

# Para-Legal Volunteers & Legal Aid Clinic an Analysis

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## ABSTRACT:

*Equality in the administration of Justice is precisely a flowering stem to the Indian Constitution. Equality here is referred to as an equal access to the Court and of presenting the case before the Judiciary but access to the court is limped upon by the payment of sizeable court fees and the assistance of skilled lawyers. This is in the context where she/ he is denied equality in the opportunity to seek justice. Nobody in our Hindustan shall be adamantly denied her/ his rights at law for lack of means but to translate this into actuality and address the same it was/ is necessary to create a considerable apparatus both on paper and practice. The present paper addresses the issue of Legal Aid Clinics constituted under The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. It has been observed that Para-Legal Volunteers, who have been appointed to create Legal Awareness and to provide legal aid to the needy is working efficiently to assist our developing country at par with the developed ones.*

**Keywords:** Legal Aid Clinic, Para-Legal Volunteer, SLSA, Free Legal Aid

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*“The worst form of inequality is to try to make unequal things equal.”*

*- Aristotle*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 1945, the Bombay Legal Aid Society gently drew the attention of the Government of India to the Report of the Committee on legal aid and legal advice in England and Wales appointed in 1944 by the Lord Chancellor under the Chairmanship of Lord Rushcliffe. It was directed to enquire facilities like grant of legal aid to poor persons and to make available conduct litigation.

In 1946, the Government of India enquired from the Provincial Governments whether they would be able to provide sublime facilities for legal aid to poor persons in both civil and criminal cases. The Provincial Governments were then, in general, of the opinion that the existing provisions for legal aid in civil cases, were sufficient but that the provisions for legal aid in criminal cases were inadequate but that the provisions for the grant of similar aid in criminal cases might be liberalized. On the ground of financial stringency, however, they were reluctant to undertake any scheme of free legal aid even to the limited extent of the more further extension of such aid in criminal cases. The concept of legal aid to the people has its roots in the well-settled principle of natural justice stated in Latin ‘*audi alteram partem*’ which means hear the other side. It is now trite that the principle of natural justice is a fundamental right by the judiciary in the case of Maneka Gandhi. Even in ancient ages, the leader of the tribes used to hear both the grieving parties to reach to a just conclusion.

Cambridge Dictionary defines Legal Aid as the money to help people pay costs of using lawyers, courts of law, et cetera, especially from the government. The term 'Legal Aid' connotes two things— One in a broader sense and other in narrow. In its broader sense, it means neither more nor less than the help given to a person concerned to maintain her rights under the law. The narrower meaning of 'Legal Aid' that prevails is confined to help given charitably or under some privately administered system. Mankind is one society continuing many societies, each of which can contribute its own special insights and draw upon its own special experience in the development of the rule of law within which legal aid is coming to be recognised as an inherent part.<sup>1</sup>

Article 39-A of the Constitution of India provides equal justice and 'Free Legal Aid' which states that the State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on the basis of equal opportunities, and shall in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 was passed by Parliament which came into a drive on 9th November 1995 and skilful legitimate administrations to the weaker segments of the general public to guarantee that open doors for anchoring equity are not ardently denied to any national by reason of financial or different incapacities. The working system incorporates the Apex specialist id est National Legal Services Authority, at that point the State Legal Services Authority, at that point the District Legal Services Authority and finally the Taluka Legal Services Committee.

- **National Legal Services Authority (NALSA)**

Section 3, Chapter II of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 defines the Constitution of The National Legal Services Authority (hereinafter referred to as NALSA). It is present to peacefully exercise the powers and perform the functions conferred or assigned to the Central Authority, and to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society. Presently, the Chief Justice of India, Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde is the patron-in-chief, the Senior most Hon'ble Judge of the Supreme Court of India is the Executive Chairman of the Authority.

Public awareness, equal opportunity and deliverable justice are the cornerstones on which the edifice of NALSA is based. The principal objective of NALSA is to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society and to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and to organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes. Apart from the above mentioned functions of NALSA, it includes spreading legal literacy and awareness, undertaking social justice litigations etc.. With the aim of reaching out to the diverse milieu of people belonging

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<sup>1</sup> Seton Pollock, The English Legal Aid System Its History And Principles (1st ed. Orient Longman 1974).

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of India, 1949.

to different socio-economic, cultural and political backgrounds, NALSA identifies specific categories of the marginalised and excluded groups from the diverse populace of the country and formulates various schemes for the implementation of preventive and strategic legal service programmes to be undertaken and implemented by the Legal Service Authorities at the various levels. In carrying out all these responsibilities, NALSA works in close coordination with the various State Legal Services Authorities (SLSA), District Legal Services Authority (DLSA) and other agencies for a regular exchange of relevant information, monitoring and updating on the implementation and progress of the various schemes in vogue and fostering a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure smooth and streamlined functioning of the various agencies and stakeholders.<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning of the year 2009, the NALSA worked out on a comprehensive scheme named as 'Para-legal Volunteers Scheme' which motivated in imparting the legal training to the volunteers selected who willingly want to help other people in relation to any legal disputes. Para-Legal Volunteers (hereinafter referred to as the PLV) are expected to act as intermediaries narrowing the gap between the public at large and the Legal Services Institutions to impart early and quick justice. The commoners are very familiar with a term in our native language 'tareek pe tareek', whenever anybody faces a legal dispute and the dispute is taken to the court in order to get justice, so as to avoid any delay. PLV's guide them regarding the technical law forms such as Public Utility Services which can be opted and one may receive an early justice.

This concept of Para-legals has been taken by the Western Culture just like we borrowed liberally the Bicameral Parliament from the United Kingdom but it is quite not possible to embed it in our society because of lack of literacy among people. PLV's have to be trained at first in the very basics of different Laws which would be applicable at basic standard with reference to the day to day working. With this grass root level of basic legal knowledge, they would be able to assist the people living around them. If the dispute is of such a nature that it cannot be resolved with their assistance then they could bring such parties to the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centres, where, with the assistance of the Secretary in charge either it could be referred to Lok Adalat or Mediation Centre or Legal Assistance could be provided for adjudication in a court of law, depending upon the nature of the problem.

- **State Legal Services Authority (SLSA)**

Section 6 Chapter III of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 defines the Constitution of The State Legal Services Authority (hereinafter referred to as SLSA). It is present so to exercise the powers and perform the functions conferred on, or assigned to, a State Authority under the said Act. The linkage between Article 21 and the privilege to free legitimate guide was produced in the decision in *Hussainara Khatoon v. State of*

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<sup>3</sup> NALSA, (July 3rd, 2018, 10:12am), <https://nalsa.gov.in/content/introduction>.

*Bihar*<sup>4</sup> where the court was shocked at the situation of thousands of undertrials moping in the prisons in Bihar State for quite a long time while never being spoken to by a legal counsellor or delivered in a Court of Law. The court declared that “there can be no doubt that speedy trial, and by speedy trial, we mean reasonably expeditious trial, is an integral and essential part of the fundamental right to life and liberty enshrined in Article 21.” The court pointed out that Article 39-A emphasized that free legal service was an inalienable element of 'reasonable, fair and just' procedure and that the right to free legal services was implicit and inherent in the guarantee of Article 21. In his inimitable style, Justice Bhagwati declared:

***“Legal aid is really nothing else but equal justice in action. Legal aid is in fact the system of social justice. If free legal services are not provided to such an accused, the trial itself may run the risk of being vitiated as contravening Article 21 and so every State Government would try to avoid such a possible eventuality.”***<sup>5</sup>

The Hon'ble Judge reiterated the above in *Sukh Das v. Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh*<sup>6</sup> and observed "It may therefore, now be taken as settled law that free legal assistance at State cost is a fundamental right of a person accused of an offence which may involve jeopardy to his life or personal liberty and this fundamental right is implicit in the requirement of reasonable, fair and just procedure prescribed by Article 21."<sup>7</sup>

This part of the narration would be incomplete without referring to the other astute architect of human rights jurisprudence, Justice Krishna Iyer. In *M.H. Hoskot v. State of Maharashtra*<sup>8</sup>, Hon'ble Judge declared: "If a prisoner sentenced to imprisonment is virtually unable to exercise his constitutional and statutory right of appeal inclusive of Special Leave to Appeal (to the Supreme Court) for want of legal assistance, it is implicit under Article 142 read with Articles 21 and 39-A of the Constitution, that the court has power to assign counsel for such imprisoned individual 'for doing complete justice.'"<sup>9</sup>

In *Khatri & Others v. St. of Bihar & others*<sup>10</sup>, Bhagwati J. observed; "Right to free legal aid, just, fair and reasonable procedures is a fundamental right (Khattoon's Case). It is an elementary that the jeopardy to his personal liberty arises as soon as the person is arrested and is produced before a magistrate for it is at this stage that he gets the 1st opportunity to apply for bail and obtain his release as also to resist to remain in police or judicial jail custody. This is the stage at which an accused person needs competent legal advice and representation. No procedure can be said to be just, fair and reasonable which denies legal advice,

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<sup>4</sup> AIR 1979 SC 1377.

<sup>5</sup> An Introduction to the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, (July 3rd, 2018, 5:10pm), <http://www.legalserviceindia.com/articles/legaut.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> AIR 1986 SC 991.

<sup>7</sup> *Sukh Das v. Union Territory of Arunachal Pradesh*, AIR 1986 SC 991.

<sup>8</sup> AIR 1978 SC 1548.

<sup>9</sup> *M.H. Hoskot v. State of Maharashtra*, AIR 1978 SC 1548.

<sup>10</sup> AIR 1981 1 SC 635.

representation to the accused at this stage. Thus, State is under a constitutional obligation to provide free Legal Aid to the accused not only at the stage of..... Every individual of the society are entitled to as a matter of prerogative.”<sup>11</sup>

In *Indira Gandhi vs. Raj Narain*<sup>12</sup>, the Apex Court held "Rule of Law is basic structure of Constitution of India. Every individual is guaranteed with the rights given to him under the Constitution. No one can be condemned unheard. Their ought to be a violation to the fundamental right or prerogatives, or privileges, only then remedy is to go to the Court of Law.”<sup>13</sup>

In the *Municipal Council, Ratlam v. Vardichand and Others*<sup>14</sup>, The Bench observed, “It is procedural rules as this appeal proves, 'which infuse life into substantive rights, which activate them to make them effective'.... the truth is that a few profound is sue of processual jurisprudence of great strategic significance to our legal system face us and we must zero-in on them as they involve problems of access to justice for the people beyond the blinkered rules of 'standing of British Indian vintage'. if the Centre of gravity of justice is to shift, as a preamble to the constitution mandates, from the traditional individualism of *locus standi* to the community orientation of public interest litigation, these issues must be considered. In that sense, the case before us between the Ratlam municipality and the citizens of the Ward is a pathfinder in the field of peoples involvement in the judicious process, sans which as Prof. Sikes points the system may crumble under the burden of its own insensitivity.”<sup>15</sup>

In the *Fertiliser Corporation, Kamagar Union V. Union Of India*<sup>16</sup>, The Hon'ble Supreme Court has made the following meaningful observations, “We have no doubt that in competition between Courts and Streets as dispensers of justice, the rule of law must win the aggrieved person for the law Court and save him from the lawless street. In simple terms the locus stand must be liberalized to meet the challenges of the times.

*Ubi jus ibi remedium* must be enlarged to embrace all interests of public minded citizens or organizations with serious concern for conservation of public resources and the direction and correction of public power so as to promote justice in its true facets.”<sup>17</sup>

- **District Legal Services Authority (DLSA)**

Section 9 Chapter III of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 defines the Constitution of The District Legal Services Authority (hereinafter referred to as DLSA). In every district, DLSA has been constituted to actualize

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<sup>11</sup> *Khatri & Others v. St. of Bihar & others*, AIR 1981 1 SC 635.

<sup>12</sup> AIR 1975 SCC 2299.

<sup>13</sup> *Indira Gandhi vs. Raj Narain*, AIR 1975 SCC 2299.

<sup>14</sup> AIR 1980 SC 1622.

<sup>15</sup> *Municipal Council, Ratlam Vs Vardichand and Others*, AIR 1980 SC 1622.

<sup>16</sup> AIR 1981 SC 344.

<sup>17</sup> *Fertiliser Corporation, Kamagar Union Vs Union Of India*, AIR 1981 SC 344.

Legal Services Program in the District. The District Courts Complex in every District is chaired by the District & Sessions Judge of the respective district.

NALSA is quick to create and advance a culture of placation rather than a suit in the nation with the goal that the nationals of the Country like to determine their question and differences across the table in a spirit of goodwill and brotherhood, for which following innovative steps have been introduced:

- ✓ Regulations on Lok Adalat to be published in Gazette
  - ✓ Training of PLVs
  - ✓ Legal Literacy programmes in Schools and Colleges
  - ✓ Legal Aid Clinics in all areas
- **Taluka Legal Services Authority (TLSA)**

Section 11-A Chapter III of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 defines the Constitution of the Taluk Legal Services Committee. It is constituted for each taluk or mandal or for the group of taluks or mandals.

## II. PARA-LEGAL VOLUNTEERS (PLV'S)

The Collins English lexicon characterizes the term prefix 'Para' as 'beside or beyond' and the word Legal is in relation to law and its other aspects. The word 'Volunteer' is defined as 'A person who freely offers to take part in an enterprise or undertake a task' by the Oxford lexicon.

So, the Para-legal Volunteers are the people who in volition impart awareness on laws and the legal system and are trained to counsel and amiable settle simple disputes between parties at the source itself which could help people to resolve certain disputes. Legal Services Day likewise celebrated crosswise over country consistently on 9th November to spread awareness for ensuring reasonable fair and justice procedure for all citizens.

The post of PLV is advertised by the Govt. through Legal Services Authority in the form of Essays, online websites, survey forms et cetera. The procedure to be enrolled as a PLV lies under the statute of Legal Services Authority Act, 1987.

- **Who can be a PLV ?**

Ideally, any individual who has fundamental learning of common undertakings can be a PLV in light of the fact that just two conditions fulfil the need of PLV—

1. Knowledge to comprehend individuals and their legitimate issues;
2. Motivation to do work.



These conditions are necessary because one has to understand the psychology of the person who requires legal aid and secondly it is a voluntarily work which gives you nothing but inner satisfaction so without being stimulated one cannot help others. Subsequently, Teachers, either resigned or working; Retired Govt. officers; Hirelings; Senior Citizens; *Anganwadi* Workers; Doctors or Physicians; Students; Social Workers; NGO Workers; Members of Self Help Groups; Educated Prisoners with great conduct; or Any other individual fit to be distinguished as a PLV.

- **Training of PLVs**

Before entering the border area all of our army goes under rigorous training procedure with the goal that they are very much arranged for anything that occurs on the fringe. On a parallel line, PLVs undergo a training programme so that they are thoroughly prepared regarding the problems that they might face while doing the field search or in collecting data or organising event et cetra. The training is given by the Member Secretary. All the PLVs don't have a place with a legitimate foundation, consequently, it ends up important to take a shot at their lawful aptitudes through the preparation strategy to manage them about the law working for them. I attended one of the monthly meeting of the PLVs in which the panel lawyer were guiding the PLVs about the Acts for favour of labourers ie. Minimum Wages Act 1948, Workmen's Compensation Act 1923, Unorganised Workers Welfare and Social Security Act 2008, The Inter-State Migrant Workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979, The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 (Briefly) were being discussed. The most common problem that was faced was the people who work on daily wage, they do not have Aadhar cards because they have no permanent residence so how this issue can be solved. Prior to the beginning of the gathering, all the problems faced by them were thoroughly discussed first so that in the next meeting the solution can be taken out for the same. At the end of the discussion they even had a high tea which gives a sense of accepting aura in the environment to work.

- **Main Objective**

One of the main objectives of the “Policy for access to justice for all” is formulated by National Legal Services Authority (NLSA) is the development of “Para-Legal Services” for the purpose of imparting legal awareness for all the sections of the society.

- **Trainers**

Suitable persons from the members of the Bar are called by the SLSA to guide and train the PLVs. Not only this, but people from NGOs associated with the activities of Legal Services Au thority are also called up.

- **Nature of Training**

Training is provided by the curriculum laid down by NALSA which follows the format of Oriental Programme, Basic Training, and Refresher Course. The Legal Services Authority assesses the work of the PLVs and assists them to tackle problems faced by them in doing their fieldwork.

Once every month, a meeting is held too so that the solutions to the problems faced by all the PLVs can be discussed amongst all. Law Officer and Member Secretary are additionally part of the procedure of the gathering and now and again a lawyer is available too to manage the PLVs on any up and coming law which may be helpful for their next hands on work and improve their abilities or on any present case on which they would chip away at.

- **Topics for Training**

A training module is set by NALSA which shall be applied to the whole country which has a special resolution on the behaviour of PLVs. But there are additional topics as well at the discretion of PLVs and under the guidance of Member Secretary to work upon. PLVs learn how to read the psychology of the person because they are dealing with real life problems of people. The modules are converted into local dialects as well according to prerequisite of the same.

- **Identity Cards**

After the Training of the PLVs is completed, they are issued ID cards. The explanation for the ID cards is that the police doesn't care for individuals to meddle in their procedures yet as PLVs are approved to encourage them, they require a character with the goal that they can be perceived by the police. The ID card shall have the serial number; name and address of the PLV; Contact number of the PLV; Photograph of the PLV; date of issue and period of validity of the Card. It ought to be obviously composed on the posterior of the card that if this property is lost then it must be given to the closest police station. The identity card shall not be used for availing any facility except for the purpose of identification of the person as a PLV. The validity of the card shall be for the period of one year. A new card will be issued every year as per the performance of the PLV.

- **Mentors**

There is a panel of Mentors for the PLVs to whom they could reach out to at the time of need. The mentors are the panel lawyers, and they could always reach out to the Law Officer or the Member Secretary if required to do so.

- **Reports**

A monthly report is to be submitted by SLSA to NALSA which would include the amount of work done by the PLVs and the work done by the organisation to train these PLVs to make them more productive.



- **Expenses incurred by PLV'S**

Reasonable expenses incurred by the PLVs should be reimbursed by the SLSA, but usually it doesn't happen because the first hand expenditure comes on the PLVs and if by any mistake the receipt of the expenses gets lost then the PLVs won't be entitled to any amount. Most of the times, PLVs think that it is useless to ask for the reimbursement because that process takes time to implement and so they don't bother to get their money reimbursed. This is one of the negative effect as the Govt requires confirmation of the receipt or reminder to repay the sum that was acquired by the PLV so nobody mis-utilizes the cash however on occasion PLVs endure because of this. One of the respondents was so devoted to work which was visible by the hard work he was putting in. The reason behind this was a mishappening happened with a female member at home. How strange one's life can be that how people who have suffered can be motivated to help those without caring for the rest of the worlds. Someone has truly said that humanity still exists on this very planet.

### **III. LEGAL AID CLINICS**

The Member Secretary may depute PLVs in the Legal Aid Clinics set up under the National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Clinics) Regulations, 2011. There are 24 Legal Aid Clinics in and around Chandigarh that comes under the jurisdiction of SLSA, Chandigarh, namely— Govt. High School, Colony No. 4; Govt. Senior Secondary School, Burail; Anganwari Centre, Ram Darbar; Anganwari Centre, Bapu Dham Colony; Govt. Model School, Indira Colony, Manimajra; Govt. Model Senior Secondary School, Kaimbwala; Middle School, Maloya; E-Sampark Centre, Palsora; Govt. Model Sr. Secondary School, Dadu Majra Colony; Anganwari Centre, Village Dhanas; Permanent Lok Adalat (Public Utility Services), Sector-17; Front Office, District Courts; Govt. Institute of Mentally Retarded Children, Sector-31; Human Rights Department in Panjab University; University Institute of Legal Studies (UILS) in Panjab University; Law Department in Panjab University; Model Jail, Burail; Labour Office, Sector-30; Child Welfare Committee, Snehalaya, Maloya; Juvenile Justice Home, Sector-25; Protection Home for Runaway Couples, Sector-19; Oldage Home, Sector-15; Nari Niketan/ Adoption Home, Sector-26; & State Legal Services Authority. They are just like that of primary health care where a doctor provides basic health care, legal aid clinics on the same line provide basic legal services to the poor and poverty affected people. A lawyer is appointed to a legal aid clinic and PLVs are there to help them, so anyone who has an unresolved issue or wants to file a case can approach a legal aid clinic for help free of cost. Legal Aid Clinics was started under the scheme of National Legal Services Authority (Legal Aid Clinics) Scheme, 2010. The objective of the scheme is to provide free legal services to the poor and weaker sections of the society who can't afford to pay for the consultation services of the lawyers. Legal Services includes Government schemes, consultation advices on the legal aspects and explaining their rights and procedure of the court.

#### IV. HONORARIUM

All the PLVs get an honorarium of Rs 550/- per day which is generally alluded to according to the task. But the truth is far from fantasy because all of the PLVs are not receiving the amount of honorarium that they are supposed to get. The Law Students of Panjab University who work as a PLVs doesn't get any sum from the SLSA yet at the same time, they are filling in as productive PLVs to our country. They regularly be a part of *Nukad Natak* so to aware people about the free legal aid services that people can receive.

#### V. OBJECTIVE OF THE PAPER

The paper aims to find out whether the PLVs appointed by Legal Aid Clinics in and around Chandigarh meet the requirements under The State Legal Services Authorities Act,1987. Besides, to examine the part performed by PLVs in and around Chandigarh.

#### VI. METHODOLOGY

28 PLVs have been interviewed by the researcher to investigate the objectives at hand.

All the 28 PLVs chosen for the study were working at SLSA in Sector 9, Chandigarh. In total, around 50 PLVs work at SLSA, Chandigarh. There is no immaculate settled number because it continues shifting by taking a gander at the profitable work of the PLV and as it is voluntarily and they get an extremely negligible measure of honorarium so it gets intense to only stick with crafted by PLVs all the time on the grounds that the truth thumps at the entryway and one has to earn a living for the family.

#### VII. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

For the present paper, a brief study was conducted and Para legal volunteers (PLV) were interviewed.

The results of the interaction with Respondents are as follows—

- **Respondents on the basis of Age**

Age is hardly a barrier when someone is doing a noble cause for the society. It has come to the fore that PLVs belonged to varied age groups. One of the female PLVs was 51 years of age and still working productively towards the need of the society. There were 8 PLVs belonging to age group of 36-40 years of age. The reason for such variation in the age group was as there was no bar on age by The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Minimum age was 21 years who was a young law student. However, there is no specified aged provided, it is mentioned that PLVs shall be literate and should preferably be matriulate. Larger part of the respondents had a place with Hindu religion and two had a place with Sikh people group due to the lion's share populace of Hinduism in our nation.

- **Respondents on the basis of Education**

Being a Para-Legal to help the weaker sections of the society has no bar constrain even in the subject of education. One of the respondents was under matriculation and was working for the people since 8 years being solely devoted to working as a Para-Legal. Most of the PLVs were Graduated. A very less percentage of PLVs have a diploma. Moreover, we are obliged to see woman empowerment as many of the female PLVs were home makers and being PLV gave them a job and an acceptance for a change in the patriarchal society. On top of that, the society requires more of Females in this field because science has proved that females are better at understanding people's needs. After an interaction with a male respondent, the issue that they confront is the females dither to uncover them instances of Domestic Violence which can be overwhelmed by a female PLVs.

- **Respondents on the basis of their occupation**

There seems to be diversity in occupation, but maximum PLVs are devoted to the work as a PLV and it is delightful to witness that majority of total PLVs are law students who are aware of the paralegal work and they are too devoted to helping others because youngsters are the generation who will let this country move forward. Majority of the male respondents are occupied with Business other than working as a PLV because it gives a steady income for the family. Most extreme populace met are exclusively dedicated to their work as PLV.

- **Respondents on the basis of days they work as a PLV**

It is wonderful to see that maximum number i.e. 11. PLVs are devoted to their work to help others on a daily basis and then most of the PLVs are on their toes to help whenever the task is assigned. After interacting with them, the clear picture that came up was that the PLVs who are appointed from the Panjab University have a working Legal Aid Society under which more people as Executive Member of the Legal Aid Society work which are not enrolled as PLVs with State Legal Services Authority, Chandigarh. They too work whenever called upon or whenever any assignment is given to them.

- **Respondents on the basis of tasks performed by them**

Every nook task helps someone to get a better off idea to proceed in life. Most of the PLVs perform the task of Legal & Social Awareness where they go in colonies and societies and talk to people face to face and aware them about the legal services which SLSA provides for them and if they are facing any issue then they can take the help of SLSA in resolving them. Then comes the population of PLVs who help others in performing the task of social awareness and fieldwork. Social Awareness includes all the Government schemes and Fieldwork includes talking to people by going at their doorstep and discussing and resolving their issues. After interacting with PLVs it was known to us that they conduct surveys more often to recognize the target problems that people face. For example, Proforma for Survey as per the Senior (Legal Services to Senior Citizens) Scheme,

2016. Some other questionnaire were also to seen which included questions like— Are you aware of the Legal Services being provided by the SLSA? Have you ever availed any of these services? Are you involved in any type of dispute/ litigation? Have you ever availed benefit of different social welfare schemes? At times these questions are translated to the people and filled by the PLVs themselves because most of the people have Hindi as their regional language.

- **Respondents on the basis of joining as a PLV**

It is rightly said that things of quality have no fear of time. The maximum of the respondents devoted their time period as a PLV have worked with SLSA for 10 years. Majority of the PLVs fall in the category of fewer than 6 months. It is good to see that many new PLVs are willing to work with SLSA in order to bring a change for good. The least are working with SLSA for over 5 years and above.

- **Respondents on what they consider to be the Basic Function**

No two individuals in this world think alike and as everybody has an alternate out look of what things they are doing. Dominant part of the female PLVs trust that the fundamental capacity is to aware individuals about SLSA and its working. Majority of male PLVs believe that the basic function is to do social work and making people aware about social Schemes that Govt. takes for the benefit of people time to time.

- **Training**

Training is a basic necessity for the PLVs to do a paralegal work so there is nobody who came in as a PLV without training but there are newly joined candidates who are undergoing training. Most of the PLVs are working for a long duration so they have undergone an orientation & training process before starting with the field work. They are usually trained by the Member Secretary first and then the panel lawyers guide them on the specific topics of laws that come across them.

- **Respondents who received training from different people**

Majority of the PLVs responded SLSA because they were unaware of the names of their mentors who gave them training. There is a great variation of PLVs as some of them are working with the SLSA for years and a couple of them are newly arrived so their response varies by whom they received training. The process of training is on-going which is conducted through monthly meetings to make them aware of the new amendments.

- **By whom they are issued the schedules**

The PLVs have issued the schedules for their work by SLSA supervised by Member Secretary. PLVs are free to make their own schedules according to the needs planned by the SLSA because ultimately they are the ones

who have to conduct surveys and help people. Maximum schedules are issued by SLSA.

- **To whom they submit schedules**

Majority of the PLVs are unaware of the names or designations of the people under whom they work in SLSA because when they are required to submit their reports in writing they leave it at reception or they hand it over to their mentor who further submits it in their final place which is the Member Secretary who finally checks it and sends the work to NALSA.

- **Past Surveys**

The majority of the PLVs have conducted surveys on the issue of Legal Awareness because it is the basic function of the SLSA to aware people about their rights and duties as a citizen of this country, and to help them legally if they require any sort of help. Other issues were Aadhar Cards, Court related matters & Education; Child Friendly Chandigarh & Legal Service Camps; Child Labour & Beggar; Drugs & Matrimonial Disputes; Education, Handicap, Social & Labour Class; Legal & Social Awareness; & Litigation Cases. Other than these there were certain Social Welfare Schemes on which the field work was conducted— Pension to Widows & Destitute Women; Old age Pension; Pension to disabled persons; National Family Benefit Scheme; Financial Assistance to dependent children of Widows & Destitute women; Financial Assistance for the marriage of Daughters of Widows/ Destitutes women belonging to Scheduled Caste; Free education for Meritorious Scheduled Caste & Other Backward Classes students; *Swavalambam* New Pension Scheme; Micro Insurance Schemes; Post Natal Assistance Schemes; *Apni beti apna dhan*; Indira Gandhi *matritva sahyog yojna*; Rajiv Gandhi scheme for empowerment of adolescent girls; Direct loan scheme for women belonging to weaker section of the society; Loan scheme under bank tie up; Loan under national handicapped financial development corporation scheme; *Mahila samridhi yojna* for SC & OBC; *Mahila samridhi yojna for safai karamcharis*; *Mahila samridhi yojna* for minorities; Maternity benefit; Old age pension; *Swarna Jayanti Shahari rozgar yojna*; Widow pension & child scholarship scheme et cetera.

- **Present Surveys**

There is an immense variation in the topics because everyone is working on to resolve different issues in our society but the majority of the PLVs are working on one basic issue that is legal awareness. Other issues are Aadhar Cards, Court related matters & Education; Child Friendly Chandigarh & Legal Service Camps; Child Labour & Beggar; Drugs & Matrimonial Disputes; Education, Handicap, Social & Labour Class; Legal & Social Awareness; & Litigation Cases.

- **Time taken to collect data**

Every person on this planet has an entire different strategy to work for, what may work for one, may not work for others so there is a variation of time to collect data but majority of the PLVs collect it as per their own convenience ie 16 which doesn't mean that they procrastinate their work. Work is always done on time. Some places require more time whether some require a couple of hours, it varies on the population of the place and on the type of data which is to be collected.

- **Who supervises their work**

Majority of the PLVs ie. 7 say that their coordinators supervise their work which because coordinators are the first hand people who collect their work and check it which is ultimately sent to the Member Secretary for final re-evaluation. One respondent, even said that we do self-supervision which indeed is a positive attitude to work upon.

- **Incentives**

Majority of the PLVs believe that they are not getting any incentives or perks ie. 15 while doing the job of a PLV, whereas many people stick to the opposite side of the coin ie. 13, and the truth are that each year NALSA has a Best PLV award with some cash prize so one has to be good enough to reach there.

- **Satisfied with the work as a PLV**

There is no doubt about it because each and every PLV is fully satisfied with a perfect 28 yes because what they do because they are helping the weaker and needy section to be a part of the world of which we are. This is a scheme to fuse have and have-nots into the same molecule of water.

- **Kind of problems faced by the PLVs**

Everyone faces problems, but the major deal is how we should resolve them. Majority of the PLVs say that they have no problem at all ie. 8. Other problems that are faced by the PLVs are Financial Issues as the first-hand expenses are borne by the PLVs themselves; Illiteracy as when they meet people while conducting field surveys and awareness most of the people are from the rural background and are uneducated then PLVs face problem of communicating the right message in their language, one of the respondents even told that once it happened that the old woman whom he was awarding about the free legal assistance that she has access to, she wasn't even aware that they have rights because she never stepped out from her marital home; Sometimes people are not interested in listening to you because they think that it is some sort of Private departments; People are scared to disclose their problems due to privacy concerns; Public is not aware of their rights; & Time Management.

- **Problems at field work**

Everyone faces problems but the major deal is how we should resolve them. Majority of the PLVs say that they

have no problem at all i.e. 7. Other problems faced are Financial Issues as the first-hand expenses are borne by the PLVs themselves; Hesitation for females to disclose problems to male PLVs; Illiteracy as when they meet people while conducting field surveys and awareness most of the people are from rural background and are uneducated; Teetotaller & unhygienic conditions; Time Management; People are not interested in listening to you; People are scared to disclose their problems due to privacy concerns; Police don't recognise; & Unawareness among people.

- **Belief that this is the best way to create awareness**

All of the PLVs believe this to be to best way to create awareness because there is a personal touch when Para-Legals talk to people on a regular basis to solve their daily problems that is when you got to be the real-life hero.

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Creating awareness is not easy. It takes immense amount of courage, experience, confidence and skill to be friendly and polite. The feeling is absolute patriotic and it feels proud to see that our Para-Legal Volunteers inspite of their age group works hard to help the needy strata of our society. They are just a call away inclusive of the odd timings of the day. The drops of water may fill an ocean therefore each drop counts. The scheme introduced by National Legal Services Authority in the year 2009 seems to be a successful one as many needy ones are helped by the volunteers who wants to feel the real change which urged me and my friends to get ourselves trained as one of the Para-Legal Volunteers in order to bring a change in the society.