

SCHEMES FOR ENFORCEMENT OF SINGLE WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women constitute strategic segment of the society and our constitution provides for support mechanism in the shape of protective discrimination for them. However, despite various schemes of social upliftment and programmes of women empowerment, much is still to be done. It is felt that even amongst women, a large segment of single women, (who include abandoned, widowed, deserted, separated, unmarried and divorced) is more vulnerable to atrocities & general discrimination and is deprived of reaping the fruits of legal aid benefits, for want of awareness or due to illiteracy.

The single women who include widows, divorcees, separated, deserted and unmarried are part of work force, which is mostly unorganized, majority of whom find the going tough. Particularly, in rural areas, they have to constantly battle not only societal prejudices but also have to fight for survival. The atrocities faced by widowed women on the part of their in-laws after the death of husband are more acute, as they are caught between rigid social & religious customs. The challenges faced by the single women are manifold. They are not only vulnerable as both physical and financial insecurity stalks their existence but often face overt discrimination. Many such women despite technically heading the households being providers for their children, are hardly named as heads of families in ration cards. Only some of them receive social security benefits.

Haryana State Legal Services Authority has implemented scheme of Para-legal Volunteers. These volunteers are expected to act as intermediaries/bridge between the common people and legal services institutions and thereby removing the barriers of "Access to Justice". Besides this, Haryana State Legal Services Authority has opened legal aid clinics in cluster of villages of all the Districts of Haryana, which are manned by Para-legal Volunteers and Panel Advocates.

In order to ameliorate the condition of single women and to help them to achieve their rights; all the District and Sessions Judge of Haryana have been requested that **female** Para-legal Volunteers of their respective districts should visit every village falling under the area of their operation (cluster) and identify the single women and provide them all sort of legal services, whichever is required and to help/guide them to approach legal services institutions, if and when it is required to assert their rights. They were also requested to conduct special workshops to make these women aware of their rights. Interested women of this segment of society may also be trained as 'Para Legal Volunteers'.