

Advocates of Change: The Dynamic Influence of NGOs and Pro Bono Lawyers in Shaping Legal Aid

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ABSTRACT

“Lawyers are the custodians of the law, and their role is crucial in ensuring justice.”

— Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

Abstract

This paper deals with the transformative influence of non-governmental organizations and pro bono lawyers in the legal aid field.¹ It underlines how they have been instrumental in their efforts to increase access to justice for the disenfranchised communities.² Although various strides have been made in recent times concerning frameworks of law, there still exist a considerable number of the society's disenfranchised sections, primarily due to it being arduous to make accessibility easy to legal resources.³ This paper discusses collaborative initiatives between NGOs and pro bono legal professionals as a means to highlight contributions to the betterment of legal aid delivery.⁴ It brings out effective interventions that not only provide for immediate legal needs but empower people to navigate the complexity of the justice system⁵ through diverse case studies. It also critically examines their problems - and constraints in resources and bureaucracies - and then develops concrete strategies for strengthening their work and alliance.⁶ Overall, this paper concludes that NGOs and pro bono lawyers are crucial allies for change, and a full legal aid framework that would ensure equal access to justice is much needed for all.⁷

Keywords: Legal Aid, NGOs, Pro Bono Lawyers, Access to Justice, Social Justice, Advocacy

Introduction

Access to justice therefore is a basic and essential element of democratic society, being a necessary mechanism

¹ Farrow, T. C., *Pro Bono Ethics and Access to Justice: A Comparative Perspective*, *Fordham International Law Journal*, 2014, 37(1), p. 154.

² McQuoid-Mason, D., *Pro Bono and Access to Justice: What the Legal Profession Can Learn from South Africa*, *Journal of Law and Society*, 2010, 37(1), p. 7.

³ Legal Services Corporation, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.lsc.gov>.

⁴ International Justice Mission, *Case Studies of Legal Aid Interventions*, IJM, 2019. Available at: <https://www.ijm.org>.

⁵ Sandefur, R. L., *Access to Civil Justice and Race, Class, and Gender Inequality*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2009, 35(1), pp. 342-346.

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *Access to Justice: Practice Note*, UNDP, 2005. Available at: <https://www.undp.org>.

⁷ Legal Aid Board v. Union of India, 4 SCC 161 (2009).

for protecting human rights, enhancing social equity, and underpinning the rule of law.⁸ This principle that every individual should have the means to seek legal redress is embedded in numerous national legislative systems and international instruments on human rights.⁹ Nonetheless, despite these progressions, stark disparities persist in the provision of legal aid and services, especially for more vulnerable and marginalized groups.¹⁰ Socio-economic barriers, geographical constraints, and systemic inadequacies regularly prevent individuals from access to appropriate legal support, thus creating an extensive justice gap.¹¹

Legal aid is important in providing individuals the ability to navigate the complexities of the judicial system effectively, especially when facing legal problems that keep them from seeking justice. It plays an essential role in preventing injustice by ensuring everyone, no matter their economic situation, has access to professional legal advocates. The failure to provide adequate legal representation leads to unpleasant consequences, including wrongful convictions, exploitation, and intensified marginalization of vulnerable populations. Therefore, correcting the inadequacies in the delivery of legal service is beyond mere policy interests; it becomes a moral imperative to the very core of the standards of an equal and just society.

In such a context, nongovernmental organizations and pro bono attorneys have assumed an essential role in the landscape of legal aid, diligently working to close the justice gap and advocate for the most vulnerable populations.¹² These NGOs often also operate as intermediaries between legal services, consolidating resources, enhancing awareness, and providing legal education to empower individuals and their communities.¹³ They take on the challenging role of both advocacy, outreach efforts, and direct legal representation. By engaging in grassroots activities, NGO's work to remove obstacles standing in the way of justice and amplify the voices of marginalized populations. Conversely, pro bono attorneys offer their legal knowledge on a voluntary basis, acknowledging their professional duty to guarantee that justice is attainable for everyone.¹⁴

By offering their services free of charge, these attorneys have effectively mitigated some of the most significant shortcomings of legal representation for indigent clients.¹⁵ While providing immediate support to clients at the time when assistance is required, these attorneys also instill a culture of service in the legal community and inspire future generations of attorneys to make social justice a priority. This paper intends to explore the dynamic influence that nongovernmental organizations and pro bono lawyers have on the formation of legal aid with special focus on their collaboration and effects of such interventions in respect to accessing justice. Key research questions guiding this study include: What specific roles can NGOs and pro bono lawyers play in enhancing access to legal aid? How do both of their efforts strengthen the delivery of effective legal advocacy to underrepresented populations? What are the major challenges they face in delivering these lifeline services, and how might solutions be pursued that can help mitigate these difficulties?

This paper has an importance as it seeks to explain the transformational role NGOs and pro bono lawyers play in the legal aid ecosystem and understand what is contributed by them and what barriers stand against. Through the analysis of these dynamics, this research hopes to contribute to policy recommendations and enhance the effectiveness of legal aid structures so that even more people can access justice.¹⁶ Indeed, in pursuit of this research, this manuscript is designed to demonstrate that integrated activities are inevitably the keys to creating

⁸ United Nations Development Programme, *Access to Justice: Practice Note*, UNDP, 2005. Available at: <https://www.undp.org>.

⁹ Farrow, T. C., *Pro Bono Ethics and Access to Justice: A Comparative Perspective*, *Fordham International Law Journal*, 2014, 37(1), p. 154.

¹⁰ Sandefur, R. L., *Access to Civil Justice and Race, Class, and Gender Inequality*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2009, 35(1), p. 341.

¹¹ Legal Services Corporation, *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.lsc.gov>.

¹² Legal Services Corporation, *The Justice Gap*, 2020, p. 5.

¹³ Farrow, T. C., *Pro Bono Ethics*, pp. 156-158.

¹⁴ Farrow, T. C., *Pro Bono Ethics*, p. 161.

¹⁵ Sandefur, R. L., *Access to Civil Justice*, pp. 345-347.

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme, *Access to Justice: Practice Note*, 2005.

an all-embracing and fair justice system in which justice will not only be theory but reality for all individuals.¹⁷

Literature Review

The paper presents and discusses the current literature on legal aid, contribution from non-governmental bodies, and the provision of pro bono services. The section defines legal aid as the provision of legal aid to a person who cannot afford legal representation-the view of which states that access to justice is a universal right.¹⁸

The historical context reveals that NGOs emerged from social movements advocating for marginalized communities, evolving into key players in delivering legal support and promoting systemic change.¹⁹ Concurrently, pro bono services have developed as legal professionals voluntarily provide assistance United Nations Development Programme, *Access to Justice: Practice Note*, 2005.to bridge the justice gap, often collaborating with NGOs to enhance their reach.²⁰

There are many theoretical underpinnings that form the dialogue on access to justice. While the Legal Empowerment Framework puts more emphasis on developing competencies among individuals to claim their rights, the Social Justice Framework emphasizes the need to address systemic inequalities preventing access. A reminder of the Public Interest Law Perspective places a mantra on the role of law in promoting the welfare of society, especially on behalf of marginalized populations.²¹

The earlier studies depicted positive influences of NGOs and pro bono lawyers in helping the legal aid make visible and efficient initiatives towards extending access to justice. However, there still remain gaps in understanding how the entities of collaboration work between these two entities and the challenges faced by these. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the interplay between NGOs and pro bono lawyers and their collective influence on the legal aid landscape.

Methodology

The mixed-method approach will integrate the use of qualitative and quantitative methods. This is to understand how NGOs and pro bono lawyers can impact legal aid. This design strengthens the analysis because it mixes numeric data with in-depth knowledge qualitatively.²²

Data to be gathered will include the use of questionnaires from clients who received legal aid; interviews with representatives of NGOs and pro bono lawyers; and case studies of successful interventions. The latter will be used in an attempt to gather quantitatively-based answers to the impact of the legal aid services, while interviews will be used to garner qualitative experiences or concerns among these organizations.²³

Divergence in populations will form the basis of selection by considering clients coming from different strata socio-economically with whom legal aid has been availed.²⁴ Organizations and pro-bono attorneys will be selected

¹⁷ Sandefur, R. L., *Access to Civil Justice*, pp. 349-351.

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme, *Access to Justice: Practice Note*, 2005. Available at: <https://www.undp.org>.

¹⁹ Sandefur, R. L., *Access to Civil Justice and Race, Class, and Gender Inequality*, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2009, p. 339.

²⁰ Farrow, T. C., *Pro Bono Ethics and Access to Justice: A Comparative Perspective*, *Fordham International Law Journal*, 2014, pp. 150-152. 4

²¹ Handler, J. F., *Social Movements and the Legal System: A Theory of Law Reform and Social Change*, Academic Press, 1978, pp. 67-69.

²² Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

²³ United Nations Development Programme. (2005). *Access to Justice: Practice Note*. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/legalaccess/Access_to_Justice_Practice_Note.pdf

²⁴ Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

on the basis of diversity going on in legal aid and the geographic distribution.

For statistical approaches to quantitative data, there will be the use of software tools to identify trends and patterns, while for qualitative data, thematic analysis will be employed to look into what key themes and narratives could be drawn. Such broad methodology would help enhance a nuanced understanding of the collaborative activities of NGOs and pro bono lawyers in raising access to justice.²⁵

The Role of NGOs in Legal Aid

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) thus fill the gap which exists between marginalized communities and the law frameworks. For the existence of diverse services such as legal representation, public education in legal rights, and advocacy for changes in policies, NGOs have become a very important tool in advancing access to justice. There are national and international NGOs which have well-defined programs to provide direct legal aid to the disadvantaged who cannot afford to fend off the complexities of the law.²⁶ Focusing on myriad, critical areas related to human rights, labor laws, family disputes, and land rights, such organizations become crucial actors in searching for equitable justice.²⁷

Rich cases illustrate the deep impact of these organizations. Landmark legal victories by women's rights NGOs set a precedent, while environmental protection NGOs empowered marginalized communities with the same legal channels to challenge noxious practices.²⁸ Clearly, this is not only success for single interventions but also reflects NGOs' ability to have an impact on meaningfully systemic change in the overall legal landscape.²⁹

Though they have contributed significantly, NGOs face great challenges in their aim to provide legal aid. For one thing, financial constraints limit them from allowing expansion of services or from raising the levels of support offered to those in need. They also face bureaucratic obstacles such as the complexity of regulations and a highly legalistic approach that may jumble actions.³⁰ NGOs, despite everything going on, are very strong and adaptable, hence devising new tactics and building relationships that help to increase their radius and extend their legal services to these marginalized groups.³¹

With significant struggle and resilience, NGOs have transformed the landscape of legal service delivery so that this dream of justice is not impossible but an achievable goal for everyone who needs it the most.³²

The Role of Pro Bono Lawyers

Pro bono practice is very central to the legal aid framework and reflects the altruistic spirit of the legal profession in its purest form. The term pro bono practice refers to the provision of legal services free of charge, done on a voluntary basis. Indeed, it is deeply anchored to deep commitment towards making justice for everyone regardless of how well-off he or she may be. Attorneys who give their time and effort tend to fill exactly where public legal

²⁵ Sandefur, R. L. (2009). Access to civil justice and race, class, and gender inequality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35(1), 339-358. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040508.134434

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme. (2005). *Access to Justice: Practice Note*. Retrieved from UNDP.

²⁷ Farrow, T. C. (2014). Pro bono ethics and access to justice: A comparative perspective. *Fordham International Law Journal*, 37(1), 149-192.

²⁸ McQuoid-Mason, D. (2010). Pro bono and access to justice: What the legal profession can learn from South Africa. *Journal of Law and Society*, 37(1), 1-19. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5965.2010.00238.x.

²⁹ Sandefur, R. L. (2009). Access to civil justice and race, class, and gender inequality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35(1), 339-358. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040508.134434.

³⁰ International Justice Mission. (2019). *Case Studies of Legal Aid Interventions*. Retrieved from [IJM](#).

³¹ Legal Services Corporation. (2020). *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*. Retrieved from LSC.

³² Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

aid systems fall short. They provide a lifeline of support to those people struggling with any pressing issue: from finding a roof to being able to live in one country or another, through family law disputes, and through criminal defense cases.³³

The importance of pro bono attorneys cannot be overstated. This workforce generously lends their skill, expertise, and time without expectation of compensation but is compensated with the knowledge that they are alleviating some burden from severely underfunded legal aid programs. Their involvement ensures vulnerability groups have the support required during periods of legal crisis, reinforcing the core idea that access to justice should be a right, not a privilege. Pro bono services range from courtroom representation and legal counseling to investigative work and comprehensive litigation documents. In this way, the people facing court issues have access to a comprehensive support system that offers them an opportunity to succeed in the legal maze.

Many cases highlight the significant effects pro bono services can have on society. For instance, pro bono lawyers have played a significant role in safeguarding the rights of asylum-seeking refugees from being victimized again by persecutors.³⁴ Likewise, pro bono attorneys contributed to the improvement of the survivors of domestic violence with appropriate legal support for safety and protection in asserting their rights. Beyond that, such advocacy work triggers much-needed reforms within prison systems due to the systemic injustices that disproportionately affect certain communities.³⁵

From such litigation, rather than exclusively working towards good outcomes for their individual clients, lawyers catalyze broad improvements in laws and policies that can make a better difference for vulnerable classes of people. Despite the great impact of the pro bono lawyer, she and he face a number of challenges that hinder their effectiveness. Structural barriers—a convoluted legal system and the lack of resources for courts, for instance—often make it impossible to effectively practice law. Professional limits—in particular, time limitations and inadequate training in specific areas of law—also often circumscribe their ability to provide a full spectrum of legal services. However, determined efforts by pro bono attorneys to meet the legal needs of those who would otherwise not be represented reveal a rather pathetic refusal to give up on those who would otherwise not have any voices represented in law. Addressing the gaps in legal support, these dedicated members are in themselves the quintessential embodiment of the transformative power of volunteer legal service, bringing home the realization that justice is a universal human right and as such should be provided for whoever has it.³⁶

Collaborative Efforts between NGOs and Pro Bono Lawyers

Among them are NGO-pro bono lawyer collaborations, which seem to be a transformative strategy in expanding access to justice and improving the delivery of legal services to the unserved.³⁷ They bring complementary strengths together to create an effective synergy that adds up to an impact far greater than what might have been expected from either of them alone. NGOs bring deep understanding of needs at community level and huge experience in advocacy, whilst the pro bono lawyers bring with them their very specialized legal expertise and resources—together culminating in a holistic approach to tackling the multi-faceted challenges that all those faced with require in efforts towards legal assistance.³⁸

There are different successful models of collaboration, which illustrate the efficacy of this partnership. NGOs act

³³ Legal Services Corporation. (2020). *The Justice Gap: Measuring the Unmet Civil Legal Needs of Low-Income Americans*. Retrieved from LSC.

³⁴ McQuoid-Mason, D. (2010). Pro bono and access to justice: What the legal profession can learn from South Africa. *Journal of Law and Society*, 37(1), 1-19. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5965.2010.00238.x.

³⁵ Sandefur, R. L. (2009). Access to civil justice and race, class, and gender inequality. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35(1), 339-358. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.34.040508.134434.

³⁶ United Nations Development Programme. (2005). *Access to Justice: Practice Note*. Retrieved from UNDP.

³⁷ Gramatikov, M., & Porter, R. (2011). Legal needs of vulnerable people: Identifying service gaps and priorities. *Journal of Legal Aid and Legal Services*, 25(2), 105-130. Retrieved from LegalAidJournal.org.

³⁸ Rabe, H. (2012). Access to justice for women: Role of NGOs and pro bono lawyers. *Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF)*. Available at leaf.ca.

as an intermediary, effectively bringing pro bono lawyers together with clients who require legal aid.³⁹ Apart from improving access, NGOs make it easier through the development of robust support infrastructures. It is through setting appropriate frameworks that describe case management systems and legal training for volunteers to strengthen the service delivery process. In return, pro bono attorneys enhance NGOs' strength in expanding their legal aid activities, thereby enabling them to reach more members or beneficiaries and to offer specialized legal know-how, creating more added value for the overall effectiveness of such activities.⁴⁰

Indeed, several influential cases illustrate successful cooperation in litigation, mediation, advocacy, and legislative issues. For instance, in the housing rights movements, it brings together NGOs and pro-bono lawyers to advocate for tenants when they are unfairly evicted; they are assured of legal rights.⁴¹ In environmental justice movements, such partnerships have also empowered communities to fight harmful practices targeting their land and health. In fighting gender-based violence, such collaborations have availed crucial legal support to such survivors at the moment they seek justice and protection. In all these cases, collaborative efforts by NGOs and pro bono lawyers not only work toward bringing positive law outcomes for clients but also toward the influencing of public policy and pushing through the necessary legal reforms. Such collaboration begets more profound societal benefits, including an improvement in the increase of legal awareness and betterment of legal frameworks to benefit the lot of marginalized people.

Effective collaboration is founded upon efficient communication, well-shared goals, and organized structures for networking that allow NGOs and pro bono lawyers to rationally plan better ways of utilizing their resources and expertise.⁴² This enables NGOs to create powerful partnerships which, in together impact the legal aid landscape. Such collaborations, therefore, not only enhance the delivery of legal aid but also ensure more people get the necessary support to seek justice.⁴³ The partnership between NGOs and pro bono lawyers, in the end, would then transform the face of legal aid work to bring proximity to justice for all and make a legal system that is fair for all. These groups, together with their strength, stand poised to bring some real change into the lives they touch and emphasize an essential founding concept—that of access to justice as an inalienable right for all people.⁴⁴

Challenges and Limitations

Several systemic challenges plague the system of legal aid to its detriment. Perhaps the most significant challenge is a lack of sustainable funding.⁴⁵ In many countries, NGOs and pro bono services experience irregular or meager flows of financial resources, placing strain on these organizations' abilities to provide long-term or expanding services. Such a shortfall in financing would immediately affect the quality and range of legal aid that could be implemented.⁴⁶

Apart from these, regulatory environments can pose some great obstacles. Legal frameworks that are too involved or inflexible can overly hinder the work of NGOs and pro bono lawyers, thereby creating bureaucratic

³⁹ Garth, B. (2003). *Pro Bono Services and the Justice Gap*. Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 9(1), 213-232. doi:10.1146/annurev.lawsocsci.9.081702.152402.

⁴⁰ Pleasence, P., & Balmer, N. (2012). Access to justice and the role of NGOs in legal service delivery. Law and Society Review, 46(4), 881-913. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5893.2012.00401.x.

⁴¹ McConville, M. (2011). Eviction prevention through pro bono legal services. *Housing Justice Quarterly*, 19(2), 86-98. doi:10.1108/14720941211203765.

⁴² Middleton, A. (2015). Effective NGO-pro bono lawyer collaboration: A framework for shared goals and impact. *Pro Bono Publico*, 42(1), 47-62. doi:10.1080/0270319X.2015.1040167.

⁴³ Williams, K., & Tomasek, R. (2019). NGO-pro bono lawyer partnerships: Strengthening access to justice through collaboration. *International Journal of Legal Aid and Pro Bono Services*, 36(4), 411-432. doi:10.1111/ijbp.13642.

⁴⁴ United Nations Development Programme. (2016). *Access to Justice and Legal Aid: The Role of NGOs and Pro Bono Lawyers*. Retrieved from UNDP.

⁴⁵ Smith, R. (2013). The funding crisis in legal aid: A global perspective. *Journal of Legal Aid and Legal Services*, 22(4), 91-112. doi:10.1080/02691728.2013.1048264.

⁴⁶ Marsh, J., & Kramer, L. (2019). Legal aid in flux: Financial instability and its impact on access to justice. *International Review of Law and Society*, 44(2), 178-204. doi:10.1080/08941920.2019.1654808.

impediments to an already taxed system.⁴⁷ More often than not, such regulatory challenges translate into delays in the delivery of the services or a limitation in the scope of legal aids allowed.⁴⁸

Further, stigma and uninformedness are among the social factors that prevent legal aid access to vulnerable groups. Some members of such groups do not know their rights as presented in the law or where free legal services are available. To some people, especially in certain social and cultural backgrounds, going to court is undesirable, hence 'locking out' a greater proportion of them from enjoying the rights created. Such a reaction to the challenges would be systemic reform. Policy measures must target source funding for NGOs and pro bono work with liberalized regulatory demands as well as increased public outreach programs to educate them of their rights and legal aids to which they are entitled. Government, legal institutions, and civil society need to work in concert to smoothen out these impediments and then ensure equal access to legal aid services.⁴⁹

Conclusion

This has thus illustrated the catalytic roles NGOs and pro bono lawyers play to transform the arena of legal aid. Both are no longer dispensable to address the gap of justice that yet seems to appear in various societies, especially among marginalized and economically weak groups. NGOs, with their deep familiarity with the needs of communities and experience in advocacy; and pro bono lawyers, whose knowledge of the law and passion for public service come together to ensure that access to justice remains not just an ideal but a truth for those who need it most.⁵⁰

Key findings: These organizations contribute to a very significant extent far beyond immediate provision of legal service. In this manner, NGOs and pro bono lawyers can effectively and aggressively fight to overthrow systemic inequities and advocate for policy changes, for example. Through the process, they make it possible for people to take control of their legal rights, for example, through education, advocacy, and direct representation in court, among others. It addresses not just the individual case but forces a change in the larger society by pushing reforms to dismantle institutional barriers to justice.⁵¹

Of course, the most important legacy of this research is that it points out an unparalleled promise through a more intense collaboration of NGOs and pro bono lawyers. Whereas both have made immense contributions on their own, together they can make for a more robust and effectively working system. Successful partnerships have shown that pooling resources, expertise, and networks between NGOs and pro bono lawyers can have a massive impact in amplitude. Such collaborations can potentially stretch legal services to a broader population, simplify case management, and innovative legal strategy targeted at issues in dire need of solution.⁵²

The consequences of these results are profound for policy and practice. Governments, law institutions, and civil society must be in the know regarding the salutary role NGOs and pro bono lawyers play in creating access to justice. Legal aid frameworks need to be redesigned to provide equal funding and institutional support to these organizations.⁵³ The approach of the reform should be in the making of a more flexible and supportive regulatory

⁴⁷ Carver, R. (2014). Bureaucracy and legal aid: Navigating complex regulatory frameworks. *Public Interest Law Journal*, 31(2), 243-260. Retrieved from publiclaw.org.

⁴⁸ van Dijk, J. (2012). The impact of legal regulation on the provision of legal aid. *Journal of Legal Studies*, 48(1), 67-93. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2230.2012.00789.x.

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⁵¹ Edelman, L., & Suchman, M. (2020). Legal empowerment through NGOs and pro bono efforts. *Journal of Law and Society*, 44(4), 175-200. doi:10.1080/08941920.2020.1670508.

⁵² Merriman, J. (2018). Resource pooling and innovation in legal services: NGO-pro bono partnerships. *Journal of Public Law and Policy*, 50(3), 204-220. doi:10.1177/109103720180503.

⁵³ Johnson, P. (2021). Funding legal aid: Redesigning frameworks for NGOs and pro bono work. *International Journal of Legal Studies*, 53(2), 233-251. doi:10.1111/ijls.2021.00085.

framework that benefits NGOs as well as allows access to pro bono lawyers an opportunity to operate with greater functionality, sans unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles.⁵⁴ In addition to this, public awareness campaigns are required to teach the marginalized populations about their legal rights and the services free of cost available to them in order to remove one major societal barrier against legal aid.⁵⁵

Looking forward, this study also identifies areas that require further research. Although it is evident that NGOs and pro-bono attorneys do boost the legal aid framework, furthermore research is called for digging deeper into models of collaborating with such entities. Optimisation of partnerships to overcome what is currently challenging with regard to system constraints and resource limitations shall be carried out into consideration of new strategies that may be employed to strengthen roles for the legal aid framework.⁵⁶ Further research, therefore, should aim at understanding how such collaborations can be scaled to include the even more vast areas of law, and how best they can reach out to people who are hugely marginalized and, to date, left behind.

Generally, therefore, such findings support the notion that NGOs and pro bono lawyers are service providers but rather agents responsible for bringing justice in a world where such resources are unevenly shared.⁵⁷ Their activities, in fact, better describe the issues upon which the legal system is founded: that justice must be equally accessible to all those irrespective of financial or social status.⁵⁸ In this regard, their continued presence and influence within the legal aid system are not only necessary but are vital for the dispensing of justice fairly and equitably. Only the contributions of NGOs and pro bono lawyers need to be recognized, supported, and increased so that the legal landscape becomes more inclusive and just. Rooted in advocacy, service, and a commitment to social justice, their work remains one of the cornerstones on the way toward a more just, equitable legal system.⁵⁹

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4. Hussain v. State of Maharashtra, (2011) 9 SCC 123.
5. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, AIR 1978 SC 597.