

# **“LEGAL AID CAMP: SENSITIZATION OF SOCIETY TOWARDS THIRD GENDER PERSONS”**

*(Report on the event conducted in Delhi-  
N.C.R. on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2015)*

**Abstract:** This event was conducted by six para-legal volunteers from Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S.-Noida. Firstly, the villagers from a village in Gurgaon 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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## **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 the society. The aforesaid program was part of 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.

In the 21st Century, with much agitation on Gender Equality, it's time to recognize and treat all the 'genders' with 'equality', including the ones who do not fall within the procrustean beds of being a 'male' or a 'female'. It's time to erase the dilemma of filling up forms and the faltering of pens not knowing which box to tick, or, the unease of entering women restrooms and becoming a victim to the sensory assault of others. It's a time to provide a hesitation free life and freedom to those whose body, though built in one way, houses a mind which is crying to be something else. It might be difficult to walk in those shoes, but that does not mean those shoes are not there. With this view in mind, the Legal Aid Centre had organised the program for sensitizing the society towards third gender population.

## **II. Objectives**

With the aim of sensitizing the society towards the third gender population, the LAC organised the program to discuss this issue with senior citizens of a village as it is they who have maximum influence upon their families and the village at large. The following were the objects of the program, which we successfully achieved:

- To find out the biases and stereotypes held by people towards the third gender; and source or origin of such thinking.
- To remove or cleanse such stereotypes by attacking the source and by educating them.
- The above two aims once achieved, will lead to social Integration of the third gender.

### **III. Preliminary Preparations**

Before conducting the event, certain steps were required to be taken in order to prepare for 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.
- The centre members contacted the previous Sarpanch of a village in Gurgaon, who helped them in setting-up things for awareness campaign in the village.
- The posters and banners were pasted in an enclosure, where a number of villagers were to gather.
- The target audience identified was to be senior citizens of the village as they have great influence in their families as well as the village at large.

The topics were divided between the members, and the members took turns to talk about the topic, and answer the frequently asked questions

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

We visited the Gurgaon Village for sensitizing the people. A room right next to the village panchayat office was arranged for us where people from the village had gathered. We started with the event by introducing ourselves 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 our dialogue with them.

We started our discussion with the crowd gathered by asking them a question i.e. “Why the third gender persons had a separate colony and why they did not live with them in the village?” as we had come to know about this fact just before we went for organizing this event. There was no valid answer for the question with the people.

We then explained to them that even the third gender persons are children of the same Almighty as we are and we should accept them the way they are. We should not



discriminate against these persons and we should make available for them the same resources that are present at the disposal of the other two genders.

The people present welcomed our opinion. A person from the crowd was kind enough to tell us the history of the third genders in the Hindu religion. The people were also of the opinion that the next time we should also visit the colony of the third gender persons and persuade them to not resort to illegal ways to live their livelihood and also sensitize them.

We reached to a conclusion that if all three genders work together, the third gender persons could be brought into the mainstream easily.

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

The target population comprised of mostly the senior most members of the family (also known as the head of the family) as on general parlance it was observed that they have a big role in changing the mind-set of the family, as a whole, having larger impact.

At first they were little sceptical in talking about the third gender persons and they preferred to blame the conduct of Third Gender persons for treating them differently and gave various reasons/ examples of their lives for not mingling with them and not treating them equally. However, later the interaction turned healthy and the response of the members was very warm and overwhelming. They decided to talk to them, sort the problems amongst themselves and accept them as one of their own. They showed readiness to initiate a change in their mind-set when they were made aware about the mistake on their part as well.

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

The villagers, though very open minded and excepting towards the 3<sup>rd</sup> gender population, had few concerns against them which included their habit of asking money and snatching away the child who is like them. So, they wanted us to speak to them about their concerns so that they can be better accepted in the society and work with them to explore their inner talents and grow together as a society. Therefore, the next step should be to talk to the 3<sup>rd</sup> gender population or bring both the sections of society to a common platform where they can resolve their problems through healthy discussion.

## **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.
- Getting in touch with NGO's working in this field will ensure better access and will also enable the members to be better acquainted with the required skills while conducting the program.

Involving other cell of the collage, like the theatre cell. This will bring versatility in the centre approach like bringing awareness by the way of Skits/ Street Plays.

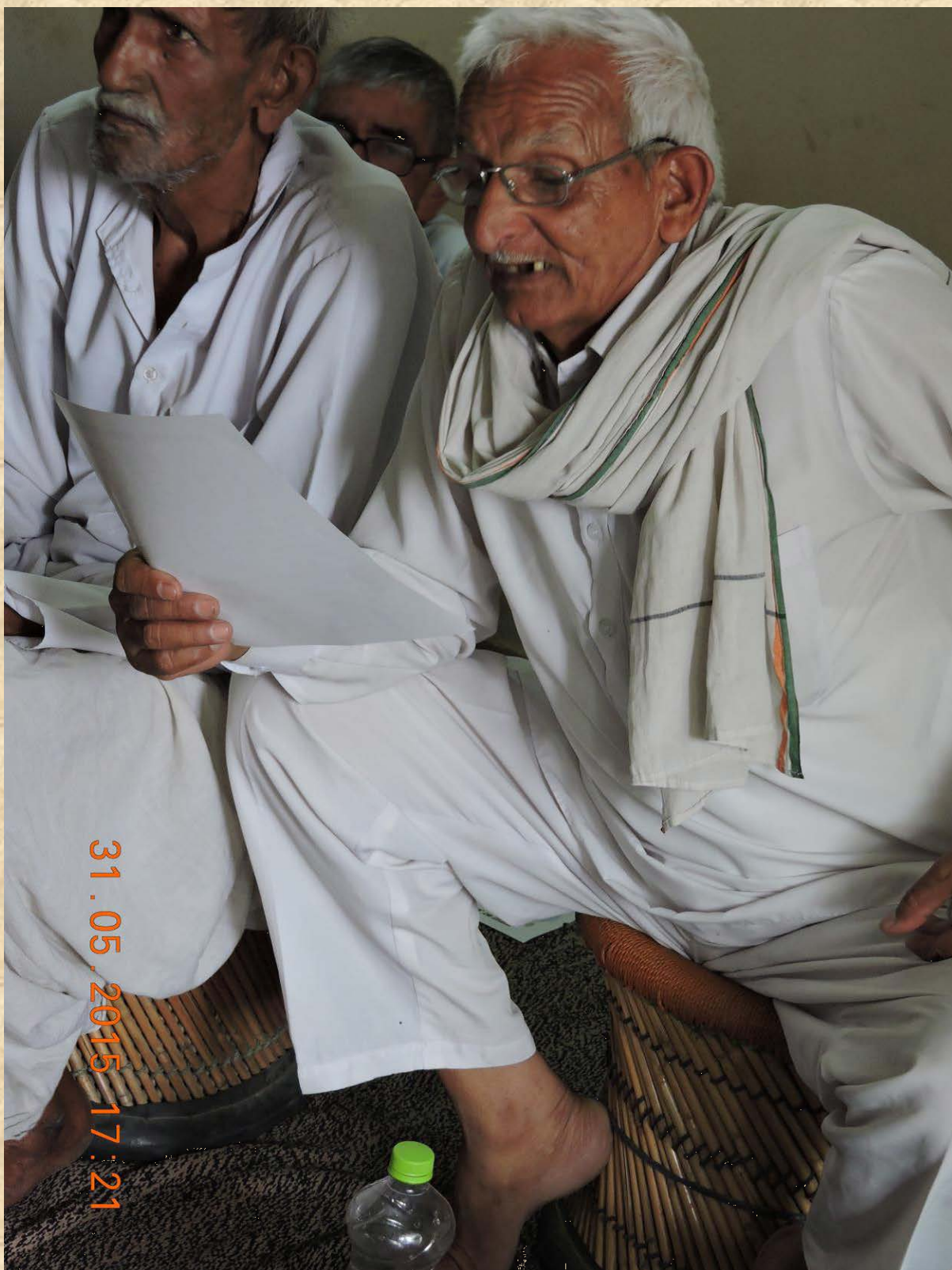
## **VIII. Concluding Remarks**

The event was overall had a success story with enriching experience to the participating members and going with the positive response of the villagers, it was an educational experience for them as well. The thing which surprised us and was also encouraging was the openness of the villagers and their willingness to accept and work with the 3<sup>rd</sup> gender population. We also realised that they had valid concerns against the transgender population and is equally important to be addressed in our future endeavours.









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