

**“LEGAL AID CAMP: SENSITIZATION
OF SOCIETY TOWARDS THIRD
GENDER PERSONS” & “LEGAL AID
CAMP: HOW TO FILE APPLICATION
UNDER RTI ACT”**

*(Report on the event conducted in Kolkatta,
West Bengal on December 24, 2015)*

Abstract: This event was conducted by two para-legal volunteers from Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S.-Noida. Firstly, the participants from a slum-village in Kolkatta were informed about the pathetic life that the persons belonging to third gender are forced to live because of the restrictions imposed upon them by the society. Then, the participants were informed about the ‘rights’ that the ‘law’ in India provides to such persons. They were further informed about their moral duties towards such persons.

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1. Concept Note:

The Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA conducted several awareness programs to sensitize the society towards the 3rd Gender Community which were conducted in the months of May-June 2015. Moreover, the members of the Third Gender community were invited within the college premises for the purposes of an interactive session where the community was made aware of their legal rights as provided in NALSA Judgement.

As an extension of the above initiative we, students of the college and para-legal volunteers conducted a program in association with the **NGO People like Us (PLUS) KOLKATA** in Salt Lake area of Kolkata on 24th December 2015.

The Third Gender stigmatised is trying to find a place within our society. Third sex or Third Gender is a concept where individuals by their own will or by a social consensus are categorized as neither man nor woman. At times, the third gender present in many cultures is made up of individuals who although biologically male at the time of birth but take on a feminine gender role or sexual role later on. In the present era, where the third gender seek recognition, it is important for the society to sensitize itself towards their needs. The society not only needs to be aware about the existence of the community but also needs to accept the Third Gender as a part of their circle. Thus, sensitizing the society for a more collaborated and harmonized living is the need of the hour.

2. Objective:

The main objective of the Legal Aid Centre of SLS- NOIDA is to make the Third Gender a part of a harmonized society. And in order to achieve the ultimate goal, interlocutory measures have to be undertaken the most important of which is educating the community of its legal rights, holding in society and legal remedies.

- ☐ To establish legal literacy camps to educate the Third Gender Community.
- ☐ To ensure fair and equal treatment to the Third Gender
- ☐ Recognition of the Third Gender People as 'public' and 'society'.
- ☐ To reinterpret and redefine the third gender identities to fit into the Western concept of "sexual orientation".

3. Preliminary Preparations:

Before conducting the event, we had made a few preliminary preparations like printing of banners, posters and pamphlets.

- ☐ We contacted **NGO PLUS KOLKATA** and decided upon the place and timing for the said event.
- ☐ We divided topics and prepared a brief as to the legal points to be made known to them and the questions that were to be discussed during the interactive session.

4. Conducting the program:

We organized the event within the office premise of the Plus Kolkata. The NGO helped us gather around 12-13 members of the community. Once the crowd was seated we started we briefed them about their legal rights and discussed the NALSA v. Union of India Judgement in detail. We explained the meaning of third gender and the people who fall under this category. Also instances from mythology were cited to emphasize on the normalcy of the Third Gender Community and the need to accept them. On their request we further discussed Section 377 of the IPC and its penal consequences.

This was followed by an interactive session which proved useful in finding out their problems and difficulties. We figured they needed legal assistance or someone well versed with law to help them understand how to implement the rights so guaranteed to them by the country's legal system.

We spoke to HRLN- Human Rights Law Network which has a group of lawyers fighting pro-bono cases and they agreed to provide legal assistance to PLUS Kolkata.

5. Response of the target population

While discussing with the members of the community, it was found that there were several members who were aware of their rights but they were not aware of correct procedure of the law. For example, one of the members shared the experience of being beaten by the people but the police refused to lodge the FIR. So they were aware that regarding their rights of lodging the FIR but were not aware the steps mentioned in criminal procedure code regarding

the steps to be taken police refuse to lodge the FIR i.e. going to SP or filing a complaint. The discussion, as proceeded, was more related to the specific situations and the area of law at that point than the general discussion on law point.

6. Future plan of action

One session is not enough to make the target population aware of topic chosen in entirety. We could only provide them with a basic structure. We think more programmes like these should be organized in future so that the people can have a clearer idea and have a greater understanding of the topics.

7. Suggestions/Feedback:

Various ways in which the program could be better conducted in future are as follows:-

- ❑ No. of Volunteers- The number of volunteers for the program should be definitely more than 3, because if there are more helping hands, then the objective could be better served and achieved.
- ❑ Information to the Police Department- An association with lot more volunteers and a larger target audience and a proper street display of banners and posters requires a prior information to police department so that operation and program could be conducted without any hindrance to the society.
- ❑ Contacting nearby police department- This is important for a more comprehensive understanding of the problem faced by the Third Gender Community with the Police Stations and approaching authority would provide more clarity to the situation at hand.
- Object of the program which the legal aid centre of SLSN proposed was diverged a bit but sensitizing the society would be much more effective only when the third gender community themselves are sensitized regarding their rights.

8. Conclusion/Remarks:

Overall this was a great experience and learning process as para-legal volunteers and it indeed did make us aware of the society's mind-set at a very basic level, which is needed and useful for every law student for their comprehensive and holistic understanding of Law and makes us more equipped with handling twisted legal dilemmas.

(The photographs relating to this program are attached as annexure)











