**Increasing Access to Justice for Marginalized People**

**PROJECT INFORMATION**

**Area:** Democratic Governance  
**Budget:** US$ 5 million  
**Duration:** 2013-2017  
**Government Counterpart:** Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India  
**Implementing Partner(s):** Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India  
**Other partner(s):** National and State Legal Services Authorities in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh; Judicial academies in Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh; Department of Secondary Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India; civil society organizations across the country  
**Location(s):** Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh

**Background**

Access to justice is essential not only for human development, but also for democratic governance, poverty reduction and conflict prevention. Between 2006 and 2008, UNDP partnered with the Department of Justice, Government of India to pilot a project aimed at strengthening access to justice. The project undertook a broad analysis of the justice sector including an identification of key challenges in the criminal justice system, informal justice systems, legal aid and legal empowerment. Based on the analysis and lessons learnt, UNDP launched the current project in 2008, in partnership with the Department of Justice, to strengthen legal aid and legal empowerment for marginalized people.

**About the project**

The project focuses on strengthening access to justice for the poor, particularly women, scheduled castes, tribal communities and minorities, through developing strategies and initiatives that address the barriers they face accessing justice in legal, social, economic and political domains.

This is to be achieved through:

- Supporting national and local justice delivery institutions
• Developing legal and representational capacity of civil society organizations and networks providing justice services to disadvantaged groups
• Enhancing legal awareness among women and men belonging to marginalized groups
• Informing policies and institutional structures through action research and studies

Developments so far

• Based on the success of the partnership, the Government has launched a similar project in Jammu and Kashmir and the north-east of India with a budget allocation of US$ 6 million
• More than two million people from marginalized communities are more aware of their legal rights and how to seek redressal of their grievances
• As a result of convergence with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, legal literacy has been included in the continuing adult literacy programme under the national Government of India literacy scheme, Sakshar Bharat
• Over 7,000 paralegals drawn from diverse backgrounds including women SHGs, Muslim women, women living in urban slums and so on, trained to better assist marginalized communities
• The project has built greater synergy between a range of key actors, both nationally and at state levels to better coordinate efforts in supporting the legal needs of marginalized communities
• A first-ever study conducted in India on legal aid clinics run by law schools and needs assessments of several State Legal Services Authority have enabled a better understanding of the barriers faced by marginalized communities in accessing justice

Looking to the future

• A cadre of young lawyers trained and sensitized to assist men and women from marginalized communities
• Greater convergence with other ministries and departments
• Training of judges in partnership with state judicial academies on issues affecting marginalized communities
• Legal Services Authorities to develop a strategy to improve services for marginalized people
• Piloting voice-based legal information kiosks to enhance legal awareness of the marginalized communities
• Strengthening legal aid clinics in law schools so that students can be more involved in enhancing legal awareness among communities