened the prison legal aid framework by reinforcing the constitutional mandate under Article 39A and clarifying the responsibilities of Legal Services Authorities in ensuring that every prisoner receives timely and effective legal assistance. It emphasized coordinated implementation, institutional accountability, regular monitoring and legal awareness to guarantee meaningful access to justice for prisoners across the country.

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