YOU ARE NOT ALONE

A Campaign for Senior Citizens by
HARYANA STATE LEGAL SERVICES AUTHORITY
“As long as I am breathing, in my eyes, I am just beginning.”

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INTRODUCTION

Life expectancy has increased with the advancement in medical science. There has been a substantial increase in life expectancy. The National Policy on Senior Citizens, 2011 mentions as follows:

“The demographic profile depicts that in the year 2000-2050, the overall population in India will grow by 55% whereas population of people in their 60 years and above will increase by 326% and those in the age group of 80+ by 700% - the fastest growing group.”

1/8th of the world's Elderly Population lives in India. In real terms, in India, the population of elderly persons has increased from nearly 2 crores in 1951 to 7.2 crores in 2001 to 10.38 crores in 2011. Thus, about 8% of the population is above 60 years.

Old age brings with itself many problems which are peculiar to old age itself. Nowadays with the disintegration of the joint family system, the abuse of elderly has increased. Economic dependency in old age brings with itself many problems for the senior citizens including the humiliation which they face from the generation which they have nurtured. Some of the problems which are encountered during old age are as follows:

1. A limited income.
2. Not easy to access to Health Centres.
3. Non availability of job due to old age.
4. Loneliness.
5. Less participation in family matters.
7. Humiliation at the hands of family members.
8. Less access to Justice delivery institutions.

The Constitution of India applies uniformly. Senior citizens are also
entitled to all the rights which the younger generation have. Advancement in age does not result in taking away of the rights which the law of the land bestows. Various laws for the welfare and the protection of the life and property of the senior citizens have been passed by the legislature. Similarly, the welfare schemes are also there. However, senior citizens are not aware of the welfare laws and the welfare schemes. A massive drive is required, and is the need of the hour, to make senior citizens aware of the welfare laws and their entitlements under the law and welfare schemes. It is quite important to make them aware of the welfare schemes. It is of utmost importance to connect senior citizens, the needy one, to the welfare schemes so that they obtain the benefits under the various schemes meant for them. Work is also required to be done to inspire confidence in them that they are not alone. The National Legal Services Authority has also launched a Scheme namely NALSA (Legal Services to Senior Citizens) Scheme, 2016. The objectives of the said Schemes are as follows:

1. To outline the basis rights and benefits that should be accorded to senior citizens.

2. To strengthen legal aid and representation at the national, state, district and taluka levels for senior citizens who are entitled under Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 in availing the benefits of the various legal provisions which exist.

3. To ensure access to various Governmental Schemes and programmes to the senior citizens.

4. To ensure that the authorities and institutions such as the Tribunals and the Appellate Tribunals under the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007, old age homes for senior citizens have been established.

5. To create and spread awareness about the rights and entitlements of the senior citizens under the various laws and Governmental Schemes and programmes through the District Legal Services Authorities, Taluka Legal Services Committees, panel lawyers, para-legal volunteers, students and legal services clinics.

6. To enhance capacities at all levels of panel lawyers, para-legal volunteers, volunteers in legal services clinics, government officers tasked with the implementation of the various schemes, service providers, police personnel, non-governmental organizations by organizing training,
orientation and sensitization programmes.

7. To undertake research and documentation to study the various schemes, laws etc. to find out the gaps, the needs and to make suggestions to the appropriate authorities.

The ultimate objective of the Scheme is to ensure that the senior citizens live a life of dignity and enjoy all the benefits and facilities which are due to them.

The United Nations has also worked on the rights of elderly. The United Nations Principles provide a broad framework for action on ageing. Some of the Principles are as follows:-

i. Older Persons should have the opportunity to work and determine when to leave the work force.

ii. Older Persons should remain integrated in society and participate actively in the formulation of policies which effect their well-being.

iii. Older Persons should have access to health care to help them maintain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well-being.

iv. Older Persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential and have access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

v. Older Persons should be able to live in dignity and security and should be free from exploitation and mental and physical abuse.

Elderly individuals are often subjected to discrimination and abuse because they are perceived as easily taken advantage of. The old age is the golden age to be lived, enjoyed and respected. Nevertheless, in the contemporary era, they are not considered as part of the society. They are ill treated and no proper care is taken about their necessities. They are many a times left to their fate to lead a life on their own after robbing their riches and youthful days.

Keeping in view the said scenario, “**You are not alone**” - A campaign for senior citizens has been conceived and devised by Haryana State Legal Services Authority. 21 District Legal Services Authorities shall implement the said project for a period of 10 days across the state of Haryana under the supervision and guidance of Haryana State Legal Services Authority. The objectives, the strategy and the activities related to the said campaign are as follows:-
OBJECTIVES

- To apprise senior citizens about the welfare laws, welfare schemes and their entitlements.
- To identify senior citizens who are destitute and indigent.
- To take effective steps for connecting senior citizens with the welfare schemes.
- To enhance the skills of senior citizens in co-ordination with the concerned departments and NGOs.
- To help senior citizens in self-employment schemes in co-ordination with the relevant banks and departments.
- To sensitize younger generation about the need and importance of respecting elderly.

STRATEGY

- The District Legal Services Authorities shall form teams of Panel Lawyers and PLVs. The said teams of Panel Lawyers and PLVs shall be apprised about the welfare laws and the various welfare schemes and benefits and concessions meant for senior citizens. The said teams shall be trained adequately and effectively in the welfare laws and welfare schemes etc. relating to senior citizens.

- The District Legal Services Authorities shall collect data about senior citizens living in their respective districts. The data can be collected under various categories. Such categories of senior citizens may include category of senior citizens who are living alone, who are indigent, destitute etc. Data bank of senior citizens shall be systematically prepared.

- Places shall be identified for holding awareness programmes for making senior citizens aware about the welfare laws, welfare schemes and their rights under the law of the land. While identifying the places, the DLSAs shall keep in view the purpose of this special campaign. Schedules for holding the awareness camps shall be framed by District Legal Services Authorities.

- A proper Plan of Action including the identification of colleges and schools shall be prepared by District Legal Services Authorities with an aim to sensitize the younger generation about the need and importance
of respecting elders.

- Identification of the NGOs, experts persons and relevant departments of the Government for enhancing the technical knowledge, skill development etc. of senior citizens, and to accordingly prepare plan of action with regard to it.

**ACTIVITIES**

- Conducting awareness programmes in the Senior Citizens Clubs and Old Age Homes and at appropriate places to raise awareness about welfare laws (including Action Plan for Senior Citizens in Haryana), welfare schemes and rights of senior citizens.

- To fill-up forms and complete necessary formalities for connecting eligible senior citizens to the various welfare schemes.

- Holding of rallies and seminars/camps to make younger generation aware about the need to respect the elderly and refrain from abusing and hurting them.

- Conducting skill enhancement camps for senior citizens in co-ordination with the concerned departments and NGOs.

- Taking steps in coordination with the relevant experts to enhance the technical knowledge of senior citizens particularly with regard to e-mails, Internet, online booking of railway tickets etc.

- Spreading awareness amongst the senior citizens about do's and don'ts regarding their safety.

- In association with Health Department to ensure that all the hospitals have separate queues for senior citizens. Senior Citizens be also made aware of Schemes of Health Department.

- With the help of experts to organize financial literacy lessons for elderly.

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