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## **ABSTRACT:**

Ensuring access to justice for children is not just a policy goal it is a constitutional mandate rooted in Articles 14, 21, and 39A of the Indian Constitution. However, in practice, many children especially those in conflict with the law or in need of care and protection struggle to navigate the complexities of the legal system. This research critically examines the role of child- friendly legal aid services in bridging that gap and enabling meaningful access to justice for minors in India.

Through a doctrinal and qualitative approach, this study analyses the statutory provisions under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, and initiatives like NALSA's 2015 Scheme on Child-Friendly Legal Services. It investigates whether the current frameworks and institutional mechanisms truly accommodate the best interests of the child, as envisioned by both domestic law and international conventions such as the UNCRC.

The findings underscore persistent challenges, including lack of legal awareness, limited training of legal aid providers, and infrastructural deficiencies. The study calls for child sensitive reforms such as better implementation strategies, enhanced legal literacy, and expanded child-friendly judicial spaces to uphold the constitutional promise of justice for all, especially the most vulnerable.

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:**

1. *To understand the concept and importance of child-friendly legal aid services in ensuring access to justice for minors.*
2. *To examine existing legal frameworks and policies that support legal aid for children at national and international levels.*
3. *To evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of child-friendly legal aid services in practice.*
4. *To identify key challenges and barriers faced by children in accessing legal aid and justice.*

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5. *To suggest policy and practical recommendations for improving child-friendly legal aid mechanisms.*

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS:**

1. *Whether child-friendly legal aid services effectively ensure access to justice for children in conflict with or in need of care under the law.*
2. *Whether the current legal and institutional frameworks are adequate in supporting child-sensitive legal aid delivery.*
3. *Whether children are able to meaningfully participate in legal proceedings with the support of existing legal aid services.*
4. *Whether the challenges faced by stakeholders (e.g., legal aid providers, NGOs, child welfare bodies) impact the quality and accessibility of legal aid for children.*

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

1. Anil Malhotra & Ankit Malhotra, Enhancing Access to Justice for Children in India, ANIL MALHOTRA BLOG (Mar. 6, 2022)
  - In this article, the authors examine the intersection of legal provisions, constitutional mandates, and international conventions like the UNCRC.□
  - They advocate for consistent implementation of child rights, child-friendly courtrooms, and legal literacy among children and stakeholders.□
  - They also highlight the 2015 NALSA scheme as a major step toward institutionalizing child-friendly legal aid.□
2. Kalpana Kannabiran, Tools of Justice: Non-Discrimination and the

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Indian Constitution (2012).

- While this book has a broader scope, it provides a strong constitutional lens through which to view legal aid and justice access.□
- 3. Dr. Kannabiran discusses how marginalized communities, including children, face legal Shweta Vishwanathan, Children's Access to Justice: Legal Aid in the Juvenile Justice System, 16 Indian J. Hum. Dev. 213 (2022).
- In her article titled "Children's Access to Justice: Legal Aid in the Juvenile Justice System", Vishwanathan explores the effectiveness of legal representation for children in conflict with the law.□
- She critiques the lack of specialized training among legal aid counsels and the need for□ trauma-informed approaches.
- Published in: Indian Journal of Human Development, SAGE Journals.□
- 4. Law Commission of India, Report No. 222, Need for Justice-Dispensing System for Children (2009).
- Although authored collectively by the Commission, this report forms a key Indian reference.□
- It identifies the structural gaps in juvenile legal aid and suggests reforms such as child- friendly procedures, speedy trials, and separate child courts.5. □
- 5. National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) – Child-Friendly Legal Services to Children and Their Protection Scheme, 2015□

A key milestone in India's legal aid system, this scheme focuses on promoting legal literacy for children, establishing child-friendly interview rooms, and creating a supportive environment for children in conflict with the law or in need of care. It also highlights the need for constitutional remedies to be more inclusive and child sensitive.

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## **CHAPTER 2: LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY LEGAL AID IN INDIA**

Access to justice for children is not only a fundamental right under the Indian Constitution but also a moral and legal obligation rooted in both domestic and international instruments. This chapter outlines the legal framework supporting child-friendly legal aid in India, emphasizing the constitutional foundation, statutory enactments, institutional mechanisms, and international obligations that collectively aim to protect and empower children in the justice system.

### **2.1 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS:**

India's Constitution lays a robust groundwork for children's access to justice. Article 14 anchors the principle of equality before the law, ensuring that no child is denied legal protection on discriminatory grounds.<sup>1</sup> Article 21—read expansively in *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar* (1979)—makes free legal aid an integral part of the right to life and personal liberty.<sup>2</sup> Article 39A goes further, compelling the State to provide free legal assistance so that poverty or other disabilities never bar entry to the courts; its mandate gave rise to the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

<sup>3</sup>Article 15(3) empowers lawmakers to craft special measures for children<sup>4</sup>, while Articles 39(e) and 39(f) charge the State with shielding them from abuse and exploitation.<sup>5</sup> Taken together, these

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<sup>1</sup> India Const. art. 14; see also Article 14 of the Indian Constitution - iPleaders (Aug. 4, 2024), <https://blog.ipleaders.in/article-14/>

<sup>2</sup> Id. art. 21; *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar*, (1979) 3 SCR 532, 1979 AIR 1369 (India); see also *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar* (1979): case analysis - iPleaders (May 12, 2024), <https://blog.ipleaders.in/hussainara-khattoony-state-of-bihar-1979-case-analysis/>

<sup>3</sup> Id. art. 39A; Legal Services Authorities Act, No. 39 of 1987 (India); see also The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/1925/1/198739.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Id. art. 15(3); see also Article 15 of the Indian Constitution - iPleaders (Jan. 7, 2024), <https://blog.ipleaders.in/article15/>

<sup>5</sup> Id. art. 39(e), 39(f); see also Article 39 of the Indian Constitution - iPleaders (Feb. 6, 2022), <https://blog.ipleaders.in/article-39-of-the-indian-constitution/>

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provisions create a cumulative, rights-affirming framework that, as Kalpana Kannabiran observes, must be read “in concert” to drive an inclusive and non-discriminatory justice system.

## **2.2 THE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITIES ACT, 1987:**

**The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 operationalizes the constitutional promise of free legal aid under Article 39A. It provides a statutory structure for the delivery of legal services and institutionalizes legal aid bodies at national, state, district, and taluk levels.**

- Section 12 of the Act includes children as eligible beneficiaries for free legal aid services. This includes children in conflict with the law and those in need of care and protection.
- As highlighted in the article Free Legal Aid in India, the Act facilitates the appointment of legal aid counsels, organization of Lok Adalats, and promotion of legal literacy programs for children in schools and observation homes<sup>6</sup>
- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) coordinates the implementation of legal services across India and plays a vital role in ensuring child-friendly legal frameworks, particularly through its 2015 Scheme (discussed below).

While the Act offers a solid framework, Vishwanathan (2022) criticizes the inconsistent quality of legal aid lawyers, pointing to the need for specialized training in juvenile justice procedures.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.3 JUVENILE JUSTICE (CARE AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN)**

### **ACT, 2015:**

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 is the primary statute addressing legal procedures involving children. It provides for a bifurcated approach toward children in conflict with the law and children in need of care and protection.

Key features relevant to legal aid include:

<sup>6</sup> India Const. art. 39A; Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, Act No. 39 of 1987. [India Government Portal Legislative Dashboard](https://www.india.gov.in/legislative-dashboard)

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- Section 8(3)(c) mandates that a child in conflict with the law must be provided legal aid through the District Legal Services Authority.
- Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) and Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) are mandated to be child-friendly and must ensure that legal representation is accessible, non-intimidating, and competent.<sup>7</sup>
- The Law Commission of India, in its 222nd Report, emphasizes the importance of speedy trials, rehabilitation-based decisions, and the need for legal personnel to understand children's psychological and social needs.
- The Act allows the inclusion of psychologists and social workers in legal proceedings to complement the efforts of legal aid providers, ensuring a holistic approach to justice. As per Shweta Vishwanathan (2022), the lack of trauma-informed legal counsel within the JJ framework is a persistent challenge that undermines the protective intent of the Act<sup>8</sup>.

## **2.4 NALSA'S CHILD-FRIENDLY LEGAL SERVICES SCHEME (2015)**

The NALSA Scheme for Providing Child-Friendly Legal Services to Children and Their Protection, launched in 2015, represents a significant institutional advancement in the field of legal aid for children.

**Key components of the Scheme include:**

- Establishment of child-friendly legal aid clinics in observation homes and childcare institutions.
- Deployment of para-legal volunteers (PLVs) trained in child rights and juvenile justice.
- Provision for child-friendly interview rooms and sensitization of legal professionals to handle child-related cases.
- A focus on legal literacy and awareness programs targeting children, caregivers, and institutional staff.

<sup>7</sup> Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, No. 2 of 2016

<sup>8</sup> Shweta Vishwanathan, Trauma-Informed Lawyering in the Juvenile Justice System, 15 NUJS L. Rev. 123, 130 (2022).

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As highlighted by Anil Malhotra & Ankit Malhotra (2022), this scheme is a landmark initiative that aims to bridge the gap between legal entitlements and their implementation.<sup>9</sup> However, the authors also point out that the success of such schemes depends heavily on their integration with broader child protection services.

## **2.5 INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS (UNCRC AND OTHER**

### **TREATIES):**

**India is a signatory to several international conventions that emphasize the right of children to access justice and legal representation:**

- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) lays out a robust framework for child rights. Relevant articles include o Article 12: Right of the child to be heard in all judicial and administrative proceedings.
  - o Article 37(d): Right to legal assistance and to challenge the legality of deprivation of liberty.
- **Other influential guidelines include:**
  - o UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules) – which highlight procedural safeguards. o UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines) – emphasizing preventive measures through legal education.
  - o UN Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules) – providing for humane and just treatment of children.

These conventions, though not directly enforceable in Indian courts, have influenced the judiciary

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<sup>9</sup> Anil Malhotra & Ankit Malhotra, Hear the Child, Honor Their Future: The Voice of the Child (May 17, 2025), <https://www.anilmalhotra.co.in/post/hear-the-child-honor-their-future-the-voice-of-the-childby-anil-malhotraadvocate-iafl-fellow>

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and legislature to adopt a more child-sensitive approach, as reflected in domestic legal reforms like the JJ Act and the NALSA Scheme.

## **CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILD-FRIENDLY LEGAL AID SERVICES**

The implementation of child-friendly legal aid services in India reflects the nation's commitment to providing equitable access to justice. While constitutional and statutory frameworks are in place, the real test lies in translating legal provisions into functional support systems on the ground. This chapter explores how child-friendly legal aid mechanisms function in practice, who the key actors are, and what institutional and infrastructural elements determine their effectiveness.

### **3.1 CURRENT LEGAL AID DELIVERY MECHANISMS FOR CHILDREN**

Child-focused legal aid services are delivered through a network of institutions, primarily under the supervision of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) and its state, district, and taluk branches. These services are implemented in coordination with the Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs), Child Welfare Committees (CWCs), NGOs, and childcare institutions.

#### **Key components include:**

- Free Legal Representation through empanelled lawyers of the District Legal Services Authorities (DLSAs) for children in conflict with the law or those in need of care and protection.<sup>10</sup>
- Legal Literacy and Awareness Programs targeting children in schools, observation homes, and childcare institutions.
- Legal Aid Clinics set up in institutional homes and child-friendly spaces, as mandated by NALSA's 2015 Scheme.

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<sup>10</sup> NALSA (Child-Friendly Legal Services to Children and their Protection) Scheme, 2015, <https://nalsa.gov.in/preventive-strategic-legal-services-schemes/>

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- Paralegal Volunteers (PLVs) trained in juvenile justice and child rights to support awareness and access at the grassroots level.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these initiatives, the Law Commission Report No. 222 (2009) notes that these services often lack consistency and depth due to logistical and training-related shortcomings.

### **3.2 ROLE OF LEGAL AID LAWYERS, NGOS, AND CHILD WELFARE**

#### **COMMITTEES:**

<b><u>LEGAL</u></b>	<b><u>AID</u></b>	<b><u>LAWYERS:</u></b>
Panel lawyers appointed by legal services authorities are expected to represent children in proceedings before JJBs and CWCs. However, Shweta Vishwanathan (2022) highlights a key concern: many of these lawyers lack training in child psychology and trauma-informed practices. This compromises their ability to provide sensitive and effective representation.		

#### **NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (NGOS):**

**NGOs like Bachpan Bachao Andolan, HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, and others play a significant role by:**

- Offering legal counselling,
- Acting as guardians or child advocates in legal proceedings,
- Running legal awareness and literacy programs.

<b><u>CHILD WELFARE</u></b>	<b><u>COMMITTEES</u></b>	<b><u>(CWCs):</u></b>
CWCs are quasi-judicial bodies empowered to make decisions for children in need of care and protection. Their collaboration with legal aid lawyers is crucial in facilitating speedy and just outcomes. However, CWCs are often overburdened, and many do not have in-house legal support, which undermines the quality of decisions.		

<sup>11</sup> NALSA SCHEMES english.pdf, at 6–7, <https://upslsa.up.nic.in/Nalsa%20SCHEMES%20english.pdf>

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### **3.3 AVAILABILITY OF INFRASTRUCTURE (CHILD-FRIENDLY COURTS, INTERVIEW ROOMS, ETC.)**

#### **CHILD-FRIENDLY**

#### **COURTS:**

*According to the NALSA 2015 Scheme, courts handling juvenile cases should have:*

- Separate waiting rooms for children,
- Informal seating arrangements,
- No visible police uniforms or intimidating setups.

Despite these mandates, implementation is inconsistent. A 2021 NALSA report showed that only a few states had significantly invested in child-friendly courtrooms.

#### **INTERVIEW ROOMS**

**&**

#### **LEGAL**

#### **AID**

#### **CLINICS:**

These are vital in helping children share their experiences without fear. Yet, as highlighted by Dr. G.S. Bajpai, the shortage of trained interviewers and poor infrastructure often leads to retraumatization rather than support.

#### **CHILD**

#### **CARE**

#### **INSTITUTIONS:**

Homes and shelters under the JJ Act are supposed to have regular visits from legal aid providers. However, monitoring mechanisms remain weak and often symbolic. This affects children's ability to access legal remedies from within the system.

### **3.4 TRAINING AND CAPACITY OF LEGAL AID PROVIDERS:**

*One of the most persistent gaps in the legal aid system for children is the lack of specialized training for lawyers, judges, police personnel, and welfare officials. Despite the legal mandates:*

- Many panel lawyers are unaware of procedural requirements under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015.
- Training programs remain sporadic and often theoretical, lacking modules on practical skills like child interviewing or trauma-informed advocacy.

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- Coordination between law schools, bar associations, and legal services authorities is minimal. Vishwanathan (2022) stresses the need for multi-disciplinary training that includes legal, psychological, and child development components. Without this, even well-meaning legal professionals may inadvertently cause harm.

### **3.5 CASE STUDIES AND EXAMPLES:**

**While comprehensive national-level data is limited, certain best practices highlight the potential of effective implementation:**

- *Delhi Legal Services Authority (DLSA) has established Dedicated Legal Aid Clinics in childcare institutions, staffed with trained volunteers and lawyers.*
- *In Maharashtra, certain JJBs have integrated social workers and child psychologists into their proceedings, leading to more nuanced and supportive outcomes.*
- *Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KELSA) has introduced legal literacy programs in schools to promote early awareness of rights.*

These examples underscore the importance of localized innovation and inter-agency cooperation. Implementation of child-friendly legal aid services remains a work in progress. While the legal and institutional structures exist, their effectiveness depends on localized capacity, inter-agency cooperation, training, and infrastructure. The success of these services hinges on a sustained commitment to child sensitivity, investment in human resources, and empowerment of frontline legal aid providers.

## **CHAPTER 4: CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS IN ACCESSING JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN:**

Despite a progressive legal framework and the introduction of child-sensitive schemes, the promise of justice for every child in India remains far from fulfilled. This chapter explores the multifaceted challenges - structural, socio-economic, institutional, and procedural - that hinder children from

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accessing meaningful legal aid and justice. These barriers undermine not only legal protections but also a child's psychological and social development during legal processes.

#### **4.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS:**

Children from marginalized communities - Dalits, Adivasis, religious minorities, children with disabilities, and those in poverty -face disproportionate obstacles in accessing justice. According to the UNICEF Justice for Children Framework, social exclusion severely restricts access to legal information and representation.

- Poverty is a major deterrent to legal recourse. Many families are unaware that legal aid is free and continue to rely on informal systems or avoid legal mechanisms altogether.*
- Stigma and cultural taboos, especially in cases involving child abuse, trafficking, or conflict with the law, discourage families from seeking legal help.*
- Gender-based discrimination means that girls are often denied justice due to societal pressures or family honour concerns, particularly in sexual violence or child marriage cases.*

#### **4.2 INSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS AND GAPS IN IMPLEMENTATION:**

**Even where legal provisions exist, the institutions meant to deliver justice are often underperforming:**

- Inadequate staffing and training: Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees are frequently understaffed. Members often lack specialized training in child psychology or juvenile law.*
- Delay in proceedings: Delays in investigation, hearings, and delivery of justice often result in prolonged trauma and detention for children.*
- Lack of coordination: There is poor synergy between legal aid authorities, police, judiciary, and child protection bodies. This fragmentation dilutes the quality of legal assistance.*

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- *Budgetary constraints: Many Districts Legal Services Authorities lack funds to set up child friendly spaces or hire dedicated lawyers.*

As noted by the Law Commission of India Report No. 222, these institutional deficiencies often result in systemic neglect, thereby undermining the intent of the Juvenile Justice Act.

### **4.3 LACK OF AWARENESS AND LEGAL LITERACY:**

*Awareness of legal rights is crucial for children to access justice. However, legal literacy remains low among:*

- *Children themselves, particularly those outside the formal education system.*
- *Parents and caregivers, especially in rural or low-income urban areas.*
- *Institutional caregivers in shelters, juvenile homes, and NGOs.*

According to NALSA, although legal awareness campaigns have been rolled out across several states, these efforts often fail to reach the most vulnerable children—those in conflict with the law or in care institutions. Furthermore, programs are often sporadic and not tailored to the comprehension levels of children.

### **4.4 ISSUES IN REPRESENTATION AND PROCEDURAL FAIRNESS:**

Effective legal aid for children requires sensitivity in both content and delivery. However, the current system has issues: lawyers often lack specialization and treat children like adults, ignoring their emotional needs; trauma-informed practices are missing, causing re-traumatization; children's voices are frequently excluded, violating their right to be heard under the UNCRC. Language barriers, intimidating legal environments, and non-child-friendly settings also hinder meaningful child participation.

### **4.5 EXAMPLES OF GROUND-LEVEL CHALLENGES:**

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A study in Bihar showed many legal aid lawyers for juveniles never met their clients before court.<sup>12</sup> In Madhya Pradesh, children in care homes were unaware of their legal aid rights and lacked regular lawyer contact.<sup>13</sup> In Rajasthan, the absence of child-friendly courts led to fear and confusion due to adult-like procedures. These examples highlight the urgent need for systemic reform in policy and practice. Despite existing laws, barriers like socio-economic inequality, weak institutions, untrained staff, and poor child involvement limit access to justice. A combined effort in legal reform, training, infrastructure, and awareness is vital to ensure justice for every child.<sup>15</sup>

## **CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS:**

This chapter analyses the effectiveness, accessibility, and inclusivity of child-friendly legal aid services in India, based on doctrinal sources, institutional reports (e.g., Law Commission, NALSA), scholarly commentary, and case studies. It aims to assess the current state of legal aid for children and identify key gaps and opportunities for improvement.

### **5.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF LEGAL AID SERVICES FOR CHILDREN**

India's legal framework, including the Constitution, Legal Services Authorities Act, Juvenile Justice Act, and NALSA schemes, offers a strong foundation for child-sensitive legal aid. Progress includes recognizing children's rights under Article 39A, providing free legal aid through DLSAs (mainly in urban areas), and setting up child-friendly courts in places like Delhi and Kerala. However, challenges persist, such as inadequate training for legal aid providers, uneven enforcement across states, and the limited role of legal aid in many childcare institutions. 5.2 Accessibility of Legal Aid to Marginalized Children.

<sup>12</sup> HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, Study on Legal Aid and Juvenile Justice in Bihar, (Year).

<sup>13</sup> Inspection Reports, Child Care Institutions in Madhya Pradesh, (Year). <sup>15</sup>

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12.

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Legal aid services are not uniformly accessible to children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Socioeconomic barriers, illiteracy, lack of awareness, and discrimination inhibit many children particularly from rural, tribal, and minority communities from benefiting from existing legal aid systems.

**Findings show:**

- High urban-rural disparity in availability and quality of services.<sup>14</sup>
- Low awareness levels among children in institutional care (e.g., shelter homes, observation homes).<sup>15</sup>
- Language, caste, and gender biases influencing the quality of legal representation.<sup>16</sup> For instance, case studies from Bihar and Madhya Pradesh (Chapter 5) highlight children being unaware of their legal rights or having minimal interaction with their assigned legal aid lawyers.

### **5.3 INCLUSIVITY AND CHILD SENSITIVITY IN LEGAL AID**

#### **DELIVERY:**

True inclusivity in the justice system requires not just access but also meaningful participation from children. Despite Article 12 of the UNCRC and the Juvenile Justice Act affirming children's right to be heard, many still face exclusion. Legal aid providers often lack training in trauma care and child psychology, while legal processes remain intimidating and ill-suited to children's needs. As Shweta Vishwanathan (2022) highlights, India's legal aid system remains adult-centric, neglecting the unique vulnerabilities of child clients.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), Annual Report on Legal Aid Services 2022, (New Delhi: National Legal Services Authority, 2022), 45-47.

<sup>15</sup> HAQ: Centre for Child Rights, Study on Legal Aid and Juvenile Justice in Madhya Pradesh, (New Delhi: HAQ Centre, 2021), 23.

<sup>16</sup> Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority, Report on Legal Aid in Child Care Institutions, (Jaipur: Rajasthan State Legal Services Authority, 2020), 10-12.

<sup>17</sup> Shweta Vishwanathan, Child-Centric Legal Aid and the Gaps in India's Justice System, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2022), 102-104.

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## **5.4 INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION GAPS:**

**The findings indicate poor coordination between JJBs, CWCs, Legal Services Authorities, NGOs, and police departments. This often results in:**

- Delays in appointing lawyers,
- Lack of clarity over responsibilities, and
- Overburdened child protection institutions failing to meet basic legal requirements.

Despite NALSA's child-friendly guidelines, implementation remains sporadic. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms are either weak or not enforced, making it difficult to assess real-time gaps or abuse.

## **CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS:**

Despite progressive laws like the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, children in India continue to face major challenges in accessing justice. Key issues include poor infrastructure, limited legal awareness, and a lack of specialized training among professionals. Implementation of child-friendly services remains weak at the grassroots, and coordination among stakeholders is often fragmented, undermining comprehensive child-centric support.

### **6.2 POLICY AND PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To address these gaps, the study recommends practical policy measures such as establishing child friendly courtrooms and spaces within legal institutions. Expanding legal literacy campaigns, particularly in schools and rural areas, is vital for raising awareness. Mandatory training for legal aid professionals on child psychology and trauma-informed practices should be implemented.

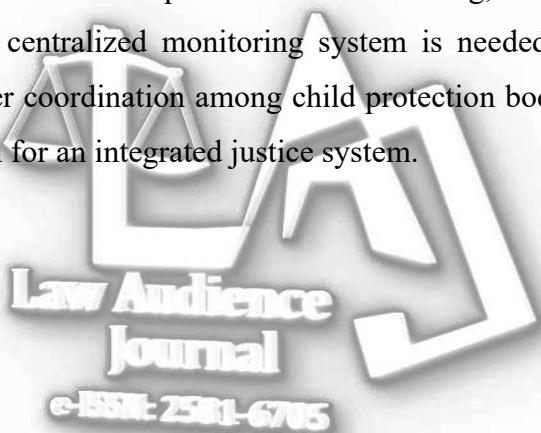
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Additionally, standardized procedures and prompt legal intervention are essential to improve the quality of legal aid for children.

### **6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR LEGAL REFORM AND INSTITUTIONAL**

#### **STRENGTHENING:**

Legal reform should introduce clear guidelines mandating child-sensitive procedures in all legal processes. It must ensure the compulsory involvement of trained legal professionals in childrelated cases. Strengthening institutions requires increased funding, staffing, and oversight for Legal Services Authorities. A centralized monitoring system is needed to track service delivery and outcomes, while stronger coordination among child protection bodies, police, judiciary, and legal aid providers is essential for an integrated justice system.



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