

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

(Report on the event conducted in Noida on November 29, 2015)

Abstract: This event was conducted by two para-legal volunteers from Legal Aid Centre, S.L.S.-Noida. Firstly, the participants 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’.

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1. Concept Note:

The Legal Aid Centre at Symbiosis Law School, NOIDA had conducted an awareness programme. The purpose behind the programme was to spread awareness among the people regarding the procedure to file the RTI application under the RTI Act, 2005. We, students of the college and para-legal volunteers conducted this programme in an urban village in NOIDA on 29th November, 2015. Right to Information Act 2005 mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information. Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or "instrumentality of State") which is required to reply expeditiously or within thirty days. This law was passed by Parliament on 15 June 2005 and came fully into force on 12 October 2005. It is still a very fresh concept for the people and most have very little idea about how to file an application under the R.T.I. Act. So it had become all the more important to arrange for legal literacy camps to assist them in filing an application under the said Act

2. Objective:

- The main objective of the Legal Aid Centre of SLS- NOIDA was to make the society aware about their rights under the Right to Information Act.
- 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 empower the citizens of the country (especially people from the rural areas) and promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government for curbing corruption or biasness towards them.
- To make them understand the usefulness of the Act and finally;
- To encourage people to file applications under the Act when required.

3. Preliminary Preparations:

Before conducting the event,

- We had made a few preliminary preparations like collecting the banners, posters and pamphlets from the Legal Aid Centre.

- We also located an appropriate urban village (slum) where we could find villagers who would be interested in listening to us.
- We conducted the event in the terrace of a house in the slum.
- We had divided the topics amongst us and prepare accordingly so that we could do our best to spread the word of awareness among the slum dwellers.

4. Conducting the Event

We organized the event in an urban village (slum). The slum dwellers provided us with a terrace to conduct the programme. First we had to gather the crowd. We went from door to door for this purpose. Once the crowd was seated we started with our first topic which was 'Sensitization of Society towards Third Gender Persons'. We explained the meaning of third gender and the people who fall under this category. Then we went on to explain how the legal system of the country has recognized the third gender persons but the society is yet to accept them. We talked about their rights that are being violated and neglected. We made them see through the narrow mindedness of the society and thus influence them to change their perspective and see the issue from a new angle. The next topic was 'how to file an application under the R.T.I. Act'. Again here we had to start from scratch as they were not aware of the R.T.I. Act. We explained the basic concept of R.T.I. and the 4 simple steps that should be followed to file an application under the Act. We informed them about the advantages of R.T.I. Act and encouraged them to file such applications whenever it's necessary.

5. Response of the Target Population

The 4 simple steps seemed to arouse their interest. They enquired about the meaning of public authority and mode of paying fees. They also had queries regarding the steps that should be followed if the authority failed to reply within the time period mentioned in the Act, i.e. 30 days. They had a lot of questions to ask regarding the departments that fall under the ambit of the Act. They showed immense interest throughout the programme making it an interactive one. They also informed us that the Government school in the area was not working properly. The quality of the teachers and their teaching has deteriorated over the years. They wanted us to help them with this issue. In addition to their queries

regarding the concerned topic, they also asked some other questions. They discussed the problems being faced by them and if the Legal Aid Centre could help them tackling them.

6. Future Plan of Action

One session is not enough to make the target population aware of topics chosen, in great details. We could only provide them with a basic structure. I think more programmes like these should be organized in future so that the people can have a clearer idea and have a greater understanding of the topics.

7. Suggestions/Feedback:

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

- No. of Volunteers- The number of volunteers for the program should be definitely more than 3, because if there are more helping hands, then the objective could be better served and achieved.
- 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.
- Information to the Police Department- An association with lot more volunteers and a larger target audience and a proper street display of banners and posters requires a prior information to police department so that operation and program could be conducted without any hindrance to the society.

8. Conclusion/Remarks:

Overall this was the great learning experience as a para-legal volunteer. It provided u with an opportunity for students to go out and explore the ground realities which are very needed and useful for every law student. It helped in acclimatizing us to the problems faced by the masses ignorant about their rights and remedies under the law

ANNEXURES







