

Establishing environmental law clinics to strengthen environmental justice and the rule of law: a case study of the Sundarbans**M.P. Chengappa**

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Abstract: Climate change arguably constitutes the foremost global challenge facing the world today. Its impact is multi-faceted and manifests itself through various unpredictable weather phenomena, the brunt of which is borne largely by vulnerable low-lying areas in the Global South. This is exemplified by the ecologically-endangered Sundarbans region, which contains the world's largest mangrove forest, spread across the Ganga-Brahmaputra Delta on the Indo-Bangladesh border. Its inhabitants have suffered, with increasing frequency, from rising water levels and erratic weather phenomena, which imperil their very existence. These threats are exacerbated by man-made activities such as intensive agriculture and aquaculture, improper waste disposal, accumulation of hazardous materials, illegal construction and pollution stemming from unchecked tourism. The local inhabitants often lack legal recourse and are powerless to prevent such environmental degradation. In this context, this paper seeks to explore the potential that student-led legal aid clinics possess in providing a grassroots solution to this problem. Being incubated in law universities with established professional support networks, these clinics undertake grassroots-level work through active stakeholder consultation. By employing the case-study method, this paper will examine the functioning of an experimental environmental law clinic focused exclusively on the Sundarbans, with practicing lawyers, government officials, academics and students, both from India and abroad, as its participants. It will consequently assess the viability of such a bottom-up socio-legal approach. In doing so, this paper aims to catalyse, through its findings, the establishment of similar environmental law clinics in other ecologically sensitive areas, and to ensure that these clinics bring together lawyers, academics, activists and students in strengthening the cause of environmental justice as a larger goal underpinning the rule of law.

Keywords:

1. Clinical Legal Education
2. Environmental Justice
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4. Sundarbans

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Available online 30 December 2025**1. Introduction**

Climate change, in the 21st Century, can hardly be called a novel phenomenon by any stretch of the imagination. Ever since the discovery of the "hole" in the Ozone Layer in 1985, climate

change and the causes and effects thereof have preoccupied the imagination of much of the climate scientists, ecologists, and environmental activists across the world (European Environment Agency, 2023). Over the course of the past few decades, it has evolved into one of the most pressing global challenges the world faces today. While Climate Action remains one of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG-13) a significant proportion of nation states have pledged mitigation and adaptation support, their efforts have largely failed to contain the increasingly egregious effects of climate change. At this juncture, together with concomitant issues such as global warming and rising sea levels, climate change has imperilled the basic human rights of vulnerable individuals (UNDP, 2023).

Moreover, the burden of accelerating climate change, global warming and allied phenomena falls heavily on inhabitants of vulnerable regions in the Global South, even while economically powerful nation-states in the Global North are primarily responsible for emitting the vast majority of greenhouse gases (International Energy Agency, 2023). These vulnerable areas, often low-lying and ecologically fragile, face intensified impacts such as rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and ecological degradation (Centre for Refugee Studies, 2023). The disproportionate political and economic influence wielded by the relatively developed players results in the perpetuation of an "Environmental Apartheid" of sorts, wherein individuals and entities hailing from underprivileged or vulnerable regions are usually denied environmental justice in judicial fora.

This disparity is exacerbated in situations wherein inhabitants and citizens of relatively underdeveloped nations are unable to take recourse to judicial fora by themselves. This imbalance highlights the urgent need for global cooperation and equitable solutions to address this challenge head-on, ensuring that those who are least responsible for its causes are not disproportionately affected by its effects. Consequently, it is imperative that alternative approaches be introduced to achieve the goal of environmental justice for all by borrowing inspiration from the recent proliferation of legal clinics in law schools and universities across the world, and leveraging their unique capabilities in delivering environmental justice. It is in this context that this paper seeks to assess and examine the transformative potential which legal aid clinics, affiliated with law schools and universities, might possess in this regard.

To this end, Section 2 of this paper undertakes a brief review of the extant literature, in relation to the development of Clinical Legal Education in India, and its impact as a tool for achieving social justice. Building on this discussion, Section 3 examines the proliferation of legal clinics in higher educational institutions across the world in the last few decades, focusing on a few landmark instances of legal clinics actively contributing to and shaping environmental justice goals abroad, especially in the United States of America, and to a lesser extent, Nigeria and Ghana. Subsequently, Section 4 of the paper will employ a specific case-study, namely the KCL-NUJS Legal Clinic, and examine its impact in securing environmental justice in the Sundarbans. In Section 5, this paper makes a few suggestions and recommendations based on the aforementioned findings, and finally concludes the discussion by offering a few closing remarks on the way ahead.

2. Literature review: Clinical legal education in India

The Constitution of India, in its Preamble, enumerates justice as one of its foundational ideals. In pursuance of this ideal, the Indian Parliament inserted Article 39A via the 42nd Amendment (1976) to the Constitution, imposing the responsibility on the State to ensure equal access to justice, and to provide free legal aid to all citizens to ensure that those economically disadvantaged are not denied justice. Subsequently, the Indian Supreme Court has consistently

upheld the Right to Free Legal Aid, in landmark decisions such as in *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of Bihar* (1979),¹ *M. H. Hoskot v. State of Maharashtra* (1978)² and so on. As a natural progression of such welfare-minded initiatives, Parliament enacted the Legal Services Authorities Act in 1987,³ whose purpose was to ensure access to justice for all, and to that end, to provide free and quality legal services to the weaker sectors of society.

More specifically, insofar as clinical legal education and its interplay with legal aid is concerned, one of the earliest instances of its official recognition in India was in the 1973 Report of the Expert Committee on Legal Aid, chaired by Justice Krishna Iyer. The Committee made a series of bold recommendations, which included, *inter alia*, amending the Advocates Act of 1961 to enable students and professors to directly represent disadvantaged individuals in court. At a similar juncture, in the early 1970s, Banaras Hindu University pioneered what became one of India's first clinical law courses, centred around a legal aid clinic with active student and faculty members, and operating under the guidance of a retired judge (Bloch & Prasad, 2007, pp. 165-169). This laid the foundation for clinical legal education elsewhere in India, and many universities quickly followed suit. In 1983-84, the Faculty of Law at the University of Jodhpur established a legal aid clinic (Bloch & Iqbal, 1990, pp. 92-120), which was actively involved in disseminating information about social welfare legislation, and advised on claims arising in motor vehicle accidents and matrimonial disputes (Narain, 1986, pp. 76-77). Their limited scope notwithstanding, these socio-legal interventions were encouraged by the Bombay High Court in its observations in *Inamdar Vahab Badasha v. Symbiosis Society* (1984).⁴

Subsequently, in the 1980s, law and legal education were increasingly being viewed as instruments of social change (Rajashree, 2021, pp. 79-94). This was catalysed by Professor N.R. Madhava Menon, who is widely recognized as the father of modern legal education in India (Sangroula, 2020, pp. 339-364). His efforts culminated in the establishment of a series of National Law Universities (NLUs) throughout the country, each of which embodied his vision of "socially relevant legal education" and "justice education" (Menon, 1998, p. 25). Menon's work also substantially influenced the Law Commission of India's 2002 Report, headed by Justice M. Jagannadha Rao, which made several key recommendations towards reforming the modalities of clinical legal education in law school curricula (Law Commission of India, 2002). Around the same time, the Bar Council of India (BCI), via Resolution No. 04/1997, introduced four mandatory clinic-oriented practical courses for all law degrees (Bar Council of India, 1997). These courses included, among other things, a compulsory clinical course on public interest lawyering, legal aid, and para-legal services.

In 2017, the Supreme Court in *Bar Council of India v. Bonnie FOI Law College*,⁵ further asked the BCI to collaborate with the University Grants Commission (UGC) and to embark on a programme of comprehensively reforming legal education in India, focusing, *inter alia*, on ensuring greater student and faculty participation, greater collaboration with industry experts, practitioners and government officials, non-government entities and charitable organizations, and so on. More recently, the Indian government unveiled its new National Education Policy (NEP) in 2020, with a special focus on skill-based holistic education and the "learning by doing" approach (MHRD, 2020). In this context, Paragraph 11.8 places key emphasis on "environmental education" and encourages using credit-based courses for community engagement in the areas of climate change, pollution, waste management and so on, in order to maximise both student

¹ *Hussainara Khatoon v. Home Secretary, State of Bihar* (1980) 1 SCC 98

² *M. H. Hoskot v. State of Maharashtra* (1978) 3 SCC 544

³ The Legal Services Authorities Act (1987).

⁴ *Inamdar Vahab Badasha v. Symbiosis Society* AIR (1984) Bom 451

⁵ *Bar Council of India v. Bonnie FOI Law College* (2017) 11 SCC 185

participation and stakeholder outcomes (Swaroop & Verma, 2022). While these positive developments are undoubtedly welcome, clinical legal education still has a long way to go in achieving its potential, despite almost five decades having passed since its inclusion in Indian law school curricula.

3. Beyond borders: the global impact of environmental law clinics

While law school clinics across the world are yet to fully realize their transformative potential, clinical legal education itself is not a novel phenomenon. Internationally, one of the earliest attempts to formally adopt clinical pedagogical models was as early as 1916, when the New York State Bar Association mandated, through a resolution, the establishment of clinics for legal aid work as a part of the law school curriculum (McManis, 1981, pp. 617-618). Later in the 20th Century, the Ford Foundation decided to fund the Council on Legal Education and Professional Responsibility (CLEPR) during the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, which became instrumental in institutionalizing such legal aid clinics throughout the United States. In 1989, the American Bar Association's MacCrate Report set out detailed evaluation criteria for assessing the performance of legal aid clinics, and recommended relaxation of the extant rules allowing students and non-lawyers to be directly involved in litigation (American Bar Association, 1992).

This encouragement from professional bodies has seen law school clinics across the US play a pivotal role in a plethora of landmark cases, especially those relating to environmental harms and climate change (Matasar, 1991, p. 488). For example, in March 2025, the Environmental Law Clinic (2025) at the Stanford University School of Law, on behalf of the International Council of Clean Transportation, filed *amicus* briefs in the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in support of the Environmental Protection Agency's multipollutant emission rules for vehicles in *Kentucky v. EPA*,⁶ in *Nebraska v. EPA*,⁷ and in *Oklahoma v. EPA*.⁸ Student members also prepared and presented oral arguments before the Los Angeles Superior Court in *Center for Biological Diversity v. City of Long Beach*, which concerned the illegality of oil wells operating in ecologically vulnerable regions.⁹ Elsewhere in the United States, the University of Virginia's Environmental Law and Community Engagement Clinic co-authored an *amicus* brief before the United States Supreme Court in *Sackett v. EPA*, a landmark case concerning the protection of wetlands.¹⁰ Similarly, the Environmental Law Clinic at the Tulane University School of Law played a significant role in determining the outcome in *O'Reilly v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers*, wherein the court halted the development of a 70-acre project, and mandated a comprehensive environmental review to assess its impact.¹¹ Likewise, the Sabin Center for Climate Change Law at Columbia University, which maintains a global climate litigation tracker in collaboration with the law firm Arnold & Porter, has also filed a slew of *amicus* briefs in recent climate lawsuits. A notable example of this is *New York v. Trump* (2025),¹² which concerns a challenge to a federal funding freeze that impacts climate action. Another non-governmental organization which involves students in pro bono litigation work is Our Children's Trust, a non-profit public interest law firm that was instrumental in helping 21 youth plaintiffs bring the famous climate lawsuit in *Juliana v. United States* (2015).¹³

⁶ *Kentucky v. Environmental Protection Agency* (2024) D.C. Cir. 24-1087

⁷ *Nebraska v. Environmental Protection Agency* (2024) D.C. Cir. 24-1129

⁸ *Oklahoma v. Environmental Protection Agency* (06/18/2025) 23-1067

⁹ *Center for Biological Diversity v. City of Long Beach* (2025) 9th Cir. 23-3624

¹⁰ *Sackett v. EPA* (2023) 598 U.S. 651.

¹¹ *O'Reilly v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers* (2023) 5th Cir. 22-30608

¹² *State of New York et al. v. Trump et al.* (2025) 1st Cir. 25-1236

¹³ *Juliana, et al. v. United States of America, et al.* (2020) 9th Cir. 947 F.3d 1159.

However, legal aid clinics and their successes are not only confined to the Global North but have also made their presence felt in underdeveloped countries as well. Apart from the aforementioned proliferation of such clinics in India, there have been instances of law school clinics enabling social change in several African countries, such as Nigeria and Ghana (Odigie-Emmanuel & Dahiya, 2023, pp. 44-51). In fact, one might go so far as to argue that such clinics have even greater transformative potential, in bridging the gulf between the law on paper and the law in operation.

At the international level, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has highlighted the centrality of clinical legal education vis-à-vis the ethos of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, and has recognized three broad models of law school clinics, each of which has been adopted in different parts of the world: the Law Reform Model, the Litigation Model, and the Consulting Model (UNCED, 1992). In 2015, the Doha Declaration of the Thirteenth United Nations Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice prompted the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to develop the Education for Justice Initiative, a significant component of which is centred around imparting practical lawyering skills to students, through the use of mechanisms like law school clinics (UNODC, 2015). The recent frequency in the activities of numerous legal clinics, particularly those associated with the Global Alliance for Justice Education (GAJE) network, represents a welcome development and reflects the increased impact of such legal clinics (Klein & Roe, 2022, p. 141).

4. Case study: The Sundarbans (KCL-NUJS CLINIC)

4.1 Background – the situation in the Sundarbans

The Sundarbans region, situated on the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, the largest delta in the world, is also arguably one of the world's foremost biodiversity hotspots. Spread across 10,000 square kilometres, across both India and Bangladesh, it is home to the world's largest mangrove forest. Four of the protected areas in the Sundarbans are enlisted as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. It is also blessed with a huge variety of flora and fauna, many of which are endangered (Hasneen & Nagdeve, 2025, pp. 262-275). At the same time, however, the Sundarbans is an ecologically vulnerable region whose inhabitants find themselves and their traditional ways of life increasingly threatened by the vagaries of climate change, along with other human activities which have disrupted the fragile ecological balance in the region. Since 2020, its mangrove forests have been classified as "endangered" by the IUCN's (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Ecosystems (Sievers, 2020). Rising sea levels, accelerated by global warming, threaten the submergence of the low-lying Sundarbans region.

With much of the Sundarbans lying at an elevation of less than one metre above sea level, even a modest increase in ocean levels leads to significant flooding. While mangrove forests have a degree of resilience to water submersion, they cannot survive prolonged or frequent tidal inundation, which is becoming increasingly common. This persistent flooding not only threatens vegetation but also accelerates coastal erosion, gradually reducing the landmass of the delta (Frontline, 2024). Some islands in the region have already vanished, raising serious concerns about the long-term future of the remaining land and the communities living there. The loss of land also forces residents to migrate, creating a growing number of environmental refugees and adding pressure to nearby urban and rural regions.

Despite its status as one of the world's largest and most biodiverse mangrove forests, the Sundarbans faces several existential threats, which include rapid ecological degradation, illegal resource extraction, biodiversity loss, displacement due to climate change, and so on. Local

communities in the Sundarbans, especially those engaged in fishing, farming, and weaving, are largely dependent on the natural resources of the Sundarbans for their livelihoods. However, increasing salinity caused by rising sea levels and the frequent occurrence of cyclones has drastically affected agricultural productivity and freshwater availability (Dhaka Tribune, 2024). As a result, many residents have been forced to turn to environmentally harmful practices, such as prawn farming for export. The ensuing water pollution and growth of algal blooms further accelerates ecological degradation. Women, in particular, face disproportionate hardships due to the gendered impacts of climate-induced migration. Owing to the loss of traditional livelihoods, many able-bodied men leave in search of employment opportunities elsewhere, leaving the women to shoulder financial and domestic burdens. This notwithstanding, women's voices and experiences are often overlooked in decision-making processes (Sahana et al., 2019, pp. 40-52).

4.2. The Clinic: Activities and stakeholder outcomes

The NUJS-KCL Environmental Justice Clinic was established in 2021, jointly by the Dickson Poon School of Law at King's College London, and the West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (NUJS) Kolkata. Established with the *raison d'être* of providing access to justice to those living in the areas affected by climate change, such as the Sundarbans, the Clinic is physically headquartered at the NUJS Campus in Kolkata, a little over a hundred kilometres away from the Sundarbans region. With the aim of leveraging cross-border collaboration towards the goal of attaining environmental justice, the Clinic collaborates frequently with leading lawyers and academics from across the globe, with leading barristers from the United Kingdom also being intimately involved with the work of the Clinic.

Owing to the role played by government entities, especially in administrative and regulatory matters, the Clinic has also frequently liaised with government officials, including senior officials in the Indian Forest Service. These officials have also visited the NUJS campus on several occasions and engaged in extended discussions and Q&A sessions with the Clinic's student members, regarding matters ranging from the adequacy of the government's efforts towards the conservation of flora and fauna, measures to reduce and address human-animal conflict, compensation procedures and mechanisms for victims of wildlife attacks and their families, (especially the so-called "tiger widows"), and so on.

Moreover, both faculty advisors and student volunteers have made multiple field visits to the Sundarbans region. During such visits, the members of the Clinic have had the opportunity to observe first-hand the impact of climate change on the ecologically vulnerable region. These observations have been supplemented by interactions and interviews with local community members, many of whom have been forced to abandon their traditional occupations owing to the deleterious effects of climate change. These teams have not only documented the various issues, challenges, and concerns faced by the local communities in the Sundarbans region but have also imparted to them basic legal and educational training which can be utilized by them to access legal services and government benefits.

Through its various initiatives and endeavours, the Clinic has had a tangible positive impact and meaningfully contributed to better outcomes, not just for its constituent members, but also for the lives and livelihoods of the people of the Sundarbans. In the field trips undertaken, students have played a proactive role in the dissemination of information regarding the legal rights of the inhabitants of the Sundarbans, with such dissemination in turn empowering and inspiring the latter to exercise their legal recourse, and take, with the assistance of the Clinic and other Non-Governmental Organizations, appropriate legal action. Recently, the Clinic, in

collaboration with a prominent NGO, assisted in securing compensation for four widows of victims of tiger attacks, from the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, pursuant to petitions filed before the Calcutta High Court. In its verdict, the High Court acknowledged the role played by legal aid providers in securing these women their due compensation.¹⁴

While the Bar Council of India currently prevents students from either filing cases or appearing in court, the Clinic's student members have assisted with a significant portion of the preparatory paperwork, especially at the evidence-gathering stage. An example of more direct student involvement is the context of improper fly ash disposal by boats traversing the adjoining waterways, in the course of exporting fly ash from India to Bangladesh. Herein, student members of the Clinic have prepared and filed applications under the Right to Information Act (2009) with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB), which has facilitated complaints, in turn, to be made before these regulatory bodies. This is especially pertinent since the menace of fly-ash pollution poses a clear and present danger to the lives and livelihoods of the inhabitants of the Sundarbans, along with its flora and fauna, as numerous local inhabitants attested to during their conversations with the Clinic's members.

The findings of this case study affirm the viability and value of student-led legal clinics in ecologically sensitive areas like the Sundarbans and reflect the largely positive degree of correlation between improved human rights outcomes and the concentration of legal aid clinics which has been generally observed in India, as noted by the Supreme Court of India in its Report titled *Legal Aid through Law Schools: A Report on Working of Legal Aid Cells in India (2024)*, released by former Chief Justice of India, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud (SC Centre for Research and Planning, 2024).

While the results are promising, the success of such initiatives hinges on sustained institutional support, adequate funding, and a strong commitment to community-centred legal practice. Extending this model to other ecologically vulnerable regions will require not only replication of best practices but also contextual adaptation to address region-specific legal, cultural, and environmental dynamics. Further, international cooperation and collaboration between like-minded groups and individuals across the globe, as exemplified by the NUJS-KCL Clinic, will be essential in ensuring regional ecological resilience, and, above all, securing access to environmental justice.

5. Key considerations going forward

In order to ensure that law school-administered legal aid clinics realize their transformative potential, and to maximise their socio-legal impact, particularly in the realm of environmental justice, several interlinked reforms must be pursued. Herein, especially in the Indian context, it would also be apposite to invoke the conclusions drawn by a 2013 research project, undertaken jointly by the Government of India and the United Nations Development Programme under the aegis of the "Access to Justice" Programme. Titled *A Study of the Law School based Legal Service Clinics*, the report focused on the functioning of law school-administered legal aid clinics, operating in seven Indian States: Orissa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan (UNDP, 2013). It collected extensive empirical information regarding the nature of activities undertaken by such clinics, the frequency of activities, the quality of the services rendered, the percentage of the student population that participated in these activities, and the frequency of interaction with the communities outside the confines of the

¹⁴ *Binarani Mandal v. The State of West Bengal (2024) WPA 21596*

college campus, especially the socio-economically and educationally marginalized communities with little to no legal recourse.

Foremost amongst its key findings was the dismal extent of participation, of both students and faculty members, in the activities of such clinics. While nearly 80% of the law schools surveyed had some form of clinical legal education and/or legal aid programmes, a majority of these lacked adequately trained or dedicated faculty members, and were largely underfunded. At a more granular level, another limitation of these clinics was that their "legal awareness" activities were confined to isolated instances of lectures by practitioners, or the occasional public address, with no follow-up engagement or outreach.

At a more practical level, an often-overlooked impediment to the functioning of law school clinics is the lack of adequate institutional support and incentives for *pro bono* initiatives (Anderson, 2014, p. 427). Consequently, the limited success of these clinics is not because, but in spite of, their parent administrations. Herein, a common but easily addressed issue is the reluctance of university administrations to grant academic credits or similar exemptions in lieu of the work undertaken by student volunteers in these clinics. This extends to faculty members as well, and faculty participation, often pivotal for the functioning of law school clinics, is disincentivised owing to the lack of commensurate workload adjustments for other teaching, research and academic responsibilities (Barry, 2007, pp. 27-50). Similarly, law school clinics must liaise with practitioners, especially public interest lawyers and *pro bono* departments of law firms, in order to provide the requisite professional expertise to those whose circumstances such clinics seek to ameliorate. As highlighted in the Apex Court's report, such collaboration would also benefit students, by helping to bridge the gulf between theory and practice. Students must also be made aware of the practical benefits and incentives of obtaining work experience with legal aid clinics, especially for those interested in building careers in public interest lawyering. At the same time, government bodies such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in India, which routinely engages lawyers, must strive to provide adequate employment opportunities to students with such past clinical work experience.

Finally, to ensure accountability, it is imperative to institute evaluation and monitoring mechanisms to assess the performance of these clinics and their impact on society at large. This must be done in both qualitative and quantitative terms, and measurable outcome metrics could be used to allocate performance-linked institutional incentives, such as additional funding (Shanahan, 2018, p. 547). Such metrics could include the number of cases filed by the clinic, the number of cases successfully litigated or favourably settled, and lastly, if it can indeed be accurately measured, the feedback from litigants who choose to avail the clinic's services. Such evaluation must also be done periodically and at a granular level, as opposed to isolated broad-based assessments, such as the 1980-81 Committee for Implementing Legal Aid Schemes (CILAS), headed by Justice P.N. Bhagwati. Such monitoring can also be carried out by an independent non-affiliated authority, with the precise monitoring methodology and the composition of such authority to be decided by the Bar Council of India. Thus, by mobilizing the resources of law universities more effectively, leveraging professional support networks, and facilitating cross-disciplinary collaboration among lawyers, academics, students, and policymakers, these clinics would be uniquely positioned to secure access to justice for those who need it most. Utilisation of these clinics to advance the cause of environmental justice offers an innovative stakeholder-driven grassroots level approach, which not only responds to the immediate legal needs of local communities but also contributes to longer-term systemic change by embedding principles of environmental justice within the broader rule of law. Through community participation, dissemination of awareness, and stakeholder engagement, these clinics can empower

communities, especially vulnerable ones, to participate meaningfully in shaping their environmental futures.

6. Conclusion

At this juncture, the challenges faced by the Sundarbans region, owing to the vagaries of climate change and other anthropogenic causes, is emblematic of similar threats posed to ecologically fragile biodiversity hotspots across the world. As climate change continues to expose the constraints of traditional legal and judicial mechanisms that have hitherto secured environmental justice, the institutionalization of a participative and inclusive grassroots-level approach, manifested in the form of law school-administered legal aid clinics, offers a more promising alternative. These clinics must prioritize grassroots engagement, participatory governance, and the empowerment of vulnerable communities through legal awareness. These clinics possess enormous potential in securing for such communities their access to justice, an inalienable component of the ethos underpinning the rule of law. From the discussion undertaken in the foregoing sections of this paper, it is evident that student-led environmental law clinics can act as powerful agents of change in advancing environmental justice and climate resilience. By grounding legal education in real-world challenges and aligning it with the lived experiences of marginalized and vulnerable populations, these clinics embody the transformative potential of legal pedagogy. While it is still at a nascent stage, it is hoped that the NUJS-KCL Environmental Law Clinic and its success will catalyse the establishment of a greater number of environmental law clinics and enable them to fully realize their transformative potential.

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