



LAW FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2024 - 25



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FOREWORD

As we reflect on the journey of the past year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude. The work documented in this Annual Report is not just a record of our efforts, it is a testament to resilience, solidarity, and the unwavering pursuit of justice.

At **LAW Foundation**, we continue to walk alongside the marginalized and the incarcerated, challenging the systems that silence them and creating pathways to dignity, freedom, and legal empowerment. From implementing crucial efforts in some of the most challenging legal contexts, to deepening our engagement with vulnerable communities through prison visits, socio-economic assessments, and home-based outreach and providing emergency support, we have strived to make justice not just a right, but a reality.

Even though there were some difficulties, yet, in every courtroom victory, every release secured, and every unheard voice amplified, we find renewed strength. Our work is rooted in the belief that justice must be inclusive—and that no one, regardless of their caste, class, or circumstance, should be left behind.



To every member of our team, and partner who stood with us – Thank You. This report is yours. Let it remind us not only of what we've achieved, but of the road that lies ahead.

Praveen Kumar
Director,
LAW Foundation

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1. OUR STORY

OUR MISSION

To Extend Socio-Legal Aid to Disadvantaged Communities, Groups, and Individuals; Enabling Equal Access to Constitutional Rights.

OUR VISION

To End Structural Inequality towards the Disadvantaged Population and Promote Fair, Just & Inclusive Society for All.

LAW Foundation is a socio-legal organization committed to ensuring access to justice, legal empowerment, and social rehabilitation for marginalized communities, particularly incarcerated individuals, women, and LGBTQ+ persons. Established in 2019, the foundation emerged from grassroots interventions that successfully challenged systemic barriers in the criminal justice system. Our work integrates socio-legal aid, mental health support, and gender justice advocacy to create a sustainable and inclusive justice system. Through policy reforms, community engagement, and innovative legal strategies, LAW Foundation continues to drive systemic change, securing the rights and dignity of historically disadvantaged populations.

Principle of the Organization



Promoting Access to Justice

Ensuring that under-trial prisoners and vulnerable communities receive fair representation and equitable access to socio-legal & mental health services.



Empowering Communities

Enhancing socio-legal & mental health literacy and awareness to enable individuals to assert their rights and navigate the justice system effectively.



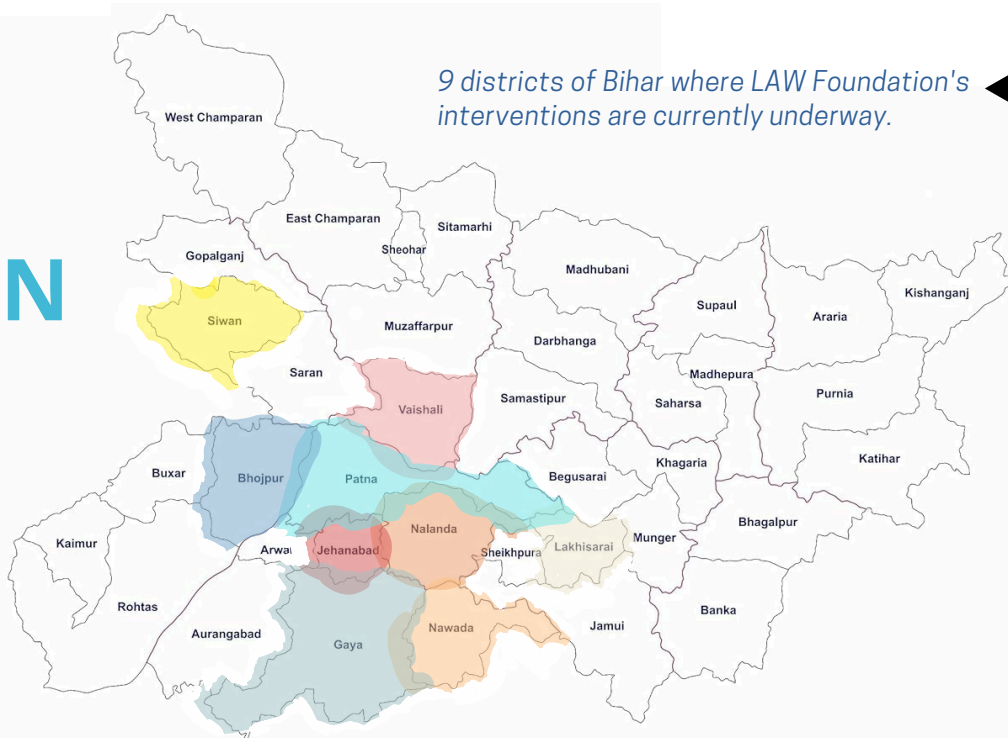
Advocating Systemic Change

Engaging with institutions and policymakers to reform legal and judicial practices, ensuring a more inclusive and humane justice system.



1.1 WORK AREA POPULATION BIHAR

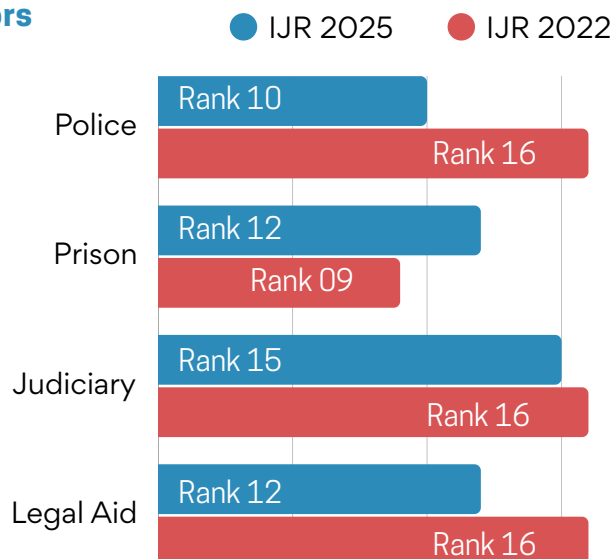
Located in Eastern India, Bihar is the third most populous state with a population of over 104 million as per Census 2011.



Out of 68 static-indicators, Across the Four Pillars of Justice out of 18 Large & Mid-size state in India, Bihar has improved the most in **47 indicators significantly.**¹

Irrespective of the improvements & advancements

- 140.1 % of Prison occupancy in Bihar
- Highest proportion of undertrial prisoners in India (89.1%), mostly from SC/ST/OBC communities, many detained due to inability to furnish surety-based bail.²
- 55.4 % Cases pending (above 3 years) (High Court)
- 70.7% Cases pending (above 3 years) (sub. court)



Despite securing bail from the Sessions Court in April 2024, 50-year-old Binod Kumar Mahto remained behind bars for another year as his bail bond was not furnished. Time passed, and no one stepped in to modify the order.³

Hundreds like Binod continue to languish behind bars, serving time far beyond what the law intends, even after bail is granted. Their freedom is trapped not by guilt, but by procedural neglect and systemic indifference. This is where the LAW Foundation steps in, bridging the gap between judgement and justice.

(Read more in the pages ahead...)

1. Data as of January 2023 for police indicators; December 2022 for prisons indicators; February 2025 for judges; March 2024/September 2024 for legal aid indicators
 2. India Justice Report: Ranking States on the Capacity of Police, Judiciary, Prisons and Legal Aid' (2025).
 3. All of the names mentioned in the Case studies and in this report is anonymized.

- 42% of Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) families live below the poverty line (earning less than ₹6,000/month), alongside 33% of Other Backward Classes (OBC) and Extremely Backward Classes (EBC).⁴
- Access to basic welfare entitlements and awareness on civil rights, especially in marginalized communities of Bihar remains critically low. For example, only 9.8% in Bihar were aware of the Ayushman Bharat Yojana, and 3.34% received job cards, with some districts reporting less than 1%.^{5,6}



For years, Rinki Devi, a daily wage laborer, struggled to access medical care due to poverty and the absence of essential documentation. Suffering from prolonged illness, her only options were to borrow money for treatment or endure her condition without medical help.

Several individuals like her from the marginalized communities of Bihar face similar barriers to healthcare, civil, and basic services.

At this critical juncture, the LAW Foundation plays a pivotal role in closing the gap between social entitlement rights provisions and real-world justice.

(Explore more in the following sections...)



- Violence against women in Bihar has risen from 39% to 39.6%, while the state ranks among the lowest in terms of access to justice and gender equality.
- Compounding this, awareness of mental health remains extremely limited among vulnerable communities, with only one psychiatrist available for every 1.3 million people. Incarcerated and impoverished populations, in particular, suffer from untreated trauma and systemic neglect.⁷



Shina, abandoned by her abusive husband and harassed by in-laws, lives in poverty with her children, battling untreated PTSD. Her kids' education is stalled due to withheld Aadhar cards, and she remains unaware of the purpose of her medication. Her story echoes many others, overlooked by systems meant to intervene.

At this crucial point, the LAW Foundation serves as a key catalyst in bridging the divide between gender justice and mental health support for vulnerable communities. **(Learn more in the sections ahead...)**

LAW Foundation addresses these deep-rooted issues such as the socio-legal illiteracy, exclusion from welfare schemes, and mental health neglect through integrated grassroots interventions that provide legal aid, social entitlement support, and mental health - informed care to marginalized communities and the ones in need.

4. Pandey, A., & Gautam, R. (2024). Myth and Reality of the Caste-based Survey in Bihar. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 59(33).

5. Prasad, S. S. V., Singh, C., Naik, B. N., Pandey, S., & Rao, R. (2023). Awareness of the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana in the Rural Community: A Cross-Sectional Study in Eastern India. *Cureus*, 15(3), e35901.

6. Kumar, A. (2021, July 29). CAG report flags low job generation under MGNREGA in Bihar. *Hindustan Times*.

7. National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences. (2016). *National Mental Health Survey of India, 2015-16: Mental Health Systems*. NIMHANS Publication No. 130, 2016.

2. VOICES FOR JUSTICE: LEGAL AID FOR THE VULNERABLE

LAW Foundation works on the intervention model of Socio-legal aid aimed at restoring the principles of justice, equality, and equity in the criminal justice system in India. It is a holistic approach that integrates two critical aspects, i.e., a) Legal aid and b) Social aid, addressing both the immediate and structural needs of marginalized communities. Social aid encompasses the free social support mechanisms necessary to empower individuals and communities to address their rights and access justice swiftly. Key aspects of Legal aid include:

1. Free Legal assistance and counseling:

Providing direct legal assistance and counseling to marginalized communities, ensuring access to justice for undertrial prisoners, victims of wrongful detention, and those unable to afford legal representation.

2. Para-legal Training and Jail-Legal Aid Clinics:

Training community-based paralegals and Jail Para-Legal Volunteers (JPLVs) to offer basic legal services within custodial settings.

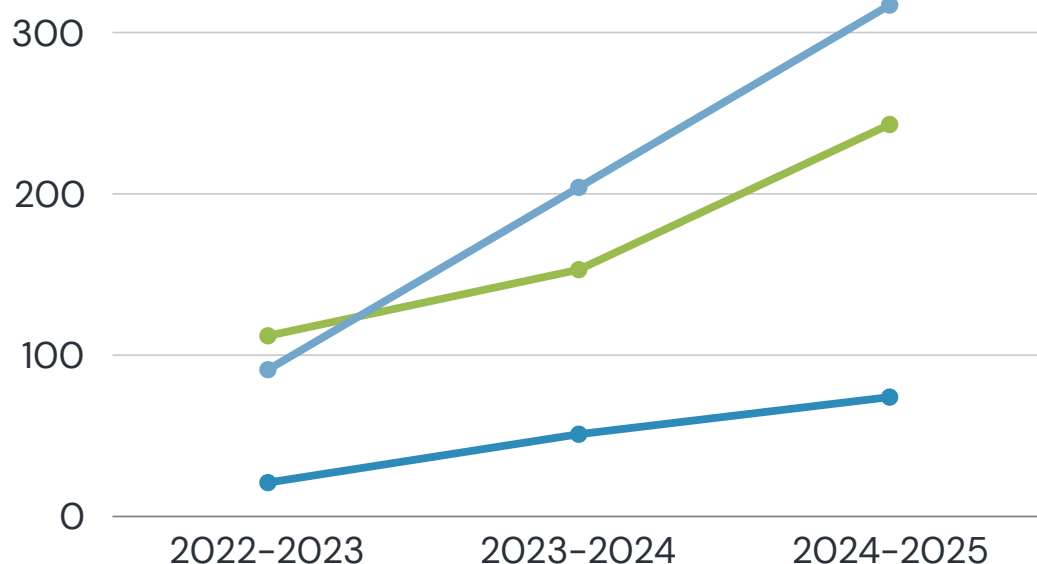
3. Strategic Litigation and legal literacy sessions:

Identifying cases that can set precedents for systemic change and advocating for favorable legal interpretations.

345 Free Legal assistance and counseling

12 Acquittals

■ Total Legal Assistance ■ Modification Petition
■ Fresh Filings



259

Fresh Filing

New legal proceedings to secure justice

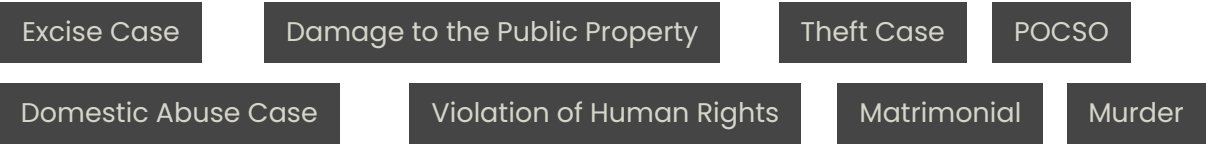
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Modification Petition

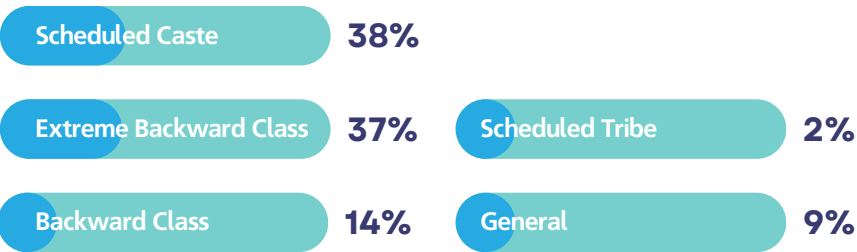
Legal revisions in existing court orders



CATEGORIES OF LEGA AID IN TERMS OF CASE INTERVENTIONS



CASTE CATEGORY OF THE CLIENTS



AGE OF THE CLIENTS



2.1 REIMAGINING LEGAL AID: THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF ADVOCATES

At the heart of LAW Foundation’s mission lies the commitment to ensuring equitable access to justice for historically marginalized and criminalized communities. In a legal system often inaccessible to the disadvantaged, our legal team plays a transformative role, intervening not just in individual cases but in the very structures that perpetuate prolonged incarceration and procedural injustices.

Legal Aid Intervention Model

The model is designed to be scalable, participatory, and impact-oriented, ensuring that justice is not merely a promise on paper, but a lived reality for those most excluded from its reach.



The Legal Intervention Model developed by LAW Foundation is rooted in a rights-based, community-driven approach that blends courtroom advocacy with grassroots legal empowerment. This model responds to systemic barriers in the criminal justice system, such as the over-reliance on surety bail, procedural delays, and lack of legal representation, by operationalizing innovative practices like the Personal Recognizance (PR) Bail Bond mechanism and jail-based legal aid clinics. The application of this model starts from the prison visits.

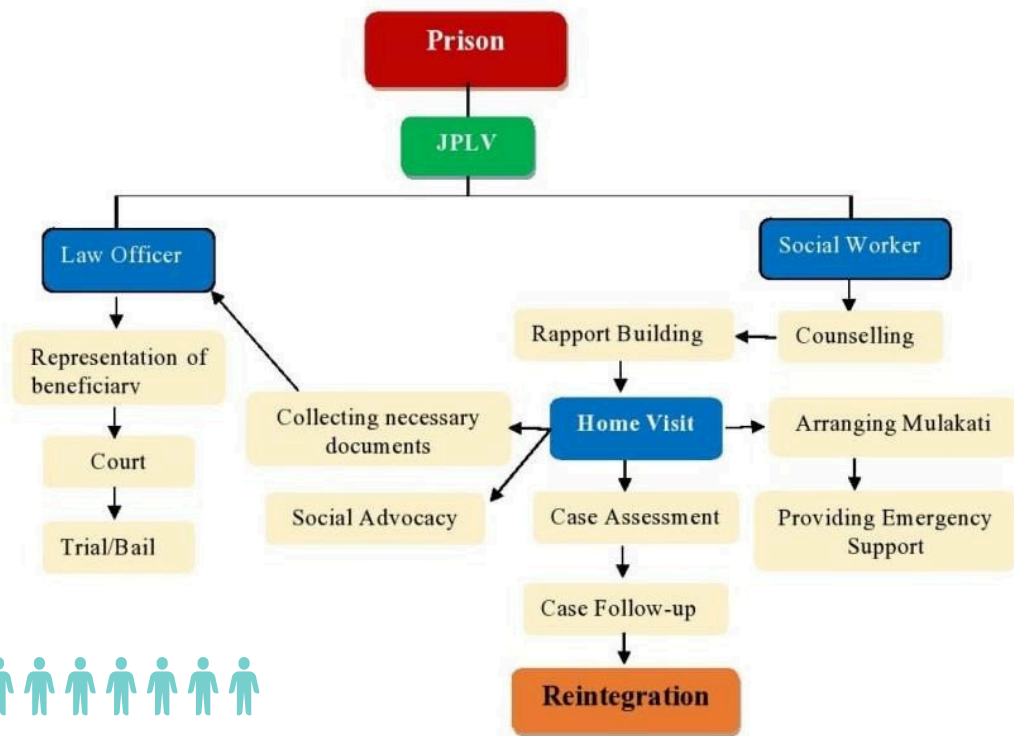
2.2 PRISON VISITS: FOUNDATION OF LEGAL AID INTERVENTIONS

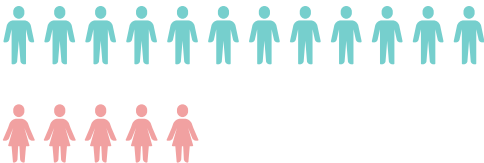
Prison visits are not symbolic acts of outreach, they are strategic, purposeful, and action-oriented engagements. During these visits, our team works in close co-ordination with the **Jail Para-Legal Volunteers (JPLVs)**. JPLVs are convicted prisoners conscientiously trained by the legal team members of LAW Foundation, Panel advocates from District Legal Services Authorities (DLSA), and prison authorities with basic legal knowledge including primary legal processes, identifying under-trial who may be eligible for legal relief, particularly those overlooked due to socio-economic constraints or systemic neglect. They are trained in writing legal applications, filling Vakalatnama, or such as filling bail bond forms.

The process of identifying clients inside prison is community-based and participatory with the crucial role of JPLVs as mentioned sidewise.

Upon receiving referrals from JPLVs, Law officers and criminal justice social workers conduct in-person consultations with inmates. This is carefully represented in the adjoining flowchart model.

Identification of Clients: A Collaborative Model for Legal Intervention



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JPLVs appointed in each prison where LAW Foundation's socio-legal and mental health interventions are currently being implemented.



3 Sub-Jails, 2 District Jail, 1 Central Jail of Bihar

are being covered where the pro-bono socio-legal aid is being provided to the ones who hail from the marginalized communities of Bihar. Prison visits are often supervised under DLSA and Prison Authorities of the respected prison. Another important element of legal intervention by us is a) Bandi Darbar and b) Advocates Meeting.

a. Bandi Darbar

Bandi Darbar is a participatory legal aid forum organized inside prison premises in the presence of JPLVs, Legal team of LAW Foundation, Panel Advocates of DLSA, and Prison authorities. It is where inmates are given a direct platform to voice their grievances, seek legal clarity, and access entitlements.

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 Sessions

conducted in several prisons of Bihar



Those inmates needing legal intervention are individually marked for follow-up. By addressing systemic neglect through in-prison legal aid and human rights monitoring, Bandi Darbar transforms silence into testimony, and institutional apathy into collaborative reform.

b. Advocate Meetings

Advocate Meetings serve as a strategic platform for LAW Foundation to connect and collaborate with practicing advocates from District and High Courts from several districts of Bihar. These interactions are designed not just to introduce advocates to the Foundation's socio-legal work inside prisons and communities, but to build a committed network of legal professionals who can extend support across multiple districts.



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 Meetings conducted and by fostering these collaborations, we expand our reach, enhances legal responsiveness in courtrooms and custodial settings, and ensures that the fight for justice is collective, rooted, and ongoing.

2.3 BEYOND SURETY: CENTERING BAIL IN LEGAL REFORM

In Bihar, the state of the prison system highlights a critical need for effective legal aid, particularly for marginalized communities. They face systemic barriers to accessing justice, which are exacerbated by overcrowded and under-resourced prisons. According to the 2021 National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, a staggering 77% of prisoners in India are under-trial prisoners (UTPs). The India Justice Report of 2022 reveals that 391 out of 1,314 Indian prisons are overcrowded, with Bihar alone accounting for 24 of these overcrowded facilities. This situation is dire, as many under-trials come from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Dalits, Backward Classes, and Nomadic Tribes, who are already marginalized and lack adequate legal resources.



Bail, not jail, is the norm. Yet, we see a disturbing trend of routine rejection of bail, especially in the lower courts.

Justice D.Y. Chandrachud, 50th Chief Justice of India

Most under-trials in Bihar are involved in minor offenses and often spend more than half of their typical sentence of less than three years in prison without bail or trial. This is due to issues such as non-functional Under Trial Review Committees (UTRCs) and poor record management. Even after securing bail, individuals from marginalized communities often face difficulties in securing their release due to property-based bail conditions. The Musahars, an indigenous community from Bihar, are among those vulnerable communities

wherein they have long faced significant socioeconomic disadvantages due to their historical position as untouchables in a caste based society. Similarly, other vulnerable communities like these in Bihar are unable to meet these bail requirements due to their landless status, resulting in prolonged pre-trial detention. For them, traditional bail systems that require surety in the form of land or vehicles pose severe barriers to justice.



Recognizing these challenges, LAW Foundation has worked tirelessly to advocate for the pivotal use of Personal Recognizance (PR) Bonds as an alternative to traditional bail systems.

PR Bonds allow individuals to be released from custody without needing financial surety, thereby promoting fairer treatment based on risk assessment rather than financial capability. Instead, they sign a pledge to return to court for their hearings on their

own accord. With the usage of PR Bonds, LAW Foundation helps individuals avoid the economic and social disruptions caused by pre-trial detention. This not only allows them to maintain their livelihoods and community connections but also supports their overall

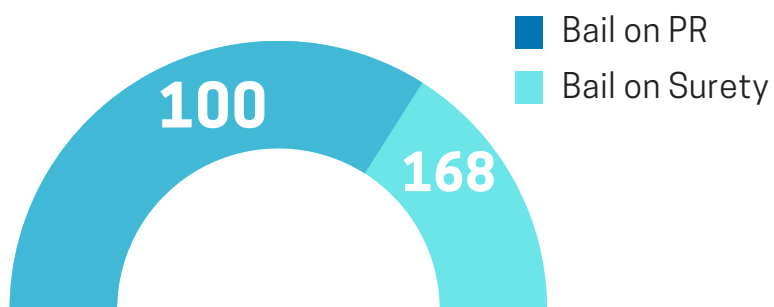
well-being and stability. Traditional bail systems often disadvantage marginalized groups by prioritizing financial capacity over risk assessment. The organization's advocacy for PR Bonds shifts the focus to evaluating an individual's risk of non-appearance or threat to public safety, which is a more equitable approach for economically disadvantaged communities. In addition, PR Bonds reduce the risk of coerced legal decisions. By allowing individuals to remain free while awaiting trial, we ensure that legal decisions are made under fairer conditions,

thus minimizing the likelihood of individuals, being pressured into unjust pleas. With efforts like these in the legal field, our team tries to foster the promotion of a more inclusive and just legal system, enhance systemic equity and fairness, and remove the barriers imposed by traditional bail systems. This approach not only restores dignity to those unjustly detained but also sets a precedent for humane and progressive legal reform across India.

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Incarcerated individuals in the prisons of Bihar were released on Bail

Beyond advocating for PR Bonds, the organization is actively working to strengthen the implementation of legal aid services. Their initiatives aim to address the systemic issues within the legal system that disproportionately affect marginalized communities, including Dalits. The organization's comprehensive approach seeks to lower the high incarceration rates among these groups and ensure that legal aid is effectively reaching those who need it most. Moreover, LAW Foundation has tackled the difficulties faced by advocates in locating Musahar families due to their temporary settlements. They have sought to include social workers to address these most. Moreover, LAW Foundation has tackled the difficulties faced by advocates in locating these marginalized families due to



their temporary settlements. They have sought to include social workers to address these challenges, such as improving communication with community and putting forward their struggles through the socio-economic assessment made in during home visits.

LAW Foundation is at the forefront of addressing these issues and working to improve the situation for under-trial prisoners in Bihar. This integrated approach ensures that legal aid is not only delivered but is also rooted in the lived realities of those it seeks to empower.

With legal interventions like these, LAW Foundation has provided critical relief to marginalized individuals through pro-bono socio-legal aid, ensuring justice and dignity for those who need it most.

THE LONG ROAD HOME: A FREEDOM TOO LATE

Background of the case:

Binod Kumar Mahto (50) was imprisoned since June 13, 2023, under Section 401 of the IPC, for alleged involvement in a theft gang. Desperate for freedom, he collected ₹4000 and hired an advocate. In April 2024, he secured bail from the Sessions Court but remained in jail as the bail bond was never furnished. Months passed, but no steps were taken to modify the order. Struggling with level 2 fatty liver disease, internal bleeding, and low haemoglobin, he was somehow receiving treatment at PMCH.



Intervention:

The panel advocates of the LAW Foundation met Binod in jail and filed for a PR Bond in July 2024, securing his release in August' 2024 after submitting his Aadhar card to the trial court. Our panel advocates and the Jail officers escorted Binod to his home in Sonapur, Bihar. Binod faced a shocking truth, his family had believed him dead, as he had abandoned his family 14 years ago. His children were in disbelief and struggled with the pain of abandonment and the joy of reunion, while his wife, who was away at work, remained unaware of his return. That evening, the silence of the home spoke louder than words, as a long-lost father tried to reclaim fragments of a life he had once left behind.



*When I saw Binod standing at the door after 14 years, I couldn't believe my eyes. I had mourned him for so long, and just as I began to hope for a second chance, fate took him away again. His return felt like a cruel illusion, here one moment, gone the next. **Ananya, Binod's Wife***

20 Days

after release from prison and just as he began to find his place again, life slipped away too soon. Binod passed away, leaving behind more questions than closure on who was responsible for his enduring life.

3. JUSTICE BEYOND BARS: SOCIAL AID INTERVENTIONS TO THE FORGOTTEN

Social-Aid intervention stands as a cornerstone in the rehabilitation, reformation, and reintegration of offenders. At LAW Foundation, social-aid is delivered through a two-pronged approach, combining structured support within custodial settings, engagement with their families, and the marginalized communities of Bihar. The team of Social workers are mentioned in the following figure with their work falling into these key themes:



i. Logistical co-ordination with the legal team:

CJSWs gather all necessary documents related to the prisoner and the case, ensure timely coordination with the legal team, and conduct home visits to gain those documents. This plays a pivotal role in ensuring that legal strategies are informed by the social realities of the affected individuals. Through this integrated approach, they serve as a vital bridge, connecting the legal, emotional, and social dimensions of justice for those most often forgotten.

ii. Facilitation of Social-entitlement schemes:

CSWs facilitate the marginalized communities in obtaining the social entitlement rights such as identity documents (Aadhar card, etc.), Social welfare & Financial assistance documents (Income certificate, etc.), Health & Child Welfare documents (Ayushman Card, etc.), and other important documents.

iii. Awareness and Capacity Building:

We work on educating the marginalized communities and the incarcerated population about their social rights and available remedies through workshops, legal literacy programs, and community meetings and mobilization.

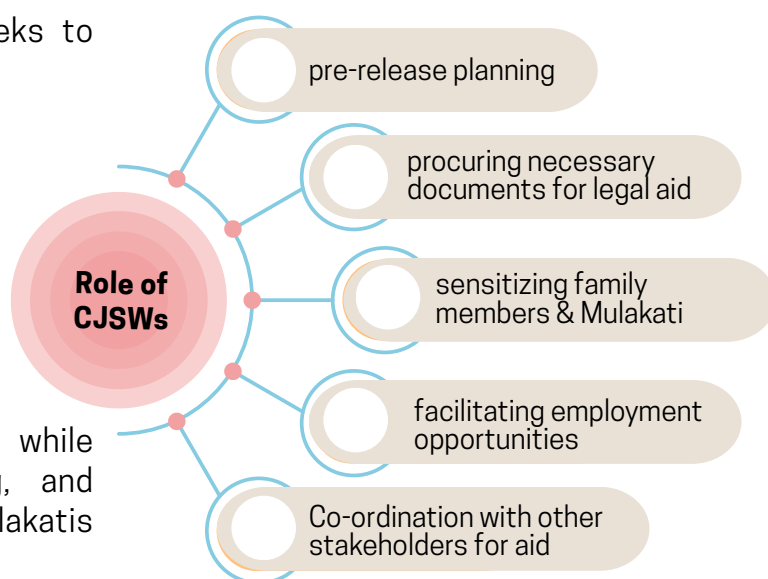
iv. Psychosocial and Emergency Support:

All the **SWs** provide counseling and emotional support to individuals and families affected by socio-legal cases. We provide immediate emergency support in the form of dry ration kits, bail bond expenses, medical assistance, and offer financial assistance to the vulnerable individuals and families during crises.

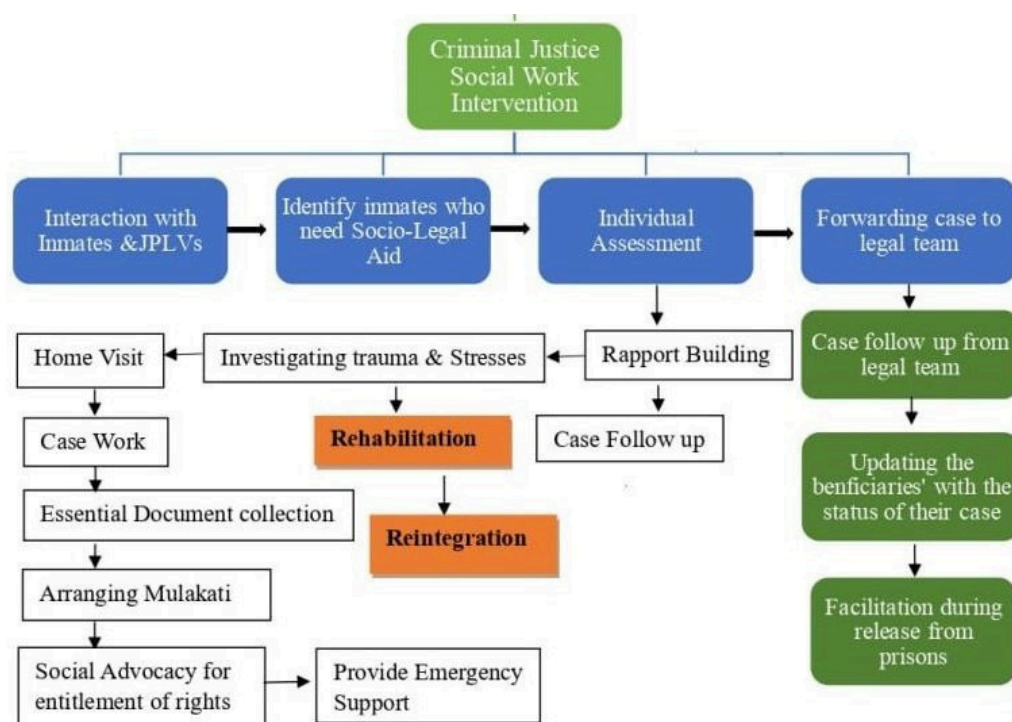


3.1 Beyond the Courtroom: Navigating Justice at the Margins

Criminal Justice Social Worker (CJSW) seeks to understand the underlying factors of “What drives an offender’s behavior under certain circumstances?” This involves assessing the individual’s emotional and social history, including possible childhood trauma. By delving into their psychosocial background, the CJSW works to uncover root causes rather than merely addressing the symptoms of criminal behavior. They deliver socio aid to vulnerable under-trial prisoners, while also offering social advocacy, counseling, and humanitarian support, including arranging Mulakatis (family visits).



Intervention Model for Criminal Justice Social Worker



Given the stigma and discrimination that often follow incarceration, many offenders face social isolation, pushing them toward repeat offenses. To counter this, CJSWs, in collaboration with the other SWs offer counseling and design reintegration strategies for released or acquitted individuals, helping them rebuild their lives and reduce the risk of reoffending. Through this holistic and humane approach, CJSWs aim to break the cycle of criminalization and promote long-term rehabilitation.

When familial relationships appear strained, the CJSW works to rebuild trust and foster healthier dynamics. By working closely with both the legal and social aid teams, the CJSW ensures that the reintegration process is holistic, addressing not just the legal aftermath of incarceration but the human, emotional, and structural dimensions of life after prison.

DEPANK'S STRUGGLE: A FAMILY ON THE BRINK OF SURVIVAL



Background of the case:

Depank, a 23-year-old auto driver, was the sole breadwinner for his family, which included his wife, a tuberculosis patient, and three children—one of whom suffers from a brain complication. With no stable home, they lived in temporary shelters in public spaces, struggling to survive each day. On January 5, 2024, Depank was arrested for alleged mobile theft under Sections 379/414. According to the police, he ran upon seeing them, and a mobile phone was found in his possession, which they suspected was stolen. Without legal support, he was sent to judicial custody, leaving his family completely abandoned.

Intervention:

For nine long months, Depank's family struggled in his absence, his children went hungry, and his wife's tuberculosis worsened due to a lack of medical care and income. The weight of survival fell heavily on a household left without support. Upon intervention by LAW Foundation, the Criminal Justice Social Worker (CJSW) conducted a home visit to assess the family's socio-economic condition and health needs. Recognizing the urgent situation, the team prioritized his case. Through coordinated socio-legal aid, Depank was released on a Bail Bond on October 22, 2024.

Post-release, the CJSW, alongside the Community Social Worker, facilitated access to TB treatment for his wife and helped the family reconnect with essential services.



For months, I had no idea how we would survive. My husband was in jail and my health was failing. I thought we would lose everything. When the didi (social worker) came and listened to my pain, it was the first time in months that I felt someone cared. When she told me they were working to bring my husband home, I felt hope again

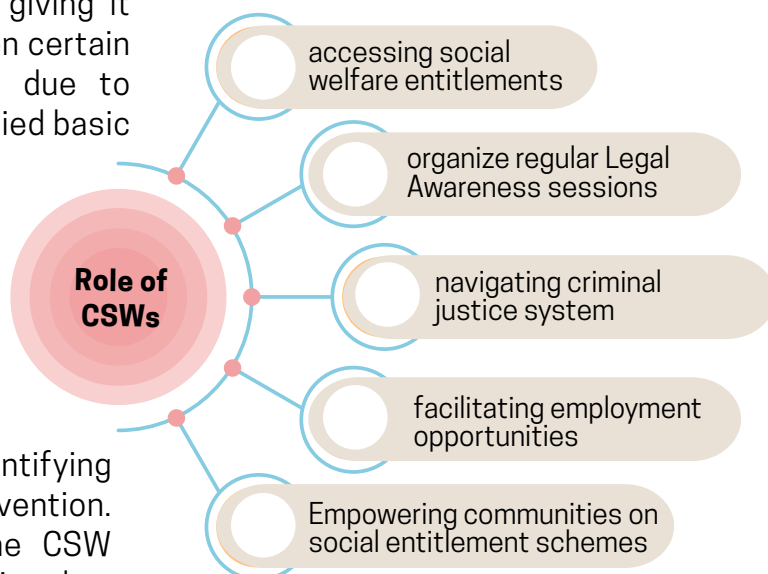
~ Ananya (Depank's Wife)

Today, Depank has resumed his work as an auto driver and is gradually rebuilding his family's life—with dignity, stability, and hope restored.

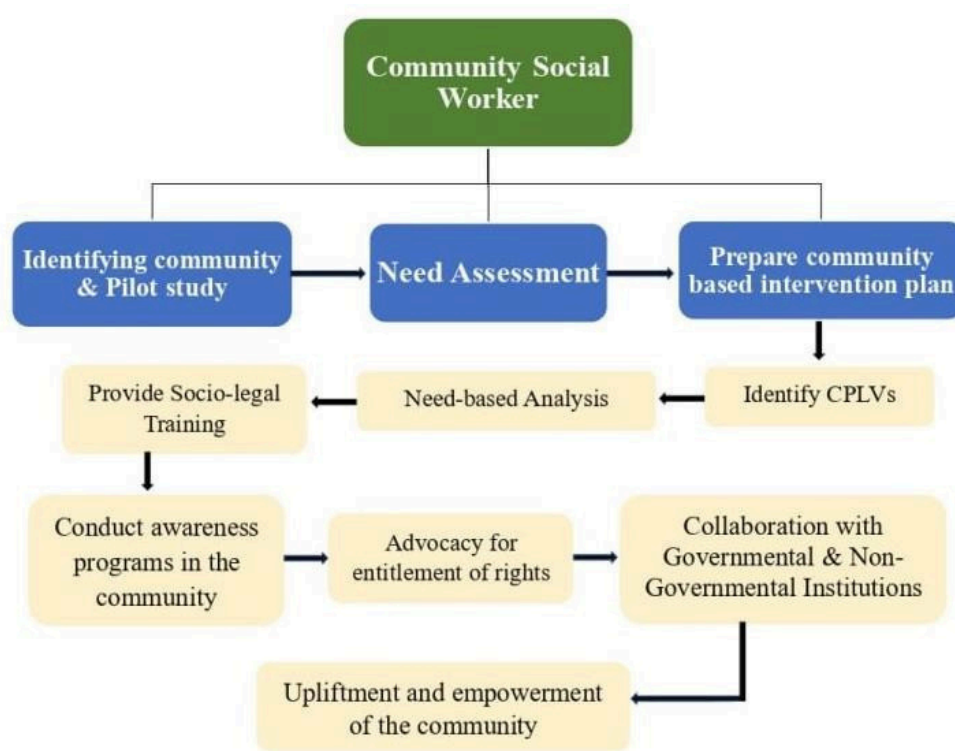
3.2 Unlocking Rights: Ensuring Access to Social Entitlements for the Marginalized

Communities form the foundation of society, giving it strength, structure, and meaning. However, when certain communities are systematically marginalized due to their socio-economic status, they are often denied basic rights and excluded from opportunities.

The **Community Social Worker** (CSW) plays a critical role in challenging discriminatory practices and bridging the gap between disadvantaged communities and mainstream society. Through dedicated efforts, the CSW works to make these invisible voices visible and heard. The process begins with identifying vulnerable communities that require intervention. Following a thorough needs assessment, the CSW designs tailored strategies and action plans aimed at long-term empowerment.



Intervention Model for Community Social Worker



Youth empowerment lies at the heart of this intervention. By identifying promising young individuals from the community, CSWs aim to cultivate leadership and resilience from within. These individuals are then trained adequately and given responsibilities in lieu that contribute to community upliftment. One such role is that of Community Para Legal Volunteers (CPLVs), who are trained, alongside the legal team, in basic legal literacy and awareness, including understanding rights and drafting First Information Reports (FIRs), to safeguard their communities from injustices.

4 CPLVs are presently in the team and through continuous capacity-building sessions, they are empowered to support their communities in securing justice, addressing local grievances, and acting as a vital link between the legal system and the underserved populations

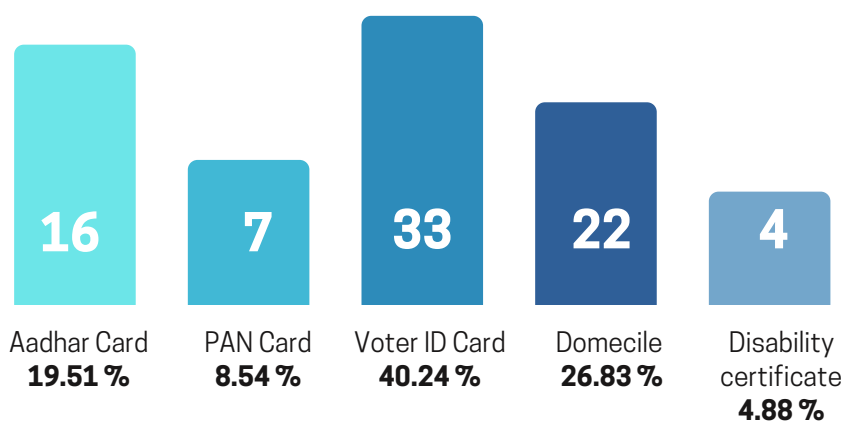


- Recognizing the critical role of social schemes in empowering marginalized groups **CSWs** with assistance from **CPLVs** assist communities in accessing government social-entitlement schemes such as pension, aadhar cards, ration cards, caste certificate, and others.
- The initiative helps individuals navigate complex bureaucratic processes, ensuring they receive their rightful benefits to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Data on the successful implementation and provision of schemes

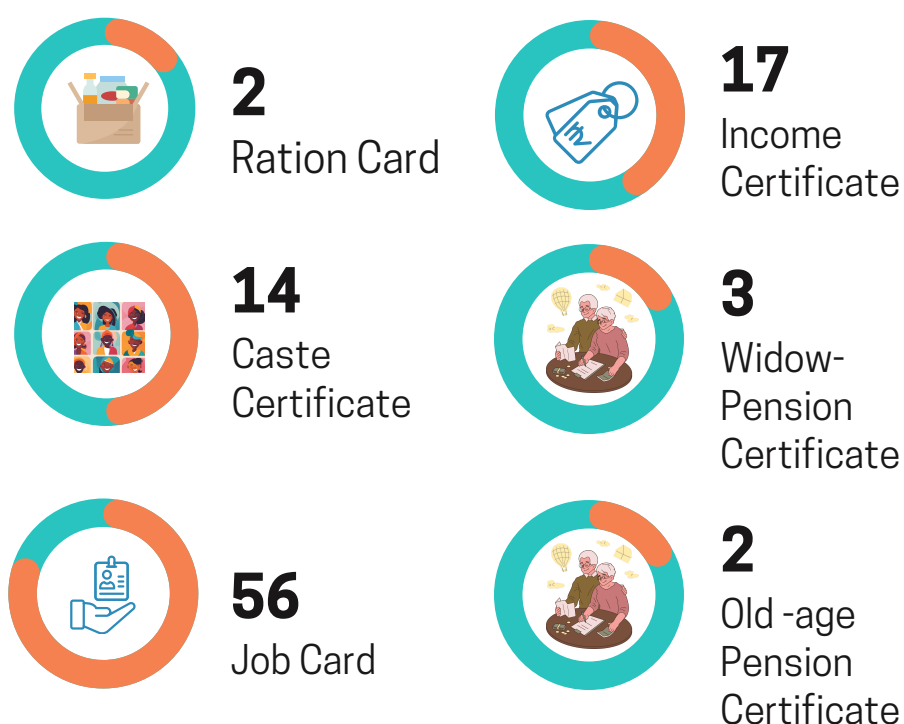
I. Identity & Citizenship documents

Access to identity and citizenship documents is crucial for marginalized communities to avail government benefits, healthcare, and legal aid. LAW Foundation assists individuals in obtaining Aadhaar cards, ration cards, voter IDs, and other essential documents, ensuring their rights and access to social welfare schemes.



II. Social Welfare & Financial Assistance documents

Social Welfare and Financial Assistance documents play a crucial role in enabling marginalized individuals to access essential government schemes and support services. These are vital for availing entitlements like ration, and educational aid. LAW Foundation assists in the procurement and verification of these documents to ensure no one is left behind due to bureaucratic barriers.



III. Birth & Legal Records

Birth and legal records are foundational documents that establish a person's identity, age, and legal existence in the eyes of the law. These include birth certificates, Aadhaar cards, ration cards, and any previous court or FIR documents. Such records are essential not only for accessing social welfare schemes but also for legal proceedings, bail applications, and ensuring rightful representation in court.

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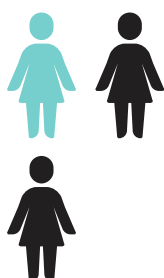
Birth Certificate



LAW Foundation supports the marginalized communities in retrieving or applying for these critical documents. Without these vital records, these individuals remain invisible to the system, further deepening their exclusion and vulnerability. By ensuring access to these documents, LAW Foundation empowers individuals to reclaim their identity, assert their rights, and actively participate in legal and social processes with dignity.

1

Death Certificate



IV. Health & Welfare Documents

LAW Foundation's **Health and Welfare Rights** initiative is bridging this gap, ensuring access to essential healthcare by assisting with medical documentation and mother-child protection cards with Rs. 5000 allowances, facilitating hospital visits, and securing government health benefits for those in need.

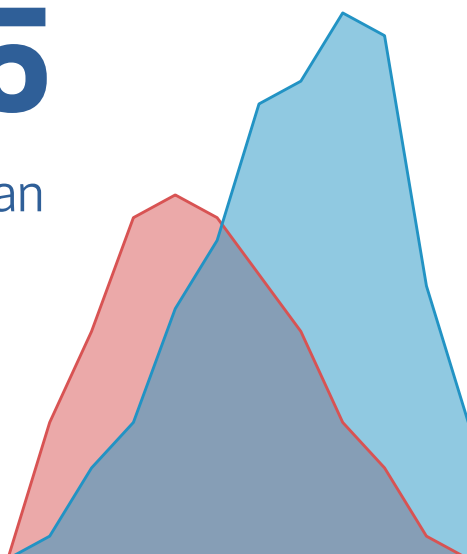
6

Mother & Child Protection Card



105

Ayushman Card



In addition to these efforts, LAW Foundation actively facilitates the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana** (PM-JAY), a flagship health insurance scheme that provides cashless treatment coverage of up to ₹5 lakhs per family per year. The team helps eligible individuals, especially from custodial and marginalized communities, in obtaining their Ayushman cards, navigating application procedures, and understanding the scheme's benefits. This access enables families to receive timely medical care for serious illnesses without falling into debt, thus making healthcare a right, not a privilege.

Now We Can See a Doctor Without Fear

Background of the case:

For years, Rinki Devi, a daily wage laborer from Jamuk village, struggled to access medical care due to poverty and lack of documentation. She had been ill for months and without formal documentation, hospital visits meant either borrowing money or enduring untreated illnesses. Like her, many in Jehanabad's marginalized communities faced similar hardships.



Intervention:

Rinki and others in her community received crucial documents like the Mother and Child Protection Card and Ayushman Bharat Health Cards, enabling access to free treatment and essential medicines at government hospitals. This not only eased financial burdens but also encouraged more women to seek healthcare confidently, knowing they had institutional support. Alongside this, In times of crisis, LAW Foundation extends immediate legal and social assistance to individuals facing urgent socio-legal challenges.



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Emergency support provided

With the initiative of emergency support, we mobilize a rapid response team that includes advocates, social workers, and para-legal volunteers to offer on-the-ground support. Whether it's unlawful detentions, medical emergencies, domestic violence, or sudden displacement, we ensure swift interventions to safeguard the rights and dignity of marginalized populations.



Dry Ration Kit
39.76 %



Medical Assistance
5.42 %



Bail bond expenses
47.59 %



Social entitlement scheme
7.23 %

We also facilitate access to emergency shelter, food, health care, and essential documentation, ensuring that no one is left unheard or unsupported during their most vulnerable moments.

RESTORING HOPE AT THE MARGINS: A WIDOW'S STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL

Background of the case:

The fragile shelter belonged to Susmita, a 53-year-old widowed woman living with her adolescent daughter. Despite being eligible, Susmita had been repeatedly denied support under critical government schemes like the Indira Awas Yojana and Widow Pension Program. Years of rejection and bureaucratic indifference had silenced her into complete withdrawal. She had stopped seeking help, stopped speaking to anyone, having lost faith in a system that continuously overlooked her dignity and basic needs.

Intervention:

With no immediate family support, her survival hinged on the compassion of a distant relative, Pinki Kumari (name changed), who herself was struggling to make ends meet but ensured Susmita received one meal a day. During one of the community visits, our team identified her and immediately intervened and provided a dry ration kit to address immediate nutritional needs and initiate the process of securing long, denied entitlements. The team carefully collected and submitted all necessary documents to reapply for her Widow Pension and housing support under government schemes.

In addition, the organization's Community Social Worker began regular follow-ups to ensure Susmita's case did not fall through the cracks again. The intervention also included sensitizing local governance structures about her condition and advocating for her inclusion in local welfare schemes.



I saw Sangeeta lose all hope, but after LAW Foundation stepped in, it felt like someone had finally listened, she started to smile again

~ **Pinki (relative of Susmita)**

Sangeeta finally spoke

on the second visit, as her voice trembling yet firm, the social worker felt the weight of silence break, witnessing a quiet resurgence of trust and a flicker of hope returning to someone long unheard.

4. SUSTAINABLE MENTAL HEALTH: BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH CARE & CONTINUITY

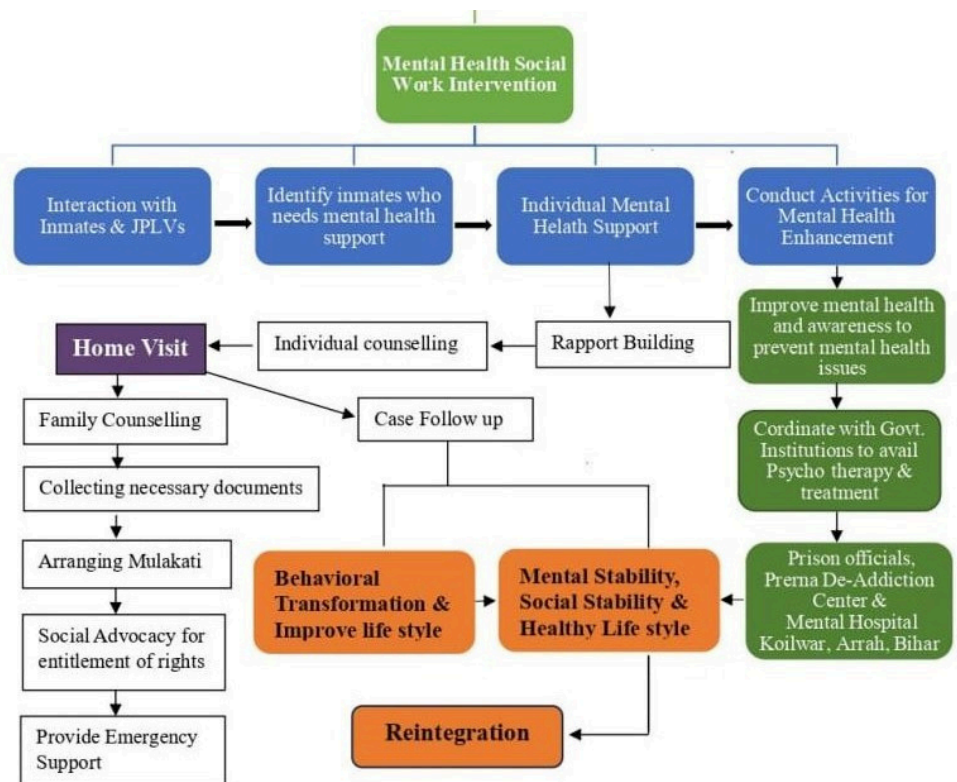
Mental health is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of overall well-being, particularly among marginalized communities, incarcerated individuals, and those affected by systemic inequalities. The Sustainable Mental Health Initiative of the LAW Foundation created long-term, accessible, and community-driven mental health support systems that cater to vulnerable populations. This initiative focuses on structural and sustainable approaches to mental health care, ensuring continuous support, resilience-building, and reintegration into society.



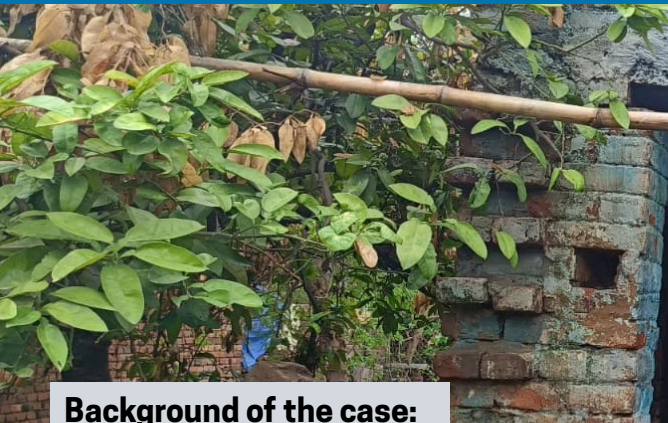
Life inside prison is extremely challenging. Individuals confront various issues affecting physical and emotional challenges inside prison. They have to leave their loved ones behind to be secluded inside a closed environment, away from the easy amenities of life. Everyone experiences emotional ups and downs, but for those incarcerated, these challenges are exacerbated by the absence of emotional, moral, and mental support from their families. In such dire circumstances, inmates require someone who can listen to them without judgment, offering moral and mental health support. This is where the role of a Mental health social worker (MHSW).

becomes crucial. They approach each individual with empathy and without judgment, offering essential services such as mental health and moral support, facilitating meetings with family members (Mulakati), assisting with legal documentation, organizing meetings with advocates, providing case updates, and conducting de-addiction and mental health awareness sessions within the prison. Their consistent presence within the prison fosters trust and provides a safe space for inmates to express their concerns, ultimately supporting their emotional healing and rehabilitation.

Intervention Model for Mental Health Social Worker



HOLISTIC INTERVENTION FOR SHINA'S MENTAL HEALTH AND LEGAL STRUGGLES



Background of the case:

Having experienced a history of abuse, Shina was abandoned by her substance-using husband in 2019, mistreated by in-laws, and subjected to sexual harassment by her father-in-law. Her trauma impacted her bond with her children, whose education was blocked due to missing Aadhar cards withheld by her husband. She had previously fled both a mental hospital in Visakhapatnam and a shelter home in Chennai, leaving her children behind. Living in poverty with her children, Suyash and Chaya, Shina had stopped taking PTSD medication provided by one of the NGOs, unaware of its purpose.

Intervention:

On July 10, 2024, the team visited Shina in Harnaut after meeting her at Patna City Court. Though initially hard to reach, she eventually met the team and explained her situation and the family's insensitivity. The team then consulted psychiatrist Dr. Sachchidanand regarding her symptoms in terms of PTSD. Suspecting psychosis, he recommended an evaluation. Shobha agreed, and after the examination, the diagnosis was confirmed. The doctor advised pausing legal proceedings and prioritizing her mental health treatment. He prescribed antipsychotic medication and suggested regular follow-ups to monitor her progress and adjust the treatment plan as needed.

Additionally, she was provided with emergency ration support and monetary assistance to ease her immediate hardships. The team also assured her of continued psychosocial support, regular follow-ups, and help with accessing essential documents for her children's education.



I was lost and unheard in jail, but through LAW Foundation's support, I found care, justice, and a path back to life.

~ Shina

Sustained effort

The intervention marked the beginning of a sustained effort toward her recovery, stability, and reintegration into the community.



3 major type of initiatives under this theme:

- Mental Health Awareness Session
- Awareness on Substance abuse
- Deaddiction session



4.1. Mental Health Awareness Sessions

Seven mental health awareness sessions were conducted by the team on various occasions inside the prison, specifically targeting the vulnerable population to address their psychological well-being and emotional needs. On World Mental Health Day, LAW Foundation, in collaboration with DLSA and District Jail Phulwari Sharif, organized a mental health camp for inmates. Renowned psychiatrist Dr. Sachchidanand Singh led the session, addressing issues like anxiety, depression, stress, and substance abuse. Around 20-25 inmates attended, and the doctor later assessed eight individuals, diagnosing conditions such as psychosis, schizophrenia, and illness anxiety disorder.



The camp highlighted the critical need for mental health services in prisons, where such conditions often go unnoticed, and marked an important step in prioritizing inmate well-being.

CATEGORIES OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SESSIONS

Stress Management & Coping Mechanism

Depression, Anxiety & Common Mental Disorders

Mindfulness & Relaxation Techniques

Self-Awareness and Emotional Regulation

Importance of Seeking Help & Support Systems

Anger Management & Conflict Resolution

Dr. Sachchidanand Singh, a psychiatrist, conducted an insightful session on stress management and self-awareness for inmates. During the session, participants were encouraged to openly share their experiences and the challenges they face within the prison environment. Dr. Singh introduced practical techniques to manage stress, highlighting the importance of identifying stress triggers and understanding personal limits. He also shared valuable strategies for improving mental well-being, such as practicing

mindfulness, engaging in regular physical activity, and maintaining healthy sleep habits. The session reinforced the significance of seeking mental health support and the power of self-reflection in building emotional resilience and coping with life in custody.

The session created a safe space for inmates to express themselves, fostering a sense of community and emotional solidarity. Many participants expressed that it was the first time they felt truly heard and understood within the confines of prison walls.

“

Before the session, I felt lost and angry all the time, now I know how to calm my mind and ask for help when I need it.

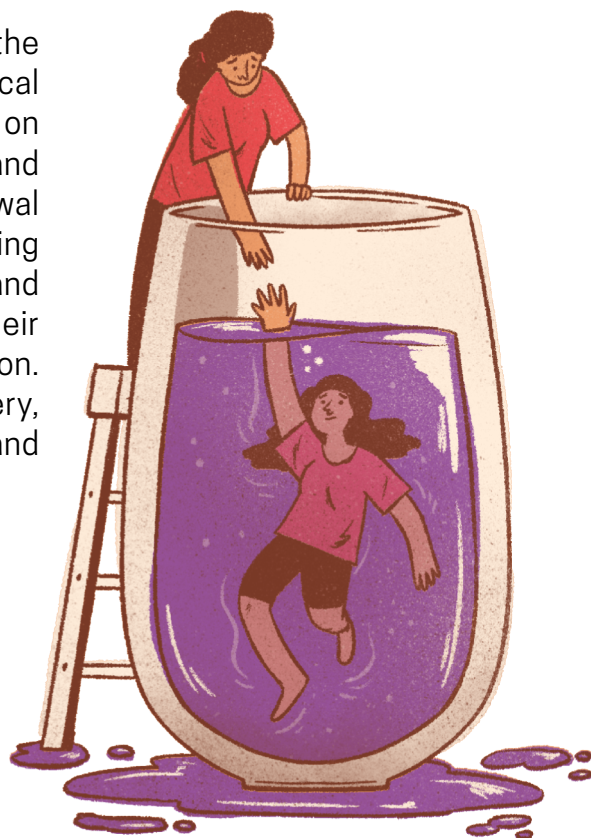
~ One of the inmate

In one of the sessions, Dr. Manoj introduced practical techniques for coping with stress, including visualization exercises that helped participants relax and feel more at ease. It underscored the importance of recognizing stressors and the role of self-reflection in emotional well-being. Our efforts highlight the critical need for consistent mental health support within the prison environment. Inmates shared that these exercises not only brought temporary relief but also empowered them to manage their emotions more constructively in day-to-day prison life.

4.2. Awareness Sessions on Substance Abuse

4 sessions on the substance abuse were conducted by the team. Discussions focused on the psychological and physical effects of drug and alcohol dependency, the impact on mental health, and the link between substance abuse and criminal behavior. Inmates were educated on withdrawal symptoms, relapse prevention, and the importance of seeking timely help. Interactive activities, including group sharing and reflective exercises, were used to help inmates identify their triggers and understand the root causes of their addiction. Counselors emphasized the possibility of recovery, highlighting the availability of de-addiction resources and support systems post-release.

These sessions helped reduce stigma around seeking help and motivated several inmates to voluntarily register for further counseling and rehabilitation support. It fostered a sense of community and mutual support among inmates, encouraging open conversations about addiction and mental well-being.



4.3 Mental Health Awareness in one Sub-jail

In collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Patna, and one Sub-Jail of Bihar, under the supervision of the Research & Development Centre (RDC) of LAW Foundation, organized an interactive session with inmates on the occasion of World Mental Health Day (10-10-2024). The session aimed to raise awareness and address mental health issues, particularly emotional regulation while creating a safe environment for the inmates to express their feelings and emotions.



Activity one: Balloon Blow Activity

They were asked to blow the balloon to the maximum extent they can blow.

They thoroughly got immersed in the activity with the essence of enthusiasm. It taught them that accumulation of suppressed emotions and how they can explode if not dealt with in a healthy way.



Activity two: Projective drawing

Drawing an imagined scenery through a sketch pen on a blank sheet

41

Drawings were made

This technique allowed the inmates to express their emotional state indirectly, projecting their inner thoughts and feelings through creative outlets. The overall session led:

Meaningful dialogue & Collective action towards Mental Health challenges

Supportive environment

Encouragement of emotional expression

Better sense of understanding for each other

From Despair to Hope: Supporting Recovery from Addiction

Background of the case:

Chaman incarcerated in a sub-jail of Bihar under Sections 379 and 411 of the IPC. Diagnosed with HIV/AIDS during his jail term, he now receives regular treatment at PMCH. At home, his elderly mother faces emotional and financial hardship but continues to hope for his recovery and return.



4.4 De-addiction sessions

The team of Mental health social workers (MHSWs) conducted **7 sessions on De-addiction** programs in the prisons of Bihar about addiction, its causes, and its consequences. A total number of 84 inmates have benefited from the sessions. A large number of inmates suffer from mental health issues and the consequences of drug addiction, which exacerbates their mental health inside the jail. In addition to the significance of the awareness session, it also created a positive environment for mental health inside the prison. Through discussions and video presentations, the team encouraged the inmates to share their experiences and reflect on their substance abuse disorders.

Inmates were invited to share their personal struggles with addiction, which created a space for peer learning and empathy. Many expressed a sense of relief in realizing they were not alone and began showing interest in long-term rehabilitation support. It aimed to reduce stigma, cultivate a positive environment for healing, and motivate inmates to envision a life beyond addiction.

The sessions highlighted the importance of self-reflection and conscious choices in overcoming addiction. The inmates responded positively, appreciating the opportunity to engage in discussions and activities beyond their mundane prison life.

LAW Foundation intervened in Chaman Kumar's case in August 2024 during a routine prison visit, where the team identified signs of substance withdrawal and emotional distress. Upon interaction, Chaman shared his story of addiction, peer pressure, and the theft that led to his arrest. Recognizing his need for support, the team enrolled him in in-prison de-addiction counseling and began regular mental health sessions focused on coping and behavior change. Simultaneously, the legal team helped file for bail and provided assistance with case documentation.

After sustained counseling

Chaman was granted bail and referred to a rehabilitation center for continued care and skill development. The intervention not only helped him begin his recovery journey but also brought relief and dignity back to his struggling family.

5. VOICES FROM THE GROUND: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES THROUGH OUTREACH

- Socio-Legal literacy is key to empowerment, and LAW Foundation conducts awareness and skill-building programs on socio-legal rights, legal procedures, and redressal mechanisms. These sessions are held in prisons, rural areas, and vulnerable populations, equipping them with knowledge to safeguard their rights and prevent socio-legal exploitation.

983

Engagement
& Outreach
event

Awareness programs

49

Institutional visits

39

Home visits

162

Court visits

489*

Community visits

72

By Advocates & SWs

Prison visits

172



Beneficiaries' categories

Government school students

Youth, women, and men of the villages

Panchayat members

Categories of the programs

Vocalising against Abuse

POCSO Act Awareness

Child Marriage

Legal Aid Camp

Menstrual Cycle Awareness

De-addiction session

5.1 Key Outreach Programs

a. Legal Aid Camp in Jamukh

On the occasion of Gandhi Jayanti (02-10-2024), the LAW Foundation Patna (India) team successfully organized a free legal counseling camp at Jamukh Panchayat, Jehanabad. The program took place at the Panchayat Bhawan, with the generous support of the Mukhiya and Panchayat members.

65

Registered queries



More than 100 people attended the camp, and around and received counseling. The legal counseling camp addressed issues related to civil cases, criminal cases, and social entitlement rights.

* does not include the data of Advocates' visits given their job profile



Among all the queries, it was notable that around 18 women from marginalized communities presented similar cases. These women had taken loans of ₹50,000 from a government bank in Kinari, Magadh, but were deceived by a mediator who only disbursed ₹17,000 to ₹22,000 to each of them.

Some of these women were also wrongfully implicated in crimes they did not commit.

Their suffering emphasized the need for organizations like ours to reach communities fragmented by power dynamics and systemic neglect and provide them with a way to voice their concerns and seek solutions. Through consistent engagement and trust-building, we aim to create safe spaces where even the most marginalized feel seen, heard, and empowered.

b. One-day conclave “Scope of Socio-Legal Aid Services within The Justice System of Bihar”

The scope of socio-legal aid services within the justice system of Bihar was critically discussed in the One-day conclave in collaboration with the Child Rights Centre (CRC) of Chanakya National Law University, Patna, on 06th of April 2024 from 10:00 am – 02:00 pm. It brought together distinguished resource persons and key stakeholders, including Legal experts, Jail-Superintendents, NGOs, Social workers, and Researchers. Following topics were covered:



Scope of Criminal Justice
Social Worker

Parental imprisonment &
children well-being

Probation of Offenders Act, 1958

Support for
Poor Prisoners
Scheme

Critical role of socio-legal aid

Legal literacy & awareness

Physical & Mental-wellbeing
of Inmates

In conclusion, the one-day conclave served as a catalyst for meaningful dialogue, collaboration, and collective action towards enhancing socio-legal aid services within Bihar's justice system

By building on the insights gained and leveraging the commitment of all stakeholders, Bihar is poised to make significant strides in advancing access to justice and upholding the rights of its citizens.

5.2 MADHUBANI AS HEALING: EMPOWERMENT THROUGH ART

From May' 2024, we introduced Madhubani painting classes in Nagwan village, Jehanabad, under the skilled guidance of Sangita Kumari, a Government of India-certified Mithila art trainer. The classes brought together women and girls from diverse age groups and socio-economic backgrounds, creating a shared space of learning, expression, and healing focused towards creativity and livelihood.

With each session, the walls of Nagwan came alive with intricate lines, vibrant colors, and stories rooted in the cultural heritage of Mithila. Girls, many of whom had never held a brush before, found not only joy and confidence in their artistic expression but also a renewed sense of self-worth and possibility.

► *Team after the completion of one of the classes*



The smiles, the focus, the joy of creation, this initiative reaffirmed that sometimes, a brush and a blank wall can do what words cannot: paint a future filled with hope, dignity, and self-expression.



► *Inside the Classroom: A Moment with the Teacher*

Beyond being a space for self-expression, this initiative nurtured emotional resilience and economic agency. We envision this as just the beginning of a sustained engagement, where these women can continue refining their skills and eventually use their art as a means of livelihood through exhibitions, product collaborations, and participation in local art markets. Through each brushstroke, they're painting a future of hope, identity, and independence.



► *One of the paintings by the students*

5.3 Voices of Dignity: Advancing Gender Justice Through Grounded Interventions

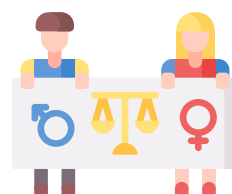
Gender justice is a fundamental pillar of human rights, ensuring equality, dignity, and protection for individuals regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Women and LGBTQ+ individuals often face systemic discrimination, legal barriers, and socio-economic marginalization, making access to justice a significant challenge. Our Gender Justice Initiative aims to provide socio-legal aid and psychological support to safeguard their rights and create an inclusive society. These includes:



i. Legal Aid and Advocacy:

Offered **17 pro bono legal representation** with cases filed under relevant gender rights laws, and supporting LGBTQ+ individuals facing discrimination or wrongful criminalization. These efforts helped amplify marginalized voices in the legal system and ensured access to justice for those often excluded from formal legal protections.

17 Legal Case filing



ii. Psychological and Social Support:

9 survivors were given mental health counseling with the aid from support groups, and vocational training to ensure holistic recovery and reintegration. These interventions helped rebuild their self-confidence and emotional well-being. Survivors also received ongoing follow-up support to strengthen their journey toward independence and resilience. Many have now become peer mentors, offering support to others facing similar challenges.

iii. Awareness and policy reforms

Eight gender justice and violence sensitization sessions were conducted, creating safe spaces for dialogue and healing. Additionally, 23 cases of gender-based violence received emergency socio-legal support, facilitating access to rehabilitation services for the survivors. These interventions not only addressed immediate crises but also fostered long-term empowerment through rights awareness and community support.



WHEN IDENTITY BECOMES A CRIME: TRANSGENDER DALIT WOMEN'S FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Background of the case:

On December 20, 2024, 11 Dalit transgender women were unjustly arrested under the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, on false charges of unlawful assembly, extortion, and theft. Rejected by their families and surviving through begging, they were criminalized despite having only minimal belongings. Their 14-day incarceration during court holidays exposed the deep-rooted discrimination faced by transgender individuals, especially those from marginalized backgrounds, with denied dignity, justice, and support under the SITARA scheme.

Intervention:

The team immediately intervened and mobilized legal aid resources, coordinated with defense lawyers, and submitted urgent bail applications despite court closures due to the holiday season. After 14 days, the women were granted bail, and the Foundation provided post-release support, including access to counseling, safe shelter, and rehabilitation planning. However, their physical freedom didn't erase the emotional and psychological trauma they endured. The legal system, which should have protected them, had instead deepened their marginalization. After their release, the team conducted an awareness session on the SITARA scheme to help them better understand their rights, social reintegration, and available rehabilitation support.



We were treated like criminals for simply existing. For 14 days, we lost our freedom, our dignity, but the LAW Foundation saw us, heard us, and stood by us when no one else did. Their support gave us not just bail, but belief, that we deserve justice, respect, and a life with dignity.

~Reda

Fight for True Justice

Until transgender individuals are no longer criminalized for their identity, the fight for true justice and equality must continue. The journey toward societal acceptance and legal reform is long but essential for building a just and inclusive society.

5.4. PARTNERING FOR CHANGE: COLLECTIVE ACTION, GREATER IMPACT

LAW Foundation has built impactful collaborations with key institutions such as the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), Ministry of Justice, CWC, and the Prison Department to facilitate systemic change and access to justice. Partnerships with the One Stop Centre (OSC) and Women Protection Officers have strengthened support services for survivors of gender-based violence. Collaborations with Pratham, Wayve Foundation, CREA, Bihar Development Collective, and Agami have further expanded the Foundation's reach.

i. Bihar Development Collective

LAW Foundation collaborated with the Bihar Development Collective and participated in several meetings with grassroots organizations across Bihar, united in their mission to transform the state's social sector. Represented by Rajendra Prajapati, we engaged in a collaborative platform that foster relationship-building and collective problem-solving to enhance community impact.



ii. AGAMI

It was a privilege to attend the Agami Justice-makers Mela, a vibrant two-day gathering of over 700 changemakers committed to transforming the field of law and justice through stories, co-creation, games, and art. Adv Santosh Kumar and Advocate Sanjeev Sharma from the LAW Foundation represented us at this inspiring event. We had the opportunity to share our work on ensuring socio-legal aid for poor and historically marginalized prisoners and exchanged ideas with individuals striving to make justice accessible for all.

iii. WAYVE Foundation

Across one year, 5 sessions were taken by WAYVE Foundation on empowering marginalized women's leadership. These sessions brought together grassroots social workers and practitioners from across India who are committed to working on constitutional values. Participants shared their experiences and challenges while learning new techniques and strategies to enhance their leadership capacities. Neha Perveen from the LAW Foundation Patna (India) attended the program and shared insights about the organization's work in Bihar.



iv. Development Management Institute

In Sept 2024, LAW Foundation collaborated with the Development Management Institute, Patna. Md Quadir Ali, Head of Research & Development Centre, LAW Foundation supervised two students for a month under the *Development Immersion* program (PDM 11) of the *Post Graduate Programme in Development Management* (PDM) of DMI. These two students were placed in Nagawan, Jehanabad, Bihar and went under immersive learning through house-hold surveys, PLA activities, and village observations to comprehensively understand communities' socio-economic conditions.



6. MEDIA & PUBLICATIONS

The work of LAW Foundation has consistently drawn attention across multiple platforms, media, academic, and policy spaces. Some of the publications and prints are illustrated below:

I. Newspaper Prints

निर्दोष महिला 27 माह रही जेल में, आरोपित को जमानत

जागरण संवाददाता, पटना : चार वर्षीय बच्ची का अपहरण करने के मामले में दो वर्ष तीन महीने तक जेल में रही रुक्मिणी देवी को अदालत ने बरी कर दिया। रुक्मिणी पटना जंक्शन के प्लेटफार्म नंबर दस पर भीख मांगती थीं। अपहृत बच्ची को उनके बगल में देखा गया था, जिस कारण पुलिस ने उन्हें गिरफ्तार कर जेल भेजा था। तब वह न्यायिक हिरासत में ही रही। एक एनजीओ से जुड़े अधिवक्ता संतोष कुमार और शालिनी ने उन्हें कानूनी मदद दी, जिसके बाद उनकी



अधिवक्ता के साथ रुक्मिणी देवी • जागरण

बच्ची अपहरण मामले में पुलिस सही तरीके से नहीं रख पाई अपना पक्ष, आरोपित हो गए दोषमुक्त

27 जून को रुक्मिणी देवी और नौ जुलाई को गिरफ्तार हुई थी रेखा देवी छोड़ आया था। पुलिस ने जंक्शन पर लगे सीसी कैमरों के फुटेज को खंगाला तो पाया कि रुक्मिणी के बगल में बच्ची सो रही थी, फिर उसे गुलाबी साड़ी पहनी महिला करबिगाहिया को तरफ लेकर चली गई। रुक्मिणी को पीरबहोर थाने की पुलिस ने गिरफ्तार किया था। उसने बच्ची को बाबत किसी तरह की जानकारी होने से अनभिज्ञता जाहिर की थी, लेकिन परिस्थिति साक्ष्य के आधार पर पुलिस ने उसे जेल भेज दिया। नौ जुलाई को बच्ची को रेखा देवी के पास से बरामद करने का दावा

One of the Intervention by the Legal Team getting featured in Dainik Jagran Newspaper

बाढ़ उपकारा में कैदियों के बीच लगाया गया जागरुकता शिविर

पटना/कार्यालय प्रतिनिधि। जिले के बाढ़ उपकारा में विश्व मानसिक स्वास्थ्य दिवस के अवसर पर बंदियों के बीच जिला विधिक सेवा प्राधिकार के द्वारा जागरुकता शिविर का आयोजन किया गया। शिविर जिला विधिक सेवा प्राधिकार के सचिव नितिन त्रिपाठी के निर्देश पर लगायी गयी। इस मौके पर पैनल अधिवक्ता संतोष कुमार ने कहा कि बंदियों को जेल में अपने मानसिक स्वास्थ्य को कैसे अच्छा बनाये रखे इस पर विस्तृत रूप से चर्चा की। सामाजिक कार्यकर्ताओं के द्वारा बंदियों के बीच गुब्बारा फुलाने एवं पेंटिंग जैसे दो एक्टिविटी भी कराये गये। बंदी गुब्बारा फुलाने के दौरान काफी खुश दिखे। दूसरे एक्टिविटी में उन्होंने सादे पेपर पर आकर्षक पेंटिंग बनाए। बता दें कि विश्व मानसिक स्वास्थ्य दिवस पहली बार 10 अक्टूबर 1992 को रिचर्ड हंटर की पहल पर मनाया गया था। शिविर में संस्था लॉ फाउंडेशन के आनंद, कादिर, जेलर गौतम कुमार सिंह, जेल विजिटिंग अधिवक्ता ब्रजकिशोर प्रसाद व बंदीगण उपस्थित थे।

The team organized an awareness on World Mental Health Day in one of the Sub-Jail of Bihar



Adv Santosh Kumar, honored as the Best Panel Advocate by the DLSA, Patna.

II. Invitations



Shubhendu, meeting with S. Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs

नोनही पंचायत में सखी वार्ता कार्यक्रम का हुआ आयोजन



कार्यक्रम में शामिल महिलाएं.

संवाददाता, जहानाबाद नगर

सरकारी लाभ से लाभान्वित करवाना इत्यादि बातें उपस्थित महिलाओं को बताया गया।

काको प्रखंड के नोनही पंचायत में महिला व बाल विकास निगम के निर्देश पर सखी वार्ता कार्यक्रम का

उक्त कार्यक्रम लॉ फाउंडेशन के सहयोग से करवाया गया। उक्त

Awareness session in collaboration with One Stop Centre (OSC) of Jehanabad

एडवोकेट संतोष बने पटना के सर्वश्रेष्ठ पैनल अधिवक्ता विधिक सेवा प्राधिकार ने वकीलों को किया सम्मानित

पटना/कार्यालय प्रतिनिधि। जिला विधिक सेवा प्राधिकार, पटना के सचिव-सह-सब जज नितिन त्रिपाठी ने पैनल अधिवक्ता संतोष कुमार को पटना जिले के बेस्ट पैनल अधिवक्ता-2024 सम्मान से सम्मानित किया है। यह सम्मान श्री कुमार को जेल में बंद गरीब व्यक्ति को निःशुल्क कानूनी मदद करने, बेल कराने, जेल एवं कम्युनिटी में लीगल अवैरनेस कार्यक्रम करने तथा विधिक सेवा के क्षेत्र में हमेशा आगे बढ़कर उत्कृष्ट कार्य करने को



नागरिक को रिहा कराये हैं। श्री कुमार जिला विधिक सेवा प्राधिकार, पटना से 2021 से जुड़कर गरीबों को न्याय दिला रहे हैं। वही लॉ स्कूल, एनजीओ के साथ भी जुड़ कर गरीबों के न्याय के लिए लगातार काम कर रहे हैं। एडवोकेट संतोष कुमार ने बताया की वर्ष - 2017 से अब तक 600 से भी अधिक लोगों को निःशुल्क



Praveen, invited as Resource person

III. Research Paper / Magazine:

Introduction
The determinants of mental health are vastly different across regions, situations, and individuals. They are even more distinct for prisoners, as their experiences behind bars are shaped by factors almost entirely outside the ambit of 'normal' society. But global mental health often overlooks the different ways in which people experience mental well-being or the lack of it, and especially disregards the plight of prisoners.

Mental health as a global concern has gained significant attention in recent years. The fundamental aim of global mental health is to promote mental well-being and healthcare for everyone across the world, as well as encourage holistic approaches to mental health values and human rights.¹ However, although global mental health aims at promoting inclusive, equal access to mental healthcare, these principles are not adequately implemented, especially when it comes to those in prison. There is a higher prevalence of mental illness among prisoners compared to the non-incarcerated population across the world. This might be due to several factors such as socioeconomic disadvantage, histories of trauma, substance abuse, lack of access to mental healthcare, social stigma associated with mental health, overcrowding in prisons, and lack of mental health awareness among prison officials.

In India too, incarcerated individuals continue to face inadequate mental healthcare as well as lack access to it.

Additionally, in India, the inequalities perpetuated by the caste system significantly affect mental well-being, as marginalised individuals face systemic discrimination and limited access to resources. However, global mental health efforts tend to overlook the unique challenges of region-specific issues. This extends to marginalised individuals in prisons too, where caste operates, and so their mental well-being is often even more at risk.

The non-inclusion of prisoners' well-being in global mental health discourse perpetuates the marginalisation of affected communities and undermines efforts to address mental health disparities on a global scale.

This essay strives to explore prisoners' mental health as a global mental health concern. In addition, this piece will elaborate on a story of a prisoner from the lens of mental health within correctional institutions.

Mental Health in Bihar's Prisons
In the state of Bihar, prisoners are significantly overcrowded, exceeding their capacity by over 19,000 inmates, which contributes to compromised living standards, limited access to healthcare resources and recreational activities, lack of mental health facilities, etc.² These factors increase tensions among inmates and impact their overall well-being. According to Prison Statistics India's 2021 report,

80% of unnatural deaths among prisoners are suicides and are predominantly linked to mental health concerns.³

As a social worker, I frequently provide prisoners with the necessary assistance to enhance their mental health. During my visits and interaction with prisoners, I have observed that incarceration compounds the effects of isolation and stigmatises the individual, hampering their mental health. A former prisoner said, "Once you're in jail, everything is over. People call you a criminal. When individuals leave prison, they are stigmatised, discriminated against, and treated badly in society." This fear of social rejection adds to the prisoners' deteriorating mental health. Moreover, the stigma and labelling associated with seeking mental healthcare contribute to prisoners' reluctance to receive the necessary treatment and support.⁴ The absence of awareness about mental health and the care options is yet another barrier.

From my interactions with prisoners experiencing mental health challenges, I learned that both first-time incarceration and long-term incarceration severely affect the mental health of prisoners. Separation from loved ones exacerbates these issues and causes emotional damage. In such a situation, a non-judgemental listener becomes important for the prisoners to freely share their thoughts and feelings with

I met Amit Kumar (name changed), a twenty-year-old incarcerated in Phulwari District Jail in Bihar's Patna city. Though he was initially reluctant to share his experiences and concerns, after multiple interactions, he spoke about his past and his family circumstances and asked for legal assistance. His imprisonment had compelled his elderly mother to sell balloons for survival.

I was the sole earner in my family, but I have been in jail for so long. This was the first time I felt the sting, I feel angry, I feel strange. Amit Kumar

I acknowledged all that he was experiencing and listened to him. During each visit, I tried to involve him in activities like storytelling and singing songs and tried to make him laugh. I observed a noticeable change in his behaviour and overall well-being.

This story not only highlights the mental health impact of incarceration and being separated from family members but also the significance of mental health support and the positive changes it can bring about in prison environments. Undertaking interventions to improve the mental well-being of prisoners is crucial.

Conclusion

Incarcerated individuals often face more challenges to their mental health as well as significant barriers to accessing adequate care, and this is more so in the case of states like Bihar where the prison infrastructure is poor. The stigma surrounding mental health and incarceration exacerbates these challenges and further alienates prisoners. There is a need for comprehensive strategies to address mental health issues in jails. Efforts have to be made to improve the mental health and well-being of incarcerated individuals based on the principles of global mental health, including access to care, support, and awareness.

Gurudev Nanda is a social worker at the LAW Foundation, is dedicated to enhancing social well-being and mental health in prisons and communities. With an M.A. in Sociology and Social Anthropology from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati, he focuses on empowering marginalised communities and promoting equal access to social justice.

Challenges of Prison Inmates with Disabilities: Need for Comprehensive Data and Prison Support System for Access to Justice

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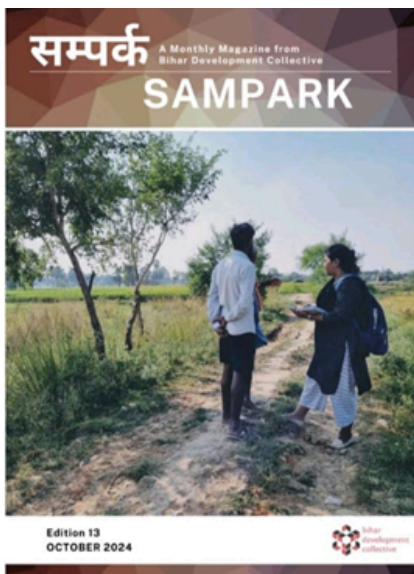
Abstract

Disability, being a multifold concept, encompasses a variety of physical and cognitive limitations impacting an individual's capacity to perform activities. With the intersection of disability and incarceration, inmates with disability encounter discrimination and abuse, with the structural failure of the

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Praveen, Shubhendu, and Quadir's contribution were published in the form of a research paper in UGC journal

Gurudev's contribution in the social sector through LAW Foundation getting published in the Magazine



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Shalini's contribution in the Legal field through LAW Foundation getting published in the SAMPARK Magazine

Caste no bar in prison

Praveen Kumar
Valay Singh

A recent Supreme Court judgment has struck down discriminatory provisions that have been found coded in prison manuals across India. While the judgment provides a concrete legal basis to advocate for reforms within prison manuals, the mere removal of discriminatory provisions is inadequate as caste-based discrimination is deeply entrenched within the culture and practice of prisons.

Every morning, the nearly 4,000 inmates of Bihar's central jail wake up at 5 am to the sound of a metal gong. The night had been spent in wards that are severely overcrowded. The wards are also organised along caste lines although this is not acknowledged officially. Upon entering the prison, the inmates are allotted a ward on the basis of their caste, be it upper caste, Dalit or Other Backward Classes. Each ward has its own toilets, which are almost always unsanitary. Some states had specific provisions in their manuals directing that only inmates from a certain community would be tasked with cleaning toilets, but even in states like Bihar which do not have any discriminatory provisions, Dalit inmates alone are given these 'polluting' and 'degrading' tasks. Between 8 am and noon, convicts are sent to work in prison-based workshops, making goods like mustard oil, bread, and wooden furniture. Here too, caste plays a role in the allocation of work; the hardest tasks are reserved for Dalits and the more manual or clerical or more white-collar duties are taken up by the upper castes. This is not done officially either; it simply is the practice and culture of prisons across India.

Inside prisons, caste, religion, and economic status are not manifested through identity markers colored on paper alone. Names are asked, told, and revealed. If you are from one of the so-called upper castes, you would not be expected to do certain chores. If, on the other hand, you bear a sur-

name such as Manjhi, Das, Rajak, Seta, Paswan, Chaudhary, Dom and Ram, you are automatically assigned to scheduled caste/scheduled tribe communities — in Bihar, there are over 19 such groups including OBCs — then, according to prison manuals of several states, you'd be made to do work like cleaning toilets, washing laundry and other such tasks that are considered polluting and degrading.

Although Bihar's manual contains no such provision, owing to the progressive politics that the state has adopted and pioneered under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan and Karpoori Thakur in the decades after Independence, it would be naive to believe that caste-based discrimination is not practised in the state's prisons.

Pinku Thakur (name changed to maintain privacy) belongs to the Nai caste, a group traditionally seen as barbers. However, within Bihar's highly stratified caste system, Thakurs, despite some social status, often face caste-based marginalisation, especially in interactions with dominant upper-caste groups and State institutions like prisons. In 2022, Pinku was arrested under the Bihar Prohibition and Excise Act, 2016, and accused of trading in illegal liquor. Although the charges against him were yet to be proven, Pinku was incarcerated as an undertrial in the central jail where his real ordeal began.

Upon entering the jail, Pinku faced intense caste-based discrimination. Inside the prison, he was harassed by upper castes who imposed manual tasks upon him, singling him out due to his caste identity. He was forced to clean the toilets of the ward, wash the utensils used by other inmates, and perform personal chores for them. Pinku's caste, though not as oppressed as Dalits, still placed him in a vulnerable position within the prison system where the unwritten codes of

work altogether. In Pinku's case, his ward mates, predominantly from privileged castes, imposed these manual duties on him as part of the social hierarchy that exists in the prison.

Sumit Manjhi (name changed to maintain privacy), a middle-aged man from the Musahar community in rural Bihar, was arrested in 2022 under the Bihar Prohibition and Excise (Amendment) Act, 2022. The Musahar community is classified as SC, the lowest tier in the caste-based classification in Hindu religion. They are referred to as Madhulis because they are the most oppressed among the Dalit communities.

Since Bihar passed an Act banning production, sale and consumption of liquor in 2016, it has disproportionately affected the Musahar community. The prison guards, indifferent to his complaints, reinforced this discrimination by either turning a blind eye or tacitly approving of the caste hierarchy within the jail. Pinku's repeated protests about his ill-treatment fell on deaf ears as the prison authorities were reluctant to intervene in what they deemed were 'prisoner's issues'. His dignity as a human being was eroded by this institutionalised caste hierarchy dictated behaviour.

The discrimination Pinku Thakur faces is symptomatic of a larger issue in Bihar where the caste system continues to permeate all aspects of life, including the criminal justice system. Within the prison environment, caste-based hierarchies thrive, creating unequal power dynamics among prisoners. While undertrial prisoners like Pinku await justice, they are subjected to harsh social realities that mirror the outside world's caste structures.

Prison labour, in theory, is supposed to be shared equally among inmates; however, caste often dictates who does what. Lower-caste prisoners are typically assigned degrading tasks, such as cleaning latrines, picking garbage from wards, cleaning stinking dustbins and messy sheds, while upper-caste prisoners may undertake other duties or avoid such

Praveen's contribution published in The Telegraph



Quadir, Shreya, and Gurudev, presenting the Team's work on Female inmates in an ICSSR Conference

6.1 FUTURE OUTLOOK

We aim to expand our reach, ensuring timely legal assistance, strengthening advocacy efforts, and integrating mental health support within the justice framework. Following are our vision that we want to achieve in the next six months:

1. Expansion of Socio-Legal Aid Services

Extend the existing socio-legal aid to more undertrial prisoners, marginalized communities, and vulnerable individuals.



450+

Legal Aid services to be provided

275+

Social Entitlement Rights services to be provided

1030+

Community engagement & Outreach programs to be conducted

2. Strengthening Jail Para-Legal Volunteers (JPLVs)

Train and deploy more JPLVs to assist prisoners with bail, case follow-ups, and legal literacy to increase effective support to our team members

4. Integration of Mental Health Support

Increasing collaboration with the mental health professionals to provide counseling and rehabilitation services for marginalized and incarcerated individuals.

5. Technology-supported Legal Aid

Develop digital platforms and helplines for legal assistance, case tracking, and awareness dissemination.

3. Enhancing the capacity of Community Para-Legal Volunteers (CPLVs)

Through specialized training and hands-on socio-legal workshops CPLVs will be equipped to assist marginalized communities in accessing justice, social entitlements, and legal remedies more efficiently. From their understanding, several booklets on social-entitlement rights would be prepared.



Thank You!

We thank the whole LAW Foundation team members, our stakeholders, and our partners for their continued generous support in our efforts to contribute to the mission forward and spread

HAPPINESS.



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