

**COMMITTEE FOR LEGAL AID TO POOR: LEGAL SERVICES INSTITUTE (CLAP)**Website: [www.clapindia.org](http://www.clapindia.org)**Organization overview**

**Founded:** 1982 | **Head office:** Cuttack, Odisha | **Coverage:** Odisha  
**Full-time staff:** 17 | **Budget (2016-17):** INR 63.68 lakh (USD 97,969)

CLAP works in Odisha and the eight north-eastern states of India with the vision of strengthening access to justice by empowering the marginalized through the use of the law, legal systems and legal processes. Its interventions are based on the rule of law and dedicated to protect human rights. All of its programs aim to advance issues of access to justice.

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**THE PROBLEM**

Despite legal protection, marginalized and underprivileged groups (women, children, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, minorities) experience discrimination, exploitation and injustice on a daily basis and are often deprived of their entitlements.

**CLAP'S RESPONSE**

CLAP seeks to make good India's Constitutional promise of equal rights by using the law, the judicial process and legal system as tools for the empowerment of the most marginalized in Odisha. It takes a five-pronged approach to access to justice through legal awareness, empowerment, legal aid, advocacy and support.

**How did it evolve?****What does it do?**

CLAP takes a holistic approach to justice through interventions within the community and within court systems. It also advocates for desired changes in legislative frameworks. Its interventions tie in to create both demand and supply of legal services and legal systems.

- **Legal awareness:** Conducts awareness camps, and skits on legal issues such as child labor, child protection, juvenile justice, gender-based violence and participation in local governance.
- **Paralegal training:** Trains and supports legal service authorities' paralegal volunteers to understand their roles and responsibilities.
- **Tribal empowerment:** Helps tribal communities obtain their entitlements under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- **Legal aid:** Takes up cases of underprivileged individuals and provides advice and litigation support.
- **Legal support:** Builds the capacity of community-based organizations to implement legal interventions.
- **Advocacy:** Learnings from its on-ground efforts help CLAP identify gaps in the legal system for its juridical advocacy and campaigning efforts.

**Key Interventions**

1. **Conduct research on gaps in laws and process and advocacy for legislative change.**
2. **Create/enhance legal awareness.**
3. **Facilitate access to legal entitlements.**
4. **Provide legal aid (legal counseling and legal representation).**
5. **Train lawyers and paralegals, to improve quality.**
6. Assist in case management.
7. Conduct training and sensitization workshops for the judiciary and provide research support.
8. Implement informal dispute resolution systems.
9. Train police officials and prison authorities.
10. Monitor and hold prison and police machinery accountable.
11. Undertake psycho-social support for prisoners and their families and ongoing rehabilitation support to released prisoners.

### What has it achieved?

CLAP has helped legally empower over 1.5 million marginalized people and among its key milestones, it has:

- Built the capacity of a network of 950 community-based organizations to advocate for human rights.
- Trained 700 paralegal volunteers at legal services authorities in Odisha and in eight North Eastern states (2013-15).
- Provided legal services in 6,000 cases and filed 100 public interest litigations for the protection of human rights, including freedom of speech and expression for media professionals and bloggers.
- Helped shape national policy in 2012 through its Campaign on National Childhood and Care and its CRC-7 Campaign on Universal Civil Registration of Children.

### What next?

CLAP is developing its strategic plan for 2018-23, and as part of its plan to take the law to the most marginalized communities it aims to:

- Provide legal aid to at least 3,000 individuals and legally empower 4,00,000 people in Odisha to ensure access to public entitlements on an annual basis.
- Create and train a network of 100+ pro-bono lawyers ('Nyaya Daatas') across lower courts and high courts to ensure free, quality legal aid ('Nyayadan').
- Achieve scale by acting as a pivot organization that strengthens governance institutions, educates civil society and trains community-based organizations on legal rights and entitlements.



CLAP inaugurates the 'Young Lawyers Justice Fellowship Program' in partnership with UNDP to train lawyers across Odisha on human rights issues

### Quality indicators

#### Leadership

- Dr. Bikash Das, President
- Advisor, Commission of Supreme Court of India on Food Rights between 2003 and 2006
- Member, Enquiry Commission by Government of Odisha on Food Security

#### Partners & funders

##### Partners:

- Legal services authorities
- Human Rights Law Network
- Ministry of Minority Affairs
- Ministry of Law & Justice, Department of Justice

##### Funders:

- UNDP
- Media Legal Defense Initiative
- AmplifyChange
- UNICEF
- Bernard Van Leer Foundation

### Voices from the ground

"Before we received our training from CLAP, we were not aware of the laws that could help us prevent domestic violence and protect our children from child marriage and other social ills. After CLAP started working with us paralegal volunteers, there has been a clear increase in levels of legal awareness within the community."

- Rajesh Mohapatra, Paralegal Volunteer, Badamba Block, Cuttack District, Odisha

### Voices from the team

"Unlike most organizations working on access to justice, CLAP does not rely purely on litigation and judicial process to uphold the fundamental rights of the most vulnerable people. Instead, it takes the law to the community with a strong focus on legal empowerment, which increases public demand for rights and entitlements."

- Dr. Bikash Das, President