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## Impact Evaluation of The Legal Aid Program fo The Poor Community in Malang Regency, East Java Province

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**Abstract:** Access to justice is a fundamental principle in a democratic legal system, reflecting the right of every individual to obtain equal legal protection regardless of social or economic background. In Malang Regency, the provision of legal aid for the poor and vulnerable groups is regulated by Malang Regent Regulation No. 31 of 2023, which aims to ensure that these rights are respected. However, challenges in implementation remain, including the absence of empirical evaluation regarding the program's impact on local communities. This study adopts a qualitative approach with an interpretivist epistemological stance to evaluate the impact of the legal aid program in Malang Regency. Through in-depth interviews and contextual analysis, the research explores community experiences in accessing legal services and the socio-cultural challenges that influence them. Findings indicate that limited access to information, education, resources, and legal assistance hinders the empowerment of vulnerable groups in realizing their fundamental rights. The study emphasizes the importance of expanding the criteria for legal aid beneficiaries beyond economic factors to include other vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities, women and children survivors of violence, and street children. Using the theoretical frameworks of Public Policy Analysis and Program Evaluation, this study argues that effective legal aid provision requires not only procedural mechanisms but also community-based empowerment strategies and the integration of local cultural values. Policy recommendations include strengthening the institutional capacity of legal aid organizations, expanding public legal education, increasing budget allocations, and fostering collaboration between government agencies, community leaders, the private sector, and universities. This study contributes to public policy discourse by asserting the need for inclusive and socially just access to legal protection.

**Keyword:** Access to justice, Legal Aid, Poor Community, Vulnerable groups

### INTRODUCTION

Access to justice is a fundamental principle in a democratic legal system, emphasizing every individual's right to equal legal protection without social, economic, or cultural discrimination (Ramadhan & Suryaningsih, 2021)). In the context of developing countries such as Indonesia, efforts to realize access to justice are carried out through the provision of legal

aid for the poor and vulnerable groups, which is normatively regulated under Law No. 16 of 2011 on Legal Aid. Despite the availability of legal instruments, the gap between legal norms and their implementation remains a significant issue, particularly in regions with high poverty rates and limited access to legal information.

Malang Regency, as one of the regions with a substantial population of low-income residents, has adopted a legal aid policy through Malang Regent Regulation No. 31 of 2023. This policy aims to ensure that poor and vulnerable communities receive free legal assistance as part of the fulfillment of their constitutional rights (1945 Constitution, Article 28D paragraph (1)). However, field implementation reveals various structural and cultural obstacles, such as the limited number of accredited legal aid organizations, insufficient public outreach, and complex administrative procedures (Sekretariat Daerah Kabupaten Malang, 2024)

This study arises from the urgency to evaluate the impact of legal aid programs provided to the poor and vulnerable groups in Malang Regency. Employing a qualitative approach and the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product) (Stufflebeam, 2014), along with impact evaluation theories by (Dunn, 2015) and (Owen, 2020), this research analyzes the effectiveness of policy implementation at the local level. The main focus includes the technical implementation of legal aid by institutions such as Posbakum (Legal Aid Posts), Peradi (Indonesian Advocates Association), and LBH LK3M, the involvement of local government, and the firsthand experiences of aid recipients.

Conceptually, this research also highlights the importance of approaches grounded in the values of *Pancasila* and inclusive development, as reflected in the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the strengthening of public policy through empirical evaluation but also underscores the necessity for reform in legal aid provision to ensure it is more equitable, effective, and responsive to the needs of society's most vulnerable groups (Sangroula, 2021).

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive design to evaluate the impact of the legal aid program for low-income communities in Malang Regency. The qualitative approach was chosen due to its capacity to capture meaning, experience, and the complex social dynamics involved in public policy implementation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The research is grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, which emphasizes understanding the subjective realities constructed by actors within specific social contexts (Neuman, 2014).

The evaluation model utilized in this research is the CIPP model (Context, Input, Process, Product), developed by (Stufflebeam, 2014). This model offers a systematic framework for evaluating public policies from four dimensions: context (social background and needs), input (resources and strategies), process (program implementation), and product (outcomes or impacts). The CIPP model is particularly relevant for assessing legal aid policies, as it facilitates a holistic evaluation of various aspects of program implementation, including community participation and institutional effectiveness.

In addition, this study adopts a public policy analysis perspective as proposed by (Dunn, 2015), which highlights the importance of policy evaluation as a systematic process to assess policy outcomes, effectiveness, and their implications for target groups. Impact evaluation is also conducted with reference to (Owen, 2020) approach, which emphasizes analyzing changes resulting from policy interventions, both in terms of immediate outcomes and long-term effects.

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews with key informants, including legal aid recipients, lawyers, legal aid organization administrators, and government officials in Malang Regency. This technique was selected for its ability to uncover subjective experiences and critical perspectives from informants regarding the program's implementation (Patton, 2014). Informants were selected purposively, based on their involvement in and knowledge of the program.

Data validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, as well as a member checking process to verify the accuracy of the researcher’s interpretation of the data collected from informants. Data were analyzed thematically using a step-by-step process involving open coding, categorization, and the identification of key themes based on the evaluation framework applied.

The research was conducted in Malang Regency, as it is one of the few districts that has issued a regional regulation on legal aid, yet its implementation continues to face significant challenges related to structural constraints, resource limitations, and public awareness.

Through this methodological approach, the study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the effectiveness and challenges of the legal aid program, while formulating policy recommendations that are both relevant and contextually grounded.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

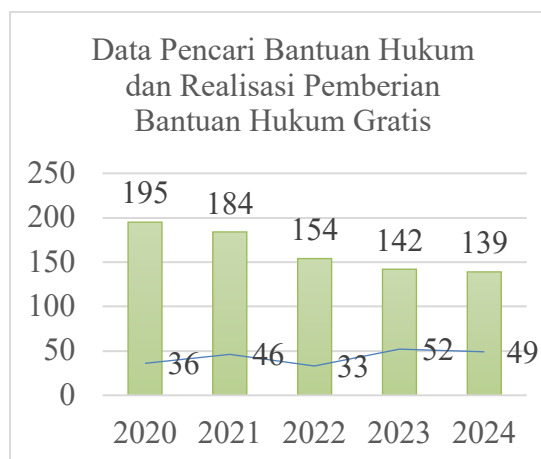
The findings of this study indicate that the impact of the legal aid program in Malang Regency remains limited and uneven, particularly in terms of fulfilling the legal rights of impoverished and vulnerable populations. This impact can be analyzed through three main dimensions: legal service accessibility, community empowerment, and the efficiency of the local legal system.

### Impact on Legal Service Accessibility

**Table 1. Number of cases at Kapanjen District Court 1B Malang Regency**

Jumlah Perkara Pengadilan Negeri Kelas 1B  
Kapanjen

Tahun	Perdata	Pidana
2020	1045	835
2021	962	659
2022	906	679
2023	89	593



**Chart 1. Legal Aid Seekers and Realization of Free Legal Aid Provision in Malang Regency**

The legal aid program in Malang Regency has created formal channels for low-income citizens to access legal assistance, primarily through institutions such as Legal Aid Posts (Posbakum) at the District Court, the Indonesian Advocates Association (Peradi), and the Legal Aid Institute (LBH LK3M). However, data show that out of 5,768 total court cases from 2020

to 2023, only 814 cases (approximately 14%) utilized legal aid services. This low figure indicates a minimal impact of the program on expanding access, due to several factors:

1. Limited outreach and promotion of the program, especially in rural and remote areas.
2. Public unawareness of their right to free legal assistance.
3. Complicated administrative procedures, including the requirement to present proof of poverty and legal documents that not all citizens can provide.
4. The distant location of legal aid institutions from impoverished villages, resulting in geographic and transportation cost barriers.

### **Impact of Legal and Social Empowerment**

From an empowerment perspective, the legal aid program is expected to function as a tool for enhancing the capacity of the poor to assert their legal rights. However, the study found that such empowerment remains sporadic and unsystematic. Most aid recipients remain passive due to:

1. Lack of community-based legal education with a preventive approach.
2. Dependency on legal counsel without educational engagement during assistance.
3. Absence of involvement from local community leaders or paralegals as legal education facilitators.

In contrast, in cases where LBH LK3M applied a community-based approach—such as assistance for women victims of violence and street children—there was evidence of increased legal awareness and willingness among the community to assert their rights in legal settings.

### **Impact on The Effectiveness of Local Legal System**

Structurally, the implementation of the legal aid program contributes positively to judicial efficiency, especially by expediting litigation processes for individuals unable to afford legal representation. Nonetheless, the program's impact on the overall effectiveness of the legal system is still constrained by:

1. Overlapping roles among legal aid providers and poor coordination with the local government.
2. Absence of a continuous monitoring and evaluation mechanism by the Malang Regency Government.
3. Dependence of legal aid organizations on annual grant funding, without guaranteed sustainability of budget or institutional support.

In other words, the program has yet to demonstrate a systemic impact on justice access reform in Malang Regency due to weak synergy among stakeholders and the lack of empirical data as a foundation for policy improvement.

### **Impact on Vulnerable Groups**

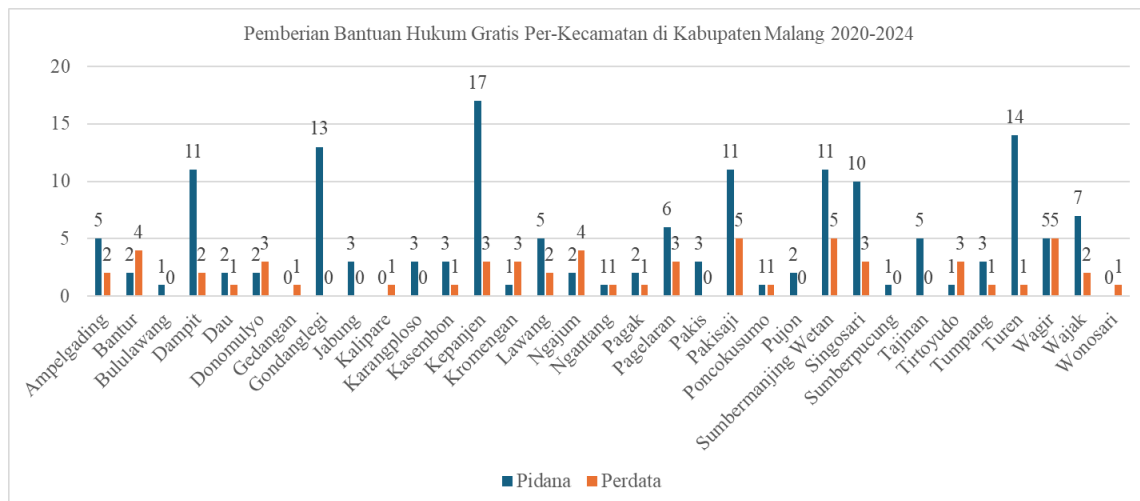
The program's impact on vulnerable groups—such as child victims of violence, persons with disabilities, and neglected elderly individuals—remains very limited. This is largely because eligibility criteria are still predominantly economic and do not account for other forms of social vulnerability. In many instances, vulnerable individuals are not even identified within the service system due to the absence of legal documentation (e.g., national ID cards, family registration, poverty certificates). Consequently, these groups remain outside the reach of the formal legal aid system.

### **Challenges in the Implementation of the Legal Aid Program**

The implementation of the legal aid program for the poor in Malang Regency continues to face significant structural, administrative, and socio-cultural challenges. Based on interview findings and field data analysis, these challenges can be categorized as follows:

### 1. Limited Resources

Despite the high demand for legal aid, only two accredited legal aid institutions operate within the jurisdiction of Kepanjen District Court, namely LBH LK3M and the Court's Legal Aid Post (Posbakum). This number is disproportionate to the coverage area, which includes 33 sub-districts and 378 villages. The limited number of active lawyers and paralegals further exacerbates the situation, especially considering that the majority of impoverished residents live in remote rural areas.



**Chart 2. Distribution of Free Legal Aid Services for The Poor in Malang Regency**

### 2. Lack of Legal Awareness Campaigns and Educations

Many beneficiaries reported being unaware of the availability of legal aid services through government media or official channels. Their knowledge came instead from neighbors or personal legal experiences. This indicates a low level of legal literacy among the poor and a weak role of local government in disseminating information. In line with this, (Amin, 2021) emphasizes the importance of community-based outreach grounded in Pancasila values, so that legal aid functions not merely as an administrative service but also as a means of legal empowerment at the grassroots level.

### 3. Administratively Inaccessible Procedures for the Poor

The legal aid application process still requires documents such as photocopies of ID cards (KTP), family cards (KK), and a Certificate of Poverty (SKTM), which are not easily accessible for many poor individuals—especially those in remote areas or those lacking complete civil registration documents. This situation creates de facto discrimination against groups that should be most protected by the program. As noted by Teremetskyi and Ukrainian (2021), administrative and digital barriers are key challenges in legal aid delivery during crises, which calls for a more inclusive and adaptive system.

### 4. Low Legal Awareness

A considerable portion of the poor population remains unaware of their legal rights and is reluctant to seek legal aid due to fear or perceived social incapacity. In some cases, they are unaware that legal assistance can be accessed free of charge from certain institutions.

### 5. Insufficient Budget and Lack of Local Government Commitment

Budgetary support from the regional budget (APBD) for legal aid in Malang Regency remains minimal. With an annual allocation of approximately IDR 30 million, legal aid institutions lack the financial capacity to expand service coverage or recruit additional human

resources. This reflects a low level of structural commitment from local authorities to fulfill the mandate of social justice as enshrined in Article 28D of the 1945 Constitution and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.

**Table 2 Budget Allocation for Legal Aid Program for The Poor in Malang Regency**

Fiscal Year	Allocation (IDR)	Realization (IDR)	Percentage
2020	31,200,000	31,200,000	100%
2021	31,200,000	31,200,000	100%
2022	31,200,000	31,200,000	100%
2023	31,200,000	31,200,000	100%

Source : (PN Kepanjen, 2024)

### Policy Implications

Based on the impact evaluation of the legal aid program in Malang Regency, several strategic policy implications emerge as foundations for future improvements in program implementation:

#### 1. Expansion of Beneficiary Criteria

The current eligibility criteria, which are solely based on economic indicators (Article 1 paragraph 6, Malang Regent Regulation No. 31 of 2023), have proven inadequate in reaching other vulnerable groups such as victims of gender-based violence, street children, persons with disabilities, and the elderly (Human Rights Law No. 39 of 1999, Article 5 paragraph 3). Regulatory revisions are needed to ensure that the policy becomes more inclusive and aligned with substantive justice (Amin, 2021).

#### 2. Decentralization and Community-Based Services

Research by (Mason, 2021) and (Teremetskyi, 2021) highlights the importance of holistic legal service approaches that reach local communities through paralegals, mobile legal aid posts, and village referral systems. This aligns with the notion of legal empowerment based on local values such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong) and social justice (Pancasila’s 2nd and 5th principles).

#### 3. Simplification of Administrative Procedures

Field findings indicate that the current legal aid application process remains burdensome, particularly for those lacking civil documentation. (Dunn, 2015) argues that policy effectiveness depends on the alignment between procedural design and recipient capacity. Therefore, greater administrative flexibility and legal accompaniment are urgently needed.

#### 4. Integration with Social Welfare Programs

The legal aid program has not been fully integrated with social protection schemes such as the Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), Health Insurance Beneficiaries (PBI), or the Ministry of Social Affairs’ social assistance. According to (Sangroula, 2021) integration between legal and welfare services can significantly enhance the protection of vulnerable groups.

#### 5. Strengthening Monitoring, Evaluation, and Public Accountability

Impact and CIPP-based evaluations (Owen, 2020; Stufflebeam, 2014) underscore the need for continuous performance measurement. The local government should establish a monitoring system based on outcome indicators such as number of cases resolved, user satisfaction, and service accessibility, following best practices such as Nigeria’s multi-stakeholder collaboration model (Onafuwa, 2023).

**Table 3. Impact Evaluation of Free Legal Aid Program in Malang Regency**

Impact Dimension	Key Findings	Impact Level	Evaluation Notes
Legal Aid Accessibility	Only ±14% of total cases utilized legal aid	Low	Limited providers, complex administrative requirements
Socio-Legal Empowerment	Low legal literacy and passive public attitude	Limited	Absence of systemic or community-based educational approaches
Local Legal System Efficiency	Faster litigation observed in some cases	Moderate	Has not led to systemic reform or institutional efficiency
Protection of Vulnerable Groups	Many vulnerable groups remain unreached	Very Low	Beneficiary criteria are too narrow and exclusive
Inter-Agency Policy Collaboration	Weak synergy between government and legal aid providers	Weak	Requires formal and sustained coordination mechanisms
Local Context Responsiveness	Pancasila values and customary approaches not integrated into service delivery	Weak	Local wisdom remains underutilized

**CONCLUSION**

This study reveals that the legal aid program in Malang Regency has made a positive contribution to increasing access to justice for the poor, although its implementation remains suboptimal. The CIPP-based evaluation highlights an urgent contextual need for legal aid services. In terms of input, limitations in budget and human resources persist. Implementation processes are hindered by administrative barriers and a lack of public outreach. In terms of product, there is some improvement in legal awareness and rights protection, though benefits are unevenly distributed.

The program has partially reduced the justice access gap but still fails to reach the most vulnerable—those in remote areas, persons with disabilities, victims of violence, and street children. Key obstacles include the limited number of legal aid institutions, non-inclusive administrative procedures, and poor public legal awareness. Overall, the findings emphasize the importance of intersectoral approaches and the integration of Pancasila values to strengthen access to justice based on social equity and human rights.

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