

LEGAL AWARENESS EVENT: RIGHT & DUTY TO VOTE

*Report on the Legal Awareness Event conducted in
Lucknow on 25th June, 2017 on the issue of Voting
Rights*

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I. Concept Note

India is a democratic country. The word democracy has its origin in two Greek words 'demos' and 'krasis'. Demos means 'the people, and Krasis means 'power to rule'. So, **democracy** refers to the power of the common people of the land. Thus the country India will be ruled by the common people. In order to facilitate this, the common people are given a right to choose, select or pick their representatives by a system of voting called elections.

Article 326 of the Indian Constitution provides universal adult suffrage which guarantees the right to vote to every citizen of India above the age of 18. Further, Section 62 of the Representation of People's Act, 1951 states that every person who is in the electoral roll of that constituency will be entitled to vote.

While there are some who genuinely cast their vote, many people sit back and relax on voting day, and others are cajoled into voting for particular candidates. The importance of voting is lost amongst the hustle and bustle of city life. While everyone sits and complains about this and that, and makes suggestions that the government should change this and that, the elections come and go without half the population paying attention. The highest recorded voter turnout in India was recorded in 2014 for the Lok Sabha elections at 66.4%. That means close to half the population does not exercise their right to vote.

Realizing this unfortunate state of the country I here at Legal Aid Centre of SLS, NOIDA planned to conduct an awareness programme which could aware people about their rights and duties towards their country and how they can properly exercise it.

II. Objectives

Many a time people are disgruntled and unhappy with non-performing MLA's and MP's, but they don't take any stand by casting in their vote. The main objective of the event was to make people aware of their right to vote guaranteed to them by the constitution. Also, to make them understand that they are the ones who can make the decision of having a good and clean government. The major objectives were-

- i. Create awareness among the residents of Lucknow about their constitutional right to vote.
- ii. To make them understand that with this right comes a huge responsibility. We need to execute the right as well as the responsibility. It is our duty to make a wise and informed decision to choose the right candidate, so that there will be good governance in our country.
- iii. Also to tell them about the upcoming local/municipal elections in the city, if any.
- iv. Informing them about NOTA that every vote is counted.

III. Preliminary Preparations

Before conducting the event,

- i. Did a research on the trends of participation of particularly the Lucknow residents in the 2014 general elections and in the recent 2017 UP State assembly elections.
- ii. Taking help from the trends selected an appropriate place for event.
- iii. Researched about the procedures to get a Voter ID Card issued, how to get updations/corrections done, nearest help Centre to contact etc. in order to be prepared for all the questions asked.
- iv. Ensured that I carry an identity card issued to me by Legal Aid Cell of SLS, NOIDA.

IV. Conducting the Event

The analysis of the recent 2017 UP Assembly election trend shows that there has only been 6 points increase in the percentage of voting in West Lucknow, which was the lowest among the other areas. Keeping this in mind, Water Works Road at Aishbagh coming under West Lucknow was chosen for the event. The target population was people of lower income groups living or working there. The PLV first introduced herself as Para Legal volunteer of Legal Aid Cell of SLS, Noida. Then, she inquired as to whether they vote or not, and if not then what are the reasons. Based on their response, she guided them and made them aware about the benefits and significance of voting.

V. Response of the Target Population

In conversation with the people, the PLV found out that, quite a good amount of people had their Voter ID card issued but they didn't vote. On further questioning, she came across different reasons which are categorized below.

- i. Quite a good amount of people have moved to Lucknow from different villages or cities, because of which they were unable to vote there in Lucknow and this information has not been updated or changed in their Voter ID card. Moreover, they had no knowledge as to how it could get updated.
- ii. Good amount of people had card issued but did not go for voting in the recent 2017 UP Elections. On being asked the reasons, they became silent and sought to avoid the question while some replied saying it's useless and time wasting.
- iii. There were only a handful of people who did not have their ID card issued rest everyone had.
- iv. Some people were unable to understand about what card I was talking about.

Depending upon their situation, she guided them and made them aware as to how they can update the information of their new residency, explained them about the benefits and importance of voting and explained the procedure of getting a Voter ID Card issued.

Overall, people were responsive and showed interest in talking to the PLV. Some were also inquisitive as they kept on asking her questions about the Voter ID Card.

VI. Future Plan of Action

The people were unaware of the procedure to apply for a Voter ID Card or how to get one updated/corrected so this makes it advisable to conduct more such events. Also, it could be done in collaboration with different commissions of government responsible for creating awareness about voting rights.

VII. Suggestion/Feedback

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

- It can be conducted on a larger scale.

- There could be supporting banners and posters to attract people's attention towards the event.

VIII. Concluding Remarks

Overall the people were responsive and inquisitive. They wanted to get their doubts cleared. They promised the PLV to get the Voter ID Card issued for their children as soon as they become eligible and will also spread awareness among their friends, family and relatives. They were happy seeing that there exist some people who selflessly bother to make them aware and empowered. In all the opinion, the event was a success.

Some moments from the event



