



Call for Submissions

**Blog Symposium - 'Building the
Pro Bono Ecosystem in India'**





Background:

What is the context and problem?

With only one lawyer available for every 18,609 individuals or a ratio of five lawyers per 100,000 people, the issue of access to legal services in India presents a substantial challenge.

The Constitution (Article 39A) mandates the State to provide free legal aid to ensure access to justice for all. On that basis, District / State Legal Services Authorities (LSAs) are required to provide legal representation & related services free of cost by to marginalized individuals who cannot afford a lawyer. However, owing to several institutional & implementation challenges, this framework falls short and there is a long way to go in terms of reach and impact for marginalised who cannot afford paid legal services.

While pro bono legal services are also voluntarily provided by lawyers, law firms, etc., this is largely ad hoc and fragmented.

Role of Law School Clinics

Legal aid clinics in law schools (required to be mandatorily set-up) provide legal aid support, including related services like:

- client counseling and follow-up para-legal assistance
- assisting legal professionals providing pro bono services or district / state LSAs or social service organizations
- carrying out field surveys
- conducting legal awareness or legal literacy programs
- facilitating mediation and other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, etc.

However, Law School Clinics face critical barriers, including overworked faculty, lack of infrastructure and limited professional support. According to a recent report, out of 83 law school clinics, 37 clinics have engaged lawyers to assist in legal matters and 24 clinics have not engaged pro bono services of any lawyer or alumni.

39-A



About the Blog Symposium

In our mission to contribute to access to justice, we have been exploring ways in which the pro bono ecosystem in India, which is largely fragmented and ad hoc, can be strengthened and more structured. In particular, we are focusing on the role that law school clinics can play in this process.

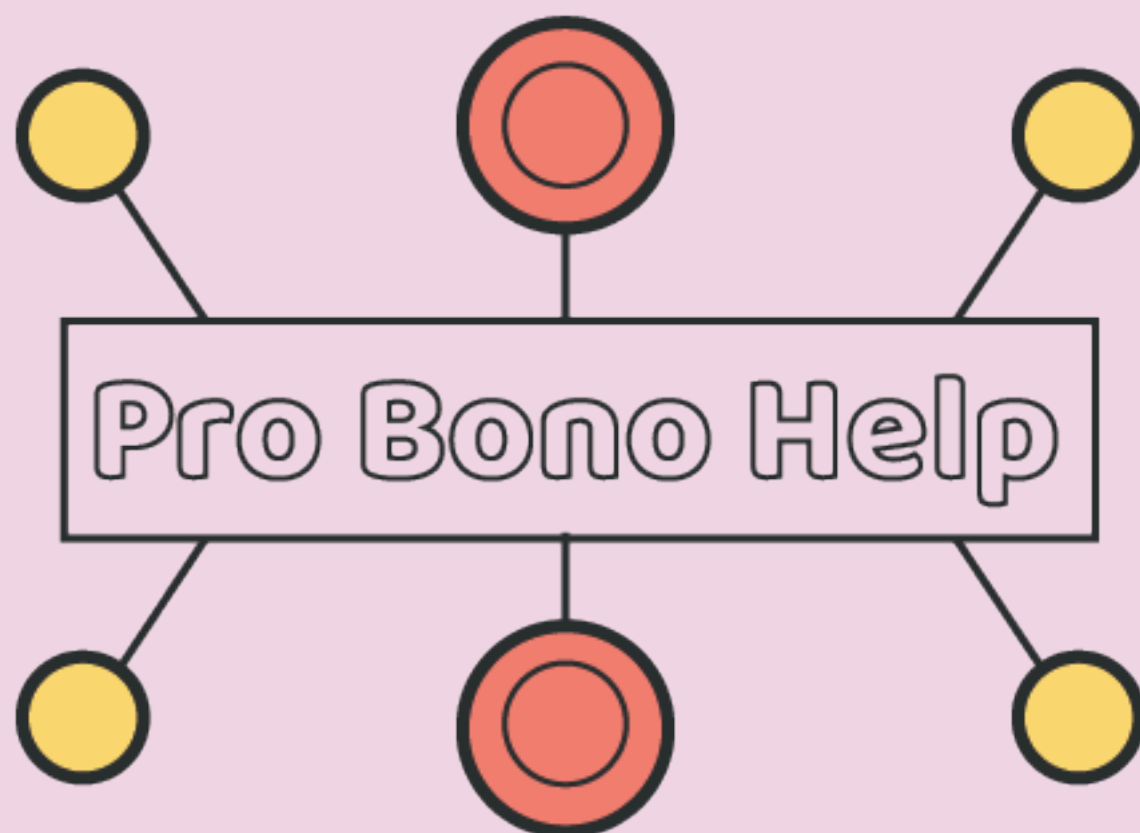
We hope to be able to support / facilitate law school clinics to strengthen the pro bono ecosystem in India and make it more structured. We are interested in developing structures, tools and processes and promoting practices that are collaborative and empowering for law school clinics. As part of this focus, we are currently developing Adda Connect, an online pro bono portal for law school clinics in India.

In order to do so, we are keen to understand practices which have evolved over time and constraints faced by law school clinics in the process of providing / supporting pro bono services. The blog symposium is aimed to be an ongoing set of reflections over the next weeks and months.

Why we are reaching out to you?

We invite you to contribute to our blog symposium, where we are bringing together a diverse set of reflections from law school clinics, development sector individuals / organisations and academicians, who will each examine how, through their work, they are building more useful and usable ways of engaging with the Indian pro bono ecosystem.

We are keen to be able to build a community of practice, and learn and share ideas and approaches on how to make the pro bono ecosystem work for everyone who cannot afford legal services.




What are the key issues and questions the blog symposium is looking to deal with?

The Blog Symposium aims to focus on and understand the various practices which have evolved over time in the pro bono ecosystem, along with the concerns / challenges / shortcomings / needs of law school clinics, development sector individuals / organisations and lawyers / law firms involved in providing pro bono legal services.

This may include issues ranging from availability of bona fide pro bono service providers (on a timely basis), incentivising student and faculty members of law school clinics, lack of / limited support and lack of locally relevant and simplified material for awareness campaigns.





In addition to the above, below is an indicative list of other aspects the write-up could include:

- Objectives with which your clinic /organisation has been set up,
- Description about your organisation / clinic in terms of composition,
- The physical location or community your pro bono work caters to,
- The different kinds of pro bono services provided,
- Other functions you /organisation /clinic may be engaged in,
- Method of functioning /dealing with pro bono work and the various tasks involved in the process, may be with examples of your journey with some previous work,
- Description about how you reach out to and work with lawyers /law firms for legal advice, legal representation, etc.,
- Your experience-sharing, including observations, patterns, future opportunities, what processes/methods /tools have worked well (and what has not).

Submission details

In case you are interested in contributing to this blog symposium, please write to addaconnect@justiceadda.com by February 5, 2025, along with an abstract of the proposed blog submission (not more than 200 words). Selected participants will be informed by February 12, 2025 and if your blog abstract is selected, you can send us your final blog submission (not more than 1500 words) by March 5, 2025.

