

The role of LBKH FH UMMI in providing legal aid for the underprivileged community in Sukabumi

Haidan Angga Kusumah¹, Agus Rasyid Candra Wijaya¹

¹ University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi, Sukabumi, Indonesia

*Corresponding author email: haidan@ummi.ac.id

Abstract

This study explores the strategic role of the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) at the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi (UMMI), in enhancing access to justice for the underprivileged community in Sukabumi, Indonesia. Legal aid is a constitutional right guaranteed under Article 28D and Article 34 of the 1945 Constitution, yet its implementation remains uneven in local regions. Employing an empirical-juridical method, this research draws upon interviews with law enforcement officials, local government representatives, and social institutions to evaluate the effectiveness of LBKH's services. The findings reveal that legal aid remains constrained by limited institutional coordination, low legal awareness, and a lack of trained paralegals at the community level. The study proposes a collaborative framework linking LBKH, village authorities, and law enforcement agencies to ensure more effective delivery of justice. Strengthening the legal literacy of citizens and building sustainable community-based legal aid networks are critical to promoting equality before the law and realizing the vision of a just and law-abiding society.

Keywords

Legal aid, Access to justice, LBKH UMMI, Underprivileged communities, Sukabumi

Introduction

Legal aid represents a fundamental human entitlement derived from the constitutional principle of equality before the law. It ensures that individuals who are economically disadvantaged may obtain legal protection without financial burden, commonly known as the principle of *pro bono publico*.¹ This obligation is embedded in Article 34 of the 1945 Constitution, which explicitly mandates that the State bears responsibility for the welfare of the poor and neglected children.² In a broader sense, the provision implies

Published:

October 1, 2025

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#)

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ASEAN Conference of Law Schools 2025 Committee

¹The concept of *pro bono publico* refers to voluntary legal service rendered for the public good without remuneration.

² Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia 1945, Article 34 paragraph (1).

that the government must safeguard not only economic and social rights but also political, cultural, and legal rights of its citizens, particularly those living in poverty.

The essence of equality before the law is reaffirmed in Article 28D of the 1945 Constitution, declaring that all persons have the right to legal recognition, protection, and equal treatment within the justice system.³ Indonesia's commitment to international human rights instruments further strengthens this guarantee. By ratifying the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) through Law No. 12 of 2005, the State accepts the obligation to protect every individual's right to an impartial legal process and non-discriminatory treatment under Article 14 of the Covenant.⁴ Consequently, the right to legal aid forms an inseparable component of Indonesia's constitutional and international human rights commitments.

Despite the legal foundation, implementation of state-sponsored legal aid remains inconsistent across regions.⁵ Many marginalized citizens, especially those residing in rural West Java lack awareness of available legal aid programs or the procedures to access them.⁶ In Sukabumi, for example, coordination among law enforcement bodies, social institutions, and community-based legal aid providers is often fragmented, resulting in unequal distribution of legal assistance and limited access for the poor.⁷ This condition reveals the continuing gap between normative guarantees and practical realization of the right to legal counsel.

Empirical findings further demonstrate that barriers to legal aid include institutional neglect, technical obstacles in case processing, and inadequate dissemination of legal information at the grassroots level.⁸ Many rural residents remain uncertain about how to respond when facing legal problems, leading to vulnerability and dependence. The situation underscores the necessity of greater synergy among law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, and university-based legal aid centers in addressing access-to-justice disparities.

Since its establishment in 2015, the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (Lembaga Bantuan dan Konsultasi Hukum, LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi (UMMI), has provided a crucial safety net for the underprivileged.⁹ It routinely receives case referrals from village administrations,

³ Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia 1945, Article 28D paragraph (1).

⁴ Law No. 12 of 2005 concerning Ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

⁵ Handayani, T. A. (2015). Legal Aid for the Underprivileged in the Perspective of the Theory of Dignity Justice. *Journal of Legal Reflection*, 9(1), 15.

⁶ OECD (2021). *Equal Access to Justice for Inclusive Growth*. OECD Publishing.

⁷ UNDP (2020). *Legal Empowerment and Justice for All: Global Report*. United Nations Development Programme.

⁸ Mustika, K. (2016). The Role and Position of Legal Aid Institutions as Access to Justice for the Poor. *Jurnal Arena Hukum*, 9(2).

⁹ Field data collected from the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi, 2024.

serving citizens who confront legal issues without professional representation. As an academic service unit, LBKH UMMI reflects the university's social responsibility by translating the principle of equality before the law into direct community engagement. The Institute provides legal counselling, mediation, and advocacy to ensure that individuals regardless of socioeconomic background can exercise their right to justice effectively.¹⁰

The broader role of legal aid institutions, such as LBKH, extends beyond courtroom representation. These bodies contribute to preventive legal education, community awareness campaigns, and human rights promotion.¹¹ Through these efforts, legal aid becomes not only a remedial mechanism but also a transformative instrument for empowering citizens and strengthening the rule of law.¹² The provision of legal aid for underprivileged people affected by legal problems by social institutions, law enforcement agencies, and legal aid institutions is still not optimally handled, because many people who seek justice, especially for people in the regions, do not know and or even do not understand the understanding of the implementation of the legal aid law, especially for people in the Sukabumi area itself where there are still people who experience obstacles, especially if there are legal problems.

As for the obstacles in the process of implementing legal aid in the regions, especially in the Sukabumi area, regarding legal issues, namely related to problems in the field in practice, there are still many neglects from legal aid institutions in helping and assisting underprivileged people who are affected by legal problems, so that many people feel confused about what to do. Moreover, the community is ordinary people and does not understand the law. These things show that the role of legal aid institutions is still low in handling cases for the underprivileged.

In practice, in the application of legal aid to communities whose rights need to be assisted in fulfilling legal aid still have obstacles and obstacles, among which are still problems related to access to legal aid for local communities affected by legal problems that have not been accommodated, the role of Law Enforcement to provide services for access to legal aid for the community has not been optimal, and other obstacles related to the understanding of the community itself that requires legal aid for access to legal aid organized by the government is not good. The other obstacles in accessing legal aid in carrying out legal process efforts are still not optimal, so that people who deal with the law can get better justice, especially in terms of legal protection of their rights.

Likewise, the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi itself, which was formed in 2015, has received

¹⁰ Interview with Village Administration of Sukabumi Regency, July 2024.

¹¹ Cappelletti, M., & Garth, B. (1978). Access to Justice: The Worldwide Movement to Make Rights Effective. Sijthoff & Noordhoff.

¹² World Justice Project (2023). Rule of Law Index 2023.

several complaints of cases that befall underprivileged people in the Sukabumi area, where the information is obtained from village government institutions, which then the village government conveys it to LBKH FH UMMI, where there are still people who deal with the law who are not accompanied by legal advisors.¹³

The Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) of the University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi itself is an institution that is a support unit for the provision of education at the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi to the community. This institution was formed to provide legal assistance as an implementation of Equality before the law, in the State of Law. The state recognizes and protects the rights of individuals. Recognition of individual rights is guaranteed on the basis of equality before the law and equal treatment for all. Equality before the law is guaranteed access to justice.¹⁴

Based on the data above, the direction of this research is to develop a strategic pattern, what is the role of the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi in Providing Legal Aid to the underprivileged in the Sukabumi Region? so that a descriptive description of the Role of the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi in Providing Legal Aid in Sukabumi was obtained.

Method

This research is a type of analytical descriptive research, which is to present existing data from relevant material and analyze it with reference to juridical foundations¹⁵. This research method is an empirical juridical approach method¹⁶. This approach is intended to conduct a study of laws and regulations that are closely related to the central theme of the research¹⁷. The data collection process includes: (1) Literature Studies to obtain or seek conceptions, opinions or discoveries related to the subject matter of laws and regulations, national policies for the development of disadvantaged regions, opinions of legal experts or the like. (2) Field study to obtain primary data through interviews or distribution of questionnaires, which are carried out in the jurisdiction of the Sukabumi Regency government. The collected data will be analyzed qualitatively to interpret, describe, and analyze to reveal the truth and understand the truth.

Data collection in the field was carried out by means of in-depth interviews for 2 months which were carried out in stages with different times, dates, and months in each

¹³ Profile of LBKH FH UMMI.

¹⁴ Pujiono. 2010. "Legal Aid in the Perspective of State Responsibility." Accessed September 15, 2018. <http://www.partner.org/public-kasi/opinion/help-legal-in-perspective-responsibility-state>.

¹⁵ Ronny Hanitijo Soemitro. 1983. Legal Research Methods and Jurimetry. Ghalia Indonesia, p. 10

¹⁶ Marzuki, Peter Mahmud. 2005. Legal Research. Surabaya: Kencana, p. 35

¹⁷ Johnny Ibrahim. 2008. Normative Law Research Theory and Methodology. Malang: Bayumedia Publishing, p. 285

agency, both the Police, the Prosecutor's Office, the Village Government, and P2tp2a Sukabumi. This aims to compare various viewpoints of the resource persons regarding "how the role of institutions in providing legal assistance for the community in the Sukabumi Region" which is seen from the perspective of each institution". This study distinguishes itself from previous research by emphasizing the development of a strategic framework through which legal aid institutions can effectively expand access to justice for marginalized communities. Unlike earlier studies that primarily focused on descriptive or normative discussions of legal aid, this research aims to identify practical and institutional patterns that enable legal aid organizations to ensure that the rights of the underprivileged to receive legal assistance are fully realized within both preventive and curative legal processes.

Results and Discussion

Communities in rural regions often encounter considerable barriers in accessing justice, primarily due to low levels of education and limited legal literacy.¹⁸ Many residents lack understanding of the procedures involved in seeking legal assistance, leading to confusion and vulnerability when they are confronted with legal disputes.¹⁹ As a result, individuals who become entangled in legal problems whether as victims or alleged offenders are frequently left without proper legal representation or awareness of their fundamental rights. This lack of guidance often results in an imbalance of justice, where the poor are unable to defend themselves effectively in formal legal proceedings.²⁰

Empirical observations conducted by the research team in Sukabumi Regency reveal that the majority of rural residents possess minimal knowledge of legal aid mechanisms. Interviews with village officials in one representative area ("Village A") indicate that recurring criminal cases such as narcotics abuse, domestic violence, and human trafficking are often aggravated by economic hardship and low educational attainment.²¹ The data further show that in most of these incidents, victims do not receive immediate legal assistance, and preventive efforts remain minimal.²² Local authorities frequently learn about such cases only after the harm has occurred, underscoring the reactive rather than preventive nature of current legal aid responses.

A survey administered to thirty respondents in the same village confirms that approximately eighty-five percent (85%) of the participants were unaware of existing

¹⁸ Banakar, R. & Travers, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Law and Social Theory* (2nd ed.). Hart Publishing.

¹⁹ Cappelletti, M., & Garth, B. (1978). *Access to Justice: The Worldwide Movement to Make Rights Effective*. Sijthoff & Noordhoff.

²⁰ Handayani, T. A. (2015). Legal Aid for the Underprivileged in the Perspective of the Theory of Dignity Justice. *Journal of Legal Reflection*, 9(1), 15.

²¹ Field Interview with Village A Administration, Sukabumi Regency, July 2024.

²² UNDP. (2020). *Legal Empowerment and Justice for All: Global Report*. United Nations Development Programme.

laws and regulations governing legal aid.²³ They expressed uncertainty about where to report legal problems or how to seek help when confronted with a dispute. This finding underscores the urgent need for social institutions, law enforcement agencies, and legal aid providers to strengthen both curative and preventive functions of legal aid.⁷

Beyond legal intervention, community education emerges as a pivotal tool for empowerment. Public awareness programs and continuous legal literacy initiatives are essential to enlighten citizens about their rights, the availability of legal assistance, and the steps necessary to seek help.²⁴ Only through comprehensive legal education and institutional collaboration can justice be made accessible and equitable for all citizens, regardless of socioeconomic background.²⁵

Obstacles and obstacles in the provision of legal aid by social institutions, law enforcement agencies, and legal aid institutions for people experiencing legal problems.

Law enforcement officials play a pivotal role in ensuring that justice is effectively administered and that the rule of law is upheld in society. Their actions determine whether the abstract norms contained within legal provisions can be translated into tangible justice for citizens. The integrity, professionalism, and moral responsibility of these officials directly influence the quality of law enforcement itself. A well-written law may fail if executed by unprincipled officers, whereas even imperfect legislation can serve justice when implemented by ethical and competent professionals.²⁶

In the Indonesian legal system, institutions such as the Police, the Prosecutor's Office, and the District Court function as the principal agents of state authority in the administration of justice. Alongside these formal state institutions, advocates also serve as independent legal enforcers who act on behalf of citizens. Under Law No. 18 of 2003 concerning Advocates, they are entrusted with the duty to represent and defend community members in legal proceedings, thereby guaranteeing citizens' constitutional right to obtain legal assistance.²⁷

Equally significant are the contributions of social institutions that complement state efforts in delivering justice, particularly in regional areas such as Sukabumi Regency. Organizations like the *Integrated Service Center for the Empowerment of Women and Children (P2TP2A)*, as well as various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), play crucial roles in handling cases of domestic violence, human trafficking, and other social injustices. Their work extends beyond litigation—they provide psychological recovery, empowerment programs, and community education for victims so that they can

²³ Primary Data Survey, Research Team on LBKH FH UMMI, Sukabumi, 2024.

²⁴ Mustika, K. (2016). The Role and Position of Legal Aid Institutions as Access to Justice for the Poor. *Jurnal Arena Hukum*, 9(2).

²⁵ World Justice Project. (2023). Rule of Law Index 2

²⁶ Muladi, B. (2002). *Democracy, Human Rights, and Law Enforcement*. Jakarta: PT Refika Aditama.

²⁷ Law No. 18 of 2003 on Advocates (Indonesia).

reintegrate into society with restored confidence. Through such integrated services, social institutions bridge the gap between formal legal mechanisms and the lived experiences of victims.

Despite these institutional efforts, access to legal aid for the underprivileged remains uneven and often reactive. Many rural citizens still face procedural, economic, and informational barriers when seeking assistance. Coordination between law enforcement bodies, social organizations, and university-based legal aid centers such as LBKH FH UMMI must therefore be strengthened. Collaborative strategies that combine legal protection, community education, and preventive outreach are essential to ensure that justice is not only enforceable in law but also attainable in everyday life.²⁸

The steps of LBKH FH Universitas Muhammadiyah Sukabumi in providing legal assistance to the underprivileged.

The Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (Lembaga Bantuan dan Konsultasi Hukum / LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi (UMMI), generally becomes aware of community legal issues through direct reports submitted by village officials. This cooperative relationship reflects the strong partnership that has been established between LBKH and local governments as part of continuous community service initiatives.²⁹ Such collaboration enables the institute to respond promptly to reports involving citizens who encounter legal difficulties, particularly those lacking access to professional legal representation.

Preliminary observations indicate that several types of legal problems frequently occur in Sukabumi Regency most notably domestic violence, narcotics-related offenses, and human trafficking. Based on these findings, the research team selected one representative village (referred to as Village A) as a pilot site for developing and testing a collaborative model of legal aid delivery.³⁰ Within this framework, the LBKH and the village administration jointly designed a procedural model outlining the steps to be taken when residents are affected by legal disputes. This includes immediate reporting, legal protection for victims or accused persons, and early coordination between community leaders and LBKH officers.

The concept proposed to the village government involves the establishment of a legal aid post (*Pos Bantuan Hukum*) operating through a hierarchical network at the local level beginning from neighbourhood associations (RT/RW) to the village office. Each level designates specific individuals responsible for receiving initial complaints and forwarding them through the chain of reporting to LBKH UMMI. This system ensures

²⁸ UNDP. (2020). Legal Empowerment and Justice for All: Global Report. United Nations Development Programme.

²⁹ Field Interview with Village Government Representative, Sukabumi Regency, June 2024.

³⁰ Mustika, K. (2016). The Role and Position of Legal Aid Institutions as Access to Justice for the Poor. *Jurnal Arena Hukum*, 9(2).

that early legal response can be mobilized quickly when a case arises within the community. Moreover, selected team members at both the RW and village levels are provided with legal literacy training to improve their understanding of procedural steps and victim protection standards.

In addition to these structural arrangements, LBKH FH UMMI and the village government conduct periodic legal education programs and community counseling sessions. These initiatives aim to raise public awareness regarding citizens' rights, preventive measures against recurring crimes, and accessible legal services. Through this ongoing collaboration, LBKH FH UMMI has effectively integrated community-based legal aid mechanisms into the broader framework of social justice and empowerment in Sukabumi Regency.

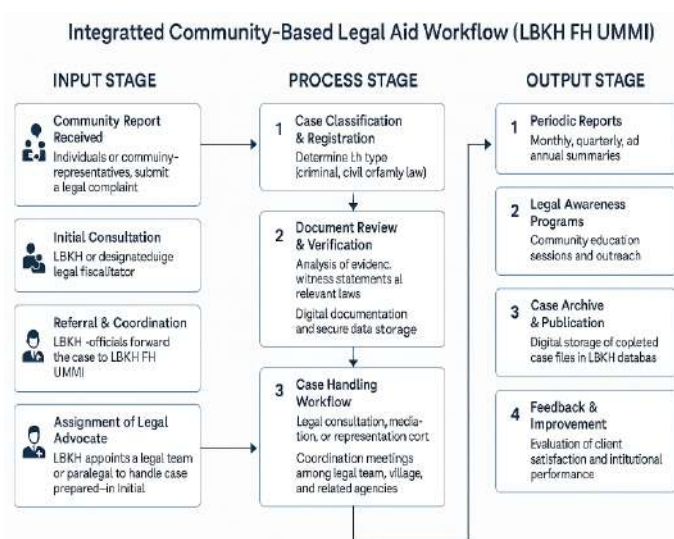


Figure 1. The Concept of Mechanism Flow in Handling Violence Cases

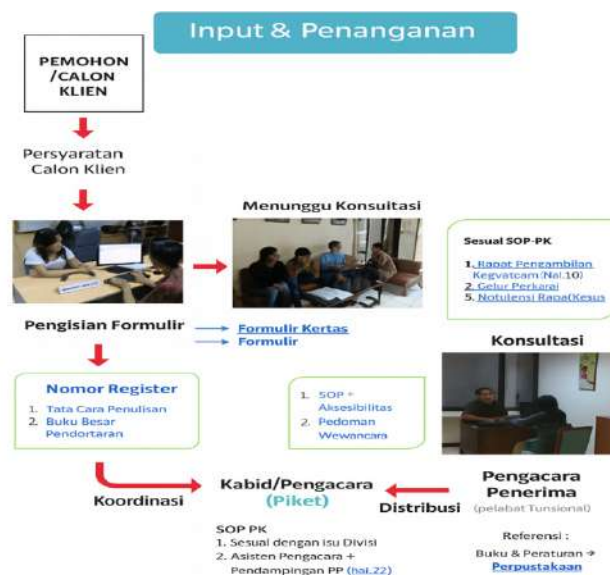


Figure 2. Input of the case handling mechanism in the Internal LBKH FH University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi

Figure 1 and Figure 2 depict a structured workflow showing how collaboration between village authorities and LBKH FH UMMI operates in addressing cases of violence, particularly those involving domestic abuse. This cooperative system was designed to improve community access to legal services and serve as a pilot model in Padaasih Village, Cisaat District, Sukabumi Regency. Once proven effective, the same model can be replicated in other villages to establish a sustainable pattern for early legal intervention and preventive action.

Interviews with representatives of the Sukabumi Resort Police revealed that most citizens who encounter legal problems do not have access to legal advisors. Many victims also hesitate to report incidents because they lack sufficient understanding of legal procedures or fear the financial burden associated with pursuing justice. Educational limitations were identified as a major factor influencing this lack of awareness. The police emphasized the need for continuous community education to help residents understand prohibited acts, their legal rights, and the proper steps to take when legal problems arise. The police expressed support for the community-based legal aid concept introduced by LBKH FH UMMI and confirmed their willingness to assist and respond when legal assistance is needed.

Similarly, the interview with the Sukabumi District Attorney's Office provided comparable insights. According to the prosecutor, most complaint-based cases rarely proceed to court because they are typically resolved at the police level through restorative justice or family settlement processes. The lack of public understanding of legal norms remains one of the primary challenges. The prosecutor agreed that legal education at the community level must be strengthened to encourage citizens to seek justice when violations occur. The Prosecutor's Office also expressed readiness to cooperate with LBKH FH UMMI in providing assistance and facilitating fair legal proceedings whenever necessary.

Drawing from both interviews, the researcher—representing LBKH FH UMMI—concluded that the proposed mechanism can function effectively if implemented with strong coordination and commitment among the involved institutions. LBKH FH UMMI will continue to collaborate with the Sukabumi Resort Police and the District Attorney's Office to ensure that victims of criminal acts within village jurisdictions receive proper protection and legal follow-up. This initiative represents not only a form of legal intervention but also a preventive measure that aims to reduce the incidence of domestic violence and serve as a model for broader community-based justice efforts throughout Sukabumi Regency.

Conclusion

In summary, the Legal Aid and Consultation Institute (LBKH) of the Faculty of Law, University of Muhammadiyah Sukabumi plays a significant role in strengthening access to justice for disadvantaged communities in Sukabumi. The findings highlight several key aspects of this contribution. First, law enforcement agencies have shown growing

awareness and willingness to cooperate in providing legal guidance, preventive information, and direct assistance to citizens involved in legal disputes, thereby ensuring the protection of their rights. Second, LBKH FH UMMI has introduced a community-based strategy by establishing local legal aid posts at the neighborhood and village levels. These posts function as accessible contact points where residents can submit legal complaints and receive initial advice from trained representatives. Third, the institute consistently conducts public outreach and legal education programs to improve people's understanding of legal norms and prohibited acts, helping to build a more legally literate society. Finally, LBKH continues to expand its network of advocates and paralegals to extend services across more regions, ensuring that the delivery of legal aid becomes more inclusive, responsive, and sustainable. Through these integrated efforts, LBKH FH UMMI demonstrates how an academic legal institution can act not only as a center for advocacy but also as a driving force for community empowerment and equitable justice in regional Indonesia. It is recommended that law enforcement agencies, social institutions, and legal aid organizations regularly provide legal counseling and education to rural communities regarding common legal issues, supported by more effective outreach strategies to foster a law-aware society. LBKH should promptly implement its proposed concept in collaboration with village authorities while strengthening its capacity by recruiting additional paralegals and conducting training programs for community members to serve as the first line of support in receiving and handling initial legal complaints.

References

- [1] Aas, G. (2019). Policing the penal provisions on repeated and severe domestic violence. *Nordisk Politiforskning Journal*, 6(2), 93–110.
- [2] Fauzi, I. S., & Puspita, N. I. (2018). Optimizing the provision of legal aid for the realization of access to law and justice for the poor. *Constitutional Journal*, 15(1), 51–72.
- [3] Handayani, T. A. (2015). Legal aid for the underprivileged in the perspective of the theory of dignity justice. *Journal of Legal Reflection*, 9(1).
- [4] Ibrahim, J. (2008). *Normative law research: Theory and methodology*. Malang: Bayumedia Publishing.
- [5] Kusumawati, M. (2016). The role and position of legal aid institutions as access to justice for the poor. *Jurnal Arena Hukum*, 9(2).
- [6] Marzuki, P. M. (2005). *Legal research*. Surabaya: Kencana Prenada Media Group.
- [7] Pujiono. (2010, September 15). Legal aid in the perspective of state responsibility. *Mitra Hukum*. Retrieved from <http://www.mitrahukum.org/publikasi/opini/bantuan-hukum-dalam-state-responsibility-perspective>
- [8] Rustiyati, A. K. (2013). Optimizing the protection and legal assistance of migrant workers through promotion of the 2000 migrant workers convention. *Journal of Legal Dynamics*, 13(1), 136–147. <https://doi.org/10.20994/1.jdh.2013>
- [9] Soemitro, R. H. (1983). *Legal research methods and jurimetry*. Jakarta: Ghalia Indonesia.
- [10] Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia of 1945.
- [11] Law No. 16 of 2011 on Legal Aid.
- [12] Law No. 48 of 2009 on Judicial Power.
- [13] Law No. 18 of 2003 on Advocates.
- [14] Supreme Court Circular Letter No. 10 of 2010 on Guidelines for the Provision of Legal Aid.
- [15] Mitra Hukum. (2010). Legal aid in the perspective of state responsibility. Retrieved from <http://www.mitrahukum.org/publikasi/opini/bantuan-hukum-dalam-state-responsibility-perspective>

- [16] Qolbi, M. (2012, July 31). Bantuan hukum bagi terpidana yang tidak mampu [Legal aid for indigent convicts]. Retrieved from <https://qolbi.wordpress.com/2012/07/31/bantuan-hukum-bagi-terpidana-yang-tidak-mampu/>