




SUCCESS STORIES

2024-25



Empowerment *Stories*

The following narratives illustrate the transformative impact of our interventions at multiple levels, individual, community, and systemic. Each story underscores how targeted legal advocacy, capacity-building initiatives, and community engagement have empowered marginalized groups to overcome entrenched barriers. From individuals reclaiming their rights and reshaping their futures to communities mobilizing for social justice and systemic shifts enhancing legal accountability, these accounts offer a clear demonstration of sustainable change in action.



Savita Ali

Director cum Managing Trustee, Eva Foundation

Advocate Savita Ali's life is a powerful example of breaking social, legal, and gender barriers to ensure justice for marginalized communities. Born as Savita Singh in a small village in Panipat, Haryana, she defied deeply ingrained caste and gender norms from an early age.



In a society where women were discouraged from pursuing higher education, she not only completed her graduation in 2007 but also carved out a career in law and activism. Her journey was further shaped by her inter-caste, inter-state, and inter-religious marriage, which came with its own set of challenges. Moving to Bihar after her marriage, she had to start over in an unfamiliar state, facing resistance from both social structures and the legal system. But she transformed every struggle into a stepping stone for justice.

Today, as a practicing lawyer at Patna High Court and Sessions Court, she has taken up 252 legal cases that have shaped lives, particularly those of Dalit, SC, ST, and Muslim communities. She has successfully secured ₹2.4 crore in compensation for victims, fought high-profile cases including securing life imprisonment for gang rape convicts, and stopped multiple child marriages. Beyond legal advocacy, she founded Eva Foundation, a state-level organization dedicated to legal aid, education, and women's empowerment. Her work has gained national and international recognition, including being named one of the Top 20 Inspiring Women Entrepreneurs by *Femme Times Media*, receiving the *Nayika Puraskar 2025* from the Bihar Government, and being appointed as an Advisory Member of The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), a prestigious global feminist organization.



The Journey of Advocate Savita Ali

A Timeline of Resilience and Achievements

- She defied societal norms by pursuing higher education in a community where most girls were not allowed to study beyond Class 10, eventually graduating in 2007.
- She entered activism in 2007 by joining the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, where she started working on caste and gender-based discrimination issues.
- She became an active member of AIDMAM (All India Dalit Mahila Adhikar Manch) in 2008, focusing on legal awareness and leadership development among Dalit women.
- She overcame personal and societal struggles by entering an inter-caste, inter-religious, inter-state marriage in 2013, challenging deeply rooted social stigmas.
- She started her legal career in Patna, Bihar, practicing at the Patna High Court and Sessions Court, representing marginalized communities in cases of atrocity, violence, and injustice.
- She founded Eva Foundation, a state-level organization that provides legal aid, mental health counseling, education, and skill-building programs for women and marginalized groups.
- She built a strong legal network by spearheading the Bihar Legal Network (BLN), connecting advocates who specialize in Dalit and minority rights cases.
- She was recognized by The Times of India in 2024 for handling 252 legal cases, focusing on atrocities against Dalits, gender-based violence, and labor rights violations.





- She successfully stopped multiple child marriages, training 1,000+ young girls to identify and report cases, directly intervening in over 20 cases of child marriage prevention.
- She secured ₹2.4 crore in compensation for victims of atrocity cases, labor exploitation, and gender-based violence between 2019 and 2025.
- She was honored as one of the Top 20 Inspiring Women Entrepreneurs by Femme Times Media, recognizing her impact in social justice and legal advocacy.
- She received the Nayika Puraskar 2025 from the Bihar Government, honoring her contributions to gender justice and legal empowerment.
- She was invited as a speaker at the AWID 2024 Forum in Bangkok, sharing a panel with leading feminist activists and legal experts discussing caste discrimination and feminist resourcing.
- She was appointed as an Advisory Member of AWID, a global recognition of her expertise in legal justice for marginalized women and communities.
- She participated in an education-focused event at Wipro, Kolkata, hosted by Azim Premji University, where she discussed the transformative power of education in social justice movements.

Click the logo for a video on her Journey



Suman Kumari



Suman Kumari, a resident of Sabarchak village in Patna, comes from a poor Dalit family. She faced caste discrimination and immense societal pressure to drop out of school and marry at a young age. However, she defied all odds and fought to continue her education. Since childhood, Suman encountered caste-based discrimination and gender inequality. Her family faced financial hardships, and the community did not support girls' education.

She was often pressured to leave school and get married, but she remained determined to pursue her dreams. Suman's life took a significant turn when she connected with Eva Foundation. Through the foundation, she learned about Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's fight for Dalit rights, constitutional rights, and gender equality. With their support, she continued her studies and received training in various fields, which strengthened her confidence and leadership skills.



Today, Suman is a leader in her community, empowering other girls by educating them about their rights. She actively raises awareness about the consequences of child marriage and encourages young girls to prioritize education. Recently, she played a crucial role in preventing a child marriage in her village, reinforcing her commitment to social change.

Recognizing her efforts and dedication, the Women and Child Development Corporation, Government of Bihar, honored Suman with the "Nayika Puraskar - 2025". This award acknowledges her remarkable leadership and contribution to uplifting marginalized communities.

Suman Kumari's journey is a testament to courage and resilience. From battling discrimination to becoming a mentor and leader, she has not only transformed her own life but is also inspiring many young girls to break barriers and pursue their dreams. Her story serves as a ray of hope for Dalit, marginalized, and underprivileged girls striving for education and empowerment.

Riya Paswan

Riya Kumari belongs to the Scheduled Caste (SC) community and comes from one of the most disadvantaged sections of society. Growing up, she faced severe discrimination and social restrictions that tried to limit her aspirations. Education was not prioritized for girls like her, and speaking up against injustice was often met with resistance.



Riya's life took a transformative turn when she attended trainings on rights, education, and empowerment through our programs. These sessions gave her the confidence to challenge injustice and understand legal processes. She realized the importance of knowing her rights and using her voice to create change in her community. Armed with knowledge and confidence, Riya is now actively involved in social work and community advocacy.

She helps victims of injustice file FIRs, raises awareness about legal rights, and amplifies the voices of the unheard. She regularly conducts awareness campaigns in her community, educating people about their fundamental rights and the importance of legal aid.

With a strong passion for justice, Riya aspires to become a lawyer in the future, ensuring that marginalized communities receive the legal support they deserve. Her journey from a girl struggling for her own rights to a leader and future legal advocate is truly inspiring. She continues to be a source of strength, proving that empowerment is not just about personal success but about uplifting an entire community.

Case Stories



1. SAGAR VERMA VS. STATE OF BIHAR – Criminal

Revision No. 369/2024

Legal processes often pose significant challenges for individuals facing criminal charges, particularly when procedural irregularities impact their right to a fair trial. This case concerns Sagar Verma, who was implicated in a financial misappropriation case related to ATM cash handling in Darbhanga. He filed Criminal Revision No. 369/2024 before the Patna High Court, challenging the rejection of his discharge application by the trial court. The Bihar Legal Network (BLN) played a key role in assisting him with the revision process and ensuring that procedural justice was upheld.

Case Overview

The case stemmed from Darbhanga Sadar P.S. Case No. 287/2016, in which Sagar Verma and two other employees of SIS Cash Services, an outsourcing agency responsible for ATM cash management, were accused of misappropriating ₹10,61,500. The allegation was based on a complaint filed by Manish Sinha, a representative of the NCR Corporation, which had an agreement with State Bank of India for cash management services.

According to the complaint, a discrepancy of ₹10,61,500 was discovered in an ATM on July 16, 2016. However, Sagar Verma was on leave from July 9, 2016, to July 20, 2016, due to his marriage, and he had transferred his password to a colleague, Bhavnath Vats, before proceeding on leave. Despite this, he was implicated in the case and charged under Sections 420, 409, 467, 471, 379, and 120(B) of the IPC.

During the proceedings before the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate-IV, Darbhanga, Sagar Verma filed an application under Section 239 CrPC seeking discharge from the case. However, his application was rejected on August 18, 2023, leading him to file a criminal revision petition under Section 397 CrPC before the Patna High Court.

Eva-BLN Intervention

The Bihar Legal Network (BLN) actively supported Sagar Verma in filing the criminal revision before the Patna High Court. Recognizing the procedural lapses in the lower court's order, BLN provided legal guidance and representation throughout the proceedings. The legal team, including Adv. Akansha Malviya, focused on key arguments to challenge the trial court's decision.

BLN emphasized that the investigation lacked direct evidence linking Sagar Verma to the alleged financial misappropriation. The case records did not establish any conspiracy (120B IPC) between the petitioner and the other accused. Moreover, there was no documentary evidence proving that Sagar Verma was involved in the incident, given that he was on leave during the period in question. These arguments highlighted the material irregularity in the trial court's assessment under Section 239 CrPC, which led to an unjustified rejection of the discharge application. Through continuous legal monitoring and advocacy, BLN ensured that the case was thoroughly examined at the appellate level.

High Court Decision

After reviewing the case, the Patna High Court set aside the trial court's order and discharged Sagar Verma from the case. The court acknowledged that there was no prima facie evidence to establish his involvement in the alleged offense and ruled that the trial court had erred in rejecting his discharge application.

The High Court's decision reinforced the principle that criminal charges must be supported by clear evidence and cannot be sustained on mere suspicion or procedural shortcomings. The revision was allowed on contest, and Sagar Verma was discharged from Darbhanga Sadar P.S. Case No. 287/2016.

Conclusion

The successful intervention by the Bihar Legal Network (BLN) in Criminal Revision No. 369/2024 demonstrates the importance of legal advocacy in ensuring fair trial rights. BLN's continuous efforts in monitoring the case, providing legal assistance, and challenging procedural inconsistencies led to a just outcome.

This case underscores the necessity of vigilant legal intervention in cases of wrongful implication. By securing a fair trial process, BLN reaffirms its commitment to legal justice and protecting the rights of individuals facing unjust prosecution.

2. SEWERAGE DEATH OF IDRIS AND IQBAL HUSSAIN –

BEUR PS CASE NO. 15/2021

The hazardous working conditions of sanitation workers in India continue to pose severe risks to their lives. Despite legal safeguards, manual scavenging persists, often leading to fatalities due to a lack of proper safety equipment. This case highlights the tragic deaths of Idris (30 years old) and Iqbal Hussain (29 years old), both laborers from Murshidabad, West Bengal, who lost their lives while working under the Namami Gange Project in Patna. The Bihar Legal Network (BLN) played a critical role in ensuring that the case was taken seriously by the authorities, pushing for legal action and compensation for the victims' families.

Case Overview

On May 31, 2021, Idris and Iqbal Hussain were assigned to clean a sewerage tank near Beur Jail, Patna, under the Namami Gange Project. They were made to enter the sewerage chamber without any safety gear or protective equipment, which resulted in their asphyxiation due to toxic gas exposure. Both workers were rushed to Patna Medical College Hospital, where they were declared dead on the same day.

Despite clear violations of The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, the police initially registered the case as a Unnatural Death (UD) FIR under Beur PS UD Case No. 15/2021, instead of invoking the appropriate sections under the Manual Scavenging Act. This pattern of misclassification is a common issue in cases involving sanitation worker deaths, leading to a lack of accountability for those responsible.

Eva-BLN Intervention

Recognizing the misclassification of the case, the Bihar Legal Network (BLN) initiated legal action and advocacy efforts to ensure justice for the victims. The team engaged in the following interventions:

- **Advocacy for FIR under Manual Scavenging Act:** BLN made several representations before authorities, demanding that the UD FIR be converted into a proper FIR under the Manual Scavenging Act to hold those responsible accountable. Due to sustained efforts, the police were eventually compelled to reclassify the case accordingly.

- **Application to NHRC and Safai Karamchari Commission:** BLN filed an application before the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the Safai Karamchari Commission, seeking legal action and compensation for the victims' families.
- **Engagement with Government Authorities:** The BLN team met Santosh Suman, Minister of SC/ST Welfare Department, advocating for rehabilitation measures for the families of the deceased workers.
- **Legal Aid and Continuous Follow-up:** BLN ensured that the case remained under legal scrutiny, filing an application before the Additional Director General of Police (ADGP), Weaker Sections, which remains under investigation.

Current Status and Impact

As a direct result of BLN's intervention, the UD FIR was converted into a standard FIR under the Manual Scavenging Act, ensuring that the case is properly investigated. However, challenges remain, as the victims' families have become untraceable, complicating further legal and compensation processes. The application before the ADGP, Weaker Sections, is still pending, and BLN continues to monitor the progress of the investigation.

Through persistent legal aid and advocacy, BLN has played a crucial role in ensuring legal accountability in a case that could have otherwise been overlooked. The organization remains committed to pushing for compensation, legal action against responsible parties, and rehabilitation for the victims' families.

Conclusion

The deaths of Idris and Iqbal Hussain highlight the ongoing dangers faced by sanitation workers in India. The lack of protective gear and safety protocols continues to put workers at risk, despite legal prohibitions against manual scavenging. BLN's intervention in this case demonstrates the importance of legal advocacy in ensuring that such incidents are not dismissed as routine accidents but treated as violations of human rights and labor laws.

3. Yasmin Khatoon – MATROMONIAL SETTLEMENT

Property disputes among legal heirs are often complex and can lead to prolonged legal battles. In this case, following the demise of Md. Jawed Alam on 22-07-2020, differences arose between his widow, Yasmin Khatoon, and his extended family regarding the distribution of his movable and immovable assets. To prevent unnecessary litigation, the Bihar Legal Network (BLN) facilitated a compromise agreement between the parties, ensuring a legally binding resolution that protected the interests of all involved.

Case Overview


After the death of Md. Jawed Alam, disputes emerged between his widow, Yasmin Khatoon (First Party), and his family members (Second Parties) over the inheritance of his properties. The Second Parties included his mother (Zulekha Khatoon), brothers (Perwez Alam, Md. Irshad Alam, Md. Shazad Alam, Firoz Alam), and sister (Sufiya Khatoon).

The primary issue centered around the self-acquired property of Md. Jawed Alam, which he had orally declared to be in favor of his wife before his passing. This 14-decimal plot, located in Mauza Mohabbatpur, Ganga Bridge Hajipur, Vaishali District, became a point of contention. Additionally, financial assets such as bank savings of ₹1,33,000 and an advance of ₹70,000 for a shop in Milky Mohalla, Hajipur were also in dispute.

Given the absence of any formal will, resolving these claims required a mutually agreed-upon settlement to prevent further legal conflicts.

Eva-BLN Intervention

BLN played a crucial role in mediating discussions and ensuring a peaceful resolution through the execution of a Memorandum of Compromise, which outlined the settlement terms. The agreement recognized Yasmin Khatoon's rightful inheritance of her late husband Md. Jawed Alam's self-acquired property in Hajipur, based on his oral declaration. Additionally, the second parties acknowledged her entitlement to ₹1,33,000 from his bank account and ₹70,000 as an advance payment for a shop, of which she had already received ₹30,000.



As part of the settlement, Yasmin Khatoon agreed not to claim ownership of the house belonging to the second parties in Sakri Gali, Sher Shah Road, Patna. Both parties mutually consented not to initiate any future civil or criminal cases regarding the disputed properties, making the settlement final, conclusive, and legally binding. By facilitating legal counseling and mediation, BLN ensured that the compromise protected the legal rights of all parties involved while preventing unnecessary litigation.

Conclusion

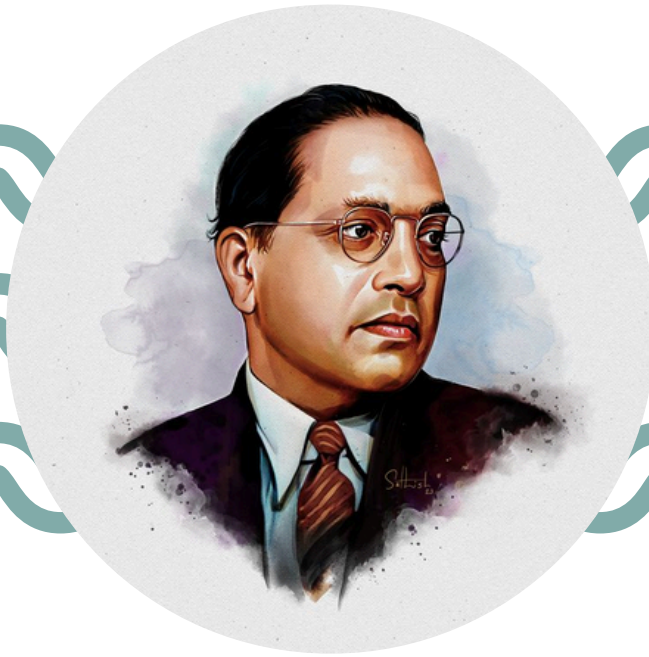
This case highlights the importance of alternative dispute resolution in property matters, especially where multiple heirs are involved. By facilitating this amicable settlement, BLN successfully prevented long-drawn litigation and provided legal clarity to both parties. The execution of a legally binding Compromise Deed ensured that both parties' interests were secured, and future disputes were avoided. BLN's role in this case reflects its commitment to ensuring equitable legal solutions, reducing family disputes, and promoting legal awareness among marginalized communities.

Bail Cases

In the financial year 2024-25 itself, Bihar Legal Network (BLN) achieved a significant milestone in its fight for justice. The dedicated legal team intervened in 30 bail cases, ensuring that individuals who had been unjustly imprisoned for extended periods were finally reunited with their families. Every single case resulted in a favorable judgment, a testament to the unwavering commitment and expertise of the legal team.

For many, these legal battles were not just about securing release; they were about reclaiming dignity and restoring hope. Faces once shadowed by despair lit up with happiness as they walked free, their rights reaffirmed. This victory was not merely a legal win but a triumph of justice, humanity, and perseverance.





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