

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
LAW AND JUSTICE
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4575
ANSWERED ON:20.12.2012
ACCESSIBLE JUSTICE
Siddeswara Shri Gowdar Mallikarjunappa

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Union Government has taken any steps to make justice accessible to the poor especially the SCs/STs/OBCs and other minority sections of the society;
- (b) if so, the details thereof during the last three years; and
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

MINISTER OF LAW & JUSTICE (DR. ASHWANI KUMAR)

(a) to (c) : The Government has taken many steps to make justice accessible to the poor and marginalised sections of the society. Under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 a member of a Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, a victim of trafficking or a beggar, a woman or a child, a mentally ill or otherwise disabled person and poor people, are amongst those who are entitled to receive free legal service. Out of the Thirteenth Finance Commission Award for the Judiciary of Rs.5,000 crore, Rs.1050 crore have been earmarked for legal aid services and for Alternate Dispute Redressal (ADR) mechanism so that the poor can access speedy justice at an affordable cost.

Recognising the fact that a key barrier to accessing justice is the lack of awareness of rights and entitlements, the Government in Department of Justice has, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), implemented a project on Access to Justice for Marginalized People -women, children, SCs, STs, minorities, people living with disability - in seven States of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh between 2009 and 2012. Several activities related to legal aid and empowerment have been conducted in eighty seven (87) districts in collaboration with thirty three (33) NGOs, law schools, and other partners. Apart from conducting education and training of communities as well as service delivery organisations, many innovative strategies were used for enhancing legal awareness of the marginalized groups including supporting law school based legal clinics, using SMS, MMS, games, skits and community radio.

The Project has reached out to nearly 20 lakh marginalized people for legal awareness, besides training 7000 paralegal workers as local resources to assist the marginalized communities. Over 300 legal aid lawyers have also been trained and sensitized. The models of legal aid and empowerment developed under the Projects will be useful for the National and State Legal Services Authorities for replicating and upscaling across the country.

The Government has decided to undertake a similar programme in the 8 States of North East India (including Sikkim) and Jammu and Kashmir during the 12th Five Year Plan.