The primary concern of a professional social worker is the empowerment of individuals, families and groups by capacity building and strength efficacy of social institutions. Social work practice assists individuals alone as well as in groups to obtain social and personal satisfaction and independence. Professional social work has since long been involved in the field of labour welfare and improvement of the quality of life of the labour force in organized as well as unorganized sector. The social workers through the professional skills and techniques try to deal with various aspects of labour force and their real life situations. In the backdrop of the mandate of the professional social work, present section is devoted to highlight some of the intervention strategies used to improve the plight of the rickshaw pullers in the area of the study. To achieve this objective, social work intervention has been carried on primarily on the three aspects of the life of the rickshaw pullers:

a. Social Work Intervention with the family life aspects.

b. Social Work Intervention to improve the conditions of work

c. Social Work Intervention to improve the living conditions.

Apart from these three groups, the study recommends programs of awareness, sensitization and advocacy were to be organized for improving their condition of work and living conditions.

**Intervention on Family Life Aspects**

Social work professionals use various methods and techniques of social work profession to overcome various issues pertaining problem posing to family life aspects of an individual and help in improving their problem solving capacities. In order to identify the problems in the family life of the respondents, social work intervention was planned on three different categories of the rickshaw pullers which are given below.
This was thought essential keeping in view the fact as these three categories have different domestic issues relating to their family life aspects, there was an urgent need for different type of social work intervention for dealing with the different types of life situations of these rickshaw pullers.

a) **Rickshaw Pullers Married and Living with their Wives and Family**

The researcher attempted to assess the relationship of the married rickshaw pullers on a three point scale- Good, Bad and Formal. The married rickshaw pullers who experienced dissatisfactory family equations were taken under social work intervention of counseling and guidance to strengthen the family ties and were motivated to resolve the family problems with collective efforts. During the process of counseling and guidance, the partners were jointly as well as individually assessed to know the reasons of the problem or conflict between them. The main reasons were relating to earnings, demands, habits, freedom and dependence. The study recommends that social work professionals can apply social case work and social group work techniques in identifying the issues suitable in dealing with the problem Apart from this, the study underlined the need to counsel the rickshaw pullers about adopting the contraceptive measure as safe mode of family planning and also to generated awareness among these pullers to know about the programmes and initiatives of the Government with regard to family planning and other related issues.

b) **Rickshaw pullers Married not Living with their Wives and Family**

It was clearly evident from the research findings that there was another group of rickshaw pullers who were married but their wives were not living with them. Among these few of them were reported to be visiting the commercial sex workers to satisfy their sexual urges in absence of their life partners and indulging in risky behavior. In
this group the intervention was clearly desired so as to make them aware about the risks of getting infected with diseases like STDs, HIV/AIDS. The study recommends the need for the process of counseling and guidance should be initiated to motivate these rickshaw pullers to take up safer sex practices. They should be sensitized by organizing multiple interviewing sessions about safe sex practices. The sessions on condom demonstration should be conducted besides carrying out focused group discussion on the issue of healthier sex practices. Awareness sessions were also to be organized from time to time about the HIV/AIDS. Awareness about HIV/AIDS is very low among all the rickshaw pullers. Apart from this, the percentage of rickshaw pullers using condoms is very less which in itself is an indicator of their vulnerability as they are living away from their partners.

c) **Unmarried Rickshaw Puller**

In the third category rickshaw pullers were young and of marriageable age. This group had less social and family responsibilities as compared to the other categories of the rickshaw pullers. These were found more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other STIs and STDs. Thus the focus of intervention remained on behavior modification and motivation so that they keep a restrain themselves from indulging in unprotected sexual practices.

**Intervention to Improve the Conditions of Work**

We all know that the conditions of work under which the rickshaw pullers work are not up to the mark and many of them are not satisfied with the working conditions provided to them. The majority of the rickshaw pullers are not aware about existing legal provisions and other municipal by laws. There was a great scope of social work intervention to improve the existing conditions of work. Towards this the study recommends that talks should be arranged with the district administration along with networking with some local NGOs working in Patiala for the welfare of rickshaw pullers.
Sensitizing Rickshaw Pullers about Road Safety

As the rickshaw operates on the roads along with the light and the heavy vehicles, rickshaw pullers like any other drivers are required to follow and obey the traffic norms. Lack of education and awareness of the traffic rules of the city roads, these pullers become victims of challans, misbehavior or maltreatment at the hands of the police and even other drivers. It is commonly found among the rickshaw pullers that they are not aware about the meaning and importance of the road safety signs and symbols displayed at places. Against this scenario, the need to sensitized and to educate rickshaw pullers about the meaning of the traffic signs. The study for this purpose recommends that group sessions were to be organized for the police and other stakeholders to have a more humane approach while dealing with them. Joint sessions of the stakeholders like the different government departments, NGOs were to be organized on traffic rules and regulations along with the signs and symbols reading. Road safety weeks and special drives should be arranged to motivate the pullers about road safety norms. Documentaries should also be shown to these pullers as they did not have any access to the latest information about the traffic rules on a regular manner. Special SAM (sensitizing, awareness, motivation) drives and workshops can prove very useful. The study recommends that SAM workshops should be organized more frequently.

Providing Legal Aid

Although the state law provides a Punjab Legal Services Authority (PSLS) whose aim is to provide free Legal Services to disadvantaged sections of our society, yet the rickshaw pullers remain out of the ambit of Government's legal help because they are illiterate and don't possess knowledge of their rights. As mentioned earlier the rickshaw pullers become victims of exploitation at hands of policemen, clerks, and other petty officials. There is an urgent need for guidance and knowledge about provisions of free legal assistance provided by Government. Social work professionals should, launch massive drives for making these Rickshaw pullers aware of such provisions. This can be done by propaganda, popular methods like "Nukad Nataks,"
group sessions, awareness campaigns. The social services and call centers should be set up where these pullers can know solutions of their legal problems.

**Networking and Liassioning**

Networking and Liassioning are very important aspects of the social work intervention as no one alone can change the conditions of the rickshaw pullers. To take on all the initiatives and start programmes, the social worker has to form network with likeminded NGOs, educational institutions, para-professionals and civil societies for sensitizing and spreading awareness on various issues and problems of rickshaw pullers. Along with these bodies, liassioning process should also be started with the District Administration, health officials and other appropriate authorities so that the existing living conditions, health and work of the rickshaw pullers so can be improved.

**Advocacy for Working Rights of Rickshaw pullers**

Like other workers in informal sector, rickshaw pullers have common set of requirements and constraints in their day to day working like harassment by others, low wages, lack of economic security, legal and social protection, basic health and safety measure; social exclusion, and fewer opportunities to work elsewhere. These workers do not have facilities like rest shelters, drinking water, first aid, rickshaw stands etc at their working sites. During the data collection, it was found that all the parking sites or the place which rickshaw pullers have themselves occupied as their halting stations were either in front of railway station or the bus stand or at religious places, hospitals and educational institutes. There is no specific place allotted or maintained by the Municipal Corporation as rickshaw stands or rest shelters. There is thus a need to advocate for the working rights of these peddling poor with the state government, Municipal Corporation officials and with the District Administration so that they are provided with the basic facilities like the rickshaw stands with facilities like drinking water, rest shelter, first aids provisions, etc. For this purpose the need to tie up with the right based groups in Patiala and organized meetings with the concerned officials. The rickshaw pullers were also to be mobilized and can prepare a demand charter
collectively or with the help of social worker and submit it to the District Administration. Advocacy as one of the techniques of social work profession proved very effective for protecting the rights of the rickshaw pullers in Patiala.

**Awareness Generation about Various Legislations**

The field survey has highlighted that majority of the rickshaw pullers are not aware about the “The Punjab Rickshaws (Regulation of License) Act, 1976, under which they are issued a license. As these pullers are less educated and are not aware about the provisions of the Act like minimum upper age of rickshaw pulling (i.e 45 years), no rental operation of rickshaw and that the puller should be owner himself. If the puller is above 45 years of age, if some other person other than owner ply rickshaw on rent or the rickshaw is not registered with the Municipal Corporation, the rickshaw pulling is rendered illegal under the act. Due to lack of awareness about the provisions of the Municipal Act, the pullers become victims of challans, seizures, destruction of rickshaws, penalties, fines and sometimes even punishments. And to overcome these problems, the incidents of bribes and corruption are very common. In the present scenario, study recommends that the rickshaw pullers should be made aware about the legal implications of the various legislations governing their conditions of work. Sessions should be organized with regard to educating this section of population about the legal aspects of rickshaw operation. The rickshaw pullers should be sensitized through lectures, legal workshops, and open discussion addressing the inquiries of rickshaw pullers in big or small groups.

**Awareness about Importance of Compulsory Accessories on a Rickshaw**

The Punjab Rickshaws (Regulation of License) Act, 1976 mandates that rear minor, reflectors, bell and mudguards should be installed a rickshaw so as to ensure the safety of pullers as well as of passengers. In the backdrop of these provisions, it was felt necessary to examine the status of installation as well as the level of awareness among the rickshaw pullers about these accessories during the field survey. The rickshaw pullers were made aware about the importance and purpose of these
accessories on their rickshaws. There was a need of generating awareness among the rickshaw pullers about the importance of these accessories. Thus the pullers were organized into different groups according to their area of operation and told about the benefits and need of each accessory on the rickshaw. The rickshaw puller were told about the importance of bell and other accessories as being important for their own safety as well as of the passenger. Along with this, they were also told about the legal implication of not having these accessories on their rickshaws. For this purpose study recommends that some experts on legal provisions were to be invited and lectures should be organized in collaboration with the Municipal Corporation and other officers.

**Advocacy for Contemporary Issues and Amendments in Rickshaw Act**

The “Punjab Rickshaws (Regulation of License) Act, 1976” needed to amend provisions relating ownership and registration. From the perspective of social work intervention, these issues were discussed with the appropriate authorities. Second issue is related to the definition of rickshaw and rickshaw pullers. According to the present Act, “cycle- rickshaw” means a three- wheeled cycle-rickshaw driven manually. This is an old terminology applicable to the manual rickshaws where a puller used, to pull the passengers likes an animal pulling the cart. Later the hand pulled rickshaws were replaced by the peddled rickshaws having three wheels and human traction power used to move the rickshaws. The new modified version of rickshaw can run at a speed of up to 20 kilometer per hour which is much faster than the hand pulled rickshaws. The new version provides a proper seat, brakes and a handle to facilitate the control on rickshaw by the driver as available in other motorized vehicles. The technology transformation has moved a step ahead in introducing the lighter and eco friendly rickshaws. But the definition of Rickshaw Puller is still the old one. Thus there is need to redefine “Rickshaw Puller” as rickshaw drivers, traction men or eco cab drivers in the Act. This part of the present Act needs to be amended in the light of above argument. So in this regard, the meeting and discussions were organized with the appropriate authority three times. Third issue related to the age limit. As mentioned earlier, per the provisions in this act, the upper age limit for the puller to ply rickshaw on the municipal limits is 45
years. Beyond this age the rickshaw puller is legally barred from the registration process. Thus after attaining the age of 45 years the puller automatically become the illegal operator on the city roads. Due to this, various problems emerge like illegal plying of rickshaw, fear of seizure or confiscation, harassment at the hands of police or municipal corporation employees and so on. So a need was felt to advocate for getting the amendment done with regard to upper age limit. The medical fitness should be the sole criteria for plying Rickshaws. For this, the researcher arranged meeting with the appropriate authorities and received reassurance from them about rectifying the anomalies of the Act to extent possible. Another issue related to the present Act doesn’t allow any one from holding more than one rickshaw and the owner himself has to ply his rickshaw and cannot rent out his vehicle. Renting out the vehicle is illegal and subject to various fine, penalties and even to punishment, since this Act doesn’t allow the rental operation of rickshaws, as a result, when the rickshaw puller wants to suspend this work due to availability of other remunerative work in occupational seasons, he has to sellout the rickshaw at a low price due to the legal barriers. The Punjab Rickshaws (Regulation of License) Act, 1976 has laid down some special provisions based on the needs and necessities of the disabled widows and the institutions for having maximum five rickshaws at a time, none the less the institution cannot rent them out but can use the vehicles for fulfilling the needs of the institution. On the other hand, it is very well known that one can own any number of other vehicles despite the fact that they pollute environment and are causes of accidents and traffic problem. The provision related to non rental and fleet operation of the rickshaws by the owner need to be amended and more flexible. The provisions of the Punjab Rickshaw Act also violate the fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 14 and 16 of the Constitution. Further the present Act itself is an unconstitutional and in violation of the fundamental right under Sub Clause (g) of Clause (l) of Article 19 of the Constitution (Navdeep, www.ecocabs.org, 2011). Against this scenario the researcher organized some meetings and discussions with some authorities to carry out necessary modification in the existing provisions of the Act.
Similarly modifications were also suggested in the system of granting and renewal of Licenses. As the existing provisions, the renewal of the license of the rickshaw puller is done on annual bases remained valid between on annual basis from 1 April to 31 March. The procedure is very tiring and exploitative in nature as majority of rickshaw pullers are migrants and illiterates. To fulfill all the requirement of getting attestations from a councilor, an MLA or a gazetted officer and procuring fitness certificate from an MBBS doctor make these poor people to shed extra money in the form of bribes or to get the formalities completed. Instead of this, simple registration of rickshaw should be introduced in line with other motor vehicles. There is a need for making the administration sensitive about the demerits of annual renewal or licensing procedure towards this the researcher attempted to sensitize the district administration about the ground realities and motivated them to adopt simple procedure of one time registration of rickshaws. Another issue that required advocacy was related including rickshaw as integral part of National Transport policy as rickshaws are not an integral part of the National Transport policy of the Nation. It is a well known fact that rickshaws transport more number of passengers than cars or jeeps and medium transport vehicle and in the same way as other public utility vehicles do. Taking the note of the importance of rickshaws in fulfilling the transportation needs of people on very economical basis besides environment benefits, it is necessary to include rickshaws as part of National Transport policy. Thus it should be genuine concern of the professional social worker to support and advocate the cause of rickshaw pullers. For this researcher wrote letters/Emails/SMS to the concerned Ministers including Prime Minister of the India.

Intervention to Improve the Living Conditions

Doubtless, rickshaw pullers are one of the important segments among other working groups of the urban informal sector. While the living conditions of the rickshaws pullers remain below the desired mark the attitude of the authorities is also not very proactive towards them. Rickshaw Pullers remain an invisible chunk in policy planning and implementation. In absence of proper provisions, their living places
including surrounding lack place for disposal of excretions, proper ventilation and provisions of light. Thus these circumstances critically demand social work intervention for improving living conditions of these rickshaw pullers.

**Advocacy for Providing Basic Minimum Living Conditions**

It was found during the field visit that the living conditions of the rickshaw pullers were deplorable lacking basic facilities like sanitation, civic amenities, space for bathing, cooking and disposal of waste. Majority of them lived in appalling, unhygienic and congested settlements. Thus in light of these facts the study recommends for some advocacy programme to be started to provide basic civic amenities by the Governments for these rickshaw pullers. Government should arrange subsidized housing, and proper places for catering to their daily needs like washing, bathing and toilets. The Government should also construct night shelters for these rickshaw pullers which have above mentioned facilities. In this regard mass campaigns should be launched to form rickshaw pullers housing societies on the pattern of the other working groups which would facilitate the construction of low cost housing on subsidized rate for these pullers in the city. The researcher in this regard initiated talks with the district administration for provisioning civic amenities at the living areas of this segment of population.

**Generation of Awareness about Health and Sanitation**

The health is not usually good as they are more vulnerable to illness because their living of lack proper sanitation facilities. Majority of them either live in rented or shared rooms in slums. Moreover, these places are not equipped with proper facilities for disposal of excreta, drainage, drinking water, sanitation and civic amenities. The mass awareness generation campaigns are required to be launched to educate these pullers about the ill effects of unhygienic living conditions which directly spoiling their health. Towards this, the researcher organized health camps and attempted to make them aware of the necessity of personal hygiene and maintenance of good health with the efforts of the researcher, appropriate authorities were convinced to make more Sulabh Shauchalayas in the city of Patiala in the next plan.
Sensitizing Rickshaw Pullers about Importance of Diet and Nutrition

As most of the rickshaw pullers are from the poorer section of the society and are found to be working for usually longer hours to earn more, the majority were found to be underweight and not maintaining good health. Majority of them were not taking proper diet according to their work load and some of them were skipping meals, commonly during the working hours. The food intake is usually of substandard and lacks proper vitamins and minerals. It was also found that the food joints where they eat were also not maintaining proper hygiene and cleanliness. Intake of stale food was a common proactive among the rickshaw pullers as they cook only once in a day. Keeping in a view proper the significance of proper diet and nutrition in one’s life. The researcher also tried to arrange the lectures of experts in the areas of diet and nutrition besides organizing general health camps. The emphasis was also laid on opening of community kitchens at different locations in the city and providing subsidized food to them. The rickshaw pullers were thus made aware through lectures, short films on diet and nutrition, focused group discussion, group guidance and camps.

Awareness Generation about Substance Abuse and Drug De-addiction

Substance abuse and intake of drugs is very common among the rickshaw pullers. Most of them were in habit of chewing tobacco, gutka, smoking, drinking and taking other drugs. The common perception among the rickshaw pullers are that intake of drugs enhances their working capacities and help in reducing their stress levels. Being less educated, these rickshaw pullers are not aware about the ill effects of substance abuse and drug addiction in the long run. Thus a campaign to spread awareness about the adverse effects of these drugs should be launched among the rickshaw pullers. The resource materials such as posters, banners and leaflets etc, should be distributed among the rickshaw pullers depicting the bad impact caused on their health by the use of drugs. Apart from this, the rickshaw pullers found in critical stage of addiction should put under care of a social worker. Counseling and guidance should be provided to these pullers as method of treatment on individual and group
basis. The professional social worker should organize drug de-addiction drives to make rickshaw pullers aware about the repercussions of the use of drugs. In this regard, researcher did organized some drug de addiction camps in collaboration with the health officials and NGOs particularly Red Cross.

**Advocacy for Free or Subsidized Medical Aid**

As it is a common practice among the rickshaw pullers that they don’t take care of their health during illness and distress. Majority of them visit the roadside medical stores for taking medicine without any prescription to save their time and money. The social workers should make efforts for the subsidized treatment of these rickshaw pullers. In this regard the health department officials shall be made aware about the grievances of the rickshaw pullers concerning health and medical aspects. The advocacy programmes should demand free medical checkup camps at the working sites, special identity cards for taking medicines at controlled or subsidized rate. Along with this, rickshaw pullers should be made aware about the governments’ special health programmes and other health and safety initiatives for this segment of poor working population in the state.

**Awareness about Issues Related to Provisioning of Financial Mechanism**

It is required that state government should simplify procedures for taking loans from nationalized banks. The paper work and red tape should be reduced. The banks should provide with new schemes for subsidized loans as given to other small scale entrepreneurs on less rate of interest. The single window system should be introduced in every municipal corporation office to deal with all sort of works ranging from registration, fitness certificates and other enquiries about loan facilities.

**Intervention in Areas of Education**

In Punjab unlike Central and Southern states, the rickshaw pullers are mainly illiterate and lack awareness. In the present society, due to the onslaught of information
and technology the life of an illiterate person has become the more difficult. In this case only basic education i.e. ability to read and write can empower the uneducated population. Therefore, social work professionals should realize the necessity of educating these rickshaw pullers so that they can enjoy the benefits of various schemes launched by Governments from time to time. The professional social workers should make them aware of their rights so that they can refuse to be exploited at hands of policemen traffic police and other petty officials. This can be achieved by launching massive education drives. Agencies like National Literacy Mission can provide ample support to the social work professionals to night classes, literature in mother tongue and other such measures in arranging to improve the condition of these workers.

**Awareness Generation on Issues Related to Social Security and Welfare Provisions**

There are a number of social security and welfare provisions which directly or indirectly influence the informal sector workers. There are special provisions laid down by the Central and State governments to protect the rickshaw pullers and other workers in the informal sector. However, there are no provisions such as accident covers and insurance facilities for the rickshaw in case of any damage or loss. The study recommended that rickshaw pulling should be given risk covers along with health and medical benefits in case of illness and occupational injuries. Apart from this, the pullers should also be given benefits of various government welfare facilities like Public Distribution System (PDS), Girl Child Allowance and Provision of Free Education etc.

**Summing Up**

In nutshell, there is a vast scope of social work intervention in the area because socio-economic condition of the workers in informal economy particularly the rickshaw pullers is very miserable. There are no job securities and welfare provisions for them. No government plan has taken into account their contribution and services rendered by them to the society. They are bound to work at late night and at odd hours and inclement weather conditions without any protection or safety. The existing legislations
dealing with the rickshaw operation are also not simple, and flexible. The Acts needs to be amended according to the present conditions and demands raised by the advocacy groups fighting for the rights of rickshaw pullers in the country. Moreover, rickshaw pullers are needed to be made aware about their rights other stakeholders needs to be sensitized about protecting and improving the conditions of work, living conditions and other aspects related to their family life of the population.