

[1] The Sikkim State Legal Services Authority under the directions of Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, Judge, High Court of Sikkim and Executive Chairperson, Sikkim State Legal Services Authority organized the State Meet of PLVs and Commendation Ceremony of the best Para-Legal Volunteers & Legal Aid Panel Lawyers on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2019 at 03:00 p.m. in the Conference Hall of Sikkim SLSA, chaired by Hon'ble Mr. Justice Arup Kumar Goswami, Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim and Patron-in-Chief, Sikkim SLSA as *Chief Guest* with Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai, Hon'ble Executive Chairperson, Sikkim SLSA and Hon'ble Mr. Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, Judge, High Court of Sikkim as *Guests of Honour*.

[2] The Hon'ble Chief Justice in his address informed the august gathering that the role of the Para Legal Volunteer is to bridge the gap between the legal system and the common people. His Lordship also informed that every State has problems peculiar to the region and that issues regarding these problems have to be addressed differently as per that region. It was also informed by his Lordship that Sikkim SLSA is blessed with very effective and functional PLVs and Panel Advocates who are the bedrock of the system for making "Access to Justice" available to all sectors of the society and that even though all PLVs and Panel Lawyers have been doing excellent work.

[3] Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Meenakshi Madan Rai in her address stated that the programme was held to acknowledge the contribution of the works carried out by PLVs and Panel Advocates towards legal services that are being carried out. It was also informed by her Ladyship that PLVs are selected from different walks of life as well as from amongst long term convicts who are lodged in the State Central Prison, Rongyek, East Sikkim and that due to extensive training and refresher courses they are very well equipped with the knowledge of legal aid services, Schemes of National Legal Services Authority as well as in other legal aspects. It was also informed by her Ladyship that Remand Lawyers have been appointed for all the Courts of Sikkim and that if the services of such lawyer are to be availed at the time of pre-arrest, the PLVs avail the services of such Remand Lawyers or when the persons who are apprehended/arrested for any offence and produced before the Courts seeking police

or judicial custody. The Panel Lawyers were also requested to inform the Police Officers/Officials that for assisting the Police the PLVs have been appointed and not for disturbing them. While complementing the PLVs of the good work she also informed of the *Corporate Social Responsibility* wherein the Pharmaceutical Companies are aiding the Old Age Homes with ration and medical supplies and that it is the responsibility of the PLVs visiting such Homes to inform the SLSA of any lapse by such Companies. The Panel Advocates were also commended with regards to spreading awareness with regard to drug abuse in Sikkim which is a growing concern. The fear of human trafficking and missing children, though small in number in Sikkim is an alarming factor and hence it is the role of the Panel Lawyer and PLV to spread awareness so that the problem can be nipped at the bud.

[4] Also present during the programme were Registrar General, High Court of Sikkim, Member Secretary, Special Secretary and other Officers of Sikkim SLSA, Principal Secretary to the Hon'ble Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, Registrar-cum-Principal Secretary to the Chief Justice, High Court of Sikkim, Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (East), Officers of High Court of Sikkim, Senior Advocates, Panel Advocates and Para-Legal Volunteers from all the Districts, Press and Media and staff of Sikkim SLSA.

[5] The welcome address was delivered by Shri Sonam Palden Bhutia, Member Secretary while the vote of thanks was proposed by Mr. Bikash Sharma, Deputy Secretary, Sikkim SLSA.