CENTRE FOR LEGAL AID PROGRAMME (CLAP)

presents

2nd NATIONAL ARTICLE WRITING COMPETITION SYMPOSIUM ON LEGAL AID AND ALLIED LAWS

on the theme

"Justice Deferred: Examining the Enforcement Gaps in Legal Aid in India and the Fiduciary Duty of Advocates in Ensuring Access to Justice"

ABOUT NUSRL

Established in 2010 by the Government of Jharkhand under the National University of Study and Research in Law, Ranchi Act, the National University of Study and Research in Law (NUSRL) has grown into one of the country's respected centres for legal education. The University offers a full spectrum of programs, B.A. LL.B. (Hons.), BBA LL.B. (Hons.), LL.M., Ph.D. in Law, and postgraduate diploma courses, designed to build strong legal foundations while encouraging research and independent thought.

Over the years, NUSRL's alumni have gone on to serve as judges, law officers in government departments, and practising advocates at the Bar, with many earning distinction across the legal profession. This track record reflects the University's continued emphasis on academic rigour and real-world readiness.

The University's strength lies equally in its faculty, scholars trained at leading institutions in India and abroad, with a substantial body of published research, books, and papers to their name. Students benefit from specialised courses in areas such as criminal law, forensic science, corporate law, and intellectual property rights, gaining a deep, practice-oriented understanding of these fields.

ABOUT CLAP

The Centre for Legal Aid Programme (CLAP), NUSRL Ranchi, is a student-driven initiative committed to advancing access to justice, legal literacy, and community empowerment. Recognised under the Department of Justice's Pro Bono Club Scheme and affiliated with JHALSA and DLSA Ranchi, CLAP bridges the gap between legal institutions and marginalised communities through legal aid clinics, client counselling, prison visits, Lok Adalat participation, and grassroots legal awareness initiatives.

Through Project Pragati, CLAP adopted Garu Panchayat under Unnat Bharat Abhiyan, conducting household surveys and organising legal awareness and health camps that provided medical consultations to 372 individuals and legal assistance to 36 individuals. Its outreach includes legal awareness sessions across seven government schools reaching 524 students, assistance to street vendors in obtaining e-Shram cards, counselling for senior citizens, and initiatives addressing menstrual health, mental health, cyberbullying, and substance abuse. Beyond legal aid, CLAP conducts blood donation camps, winter relief drives under Project Aasra, academic programmes, and digital legal education to foster meaningful social change.

Its impact has received national and international recognition, including Second Place in the MacJannet Prize for Global Citizenship 2025, accompanied by a grant of USD 7,500, and the 4th National Legal Award 2024 for Legal Aid and Social Justice Activities for the second consecutive year.

Guided by the motto "Paritranaya Sadhunam", CLAP continues to transform legal knowledge into action, strengthen community engagement, and work towards a society where justice, dignity, and legal assistance are accessible to all.

ABOUT LAST EDITION

The 1st National Article Writing Competition organized by the Centre for Legal Aid Programme (CLAP) at NUSRL, Ranchi was highly regarded for its impactful social focus, strong student engagement, and structured platform for legal discourse.

The overarching theme for the last edition was "Unveiling the Shadows: Reassessing Legal Safeguards Against Social Injustices." It focused heavily on evaluating the gaps between law and reality regarding sensitive social issues. It brought in many entries of scholars with diverse opinions who shared views on welfare and reform in legal systems. Through dynamic discussions and exploration of new avenues in addressing social injustices and their related primary causes, the Article Writing Competition built a community for change and development.

MAIN THEME:

Justice Deferred: Examining the Enforcement Gaps in Legal Aid in India and the Fiduciary Duty of Advocates in Ensuring Access to Justice.

Access to justice is not merely a legal entitlement; it is a constitutional promise. Yet, for millions of Indians, the inability to afford legal representation continues to place justice beyond reach. The theme, "Justice Deferred: Examining the Enforcement Gaps in Legal Aid in India and the Fiduciary Duty of Advocates in Ensuring Access to Justice," invites participants to critically examine the distance between the constitutional vision of equal justice and its lived reality. Rooted in Articles 14 and 21, and strengthened by Article 39A, the theme calls attention to the institutional and practical barriers that weaken India's legal aid framework. It also raises a deeper question about the role of advocates in a constitutional democracy: whether their professional responsibilities extend beyond representation to a broader duty towards ensuring meaningful access to justice. Through legal, institutional, and social perspectives, the competition seeks thoughtful analysis of how justice can become accessible, effective, and genuinely equal for all.

This document contains a detailed list of sub-themes for illustrating the vision of the main theme in the light of contemporary issues in the field of legal aid.

From Arrest to Release: Legal Aid, Remand and the Undertrial	Analysing whether legal assistance reaches an accused from the moment of arrest through first production, remand, bail and default bail. Assessing whether delays or gaps in representation convert procedural delay into prolonged detention, and whether early counsel protects personal liberty and the fairness of early proceedings.
Protest, Dissent and the Right to Fair Trial	Examining access to legal aid for persons detained or arrested in connection with protests and demonstrations. Exploring whether existing mechanisms adequately ensure fair trial, and effective representation during detention, remand and bail proceedings.
Assigned but Not Represented: The Fiduciary Duty of Legal-Aid Counsel	Examining whether the formal appointment of a legal-aid advocate translates into meaningful representation. Exploring how the duties of confidentiality, competence, communication and acting in the client's best interests materialise on the ground, and whether the institutional, state-funded nature of legal aid dilutes the advocate's obligations to the client.
Legal Aid and Tribal Communities	Examining whether legal-aid mechanisms reach Adivasi and tribal communities, including those in Scheduled and remote areas. Exploring linguistic exclusion, distance from courts and legal-aid offices, the interaction of customary law and statutory law, and whether counsel are equipped to represent clients in disputes over forest rights, land alienation and criminal cases.
Environmental Justice and the Limits of Legal Aid	Examining whether legal aid is available to individuals and communities affected by environmental harm, industrial disasters, displacement and pollution. Assessing the gap between public interest litigation and individual legal representation, and the barriers of cost, technical evidence and forum choice (High Courts, the National Green Tribunal) that affected communities face.
Accountability and Institutional Responsibility in Legal-Aid Failures	Investigating how responsibility is distributed among NALSA, State and District Legal Services Authorities, courts, police, prisons, Bar Councils and advocates when representation falls short. Assessing complaint and monitoring mechanisms and the remedies available, in comparison with institutions abroad.

Legal Aid and Persons with Disabilities	Assessing whether legal-aid services are physically, communicatively and procedurally accessible to persons with physical, sensory, intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. Exploring the duty of counsel to ascertain a client's wishes where legal capacity is questioned, the availability of interpreters and accessible formats, and the gaps between statutory entitlements and practice.
Legal Aid Behind Bars: Prison Legal-Aid Clinics and Continuity of Representation	Evaluating the effectiveness of legal-aid mechanisms within prisons and their ability to maintain meaningful communication between advocates and incarcerated persons. Assessing whether prison legal-aid clinics, jail-visiting lawyers and existing institutional mechanisms ensure continuity of representation from arrest through trial and appeal.
Beyond “Free”: The Hidden Costs of Access to Justice	Examining whether the formal availability of free legal services necessarily translates into accessible justice. Exploring the economic, geographical and procedural barriers that may continue to restrict access to counsel, including travel, documentation, communication, repeated court appearances and loss of livelihood.
Language, Vulnerability and Substantive Access to Legal Aid	Analysing whether India's legal-aid framework sufficiently accounts for linguistic, social and other forms of vulnerability that affect a person's ability to understand and participate in legal proceedings. Exploring whether substantive equality requires legal-aid mechanisms to respond differently to the needs of marginalised and vulnerable persons.
Digital Legal Aid and the New Access Divide	Analysing the extent to which virtual hearings, e-filing, online legal-aid portals and digital communication have expanded access to legal services. Assessing whether limitations relating to connectivity, digital literacy, language, privacy and technological infrastructure simultaneously create new barriers to effective legal representation.

The sub-themes are purely suggestive in nature to showcase the various dimensions within the main theme and aid the participants in their writing process.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

1. Each submission must include **an abstract of 100-150 words** (not exceeding 200 words), summarizing the research focus, crux, and structure of the work.

2. The main text should be **1500-2000 words** (excluding footnotes) and follow **OSCOLA 4th edition citation style** with specific formatting: **Times New Roman, size 12, 1.5 spacing for the body, and size 10, single spacing for footnotes.**

3. Submissions may have up to two authors and must be uploaded as a Microsoft Word file (.doc/.docx) without any identifying details; author information is to be provided only in the registration form.

4. Entries must be original, unpublished, free of plagiarism or AI-generated content, and not under review elsewhere. The Upper limit for AI Usage is 20%; Plagiarism 10%. Any violations of the rules will lead to immediate disqualification.

5. Registration Form Link: https://forms.gle/2aF1a0CBwZoExNA78, Last date of Registration 15th November, 2026.

6. Submission Form Link will be shared to participants who successfully register for the competition prior to submission date. Last date of Submission 20th November 2026.

For queries **clap@nusrlranchi.ac.in**

Eligibility criteria: The competition is open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in any recognised university or institution.

Registration Fee:
SINGLE – INR 400/-,
CO-AUTHOR – INR 700/-.

Awards & Recognition:

· **Opportunity to Present Research**: The authors of the top three submissions will be provided with an opportunity to present their research (in online mode) at the Symposium on 28th November, 2026 organised by the Centre for Legal Aid Programme (CLAP), National University of Study and Research in Law (NUSRL), Ranchi.

· **Cash Prizes:** The top three submissions will be awarded cash prizes as follows:

-First Prize: ₹5,000

-Second Prize: ₹3,000

-Third Prize: ₹2,000

· **Honourable Mentions:** The top five submissions will receive an Honourable Mention in recognition of the merit and quality of their research.

· **Certificates of Participation:** All participants who submit their research in accordance with the prescribed guidelines will be awarded Certificates of Participation.



In case of any queries, please feel free to reach out to us on our official email ID **clap@nusrlranchi.ac.in**

CONTACT:

Anindita Gogoi
Convenor
Centre for Legal Aid Programme
Ph No. +91 7896602906

Astha Raj
Convenor
Centre for Legal Aid Programme
Ph No. +91 8789716997

