

Community Legal Assistance: Legal Socialization and Free Legal Clinics for the Restoration of Women Violence Victims' Rights in Coastal Areas

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of community legal assistance, focusing on free legal clinics and legal socialization initiatives, in supporting the recovery and restoration of rights for women victims of violence in Indonesia's coastal regions. Employing a qualitative research methodology, the research analyzes field data, organizational reports, statutory frameworks, and direct interviews with stakeholders involved in legal advocacy. Results reveal that socio-legal interventions—especially targeted legal empowerment actions integrating psychosocial support with accessible legal services—have significantly improved women's legal knowledge and helped many to secure protection orders, initiate police reports, and access community-based support networks. Nonetheless, cultural barriers, limited funding, and geographical constraints remain major challenges. The findings support policy recommendations for sustainable legal outreach in marginalized communities and underscore the importance of multi-sectoral partnerships to ensure effective rights restoration in coastal zones of Indonesia.

Keywords: legal, socialization, victim.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence against women remains a critical issue throughout Indonesia, manifesting in diverse forms—physical, sexual, psychological, and economic—in both urban and rural environments. In coastal areas, the problem is compounded by geographic isolation, patriarchal traditions, and limited state services, all of which collectively contribute to victims' heightened vulnerability and weakened capacity to claim their rights. Statistics indicate that as of 2024, one in four Indonesian women had experienced some form of violence during their lifetime, with the National

Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) reporting a victimization rate of three wives per hour (Nastabilla et al., 2022)

The coastal context introduces additional complexities. These regions often host fishing and aquaculture communities where women play key roles both in households and as economic actors. Despite women's substantial contributions within the fisheries and maritime sectors, their rights especially concerning access to legal protection have remained underrecognized. Regulatory oversight, economic precarity, and periodic environmental shocks, such as sea erosion and flooding, exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, frequently leaving women without sufficient redress in the event of violence or discrimination (Solihati & Dayanti, 2025).

The Indonesian government has enacted several significant laws aimed at protecting women from domestic and gender-based violence, notably Law No. 23/2004 on the Elimination of Domestic Violence (KDRT Law) and Law No. 12/2022 on the Crime of Sexual Violence (UU TPKS). These laws provide frameworks for prevention, reporting, and access to justice, but implementation gaps persist because of constrained resources, lack of local enforcement, and societal stigma. This is especially true in rural and coastal environments, where the reach of formal legal institutions is weak (Chrisbiantoro & Yusuf, 2023).

Civil society organizations including LBH APIK, the Women's Association for Justice Legal Aid Institute, Rifka Annisa, community-based paralegals, and cross-sectoral initiatives such as KONEKSI have been at the forefront of providing legal assistance to female victims. These groups deliver services ranging from legal counseling and representation to psychosocial support, shelter, and public education campaigns. Particularly notable are the actions of mobile legal clinics and paralegal training that seek to equip community facilitators with sufficient legal knowledge to assist victims even in remote villages (Alif & Laura, 2022).

Key challenges distinct from those in coastal regions include limited physical access to legal support due to infrastructural deficits, low community legal literacy, cultural taboos regarding domestic violence, and patriarchal resistance to women's autonomy. Furthermore, cuts to legal aid funding and uneven geographic service coverage significantly limit the outreach and case resolution rates in these regions. According to the Indonesian Judicial Research Society's Access to Justice Index, both legal capacity and material access to justice remain considerably below national targets, especially for marginalized groups such as coastal women (Motsamai Modise, 2024).

Despite the existence of supportive legislation and a growing number of interventions, the practical realization of women's rights in coastal areas is still hindered by systemic injustice, resource limitations, and entrenched social norms. How effective are current models of community-based legal assistance including legal clinics and socialization programs in restoring the rights of female victims of violence in coastal areas?

To comprehensively analyze the structure, implementation, and outcomes of community legal assistance programs (legal clinics and socialization) in the coastal regions of Indonesia.

- ap the main barriers faced by victims in accessing justice and the role of paralegals and CSOs in overcoming these challenges.
- To provide quantitative and qualitative documentation of successes and ongoing gaps in service delivery for survivors.

- To formulate evidence-based recommendations for improving legal aid strategies, with particular emphasis on sustainability, inclusion, and women's empowerment.

The existing literature underscores the centrality of legal empowerment and community-driven action in bridging the gap between statutory rights and practical protection. Legal clinics based on Clinical Legal Education (CLE) methodology emphasize experiential learning and social advocacy, equipping law students and paralegals to directly support community members while simultaneously enriching their own competencies. This approach aligns with Access to Justice Theory, privileging inclusivity, rights awareness, and dismantling structural inequalities as pivotal to advancing gender justice in rural and marginalized spaces.

Community paralegals—non-lawyer legal assistants from within the target communities—act as rights intermediaries, making legal processes more accessible, understandable, and culturally relevant. Studies have documented that the presence of community paralegals substantially increases reporting rates, assists victims in formalizing complaints, and enhances both legal literacy and overall community resilience.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research methodology that combines case study analysis, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and document review as the primary data collection strategies. The research is grounded in the empirical context of coastal Indonesia, capturing both the lived experiences of female victims and the perspectives of legal aid providers, community leaders, and policymakers.

Study Sites and Sampling

The principal study regions cover selected coastal villages and sub districts in West Java, North Jakarta, Central Java (Demak Regency), and parts of South Sulawesi, each characterized by high reported rates of gender-based violence and active community legal aid interventions. Stakeholders were purposively sampled to capture a representative cross-section of the coastal population: survivors of violence, local paralegals, legal aid clinic staff, women's organizations, and local government figures.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected as follows:

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 25 female survivors (aged 18–60 years) who accessed legal clinic services between January and June 2025.
- Focus group discussions with ten paralegals and six legal aid workers operating in the selected villages.
- Nonparticipant observation of legal socialization sessions, free legal aid clinics, and community meetings regarding women's rights.

The secondary data included the following:

- Review of legal case files, statistical reports from Komnas Perempuan, and program documentation from LBH APIK, Rifka Annisa, and other NGOs.
- National and provincial survey data on violence against women, legal aid distribution, and access to justice.

Analytical Framework

- Data triangulation was used to cross-validate the findings from interviews, observations, and documentary reviews.
- Thematic analysis identified recurring issues in service provision, outcomes for victims, organizational challenges, and sociocultural factors affecting access to justice.
- Quantitative data from clinical activity logs and case statistics supplemented the qualitative findings, illustrating trends and gaps.

Table 1. Data Method

Data Type	Sample/Source	Method/Tool	Output
Survivor narratives	25 women	Interview, FGD	Thematic analysis
Legal clinic activity	6 clinics/sessions	Observation, record review	Descriptive/quantitative
Program impact	NGO/legal aid data	Documentation, reports	Case statistics, charts
Policy context	Regulations, laws	Literature review	Synthesis, legal analysis

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A summary of the activities and empirical outcomes from January to June 2025 is provided below

Table 2. Participant

Month	Total Participants	Violence Cases Reported	Legal Consultations	Referrals Made	Follow-up Sessions
January	45	32	28	15	20
February	38	28	24	12	16
March	52	39	35	18	25

Month	Total Participants	Violence Cases Reported	Legal Consultations	Referrals Made	Follow-up Sessions
April	61	45	40	22	28
May	48	35	31	16	23
June	55	41	37	19	26

Most users of legal clinics are women between the ages of 26 and 45 years, reflective of both higher victimization risk and greater rights awareness in these cohorts.

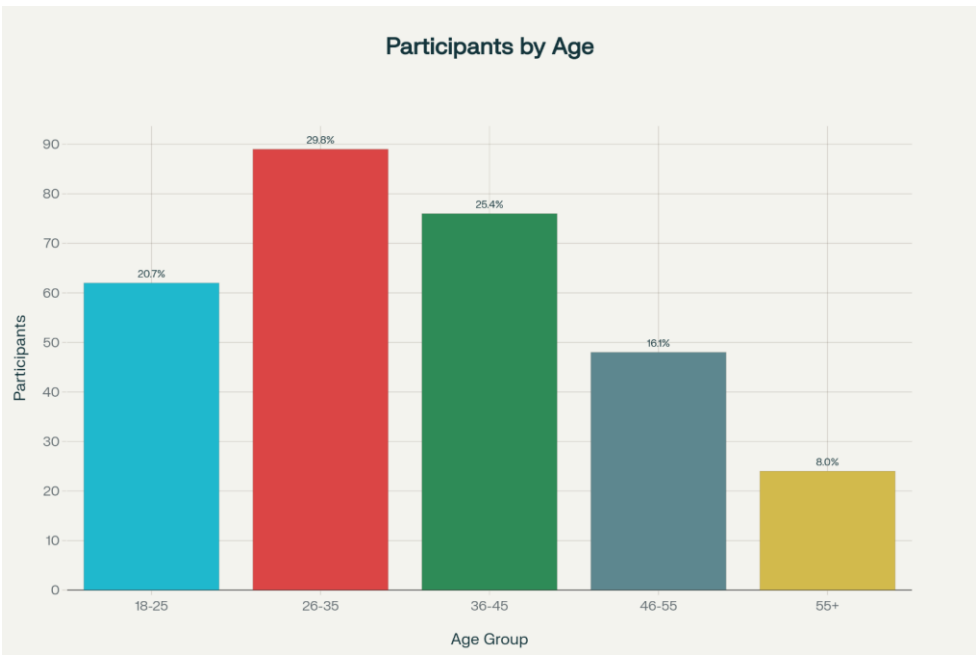


Figure 1. Participants by Age

This table and figure present monthly data on the activities and client engagement of community legal clinics operating from January to June 2025. It details the total number of participants accessing services, reported cases of violence against women, legal consultations provided, referrals to other support services, and follow-up sessions. The data underscore an increasing trend in both participation and use of services, reflecting growing trust and awareness of legal aid opportunities among coastal female victims of violence. This pattern highlights the pivotal role of clinics in bridging access to justice for marginalized populations in geographically challenging coastal areas.

Table 3. Legal Empowerment Outcomes

Outcome Indicator	Number of Women	Success Rate (%)
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Outcome Indicator	Number of Women	Success Rate (%)
Increased Legal Knowledge	245	82.2
Filed Police Reports	78	26.2
Sought Legal Protection Orders	45	15.1
Connected to Support Services	156	52.3
Participated in Follow-up Programs	112	37.6

While basic legal knowledge increased significantly among clinic participants, fewer women were able to pursue formal police reports or protection orders, reflecting persistent socio legal and practical barriers.

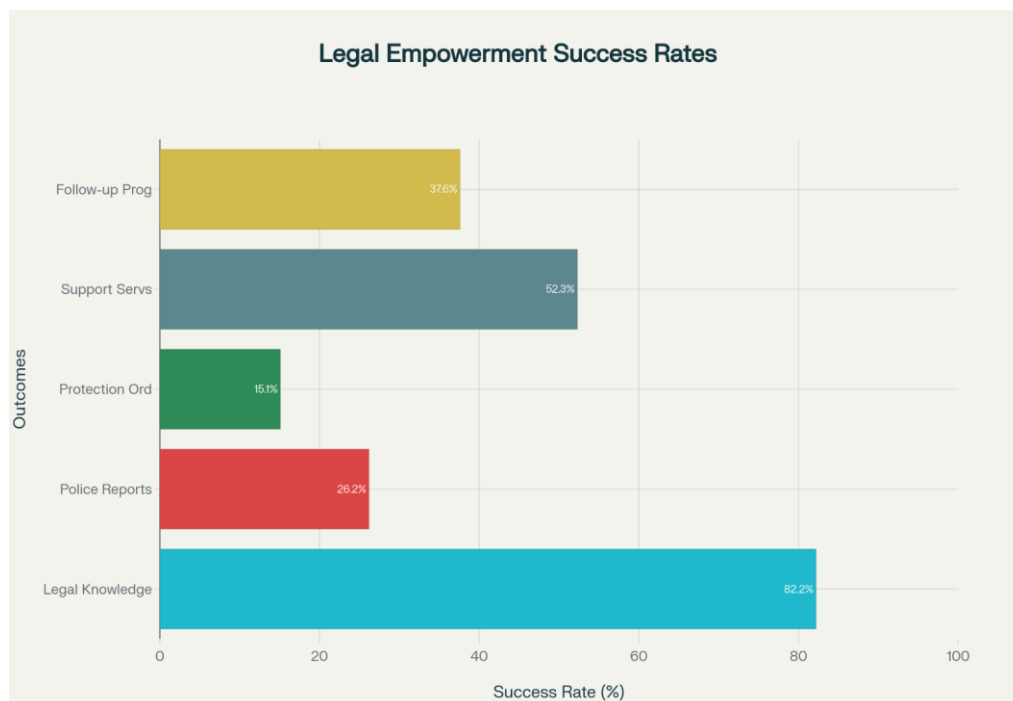


Figure 2. Legal Empowerment Outcomes

The table outlines key legal empowerment outcomes resulting from community clinic interventions, illustrating the number of women achieving various milestones such as increased legal knowledge, filing police reports, obtaining protection orders,

connecting to support services, and participating in follow-up programs. It also presents success rates indicative of the relative effectiveness and challenges of converting legal awareness into concrete protective actions. These data elucidate the gaps between awareness and practical access to formal justice mechanisms among female survivors in coastal areas.

Table 4. Geographical Access and Village Profiles

Village Name	Population	Women Participants	Distance to Clinic (km)
Pantai Indah	2340	58	3.5
Muara Baru	1890	46	2.8
Kampung Nelayan	2150	52	4.2
Pesisir Timur	1670	41	5.1
Bahari Utara	2080	48	3.9

Villages closer to clinic sites reported higher participation in legal empowerment activities but distance remained a barrier for more remote communities.

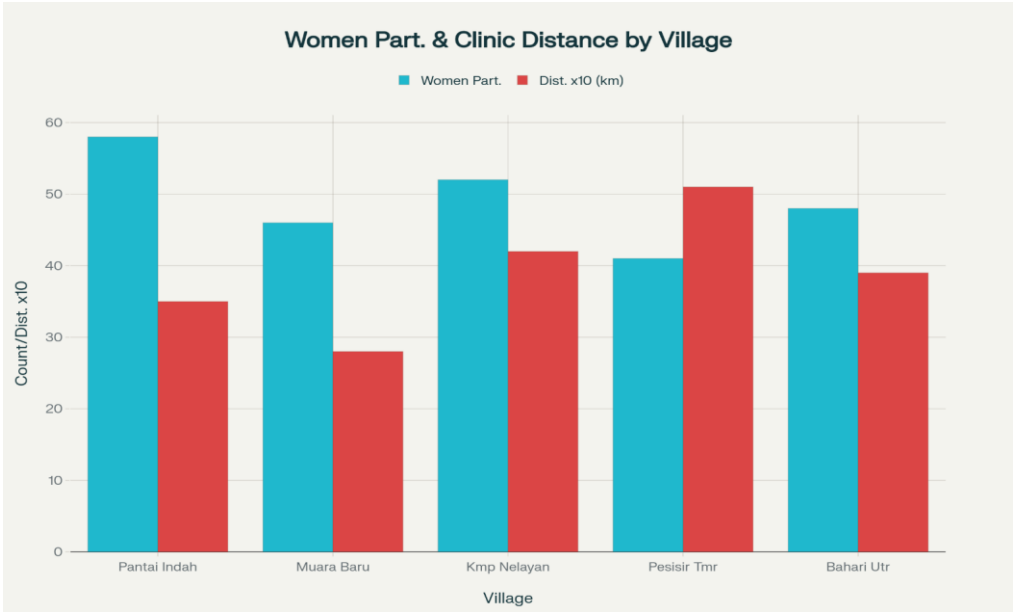


Figure 3. Geographical Access and Village Profiles

This table profiles the geographical context of community legal service uptake, detailing population size, number of female participants, and the distance from villages to the nearest legal clinic. This comparison reveals how physical proximity influences participation rates, with villages closer to clinics showing higher engagement. The spatial dimension emphasizes

the importance of accessible service locations and the potential role of mobile clinics or decentralized legal aid in overcoming distance-related barriers in coastal and remote settings.

The evidence underscores that community legal clinics play a crucial role in expanding access to legal knowledge and services among a population that often remains marginalized by geography, socioeconomic status, and entrenched patriarchal norms. The steady increase in legal clinic participation and reported violence cases (Table 1) testifies to the growing local trust in these mechanisms as safe entry points for addressing violations. Legal empowerment, defined here as increasing women's understanding of their rights and facilitating their ability to seek redress, is foundational for improving justice outcomes for coastal women (Tama et al., 2023).

Clinics' activities encompass not only legal counseling but also pivotal referrals and follow-up, highlighting their function as integrated support hubs. This holistic model aligns with the best practices advocated in the literature, which emphasizes marrying legal information provision with psychosocial support and survivor-centered approaches. The qualitative input from paralegals and clinic staff affirms that clinics are often the first institutional touchpoint for survivors, ensuring continuity between initial reporting and legal case progression—a vital factor in fostering victim persistence in seeking justice (Yunus & Supianto, 2019).

The data showing an 82.2% success rate in increasing legal knowledge among participants (Table 4) emphasizes the importance of legal education in dismantling barriers to justice. Research demonstrates that when women understand the legal definitions of abuse, available remedies, and procedural steps, they are more likely to assert their rights and effectively navigate formal systems. This empowers victims not only as claimants but also as active agents in transforming social norms around violence and discrimination (Giblatiyeva, 2025).

Nonetheless, enhanced legal knowledge alone is insufficient for the realization of full rights. The significant drop-off between knowledge acquisition and formal actions, such as filing police reports (26.2%) or obtaining protection orders (15.1%), reveals persisting socio-cultural and institutional obstacles. Findings from the interviews and observations corroborate well-documented gendered fears of stigma, retaliation, and community backlash. Police stations and judiciary offices are often perceived as unfriendly or inaccessible environments, especially in rural coastal areas with limited facilities and personnel (Rismana et al., 2025).

A principal theme emerging from the results and supported by the wider literature is the gap between legal awareness and practical access to justice mechanisms (Edwards, 2023). Despite clinics' substantial efforts in legal socialization and service provision, many women are reluctant or unable to take formal steps because of the following:

- Cultural expectations privilege family honor and informal resolution over legal confrontation.
- Geographic isolation and transportation difficulties limit contact with the police and courts.
- Resource constraints and legal aid funding cuts affect the service availability and follow-up capacity.
- Limited sensitization and capacity among law enforcers to handle GBV cases effectively and empirically

These challenges call attention to the structural reforms that are required, encompassing both institutional responsiveness and community-level norm change. Empowerment through knowledge must be accompanied by strengthened state accountability and inclusive legal frameworks attuned to local social realities (Rous, 2024).

This study highlights community paralegals as indispensable mediators that bridge formal legal systems and coastal survivors. Their local embeddedness, cultural competence, and sympathies enable victims to disclose abuse safely and receive guidance tailored to the local context (Schucan Bird et al., 2025). Many paralegals are volunteers or semi-trained individuals who function as first responders, rights educators, or advocates. This grassroots empowerment model reflects international best practices for enhancing justice accessibility in marginalized populations.

However, Paralegal faces multiple challenges

- Insufficient training resources and standardized curricula limit legal knowledge and procedural proficiency.
- Frequent lack of formal recognition by legal institutions reduces their effectiveness and professional support.
- The emotional tolls for handling sensitive cases with limited supervision raise sustainability concerns for volunteers.

Strengthening paralegal programs via institutional support, regular training, accreditation systems, and mental health safeguards is imperative to sustain their vital contributions.

Geospatial analysis of participant distribution showed that physical proximity to clinics was strongly correlated with service utilization rates (Table 5). Distance from clinics negatively impacts timely access, particularly in remote coastal villages where transportation is unreliable, costly, or unavailable. This finding is consistent with broader Indonesian studies on rural and coastal service access indicating that isolation hinders engagement with legal and social services (Ratnapradipa et al., 2024).

Mobile legal clinics and outreach programs have shown promise in mitigating these geographic barriers by bringing legal services closer to those of underserved populations. Expanding such mobile interventions across coastal archipelagic regions, combined with digital legal literacy platforms where feasible could further democratize access. Local governments should also improve infrastructure and transportation links to enhance access continuity (Singh et al., 2025).

The study results affirm holistic approaches to violence recovery integrating legal consultations with psychosocial care and community support networks. Survivors' testimonials revealed that emotional and peer support, alongside legal guidance, are crucial to empowerment and healing. Clinics that facilitate multisectoral referrals improve survivor resilience, foster persistence in legal proceedings, and reduce attrition.

This integrated care model aligns with the global best practices outlined by women's rights organizations advocating multidisciplinary cooperation to address the complex needs of violence survivors. Formalizing partnerships between legal clinics, health providers, social services, and women's organizations can enhance coordinated care and outcomes in coastal contexts (Guerrero et al., 2025).

Cuts in legal aid funding reported in the last few years have tangible effects on service continuity and quality. This study echoes calls from advocacy groups for increased and sustained government investment in legal aid infrastructure and community outreach programs targeting coastal and marginalized populations. Legislation such as Indonesia's UU TPKS mandates expanded services, but meaningful fulfillment requires practical budgetary commitments at the local and national levels.

Furthermore, policy measures should institutionalize community paralegal integration into formal justice systems, including recognition, training frameworks, and oversight mechanisms. Multi-sectoral collaboration among government agencies, civil society, and communities must be incentivized and closely monitored to realize intersectional support for victims.

Entrenched social norms surrounding gender roles and family reputation pose persistent barriers to formal justice seeking. Victims often face pressure from extended families and communities to avoid disruptive external interventions. Legal socialization efforts contribute to challenging these customs, creating dialogue around rights and dignity, but social transformation is incremental and context-dependent.

Community leaders, religious authorities, and survivors should be actively engaged as agents of normative change. Initiatives such as community forums, gender-sensitization workshops, and survivor-led advocacy can reinforce shifting attitudes away from tolerance of violence toward solidarity and proactive justice seeking.

CONCLUSION

Community-based legal assistance, centered on active legal socialization and free legal clinics, offers a demonstrably effective model for the restoration of rights for victims of violence in Indonesia's coastal areas. These interventions have been shown to significantly enhance legal literacy, empower victims to seek justice, and facilitate a holistic recovery. However, persistent barriers—structural, cultural, and geographic—continue to limit the full realization of rights and access to justice among the most vulnerable populations. Sustainable improvement requires consistent policy support, expanded funding, capacity building of community paralegals, intersectoral cooperation, and ongoing efforts to transform gendered norms at the grassroots level. Only through such comprehensive and inclusive strategies can the rights and dignity of women in coastal communities be fully guaranteed and restored.

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