



Research on the Capacity and Needs of the Legal Aid Service



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The research is organized within the framework of the “Monitoring and Analysis of the Implementation Strategy of Criminal Justice Reform in the Sphere of Free Legal Aid” Project.

The research was conducted by the Applied Research Company (ARC).



Table of Contents

Chapter #1 Research Purpose and Methodology4	4
Chapter #2 Demographic Data	6
Chapter #3 Legal Aid System and Procedures	8
Chapter #4 Main Conclusions.....	13
Chapter #5 Results	15
5.1 Results of Qualitative Research	15
5.1.1 Being Informed about the free Legal Aid Service.....	15
5.1.2 Public Awareness.....	17
5.1.3 The Essence of Legal Aid Service, Performance Evaluation	22
5.2 Results of Quantitative Research (Beneficiaries)	28

Chapter #1. Research Purpose and Methodology

A research was conducted within the framework of the “Monitoring and Analysis of the Implementation Strategy of Criminal Justice Reform in the Sphere of Free Legal Aid” Project, the purpose of which was to describe the capacities and needs of the Legal Aid Service. The aims of research were as follows:

1. The evaluation of public awareness regarding the Legal Aid Service;
2. The evaluation of the quality of service of the Legal Aid Service;
3. The evaluation of accessibility of legal aid by the population.

In order to attain the above goals, quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed. Namely, 18 focus groups were held and 300 beneficiaries (50 beneficiaries in each target city) were interviewed in target cities (Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, Gori, Mtskheta, Rustavi, Telavi).

Forming the Sample:

Based on the research aim, the participation of Legal Aid Service beneficiaries in quantitative research was considered reasonable. The sample size was determined as 300 respondents; 2011 was selected as the period of legal service. In the total sample, 150 respondents were the customers of free legal consultation, while 150 respondents were the category of beneficiaries, who had used the Public Advocate services. The quantity of beneficiaries was divided equally according to regions and, correspondingly, 50 respondents were interviewed in each region.

Sampling Frame:

The list of beneficiaries of the Legal Aid Service in target regions within the period of 2011 was selected as the sampling frame.

Focus Groups:

Three focus groups were held in each target city (18 focus groups in total; 10-12 participants in each).

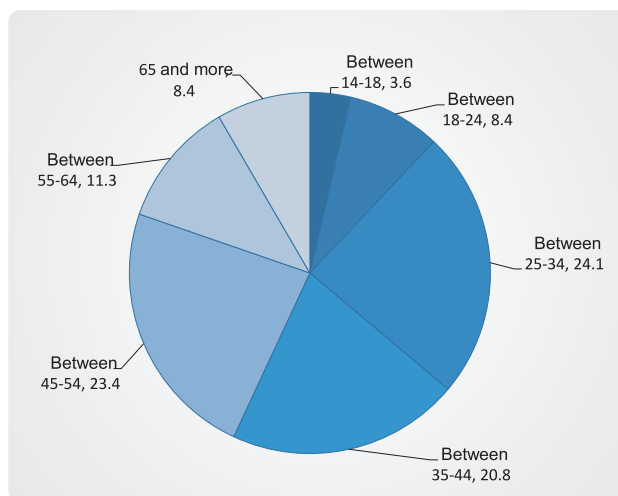
1. 6 focus groups were held with the participation of local practising lawyers, representatives of local civic organisations, self-government and regional media;
2. 6 focus groups were held with the participation of Legal Service beneficiaries;
3. 6 focus groups were held with potential customers, i.e. the representatives of vulnerable groups, who have not yet used the service (socially unprotected population, IDPs).

Face-to-face interviews were selected as the method of quantitative research. A structured questionnaire, which comprised 48 main and 6 demographic questions, was used as an instrument.¹

Chapter #2 Demographic Data

122 women and 178 men took part in quantitative research. The average age thereof constitutes 41 years. Age distribution is provided on Diagram #1.

Diagram 1. Age Distribution of Respondents

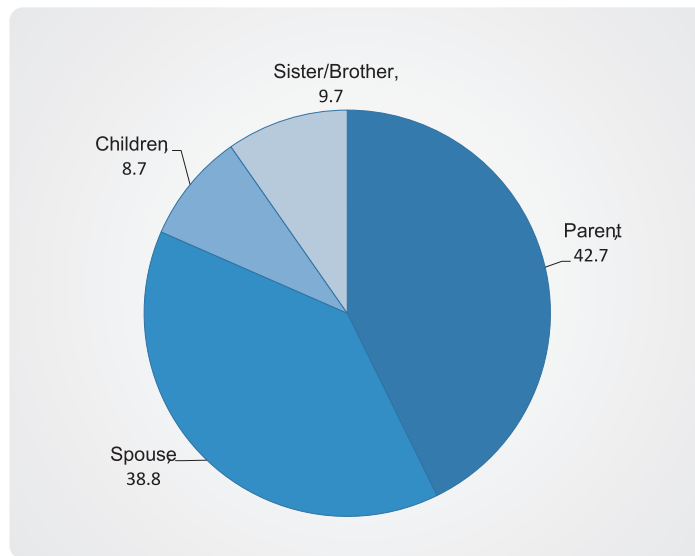


The majority of respondents, 43.4%, have a complete secondary education; 14.7% - secondary special; 7.2% - incomplete secondary; 4.5% - incomplete higher; while 29.8% have a complete higher education.

The majority of respondents (45.9%) are unemployed; 25.6% are employed; 12% are retired; 9.5% are housewives; 4% are pupils or students; 2% are disabled.

Due to research specifics, the respondents were not always the recipients of legal aid themselves. For example, if the respondent employed the services of a Public Advocate and was himself/herself arrested, the interview was conducted with the member of respondent's family, who was directly involved in the process of legal aid. In case of 59% of interviewees, the respondent himself/herself was the recipient of legal aid; while in the rest of the cases, family members were these persons:

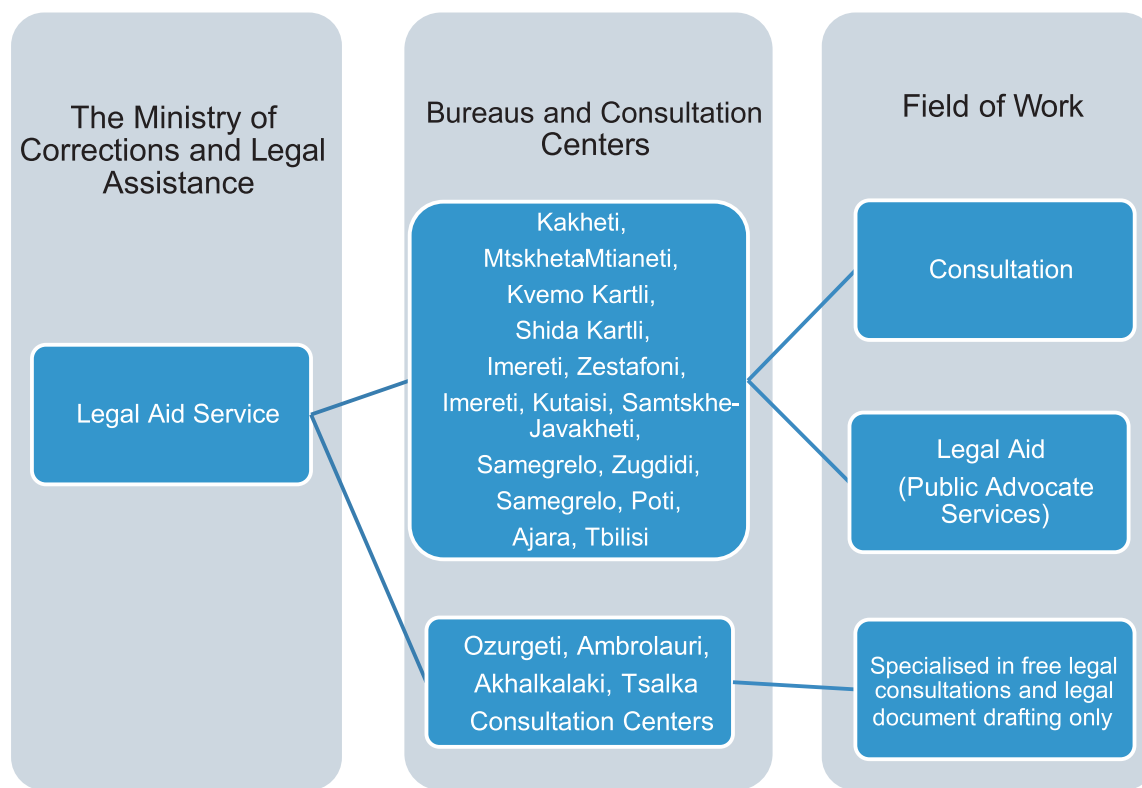
Diagram 2. Familial Relation of Respondents with the Receptient of Legal Aid



Chapter #3 Legal Aid System and Procedures

The Legal Aid Service is a legal entity funded by Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance, which provides citizens with free legal aid. The Service was established in July 2007 and currently covers almost the whole of Georgian territory by means of Legal Aid Bureaus and Consultation Centers. The main source of funding for the Legal Aid Service is the special-purpose funds allocated from the state budget. Grants and donations are also a source of funding.

Scheme #1. The Bureaus and Consultation Centers of the Legal Person of Public Law – the Legal Aid Service







Free legal aid entails such services as:


- Free legal consultation on any legal issue;
- Drafting legal documents (application, motion, etc.);
- Public Advocate services in criminal law proceedings for the accused and convicted persons;
- Advocate services on the cases of involuntary psychiatric treatment;
- Advocate services on administrative offence cases, which may result in arrest.

Anyone can receive a free consultation in the bureaus and consultation centers of the Legal Aid Service. Any accused and convicted person, who is a member of the family registered in the Unified Database of Socially Indigent Families and the rating score of whom is 70,000 or less, also (for a specific category of persons) 100,000 or less, are entitled to employ the service of a free Public Advocate.

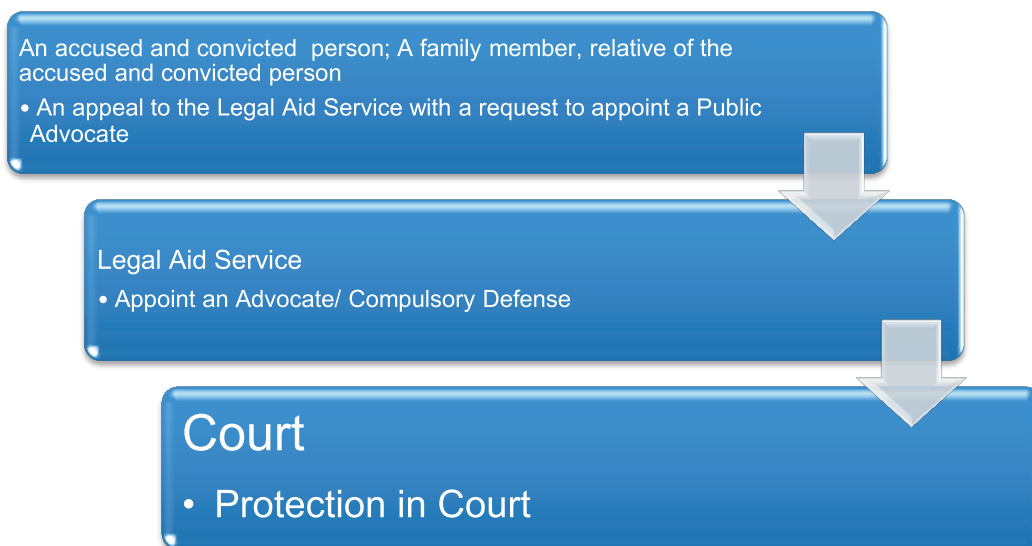
- A member of a family with many children, which has 3 or more children under 18;
 - A veteran of war or armed forces;
 - A person with a disability status under 18 years of age;
 - A person of legal age with a status of a distinct or significant disability;
 - A person with a status of a distinct, significant or moderate disability, if the disability stems from childhood;
 - An orphan under 18 years of age;
 - An internally displaced person as a result of the military aggression of Russian Federation against Georgia.
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Any accused and convicted person, who is subject to compulsory defense under the Criminal Procedure Code, benefits from the services of a Public Advocate. Namely, if:

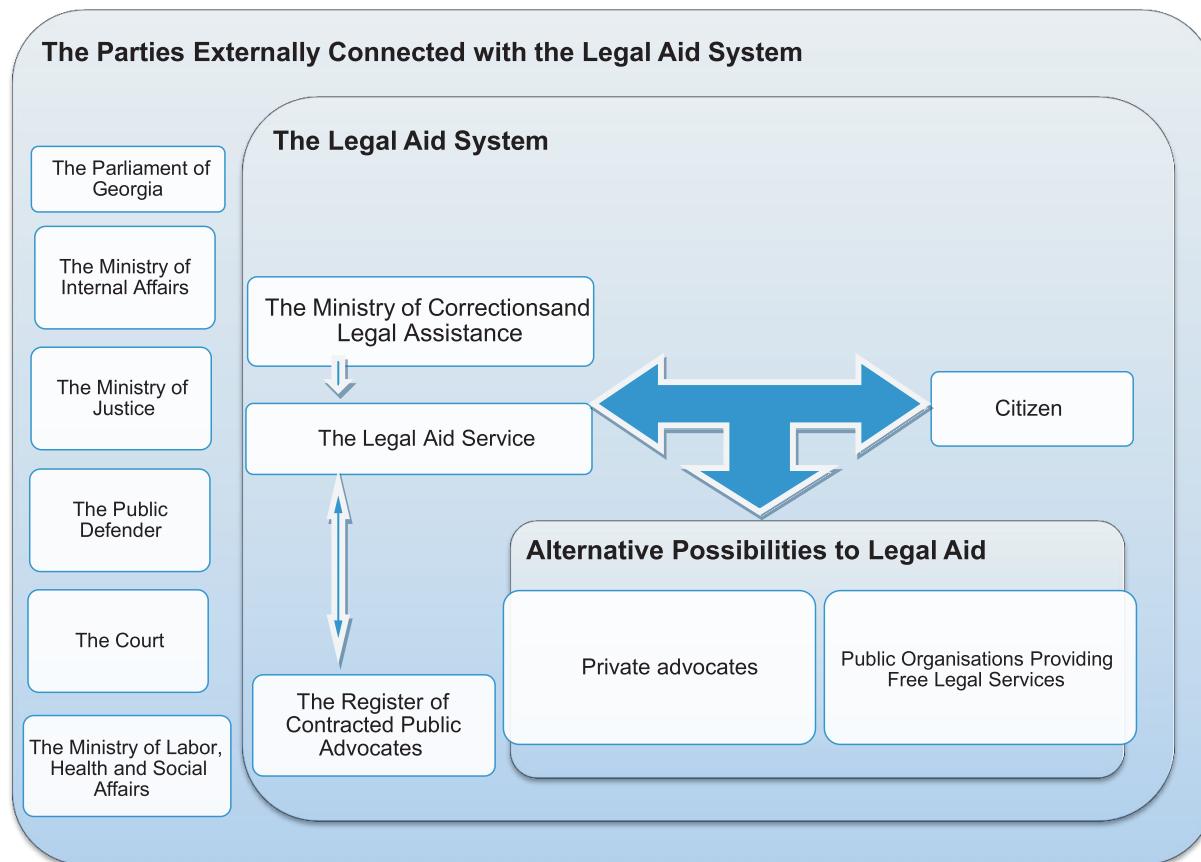
- S/he is a minor;
 - S/he does not know the language of criminal proceedings;
 - S/he has physical or psychiatric defect, which obstructs him/her in self-defense;
 - A decision has been issued on conducting a forensic psychiatric enquiry;
 - The Criminal Code of Georgia envisages a criminal liability in form of life imprisonment for the deed committed;
 - A negotiation is in progress regarding the plea bargain;
 - The criminal case is heard by the jury trial;
 - S/he is avoiding to appear before the law enforcement agencies;
 - S/he was banished from the court room;
 - S/he is an unidentified person;
 - In cases directly envisaged under the Criminal Procedure Code of Georgia.
- 

Scheme #2. The Scheme of Legal Aid (Public Advocate) Services



There is one more model for legal assistance – The Register of Contracted Public Advocates, within the frameworks of which the advocates working in the private sector are involved in criminal law cases under the circumstances prescribed by law and on budgetary remuneration.

Scheme #3. The Legal Aid System



Chapter #4. Main Conclusions

The Legal Aid Service is a necessary and timely initiative for the population stratum, which does not have the financial means to receive legal aid requiring payment. This demand cannot be fully met by the activity of public organizations either, since, as research demonstrated, there are not a lot of public organizations oriented at legal aid, or free legal assistance is just one of the directions of their work, especially in the regions.

The quality of Legal Aid Service, according to customer evaluation, is high and in compliance with beneficiary demands. The Service is highly entrusted by the beneficiaries and they are satisfied with the services provided. The beneficiaries consider the attitude of Legal Aid Service staff towards clients as positive. The majority of respondents are content with the service process – the average point on a 5-point scale is 4.7, which is a high rate. The majority of beneficiaries consider the service not to be lengthy. The Public Advocate allocates sufficient time; is tactful; is knowledgeable about the client's case. The information received from Service personnel is not contradictory. The Legal Aid Service employs professionals and their attitude towards clients is impartial. In parallel to such high evaluations, it is necessary to constantly ensure staff training and reputation maintenance –especially, because the most common communication channel to obtain information about the Service is the customer who has already benefited from the Service's legal assistance.²

Even though the coverage area of the Legal Aid Service is expanding and the number of bureaus and consultation centers is increasing, the human resource is still insufficient to satisfy the growing demands of population. In view of the growing demand and the already deficient human resource, the free Legal Aid Service will be unable to meet the requirements of numerous beneficiaries, which will reflect upon the level of customer satisfaction. It should be emphasized that there is a demand in population for low-income persons to be able to use Public Advocate services on civil and administrative cases as well. Due to these circumstances, close cooperation with local public organizations is essential at the current stage, by means of establishing the practice of client forwarding. As for the nearest future, it is important for the Service itself to provide the beneficiaries with Public Advocate representation on certain civil cases.

It is desirable to expand the list of the Advocate Register, which in itself will encourage the growth of human resource. The research shows that the membership of the Advocate Register at this stage is not a matter of significance and prestige for lawyers. In parallel to informing the general population on the work of the Legal Aid Service, it is beneficial for the communication strategy to be directed at the advocates, so that their Register membership becomes a public benefit.

² See Diagram #7

Part of the population is still unaware of the existence of the Legal Aid Service. For example, part of the beneficiaries cannot identify the organization s/he received legal assistance from. In some cases they name a specific consultant and cannot remember the organization's name. It is also vague for the population as to what kinds of services are provided by the Legal Aid Service. Based on this circumstance, it would be advisable to hand out information leaflets or bulletins about the Legal Aid Service to the population in the process of consultation. The research demonstrated that population awareness on legal issues is generally low. For example, almost 40% from those who have already used the services do not know who are mandatorily appointed with a Public Advocate on criminal law issues. Therefore, it is reasonable to organize on-field meetings (e.g. mobile groups) with the population and to provide information on the services of free Legal Aid Service and on legal issues.

The regions densely populated by ethnically non-Georgian population should be noted with emphasis. The issue of trust in the Legal Aid Service is of particular importance in these regions. Since part of the population does not yet know the state language, it is essential to provide them with information in their mother tongue. In spots, where the Legal Service Bureaus or Consultation Centers already exist, this issue is more or less resolved and the consultant speaks the local population language. However, it is particularly significant to expand the center network in these regions. Cooperation with local public and international organizations, whether oriented at providing legal service or human rights protection, is necessary. In these regions, strengthening collaboration with local government representatives, village governors, the representatives of local self-government or government is highly significant. Reinforcing cooperation and exchanging knowledge will allow the Legal Aid Service to increase public awareness on legal issues.

“The city population in the region and the population of Akhalkalaki region are well informed about the possibility of legal aid. However, this information is not accessible to the population of Ninotsminda village. It should be noted that the increase of awareness was promoted by the examination of the cases of politically repressed. Even the village population found out that these services can be received free of charge.” (Representative of Local Self-Government)

“Even though the population knows about the person, whom they can address with regard to the cases of the repressed, they still believe him/her to be concerned with the issues of repression only. I think the population is less aware that they can address this person on any legal issue”. (Representative of a Local Public Organization)

Chapter #5 Results

5.1 Results of Qualitative Research

5.1.1 Being Informed about the Free Legal Aid Service

Part of the society (representatives of local state structures, public organizations and advocates), who have contact with citizens requiring legal aid, are informed on the providers of this service. They know that there is a state service functioning in their region, which provides free legal consultation to the population. Best aware of these issues are the organizations and persons, who are legal service providers themselves. For example, public organizations, which are completely oriented at providing legal services, or legal consultation is one of the components of their services; and state structures, which are in contact with the socially indigent population.

Despite the level of awareness described above, it should be noted that the public groups in question are not fully informed on the services rendered to the population by the Legal Aid Service. It is possible to range and distinguish the following groups in terms of the level of awareness:

1. The group best informed on the activities of the Legal Aid Service – the Advocates;
2. The public organisations, which themselves have a component of legal aid, and the Media;

A social advertisement about free legal aid was initiated on several regional TV channels simultaneously from November 7, 2011.

A video clip, prepared with the support of the UN Development Programme, aimed to inform the public on the free service provided by the Legal Aid Service of the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance to the population throughout the country.

The video describes situations, when a person faces the need for a legal consultation or an advocate service. The non-Georgian population viewed the video with Russian subtitles. The video ends with the contact information of the Legal Aid Service (Hotline: 8(32)292-00-55 / Website: www.legalaid.ge), via which the citizens can receive detailed information.

The ad campaign aired on the TV stations of Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Marneuli, Gori, Gurjaani and Telavi for two months.

A meeting was held in Gori TV station with the Head of the Legal Service, where the population had an opportunity to ask questions on air through phone calls.

3. The state structures (e.g. Social Aid Service), which are aware of the existence of this organisation, are better informed on the service of legal consultation and are less informed on providing the population with Public Advocates. It should be particularly emphasised that the majority of local state structure representatives, who took part in research, consider the Legal Aid Service as a legal person of public law under the governance of the Ministry of Justice;

4. Part of the public organisations, which do not have a legal aid component, are the least informed.

The advocates and public organizations, which provide legal consultations, are informed about the Legal Aid Service through media, as well as legislation and beneficiaries. In other words, the level of awareness of this type of organizations is determined by professional activities.

The representatives of state structures have information on legal assistance from Monday meetings in the Government Hall, where the employees are informed on various novelties. The persons in daily contact with the population (socially indigent population included) are better informed, since the beneficiaries themselves often address them for the resolution of various legal issues.

The level of awareness of public organizations, advocates and local government representatives about the Legal Aid Service does not differ according to the regions.

5.1.2 Public Awareness

Public organizations, media, representatives of local government consider the population to be less informed on the existence of this Service. It was particularly noted that the level of population awareness decreases in proportion with the distance from the location of the Legal Aid Service. In their opinion, village population is less informed in comparison with city and regional center population. The regions densely populated by ethnically non-Georgian population are the most difficult in terms of awareness.

The population, who has not had contact with the Legal Aid Service, is not informed on the Service. The majority thereof refer to local state structures, advocates or locally-functioning public organizations for legal assistance, should such necessity arise. Even if beneficiary has received information, or has used the free legal aid service at least once, s/he finds it difficult to identify which organization had provided such services.

Part of the population, who has had contact with the free Legal Aid Service, mainly receives information from acquaintances or state structures (the court, investigative bodies, local government, self-government). The beneficiaries, who have been serviced by a Public Advocate, name their acquaintances, friends, investigative bodies and the court as the information source. Prior to using the services of a Public Advocate, they had no information about this possibility. The majority of this part of beneficiaries is not informed that, apart from the Public Advocate service, the Legal Aid Service can also provide free legal consultations.

The Advocates believe the population to already be better informed about the Legal Aid Service at this stage. This conclusion is based on the circumstance that the free Legal Aid Service has emerged as a certain competitor and the number of persons seeking their services has decreased in comparison.

In Kvemo Kartli, the public organizations highlighted that the villages populated by ethnically non-Georgian population are in the biggest information vacuum. In some cases, they do not even know where and whom to address in order to receive IDs or other types of documents.

Public organizations, media and state structure representatives, who have attended the focus groups, consider on-site meetings as the most effective means of spreading information.

“Statistically speaking, if 10 people per day addressed us for a legal consultation, the number has nowadays decreased, particularly, with regards to criminal law offences. Although we have sometimes provided a consultation for free, but when an action is to be performed, we do not do it free of charge, and it is good that the population now has a possibility to benefit from a free advocate.” (A private practicing lawyer)

“We hold meetings with the village population within the project frameworks. Our representatives go out to villages and meet the resident population in person. We familiarize them with their rights, legislative novelties and consult them on legal issues on-site. We organize the meetings through local governors. We contact them, inform on our work, goals and agree on the meeting details. Thereby, we increase awareness. Apart from working in the field for years now, we have carried out targeted information campaigns.” (A public organization oriented at legal aid)

“Our organization used to have a legal component, but the project ended and we can no longer help the population. Two months after the end of the project, the population still came and we provided legal aid. However, now the population cannot receive similar services anywhere. They had a lot of problems. They had problems with regard to putting the documents in order with the law enforcers. The situation is particularly complicated in the village population. There are people, who are not registered at all, since their “master” does not allow them from home. They are the members of abandoned families, who have found themselves in someone’s hands, live under their mercy and work in unbearable conditions. These people, when they manage to escape, do not know where to go or whom to address. This happens in Gardabani Municipality. There are a number of issues in schools as well, such as granting personal numbers, obtaining personal identification, etc.”
(Representative of a public organization)

The majority of non-beneficiary population participating in focus groups received information about the Legal Aid Service during the group session. The need for legal assistance was observed most in those groups, which do not have the means to benefit from services requiring payment, hire an advocate, etc. Socially indigent population, IDPs, etc. are to be mainly considered as such groups.

Among those, who have some type of information about the possibility of free legal assistance, they cannot often identify which organization they are talking about – is it a representation of the Young Lawyers’ Association in the region, local public organizations, or the Legal Aid Service. “Lawyers” – this is the common name in the population for all the mentioned organizations.

Part of the population, who has benefited from the free Legal Aid Service in line of consulting, names acquaintances, friends and media as the source of information. Those beneficiaries, who have used the services of a Public Advocate, list acquaintances,

“Our organization used to have a legal component, but the project ended and we can no longer help the population. Two months after the end of the project, the population still came and we provided legal aid. However, now the population cannot receive similar services anywhere. They had a lot of problems. They had problems with regard to putting the documents in order with the law enforcers. The situation is particularly complicated in the village population. There are people, who are not registered at all, since their “master” does not allow them from home. They are the members of abandoned families, who have found themselves in someone’s hands, live under their mercy and work in unbearable conditions. These people, when they manage to escape, do not know where to go or whom to address. This happens in Gardabani Municipality. There are a number of issues in schools as well, such as granting personal numbers, obtaining personal identification, etc.” (Representative of a public organization)

friends, investigative bodies and the Court as the sources of information. Prior to employing the free advocate service, they had no information about such possibility.

5.1.3 The Essence of Legal Aid Service, Performance Evaluation

The idea of the Legal Aid Service is highly appraised by the representatives of various public groups. Providing legal services to socially indigent population is stipulated as the basic function of this organization. In their opinion, organization with state funding must exist, which will only serve the stratum unable to bear the cost of such services.

Based on the function of the organization, it should serve the numerous members of the population stratum, which, in the opinion of various public group representatives, is not possible with the present resources. The human resource is not sufficient to satisfy the demand of every beneficiary and to face the future challenges.

The service of Public Advocates is necessary and essential, both for the socially indigent and the various category of accused and convicted persons. However, part of the specialists observes a conflict of interests between the Legal Aid Service and other state organizations. The Service is a legal person of public law under the Ministry of Corrections and Legal Assistance. Thus, the issue of how free the Public Advocate is when the person under his/her protection testifies against a state structure or the representative thereof is doubtful.

Public organizations also evaluate the existence of free Legal Aid Service positively. It is important for an organization to exist in the region, which would provide legal consultation on various issues. In some regions, they talked about the positive instances of cooperation. However, the collaboration is more of a disorganized character and is not systematic. Examples of inter-cooperation were more common in the regions, where local organizations have a component of legal aid. In part of the regions there is no precedent of such cooperation at all. In regions where the instances of collaboration were established, it was noted that exchanging beneficiaries/customers is frequent; namely, the Legal Aid Service directs the client to the organization, so that s/he can receive advocate services on civic issues. There are also cases of inter-consultation, interchanging ideas and legislative novelties.

The advocates consider the existence of such Service essential, since the population does not have sufficient sums for consultations requiring payment. In their opinion, the advocates, working in the Legal Aid Service, are highly-qualified lawyers and handle the work. However, it was noted on every focus group that the resource of advocates in the regions is not sufficient. Moreover, the practicing lawyers stated that a Public Advocate should not be appointed to a citizen in case of plea agreement, since if s/he can cover the penalty required by the plea bargain, s/he can also afford the lawyer fees. This circumstance creates an unequal competitive environment.

The representatives of public organizations also touched upon the issue regarding the lack of the Legal Aid Service employees. In their opinion, even though there is a Register of Public Advocates, the resource is still scarce. The regions with no public organizations oriented at legal services were noted with particular emphasis.

Apart from the lack of advocates, every group noted that the resource is scarce for consulting as well. Queues during the consultations about the victims of political repressions were named as an example. As a rule, the beneficiaries do not have to stand in line, but they had to wait for a long time regarding the repression-related issues, due to a large number of people seeking consultations.

In groups, which involved advocates and public organizations providing legal services, there was talk of the Register of Public Advocates. Although the website of free legal aid provides detailed information about them and there are concrete documents, which regulate their activities, private advocates do not have full information on to how to cooperate with the Legal Aid Service. An opinion was formed that there are bureaucratic barriers between the registered Public Advocates and the Service. However, the polemics demonstrated that the mentioned opinion was based on the lack of information. Several issues were raised:

“In order to handle the case appropriately, one might have up to 10 cases a month. Some cases require reading volumes, not to say anything about how many actions have to be performed. I know advocates, who have 50-80 cases assigned to them per month. Obviously, it is impossible to manage all of them properly. This is not their fault, but it is a fact that the advocates often see the person under their defense only once. No need to talk about conducting investigative activities.” (A private advocate)

1. **The Remuneration of Public Advocates.** The method of remuneration of registered Public Advocates is uncomfortable for private advocates, since a confirmation document for every activity has to be presented to the Legal Aid Service.

2. **The Rule of Proceedings for Public Advocates.** The rule of proceedings for Public Advocates in the Legal Aid Service is highly inflexible and stipulates a mandatory sequence of every predetermined stage, even against the client's will. This may in some cases result in wasting time and hindering the client's interests. However, specific examples of client interest violation were not named during the focus group.

The Register of Contracted Public Advocates is one of the means of implementing free legal aid. It was established in May 2009 with a purpose to provide free legal aid without obstructions. It functions according with the following system: a database of private advocates providing free services to the citizens, based on budgetary remuneration, operates within the Legal Aid framework. The advocates registered in the Register of Contracted Public Advocates are involved in criminal law cases when the opposing parties apply to the Bureau for help. Defending the opposing parties in one case by Legal Aid Bureau advocates is inadmissible, due to the ethical standards. In such cases, the advocate of the Legal Aid Bureau defends one party only, while the second party is assigned with the advocate from the Register. In the regions with no functioning Legal Aid Bureau, the appointment of an advocate from the Register on criminal law cases is ensured by the Consultation Centers of the Legal Aid Service.


According to the situation of June 2011, 84 private lawyers are enlisted in the Register. In 2009-2011, they took part in more than 1250 criminal law cases. The remuneration system of Register Advocates is as follows: the Legal Aid Service pays a single fixed amount to a Public Lawyer contracted to take part in a criminal law case. Moreover, each action performed by an advocate in relation to the criminal law case is reimbursed. The amount of reimbursement for the work completed in the criminal law case by the Register Advocates is determined by the Manager of the Register of Contracted Public Advocates according to the established rules.

3. Multiplicity of Cases. Public Advocates are assigned a large number of cases and part of the society believes it impossible to proceed with every case with due diligence. Sometimes, there is not even enough time for the advocate to study the case properly. This circumstances creates problems both for the defendant and his/her family.

4. A Possible Bias of Public Advocates. In case of a plea bargain, the Prosecutor and the Public Advocate easily agree upon an amount, since the money is paid for the State benefit. When the crime is committed against a State servant, the Public Advocate, due to his/her position, is more likely to protect the interests of a State servant, than those of the person under his/her defense. A specific example was named, when one of the local newspapers addressed the Legal Aid Service to clarify the issue of illegal construction. The service was not provided, because this issue concerned the interests of a State structure and the Service refrained from providing legal assistance.

Public Advocate is a certain solution for the population. It was particularly emphasized that money has to be paid during a plea agreement as it is. Thus, paying for advocate services is connected with high financial costs.

Almost every group, which represented the beneficiaries (the group, who had benefited from Public Advocate services), noted that they did not initially have trust in the Public Advocate. The mistrust dissolved after the service was provided. The majority of this part of society has had contact with the Advocate only and most did not know what other services could be offered by the Legal Aid Service. Only a single beneficiary knew that the services of a Public Advocate and a legal consultation were provided by one organization. The opinion of this smaller group was important, considering the factor that they had received both services. They consider both services to have been of high quality and they will address the mentioned organization, in case of necessity.




Everyone expressed an opinion that an advocate service on civil cases should be added to the free legal aid service, since there are issues when they cannot defend themselves before the court. It was noted on the beneficiaries' focus group, that despite high-quality and complete service, the final result is not always positive for the client (but not because of legal aid service). This is concerning the examples, when they received consultation on civil cases in the Legal Aid Service; the Court delivered a decision for the benefit of the client; and the enforcement title was provided to submit to the National Bureau of Enforcement. And it was the National Bureau of Enforcement who did not enforce the case. These examples were mostly regarding salary debts, disputed land and neighbor disputes.

“1. I, specifically, have not had contact, but as I have heard from the other Register Advocates, the reimbursement procedure is rather complicated. One has to go and authorize after each action. I am not sure how it happens exactly, but it is related to a number of nuances. It is good that the remuneration was raised and I know the advocates are satisfied.”

“2. Yes, I know that some private advocates transferred to the Legal Aid Service; but I also know that internal control is very high – what s/he does at every stage of the case. Sometimes the procedure calls for the advocate to perform a certain action, but in private cases this happens based on the agreement with the client. In case of Public Advocate service, this procedure cannot be circumvented; it has to be completed. Practical examples can be stated here, when certain actions may interfere with defending the client.”

“3. What can I say? My child is in jail. The Advocate did everything possible, but when we need him/her to visit in jail, despite his/her willingness, we understand that s/he has a lot of work and cannot always find time for us.”

“4. In case of plea agreement, the Prosecutor also prefers to deal with a Public Advocate. It is easier to negotiate.”



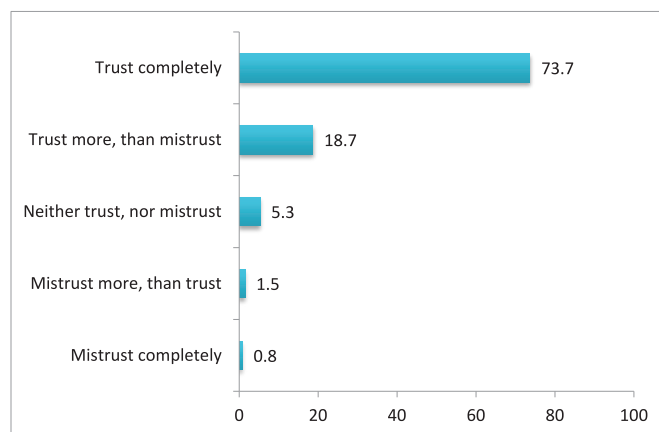
5.2 Results of Quantitative Research (Beneficiaries)

The goal of quantitative research was to evaluate the services of the Legal Aid Service, collect information about the attitudes of population towards the Service and establish the main sources to receive information on the Legal Aid Service.

The service of Legal Aid Service bureaus and consultation centers was evaluated with high scores by the beneficiaries. No differences in beneficiary opinions regarding the service received from the Legal Aid Service were observed.³ Client service quality is high for the majority of beneficiaries.

It is noteworthy, that trust towards the Legal Aid Service is high among beneficiaries. Namely, more than 2/3 of the respondents trust the Service completely; while 1/5 trusts it more, than not.

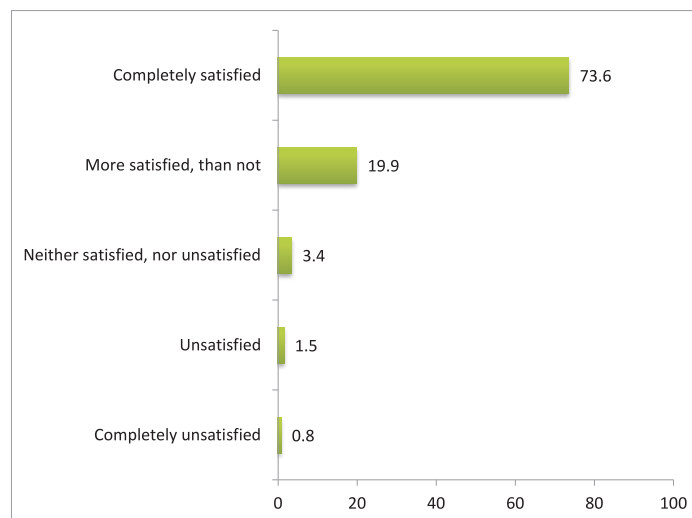
Diagram 3. Trust Towards the Legal Aid Service



The level of satisfaction regarding the services provided by the Legal Aid Service is also high. Analogous to the Trust rate, 73.6% of respondents are completely satisfied with the services received.

³ Two groups were interviewed: beneficiaries, who received legal consultation and beneficiaries (or their family members), who were serviced by the Public Advocate.

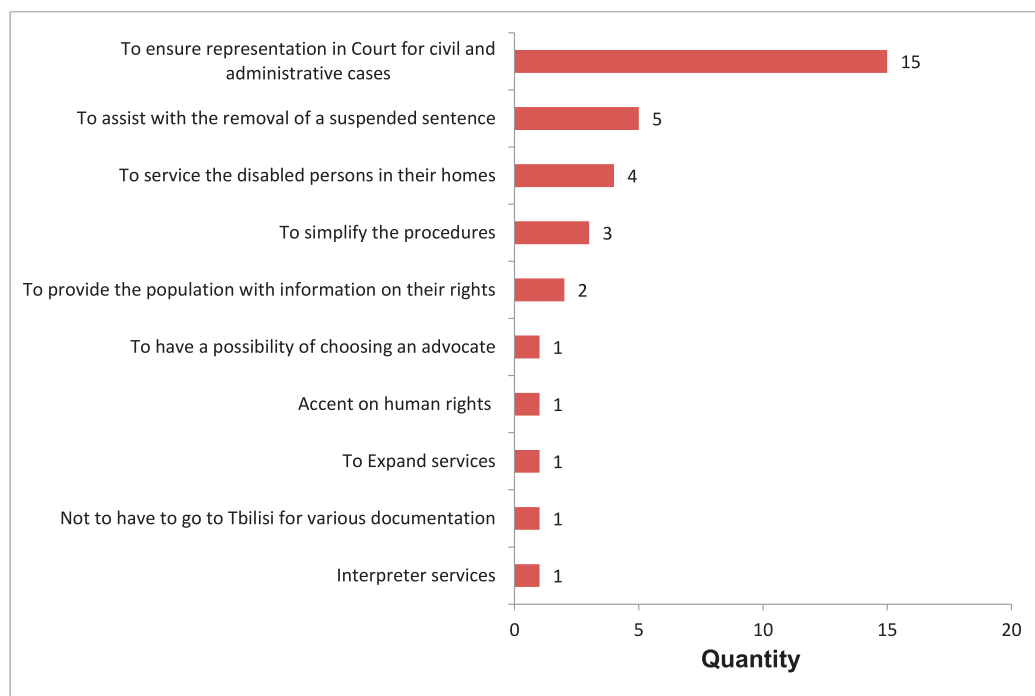
Diagram 4. Satisfaction from the Assistance Provided by the Legal Aid Service



According to research results, the majority of respondents have not encountered problems in their relation with the Legal Aid Service. However, some of them (8 respondents) noted that they had to wait in line for a long time. It was also stated that an advocate could not be assigned on a civil case and their interests were not protected before the Court (but this is not current competence of the Legal Aid service).

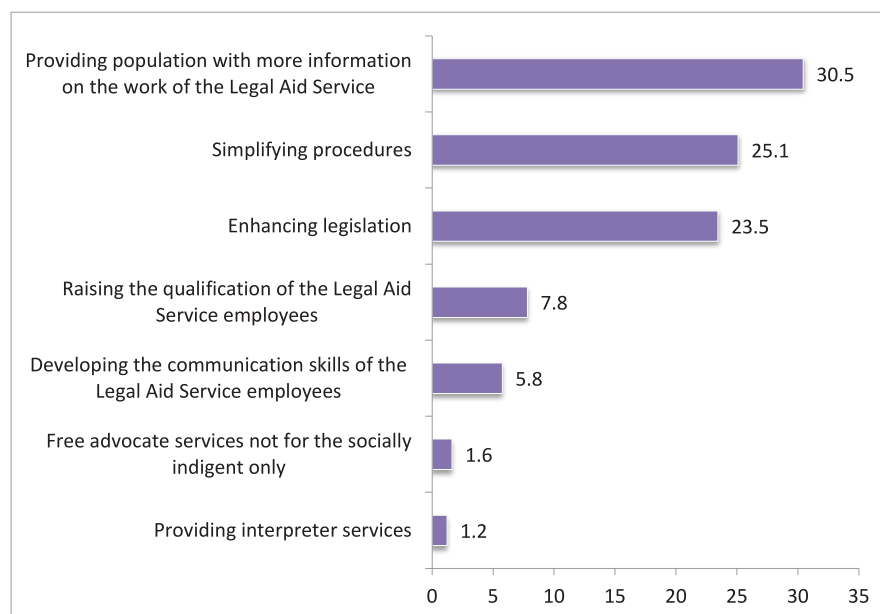
Only 34 respondents noted that it is necessary to expand the services of the Legal Aid Service. Almost half of them observed that it would be desirable to ensure protection in court on civil and administrative cases. The diagram demonstrates all the services that the respondents wish to receive. The data is calculated from those who named the need for some type of service (34 respondents).

Diagram 5. What Additional Services Would You Like to Receive from the Legal Aid Service?



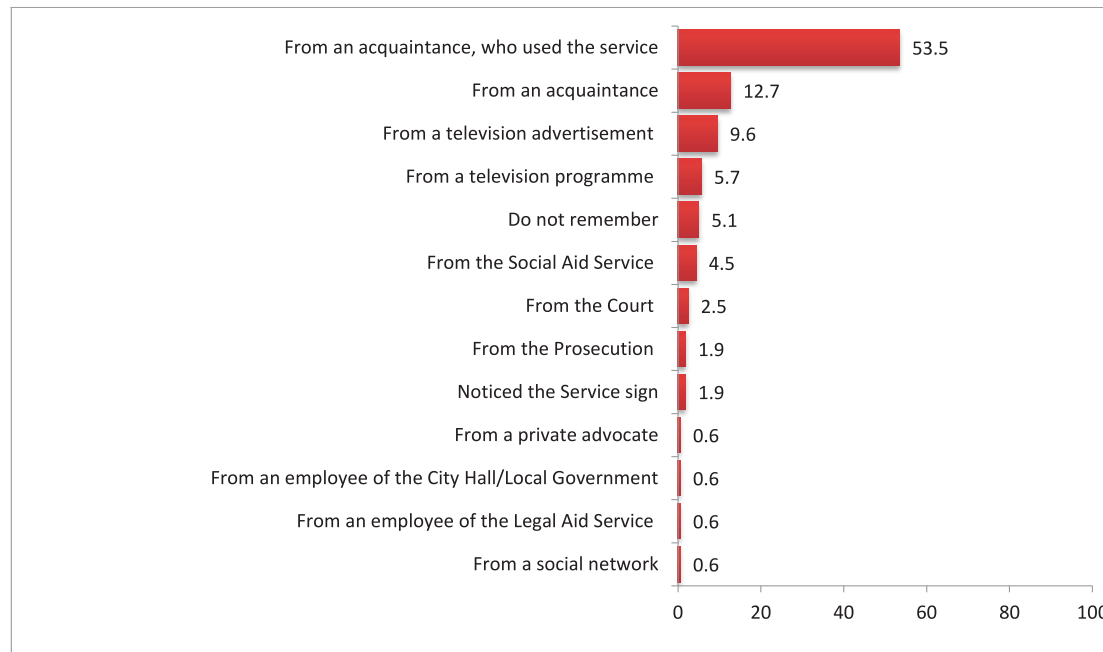
The most important issue, the resolution of which will improve the activities of the Legal Aid Service, is to provide more information to the population about the Service. Although the beneficiaries consider that the clients have to overcome minimal bureaucratic barriers in their relation with the Legal Aid Service, a quarter of the respondents named simplifying the procedures as a significant issue to advance Service performance.

**Diagram 6. Name the Most Important Issue, the Resolution of which will, in your opinion,
Improve the Work of the Legal Aid Service**



Almost 1/3 of the beneficiaries consider that the population should have more information on the work of the Service, which is easy to explain – 43.1% of the beneficiaries did not know about the existence of the organization prior to employing its services. From those who had such information, the majority notes that the acquaintances, who had already received services from the Legal Aid Service, were the source of information. Based on respondent answers, only 15% has received information from a television programme or an advertisement. According to other responses, the beneficiaries took interest in the possibility of receiving legal services as needed and obtained information on the Legal Aid Service.

Diagram 7. How did you find out about the Legal Aid Service?

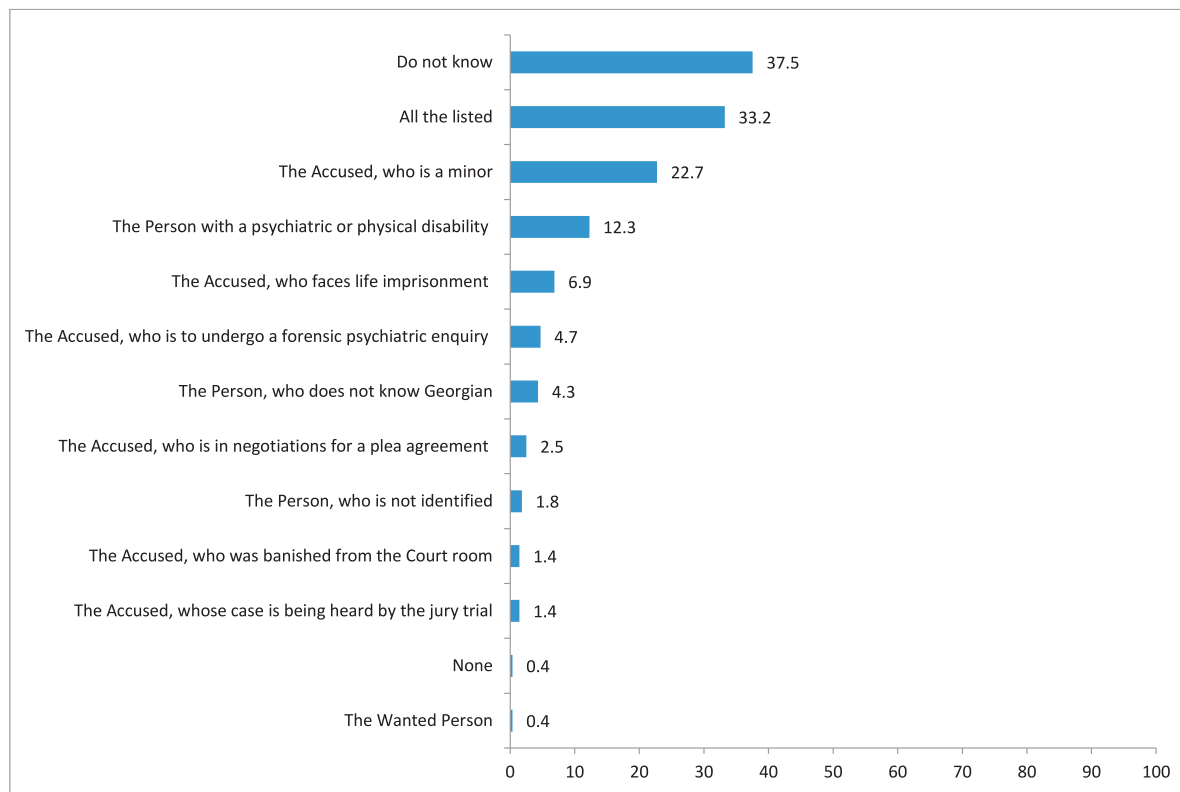


The majority of beneficiaries (73.3%) are informed that the Legal Aid Service offers the service of a Public Advocate to its customers. The majority (70%) also knows that the Service provides free legal consultations. Only 44% noted that they are aware that the Legal Aid Service provides customers with the service of preparing legal documentation.

The State mandatorily appoints an advocate to a certain category of persons on criminal law cases. 37% of respondents had no answer as to who is subject to compulsory defense. The diagram shows the response distribution of interviewees. In the group of beneficiaries, who had received legal assistance on criminal law issues, 33% replied “Do Not Know” on the present question; while in the group, which had received legal consultation on non-criminal law issues, 40.4% replied “Do Not Know”.

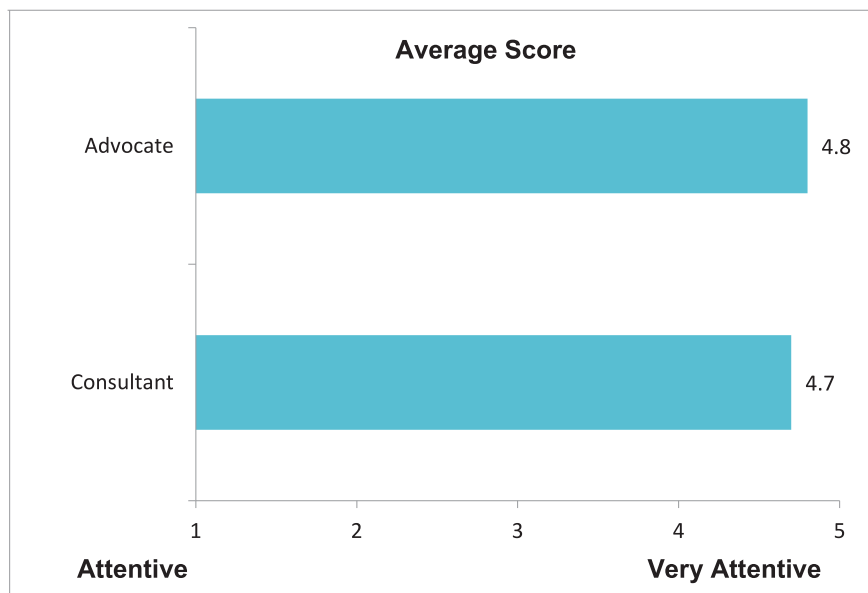
Diagram 8. The State appoints an Advocate mandatorily to a certain category of persons on criminal law cases.

In your opinion, who of the following are subject to compulsory defense?



For the majority of beneficiaries the Legal Aid Service personnel is attentive and favorable. Such attitude was demonstrated both towards the advocates and the consultants.

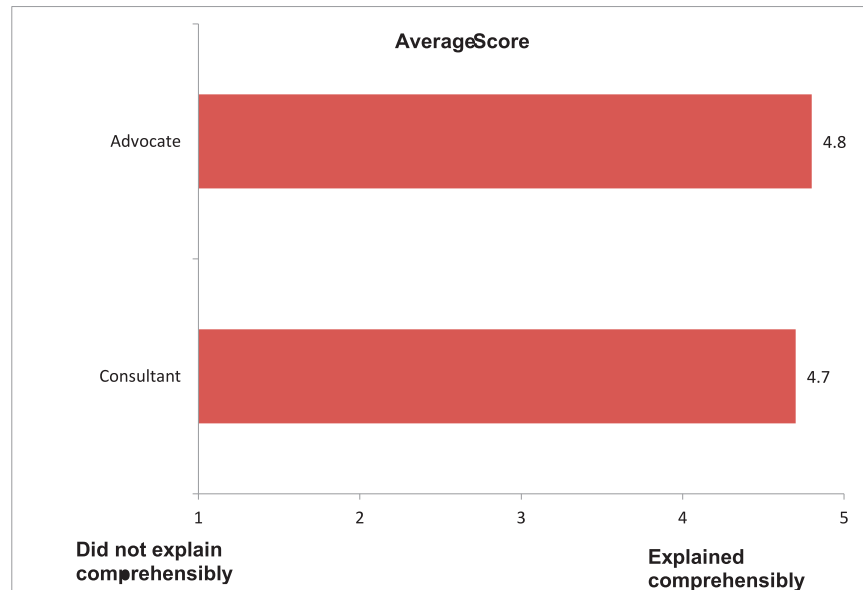
Diagram 9. How attentive was the personnel towards the Beneficiary?



The majority of population believes that the personnel explain what the client should do to resolve his/her problem in an understandable manner.

Diagram 10. How well did the personnel explain what you should do about your issue?

Who you should refer to, which documentation to present?



In total, the majority of respondents are satisfied with the service process and the average score on a 5-point scale is 4.7, which is a high rate. The majority of beneficiaries consider that the service was not lengthy and the service was provided in a timely manner.

The respondents, who have had telephone contact with the Legal Aid Service, state that contacting the Legal Aid Service by telephone is easy and the information received thereby is effective. However, only half of the respondents could evaluate this type of contact, since the rest of the respondents had not had telephone contact with the Legal Aid Service. Even though the Legal Aid Service was given an evaluation of higher than average in terms of telephone consultation, a small difference in telephone contact assessment was still observed between the groups using legal consultation and Public Advocate services. The average score of customers receiving legal consultation is 4.2 on a 5-point scale, while the average score of Public Advocate customers is 4.7.

The majority of respondents believe that s/he is treated well in the Legal Aid Service. The Advocate allocates sufficient time; is tactful, knowledgeable on the client case. The information received from the Service is trustworthy. The personnel is professional and considerate. It should be emphasized that the Legal Aid Office only received a more or less low score in the Recognition criterion – 3.7 points on a 5-point scale. Table #1 provides the average points according to all the criteria.⁴

Table 1. Service Evaluation

Criteria for Service Quality	Average Score on a 5-Point Scale
The Advocate allocated sufficient time.	4.7
The Advocate was always tactful and treated me with respect.	4.8
The environment for meeting with the Advocate was highly comfortable.	4.7
The employees of the Legal Aid Service have sufficient competence.	4.7
The personnel of the Legal Aid Service speak in an understandable language.	4.7
The personnel of the Legal Aid Service write in a comprehensible manner.	4.7
As a rule, the response/information received from different members of the personnel was not contradictory.	4.7
The employee of the Legal Aid Service, who I was in touch with, answered every question.	4.8
The Advocate was closely familiar with my case.	4.7
I received sufficient information on my case.	4.7
I can receive information about the stage of my case proceedings at any time.	4.7

⁴ From the list of criteria, the beneficiaries only evaluated the group which related specifically to their experience. For example, if the client had received a free consultation only in the Legal Aid Service, s/he did not evaluate the Advocate services.

I trust every type of information provided by the Legal Aid Service.	4.7
The Legal Aid Service is unbiased in the legal aid process.	4.7
The employees of the Legal Aid Service act in accordance with law.	4.8
The Legal Aid Service is staffed by professionals.	4.7
The majority of Legal Aid Service employees are considerate.	4.7
The majority of Legal Aid Service employees are dedicated to their work.	4.7
The work of the Legal Aid Service is known to the majority of the society.	3.7
The Legal Aid Service conducts necessary work.	4.7
The Legal Aid Service is in equal relation with each customer.	4.7
The process of legal aid is not lengthy.	4.6
The clients have to overcome minimal bureaucratic barriers in their relation with the Legal Aid Service.	4.6

The majority of beneficiaries (73.6%) have not used the services of a private or other public organization advocate. Only 17.7% of the respondents have received a private advocate service, while 8.6% - a public organization advocate service. The list of public organizations includes: Young Lawyers' Association, Union of Democrat Meskhs, Adult Education Center and Social Defender.

17.7% of respondents, who used the services of a private advocate, evaluate the service with 3.7 points on a 5-point scale; while from those who used the services of a public organization advocate, 8.6% - with 4.8 points. The trust points on a 5-point scale are analogous to the service quality points. Accordingly, private advocates were evaluated with 3.8 points and the public organization advocates – with 4.7 points.

The majority of respondents (68.6%) recommended the population to address the Legal Aid Service in case of necessity; 11.4% recommended the private advocate; while 17.1% - representatives of public organizations.