

LEGAL AID EVENT: AWARENESS ON "GOOD TOUCH, BAD TOUCH"

*(Report on the event conducted in Jona's Nursery,
Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh on September 19,
2020)*

Abstract: This event was conducted by Para Legal Volunteer, Legal Aid Centre, and S.L.S. Noida. Firstly, children mainly belonging to the age group of 5-12 were explained what kind of touches are good for them and which kind of touches they should be cautious of. This was followed by an interactive session on how to act when in a situation that involves 'bad' touch and how to stay safe at all times.

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1. Concept Note :

The Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA conducts various awareness programmes to sensitize the society towards a plethora of legal and social issues. As an extension of such initiatives I, student of the college and a Para Legal Volunteer at Legal Aid Centre conducted a session on *Good Touch, Bad Touch* in Jona's Nursery, Greater Noida, Uttar Pradesh on September 19, 2020.

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, every day 92 women are raped in India. In 2012, of the 24,923 rapes reported nationwide, 3,035 occurred in the large cities. The number of reported rapes elsewhere in the country was more than seven times higher than the number of those reported in the main cities with an alarmingly large number of cases going unreported. Due to factors like taboos and stigma, people, especially those living in rural areas shy away from conversations about sexual offences and prevent such cases from coming out in the open.

Thus, making people aware about topics such as *Good Touch, Bad Touch* is the need of the hour today.

2. Objectives :

The main objective was to create awareness and educate people about preventive measures pertaining to sexual assault. The urban populace is relatively more comfortable around conversation regarding sexual abuse as compared to rural India where it continues to be a taboo topic even today.

Thus, the target audience of this demonstrative and interactive session were children belonging to the age group of 5-12 years. Due to lack of constructive discussion about such topics, owing to stigmatized conditioning, it is imperative for growing kids to be well versed with which kind of touches are healthy/good for them and which kind of touches they should be cautious of.

Therefore, the main objectives were :

- a) To destigmatize and break the silence surrounding sexual offences as a result of which countless perpetrators get away with their heinous act and victims are forced to live a life full of shame and suffering.
- b) To make them aware about how to act at times when they encounter a 'bad' touch or a stranger tries to lure them into an unsafe situation.
- c) To imbibe into them and their guardians the thought that suffering sexual abuse is not the fault of the victim but an extremely serious offence by the perpetrator.
- d) To encourage everyone to come out in the open about their experiences of sexual assault, if any so that the offender can be rightly punished and the victim be protected from further exploitation.

3. Preliminary Preparations :

Before conducting the event a few important preparations were made :

- a) Making posters (Annexure 1) that represented the body parts highlighted in red, where touching or being touched would be considered

'bad' so that explaining this relatively sensitive topic would become easier and more descriptive.

b) Researching effective strategies to make discussion revolving around such a taboo topic child-friendly, comfortable and well-received by the audience.

4. Conducting the programme :

The programme was conducted at Jona's Nursery. These sites were chosen mainly because of a large chunk of their population belonging to the age group of 5-12 years. Moreover, the inhabitants in the nursery are persons who are employed there. They work in the nursery and their families have been provided their own quarters at the back.

They are relatively more educated and I was personally aware that they had been following all social distancing norms and practices and therefore, this venue was seemingly the safest choice considering the fact that the world is battling with the menace of a global pandemic.

As the children had been staying together since the lockdown began, they sat close to each other like any other normal day while I maintained distancing and kept my mask on.

I explained to them the importance of always staying careful, neither touching nor allowing someone to touch the body parts marked in red as 'bad' on the posters, to always confide in their parents and to not get lured by strangers. This was followed by an interactive session about mode of

action when faced by an unfavorable condition. I told them to not accept eatables, gifts or offers of gifts from strangers and how if being touched at a particular body part makes them feel uneasy and inappropriate, they should scream "NO", run to their trusted persons or to a crowded place and always inform their parents about their unpleasant experience. I told them to memorize the contact numbers of their parents and also made them repeat after myself the contact no. of the Child Helpline – 1098. I explained to them how this problem is gender neutral and the victims and the perpetrators can be people of all genders. We closed the discussion by talking about how any such untoward incident is never the fault of the victim and always that of the perpetrator.

5. Response of the Target Audience :

The children present were greatly involved throughout the event. They played close attention to my session. They were answering my questions loudly in unison and repeating points after me.

Some senior members of the audience were not really open to a discussion on the topic initially, but after a while I could see most of them nodding in agreement to whatever I was iterating.

6. Key Personal Takeaway :

The feeling of making a difference in the lives of so many budding citizens of the nation and influencing them in a constructive way was indeed an amazing experience. Most of the children present there had never been

briefed about sexual abuse and staying safe and thus the feeling of being their 'first' was incredible.

7. Future Plan of Action :

Considering how deeply engrained the stigma surrounding sexual offences is in our society, one session talking about awareness and preventive measures is not enough to eradicate it and facilitate comfortable conversation and safety of all people. Thus, more such sessions need to be organized in the future.

I will be following up and will conduct similar sessions in the future as and when possible.

8. Suggestions/Feedback :

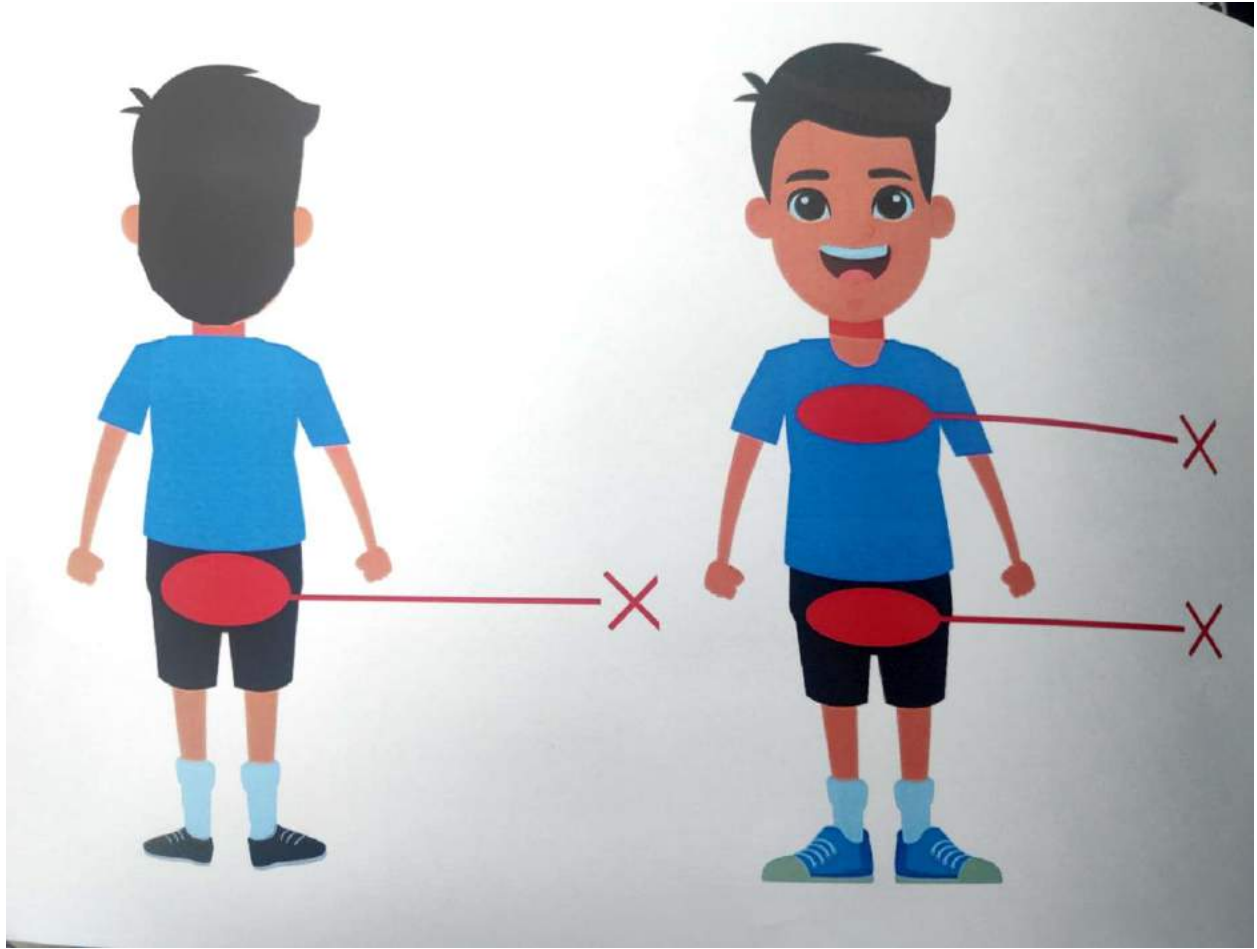
Follow up action should be encouraged and more and more such topics need to be taken up so that discussion based on them becomes commonplace and children learn the difference between right and wrong and how to keep themselves safe.

9. Conclusion/Remarks :

This was a great learning experience. I got the opportunity to take a progressive stand on a sensitive and important issue and also got the chance to educate people on it. Also, as a law student and a future legal professional, it was of tremendous help as I understood some techniques and strategies to be used while dealing with the rural populace, who are

not often educated on such issues so as to create a comfortable space for discussion.

Annexure 1



Annexure 2

