

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

*(Report on the event conducted in*

*Junagadh, Gujarat on 18th June, 2015)*

**Abstract:** This event was conducted by the co-convener of Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S.-Noida. The target population was the officials in police department of Junagadh District, Gujarat who were informed about their ‘right to file an application under the Act’ and it’s importance; later on, they were informed about: ‘how they can file such application’, ‘issues about which such applications can be needful for them’.

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## **I. Concept Note**

The Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA has been showing success with its members and its head committed to work for betterment of society. The aforesaid program was part of the endeavour of the Centre in furtherance of its 'aim and objectives'. The areas and topics identified through these programs are of vital importance and extremely necessary to be discussed and acknowledged. With this aim in mind the program was conducted and successfully culminated.

The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens, promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government, contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense. It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed. An RTI acknowledges the right to information of citizens to secure access to information under the control of constitutional authorities (the legislative, executive and judiciary) in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority. For many, particularly India's poor and disadvantaged; the simple act of filing an RTI application is empowering and can lead to easy solving of daily hassles faced by the oppressed. The legal Literacy Camp on How to File RIT Application was an attempt by the Legal Aid Centre towards this empowerment.

## **II. Objectives**

The foremost objective of this program was to familiarise the target population with the importance and the procedure of filing a RIT application, and about the avenues of redressal along with the following:

- To make officials aware of their legal right to access information from defaulting authorities;
- Making them well-versed with the procedure of filing an RTI;
- To make them aware of the benefits of filing an RTI; especially how it can be useful for the police force;
- And how our protector of rights also can exercise this right;

- To make target population aware about various deadlines and fees;
- To make them aware of the recourse that can be taken by them in case an RTI is not answered.

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event, certain steps were required to be taken in order to prepare of the event. These were:

- The centre members did extensive research and study, and prepared posters, banners and pamphlets relating to the topic. These were then printed out in different sizes depending on their usage.
- Various permissions were taken beforehand from the police department for conduction the programme.
- The posters and banners were pasted in an enclosure, where all the attendees could easily see and read.
- The target audience were form senior officers to their drivers, which helped in bringing awareness at different level.
- Extensive research was done regarding RTI pertaining to the concerns of the police force.

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

I visited the office of Deputy Superintendent of Police, Junagadh Dist., Gujarat wherein various officers were called beforehand. All the officers were gathered in the conference room. I started with the event by introducing myself and telling them a little about our college and the initiative taken by the Legal Aid Centre of the college for sensitizing people about issues of day-to-day importance. The pamphlets were distributed to the people so that they could read through during the presentation.

I started with introducing all with the act of 2005 and its importance and then moving on to “how to file application under the R.T.I. Act?” The first and the most important thing was told to them that right to information is a right conferred upon us just like any other right and we should use this right for our benefit.

Further, they were informed that that the process of filing an RTI application is very simple and the fees to be given is minimal and therefore, it is very easy to obtain information from the public authorities.

They were also informed about the time period in which they shall receive a reply from the authorities.

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

The target population comprised of Police officers at different levels from D.S.P. to constables and drivers of the police. All of them were pleased to know about their 'right to information', and its applicability in the public domain. They were eager to know about it more and more and thus asked their queries making the whole session an interactive one. Most of them had the query as to the time limit, expiration of the time limit i.e. the remedy of no response after 30 days from the filling of the RTI application, the kind of application filled, how is it to be filled, the fee required while submitting the application and the place of deposit for the same.

There were questions asked even off topic such as their response if some-one seeks information from them as they also come under the domain of public authority. Moreover, they showed more interest in the incidents and examples of RTI, which acted as a motivational force for them and thus created an impact.

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

A lot of people in target population knew about the act but were unaware of the process of filing an application under the act and almost no one knew about the appeal procedure also. One of the officers there had worked in collector's office for 5 years, and he said that no RTI applications were received by them in previous 5 years. There were instances where police had to seek information from their office but no one was aware about their 'right to information'. They also needed more practical approach towards it. So, the next step should be to go back to them and provide them practical knowledge by helping them in filling the application on their behalf and same about the procedure of an appeal.

## **VII. Suggestions/Feedback**

Though the event was an overall success, but there is always room for improvement. The following suggestions will certainly help in the same:

- To start with, there should be a meeting conducted with all the centre members and a briefing should be done in order to make everyone familiar with the aim and objective of the program and provided with all the necessary information.
- Before finalising about conducting the event all the members should be given an opportunity to give their inputs as to how the event can be better conducted.
- Proper Training session should be conducted by experts in the field of RTI so that all the members are well versed with the nuances of the Act.
- Involving other cells of the collage, like the theatre cell. This will bring versatility in the center's approach like bringing awareness by the way of Skits/ Street Plays.
- This event was conducted by only one member of the centre, if there is a number to represent an issue than people are more likely to listen.

## **VIII. Concluding Remarks**

The event was overall had a success story with enriching experience to the participating members and going with the positive response of the Police of Junagadh Dist., Gujarat, it was an educational experience for them as well. I learned from them as much as they did from us. There were certain our shortcomings which I realized from their responses. This will surely help me improve for our future endeavours.







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