

# **“LEGAL AWARENESS PROGRAMMES: RIGHTS OF THIRD-GENDER PERSON, FREE LEGAL AID, DATING ABUSE, & CYBER-BULLYING”**

*(Report on the events conducted in Noida on 27th  
November, 2016, Chandigarh on 3rd December,  
2016 and Bhubaneswar on 9th December, 2016)*

**Abstract:** Para-Legal Volunteers of the Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S. Noida conducted separate events in various locations in India. The events ranged from Rights of Third Genders to Cyber-Bullying Awareness. This report portrays an outline of these events.

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# **EVENT I: AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON THE RIGHTS OF THIRD GENDER COMMUNITY AT**

## **GHAZIABAD**

### **I. Concept Note**

The Supreme Court in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India* granted constitutional recognition to transgenders as a third gender and also gave them the right to have family. However, the condition of third gender people in India is miserable in reality and they are not treated at par with rest of the society. They still face immense discrimination from all strata of society and still do not have access to the fundamental rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution, like right to education, right to livelihood, right to liberty or right to equality, etc. Even though the Supreme Court recognized the rights the third gender community has, people's view in this matter remain primitive, putting this community at one of the most backward classes of our society. Keeping this in mind, Para Legal Volunteers Dhriti Gupta, Harshita Prakash, Namrata Raj, Ahona Pal and Shambhavi Gupta of Legal Aid Cell, S.L.S. Noida, organized an Awareness Campaign On Rights Of The Third Gender Community in Shipra Mall, Indirapuram, Ghaziabad to inform the local people about the rights of third genders and hold a discussion regarding their personal views on the issue so that they could realize the ground reality of people's perception towards the third gender community.

### **II. Objectives**

The main objective of the Legal Aid Cell of SLS- NOIDA was to make the society aware about the rights of the third gender community under the Constitution of India. Since the attitude of people is still discriminatory towards this community, they are often the most marginalized and impoverished section of our society. This programme was an initiative to change people's perception through dialogue and discussion. The main objectives of this awareness programme were:

- To promote and infuse knowledge to the local people about the legal and fundamental rights of the third gender community in the Indian society.
- To sensitize the public's view towards the third gender community through dialogue and discussion and make the people accept them as their equals.
- To hold discussion with people to gain knowledge regarding their own perceptions of the third gender community

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event,

- We prepared ourselves by reading several suggestion about what to put forward and in what way,
- We selected an appropriate place where people from all economic and social backgrounds would be available,
- We collected several colorful banners to attract people's attention towards our programme to make interaction possible.

### **IV. Conducting the Event**

We organized the Awareness Programme at a Mall in Ghaziabad, Shipra Mall since we wanted a target pool of people from all economical and social backgrounds. We approach people who were visiting the mall and talked with the elderly citizens, youngsters, educated, illiterate, shopkeepers and shoppers alike. We informed them about the Supreme Court's judgment and asked them their views on the matter. We also asked their experience of discrimination against any transgender person and their views on the matter. To gather knowledge about people's perception on this issue, we asked them if they would be able to treat a transgender person at an equal footing with themselves as an empirical study. In case the person was not aware of this issue, we made them understand the plight of the third gender community to raise awareness.

### **V. Response of the Target Population**

The people we interacted with had a positive attitude towards the rights of third gender community and they hugely supported the verdict of the Supreme Court. Many felt that this decision should have been taken a long time ago. People discussed several aspects of third gender rights with us and in turn, asked a plethora of questions about what they can do to further the awareness for third gender rights.

### **VI. Future Plan of Action**

Since the people received this campaign with open minds and positive attitudes, it may be fruitful hold more of these awareness programmes. There is also a need of awareness programmes for the rights of third gender community in economically backward areas.

## **VII. Suggestions/Feedback**

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

- Participation of Third Gender Community- If someone from the Third Gender Community itself comes forward and interacts with the people, the objective of sensitization may be fulfilled to a greater extent.
- Extensive Research- Research may be done into the position of third gender community after the Supreme Court judgment so that the extent of discrimination and marginalization can be fathomed.

## **VIII. Concluding Remarks**

Our overall experience from this activity was very enriching and satisfying. We felt we were able to make people accept the third gender community with relative ease and could lessen their apprehensions regarding the issue. We also learned how people perceive the third gender community and it was heartening to see people ready to accept them with open arms. However, how much people answered our questions truthfully and took our advise seriously remains to be validated.

## IX. Some Moments from the Event



## **EVENT II: WORKSHOP ON THE PROCEDURE TO FILE AN R. T. I. APPLICATION AT NOIDA**

### **I. Concept Note**

The Right to Information Act, 2005 is a landmark legislation, which empowers the Indian citizens to seek information from the government. It promotes transparency in the working of the Government. This helps in curbing corruption and internal politics till some extent. Everyone should be able to avail this initiative by the government need to be made aware about the same. Thus, a workshop on “How to File an Application under the R.T.I. Act” is very important. This will help not only in making people aware of what the Government is doing but will also help in seeking legal advice, information or solution to any legal query which they might need. This will also ensure that their rights are not being infringed in any which way. As Para- Legal Volunteers of the Legal Aid Cell, S. L. S. Noida, Dhriti Gupta, Harshita Prakash, Namrata Raj, Ahona Pal and Shambhavi Gupta had conducted a workshop on “How to File an Application under the R.T.I. Act” at Sec. 62, B Block Park and adjoining areas. The Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA had conducted an awareness programme. The programme involved spreading of awareness regarding the procedure of R.T.I. and also filing R.T.I.s for people who were not confident enough to file it for themselves.

### **II. Objectives**

The main objective of the workshop was to make the society aware about their rights under the Right to Information Act. Many people, especially in rural areas and urban slums are still unaware of their rights to get information from the government under the RTI Act by just filing an application. This would help the society to become more aware about how the government works and whether their rights and privileges are being catered too. The main objective of organizing the workshop was

- To promote and infuse knowledge about the procedure to file an application under the Right to Information Act by any citizen or person in the Indian society.
- To acknowledge the masses about the RTI Act which empowers them and promotes transparency and accountability in the working of the Government for curbing corruption or biasness.
- To well prepare the people so that they can file RTI applications for themselves and are accustomed with the consequent rights and powers they have under the aforementioned Act.

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event,

- We collected colourful banners and posters that would attract the people towards our workshop.
- We selected Sec. 62 B Block Park, Noida to conduct our workshop at so that we could access people from the lower income groups
- We did extensive research on the Right to Information Act, 2005 and learnt the related procedures so that we could explain those to the people.

### **V. Conducting the Event**

We held the workshop at a park in Noida. We approached the people and asked them about their knowledge of the R. T. I. Act. We observed that even though people with economically sound backgrounds knew a lot about their rights under the Act, the lower income groups had no inkling of the Act. We individually took the time to explain to each what does “Right to Information” mean, how could they file an R. T. I. application, what was the procedure for appeal and what object did the Act serve to achieve. They became very interested as we gave them certain examples relatable to their situation and asked us various questions. Most of them told us about their problems for which they want a solution through the R. T. I. mechanism.

### **V. Response of the Target Population**

The target population could be divided into the people from economically sound background and lower income groups. Those who are economically sound were familiar with the RTI Act and the procedures. However, they conveyed their stories about vague and/or escapist answers from local authorities, huge delay in replies and excuses of officials to not provide the correct answers. We had the opportunity to meet with a few central government officials who heard these incidents and encouraged us to file replies and appeals on their behalf.

People from lower income groups were not familiar with the Act. Their interest arose after we informed them of the low fee and exemptions given to people below the poverty line. They asked us various questions regarding their problems and were eager for a solution with the help of RTI mechanisms.

### **VI. Future Plan of Action**

The fact that there is still huge unawareness about the RTI Act cannot be ignored. Therefore, it will be fruitful to undertake more workshops of this kind. A workshop can be held at a rural area as well.

## **VII. Suggestions/Feedback**

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

- Model R.T.I. Application Form- The event would have been better if we could have taken with us a few model RTI application forms in the vernacular languages so that we give the people an idea about what to include
- Information About Authority- Information regarding the authorities which could grant Below Poverty Line/Schedule Caste/Disabled certificates should be given to those who require it.

## **VIII. Concluding Remarks**

Overall this was the great experience and learning process as a para-legal volunteer and it indeed did made us aware of the ground level situation, which is very useful for every law student. We helped innumerable people with their problems through spreading the knowledge of RTI mechanisms which gave us immense satisfaction.

**IX. Some moments from the event**



## **EVENT IV: AWARENESS CAMPAIGN ON FREE LEGAL AID AT BHUBANESWAR**

### **I. Concept Note**

Article 39A of the Constitution of India, provides for equal justice and free legal aid. Free legal service is an inalienable element of 'reasonable, fair and just' procedure, for without it a person suffering from economic or other disabilities would be deprived of the opportunity for securing justice. The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 made drastic changes in the field of legal services. It is an Act to constitute legal services authorities to provide free and competent legal services to the weaker sections of the society to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and to organize Lok Adalats to secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity. Para Legal Volunteer, Legal Aid Cell, S. L. S. Noida, Sheetal Patra based her event on spreading the awareness of the right to free legal aid in Bhubaneswar since there are many citizens in rural and also urban areas who are not aware of this right and hesitate to get legal remedies in fear of incurring huge costs.

### **II. Objectives**

The primary reason why people from lower income groups hesitate to initiate the process of law is due to the huge costs they have to incur. To serve the objective of right to equality, right to fair trials, principles of natural justice and reasonable, fair and just procedure, the concept of free legal aid is envisaged in the Indian Constitution. Based on these lofty ideal, my objective for this awareness campaign was

- To inform the people of their right to free legal aid and encourage them to lodge complaints with the police.
- To make the people of the slum aware of their opportunities as to the facilities provided by the government and the judiciary in the form of state legal services

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event,

- I selected Panda Park Basti (Slum) in the city of Bhubaneswar as the location to carry out the awareness programme since I wanted a location with lower income groups present to make my programme more effective.

- I contacted the local Sarpanch about my programme who promised to gather the people under her jurisdiction.
- I did extensive research on the various nuances of Free Legal Aid so that I be prepared for any questions that come my way.

#### **IV. Conducting the Event**

On the day of the event, I started with giving an insight into our legal system, police hierarchy and free legal aid. Then I informed the people about their right to free legal aid, who can get free legal aid, what is the extent to which free legal aid can be given, when will free legal aid not be granted even if eligibility criteria are met, whom to contact for free legal aid, etc. Then I called for questions and complaints and tried my best to explain the doubts of the people. I also explained concepts of Mediation, Lok Adalats, etc.

#### **V. Response of the Target Population**

The people were at once relieved and excited to hear about free legal aid. The turn up was somewhat low but then the available audience had the real zest to know the solutions to their problems. They were somewhat worried about where the money would come from and about the competency and inefficiency of their lawyers, but I could put their worries to rest by asking them to immediately contact the District Legal Services Authority in these cases.

#### **VI. Future Plan of Action**

Since I was alone in conducting these events, I could not reach a larger number of target population and was restricted to the people who came up to the event. I suggest that many more awareness programmes of this kind be held so that everyone can be aware of such free legal aid.

#### **VII. Suggestions/Feedback**

Various ways in which events of this kind can be made better are:

- Recommendation Letter- The Legal Aid Cell could provide a letter of Recommendation/Authorisation so that the people could believe our position as PLVs at an esteemed institute.
- Association with NGOs- A prior association with NGO functioning in the particular area would help in a great way to execute the program successfully because they could help to accumulate groups and they could also improve the techniques of the execution of the program.

## VIII. Concluding Remarks

I was overwhelmed by the positive response I got from the people and consider the event to be a successful one. The people promised to spread the word about free legal aid so that their friends and family may get access to the justice they deserve, which in itself would help in spreading awareness about free legal aid. I had a great experience and the learning process made me aware of the ground level situation for which I am grateful.

## IX. Some moments from the event



## **EVENT V: AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON THE PERILS OF CYBER BULLYING AT CHANDIGARH**

### **I. Concept Note**

The advent of the internet brought with itself the world of social networking sites that connect us with our friends and family anywhere and anytime. However, with it comes the black area of cyber crimes, especially cyber bullying that is aimed mainly at teenagers and young men and women. Cyber bullying or cyber harassment is the use electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending them messages of a threatening or intimidating nature. This is only a basic definition and there maybe numerous modulations to the term. According to a worldwide survey, 43% of children who are active online have faced some form of cyber bullying and only 1 in 10 children inform an adult of their abuse, making cyber bullying an extremely widespread but unreported problem. Victims of cyber bullying are prone to depression and innumerable youngsters have committed suicide to escape from the harassment they got from their classmates or online friends. India passed the Information Technology Act to curb and criminalise cyber bullying. However, many people are still unaware of the perils of cyber bullying and how to cope with cyber bullies. As a Para Legal Volunteer of the Legal Aid Cell, S. L. S. Noida, Vaishali Singh organised an awareness programme on the perils of cyber bullying.

### **II. Objectives**

There have been many instances where cyber bullying has made a victim take their own lives due to the embarrassment and fear they felt. Children who are unsupervised are often faced with situations online where they cannot control the bullying target at them and it makes them a pariah for their friends and classmates leading to isolation of the victim. Consequently, the child becomes depressed, prone to self-harm and often develops psychological complexities. With these in mind, my objectives for organizing the event was

- To spread awareness among children and early teenagers about the perils of cyber bullying and it's nuances and the harmful effects
- To inform them how to tackle with cyber bullies and report incidences of cyber crimes.
- To explain regarding privacy settings in online networking sites and some precaution they should undertake to avoid being victims of cyber crimes.

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event,

- I selected Air Force Station, Wing 12, Chandigarh as the location for my event since there are a number of children and teenagers who will benefit from it
- I did extensive research on the various nuances of Cyber Bullying and the IT Act so that I was prepared on the know-hoes of tackling cyber bullying at its roots, or to report a cyber bully. I also held conversation with members of the Cyber Crime Cell at Chandigarh so that I understand the ground reality regarding the issue.
- I prepared a presentation that would help put my message across the target population.

#### **IV. Conducting the Event**

On the day of the event, I started with my presentation on cyber bullying. I explained some famous cases of cyber bullying and explained what would constitute as cyber bullying. I told the children to take necessary precautions like avoiding accepting friend requests from unknown people, keeping privacy settings private, reporting to parents/trusted adult about any untoward incident, etc. I explained that cyber bullying is a crime and there are legal remedies that were available for the same. Then a held a question-answer session and the children eagerly participated in it. Mainly they gave me examples of incidents that happened with them and asked if they would constitute cyber bullying or not. I tried to answer them to the best of my knowledge and warned them against both being a perpetrator of cyber bullying and being a silent observer.

#### **V. Response of the Target Population**

My target population was children and early teenagers who use social networking sites regularly. They were very excited to learn about the perils of using the internet since they were not familiar with the concept. Many expressed apprehension over the dangers of cyber bullying and agreed to follow the precautions so that they could avoid facing such bullies online. Overall, the response was very positive and success ful.

#### **VI. Future Plan of Action**

I feel that cyber bullying is still not given the due attention it should be given in Indian society even though it is a reality our children face every day. I think holding such presentations on a wider scale would definitely help further the awareness regarding this evil.

#### **VII. Suggestions/Feedback**

Various ways in which events of this kind can be made better are:

- Recommendation Letter- The Legal Aid Cell could provide a letter of Recommendation/Authorisation so that the people could believe our position as PLVs at an esteemed institute and we get permission to conduct events easily.
- Number of Volunteers- The number of volunteers should be more than one since organizing such an event alone is very hectic and many details remain unattended.

### **VIII. Concluding Remarks**

I was very satisfied with the way the awareness programme concluded in, with children discussing the issue at large and how dangerous the internet can be without some supervision of any kind. They wanted to inform their family members and friends about this issue and warn others to be smart and responsible while using the internet. This in itself was very satisfying for me. I had an enriching experience and would like to do the awareness programme again.

### **IX. Some moments from the event**



## **EVENT VI: AWARENESS PROGRAMME ON DATING ABUSE AT CHANDIGARH**

### **I. Concept Note**

Dating abuse is an act of physical, mental or emotional violence by one member of an unmarried couple on the other member within the context of dating or courtship. This involves excessive obsessive behavior, extreme jealousy, control over partner's behavioral, social and economical activities, sexual assault, sexual harassment, threats, social sabotage, stalking, emotional blackmail, and psychological manipulation. People who suffer dating abuse are subjected to long term abuse like alcoholism, eating disorders, promiscuity, thoughts of suicide and violent behavior. Para Legal Volunteer Vaishali Singh, Legal Aid Centre, S. L. S. Noida, conducted an event on Dating Abuse at Chandigarh.

### **II. Objectives**

Dating abuse though widespread is still an ongoing concern that is not widely acknowledged or discussed about. Therefore, a huge amount of youngsters are unaware of its perils. Therefore, my objectives for organizing this event were

- To inform the people about the concept of dating abuse and the issues related with it
- To provide a platform where young couples can discuss about their experiences in an abusive relation and the effect it had on them
- To inform about the legal remedies that were available for the people facing dating abuse.

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event,

- I selected Air Force Station, Wing 12, Chandigarh as the location for my event since there are a number of youngsters there who will benefit from it
- I did extensive research on the various nuances of Dating Abuse so that I was prepared on the know-hoes of tackling cyber bullying at its roots, or to report a cyber bully. I also held conversation with members of the Police at Chandigarh so that I understand the ground reality regarding the issue.
- I prepared a presentation that would help put my message across the target population.

#### **IV. Conducting the Event**

I started my presentation by explaining that dating abuse can occur in subtle forms as well where the behavior of a person changes due to influence of their partners. Then I went into the in depth analysis of dating abuse and its nuances. I also explained how one can escape from the clutches of such abuse by asking them to choose their partners carefully, being confident in a relation to avoid getting influenced, legal remedies for physical and mental abuse, etc. I also explained that some abusive acts may fall within a crime under Indian Penal Code for which there is legal remedies as well. Mainly I focused on the fact that too much dependence on one's partner is negative and one should always maintain oneself as a person first, then as a member of a relation.

#### **V. Response of the Target Population**

I received extremely positive response from the audience. Many young women accepted that love marriages are still a taboo in India and this fact puts a lot of pressure on women who are dating to silently accept the abuses their partner puts on them so that the relation culminates in marriage. They also shared their experiences of abusive relations and were of the view that this issue should be brought towards the limelight. Some women also had queries regarding whether abuse faced while dating can come under the purview of Domestic Violence.

#### **VI. Future Plan of Action**

There needs to be more awareness programmes to widespread this issue since Dating Abuse is still at its nascent stages in India.

#### **VII. Suggestions/Feedback**

Various ways in which events of this kind can be made better are:

- Recommendation Letter- The Legal Aid Cell could provide a letter of Recommendation/Authorisation so that the people could believe our position as PLVs at an esteemed institute and we get permission to conduct events easily.
- Number of Volunteers- The number of volunteers should be more than one since organizing such an event alone is very hectic and many details remain unattended.

#### **VIII. Concluding Remarks**

It was extremely satisfying to engage in a debate about the complications of awareness of this issue. There were some women who were older than me and I also learnt what they faced in an abusive relation which made my eyes open towards this issue and face the reality. I was honoured to be a part of this event.