

“LEGAL LITERACY CAMP: HOW TO FILE AN APPLICATION UNDER THE R.T.I. ACT”

*(Report on the event conducted in
Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh on
December 20, 2015)*

Abstract: This event was conducted by a para-legal volunteer from Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S.-Noida. Firstly, the participants from a slum-village were informed about their ‘right to file an application under the Act’; later on, they were taught: ‘how they can file such application’, ‘issues about which such applications can be needful for them’, ‘how an appeal can be filed if they don’t receive information’.

Conducted by:

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I. Concept Note

The Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School Noida conducted a legal awareness program on “How to file an application under RTI Act, 2005”. Basically the members had to create awareness among the people on how to file an application using the RTI act. As a member/para-legal volunteer I had conducted this program in Visakhapatnam.

The RTI Act 2005 has its origin from a small movement in a rural village of Rajasthan where the farmers pressurized the local authorities to show files which contained their payment details. /this movement got great acclaim and recognition throughout the length and breadth of the country which later developed into legislation. In urban areas majority of them have good knowledge about RTI. They clearly understand the technicalities of the legislation and claim to use it whenever they get an opportunity.

Therefore a simple campaign either online or through posters will suffice in the urban areas.

II. Objective

The main objective of the LAC of SLS-N was to create awareness and educate people about the RTI Act and how it is an important tool. The urban populace is well versed with its rights and is aware of the means to safeguard their rights.

- To educate the people on the technicalities of the act and the ways to file an application.
- To encourage the people to use RTI whenever required.
- To establish a society where people are aware and protect their rights and bring accountability and transparency within the government.

III. Preliminary Preparation

- Printouts of the posters and pamphlets given by the legal aid centre.
- Highlighting the statistics in the material provided and writing the important points in the regional language Telugu.
- Reading articles from various websites on the topic at hand to have a considerable amount of information and forming a strong opinion.

- Carefully analyzing the estimated target audience to ensure that the message is conveyed and received properly.
- Took appointment of an Indian Forest Officer to accompany me to the villages and explain it to the people of those villages.

IV. Conducting the Program

In the summer of 2015, I had conducted the event in Visakhapatnam, an urban city. *This winter*, I conducted the event in two *villages* of *Warangal* district, Telangana. The two villages were *Boddu Chintalapalli* and *Gorrekunta*. The event was conducted in “Bala Sangha” or the girl’s community club. The target population was girls from the age of 11 years to 23 years. These clubs were run by a Hyderabad based NGO called Tharuni which provided great support in conducting this event. I took help from the posters and pamphlets provided by the ‘Centre’ and explained the topic to the audience. Also, the IFS officer who accompanied me talked about the intricacies involved in the actual functioning of the RTI in governmental institutions. This, helped a great deal in making the audience understand the subject.

V. Response of the audience

As stated above, the reaction of the audience was encouraging for us. They even praised the college for its efforts in conducting the program here. The audience was delighted to know that even they could use the RTI to enquire about the work and functions of their panchayat institutions. They were unaware of the act and were benefitted a great deal with this awareness drive.

VI. Future plan of action

Conducting the awareness program across different target populations and collecting their responses.

VII. Suggestions/ Feedback

- We could urge our members in filing an RTI on behalf of the target audience on some random issue. This will ensure that the target audience will completely understand the process of filing an application as they see it. This will be a practical experience for the target population.

VIII. Conclusion Remarks

This was a good learning experience for us. We got the opportunity to take a progressive stand on a sensitive and important issue and also got the chance to educate people on this. Also, as a para legal volunteer, it was of great help as I understood some techniques while dealing with the rural populace, who are not often educated on such bold issues.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT

1. The audience listening to the lecture on "How to use RTI"



2. IFS officer Mr. Raghuveer explaining the intricacies involved while using RTI by sharing on-ground experiences.


