

“LEGAL AID : FILING APPLICATION UNDER THE RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT”

*(Report on the event conducted in Kolkatta,
West Bengal during June, 2016)*

Abstract: This event was conducted by a para-legal volunteer in Bhawanipur locality of Kolkata, to assist people in filing of RTI applications and make them aware of the same. The main modus operandi used is to approach people by distributing pamphlets through newspapers and trying to approach people from door to door.

Conducted by:
Mr. Yash Kotak,
**(Convener, Legal
Aid Centre,
Symbiosis Law
School, Noida)**

**Under the
guidance of:**
Dr. Madhuker S.
**(Head – Legal Aid
Centre, Symbiosis
Law School,
Noida)**

1. 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 endeavor 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.

2. 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:

Assist people in filing of the RTI applications

Making them well-versed with the procedure of filing an RTI

The recourse that can be taken by them in case an RTI is not answered.

3. Preliminary Preparations

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

- Drawing out the pamphlet (Soft copy of the pamphlet is attached as Annexure I) and printing them in the number to distribute in the locality. (Photos annexed as Annexure II)
- Contacting the local newspaper distributor, such that these pamphlets could be distributed.
- Making of list of houses and addresses, that is to be visited for achieving such objectives.

4. Conducting the Event

I, firstly, contacted the local newspaper distributor of the newspaper and the way was been adopted that pamphlets are to be distributed such that the people which could not be approached, could also get the information of this service/assistance provided by the Legal Aid Center.

Apart from the distribution of the pamphlets, door to door visit was been conducted in Bhawanipur locality which included visiting of various apartments like, Vaikunth Apartment, Indraprasth society, Sterling Building, Anand Building, etc. This program was conducted over the period of 10 days (including the time for preparation of the program) starting from 19th June 2016 till 30th June 2016.

One more modus operandi was been used is the use of 'What's app' application with the help of this spreading it across India, where it is same pamphlet was been forwarded along with the request to keep circulating. (Images were not annexed because of questions of privacy)

All these operations were been used in order to achieve objectives of assisting people to file RTI and to make them aware the procedure of the same.

5. Response of Target Population

The experience with target population was indeed not good because the people, who were approached through door-to door service, were not at all interested in the development of the law or application of law and were finding RTI last resort to receive any information from the public authorities.

Some of the members of the target population were not aware of the concept. I explained the concept to them along with the way to file RTI application, but they did not find it appropriate to file the questions to acquire information from the public authorities.

None of the calls received from the pamphlet distribution via newspapers.

Moreover, it is concluded that people are more scared to apply the RTI's due to various threats, intimidations to the persons filing RTIs.

The objective of Act of 2005 was to give people "right to know" but a decade has passed still the implementation, awareness and execution of this right is not fully successful.

6. Future Plan of Action.

Because the above plan/modus failed in achieving the right objective, the next plan could be implemented is to visit the secondary schools and hit the ground level and approach the youth to make them aware of such concept of RTI's such that next generations at least could implement such beautiful law in a right full manner and can make execute their right.

7. Suggestions/Feedback

The workings of the Legal Aid Center should be curbed and be limited to one area, such that all the man-force could work together and there could be frequent interactions with the target populations. Otherwise, there is lack of trust and lack of continuous interactions with target population which hampers the relations.

The programs of LAC are time specific rather i.e. the issues so taken or the program so conducted are for specific period of time only, though they are been repeated again, but after a lapse of certain time. There should be a team divided as per issues and each team

should focus on the same issue year and that team along with the supervisor should be deciding various programs.

8. Concluding remark

The event was overall a failure but still I, as a para-legal volunteer could gather immense experience in dealing of people and to understand how is law been understood at the ground level.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

HAVE QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AUTHORITIES?

DON'T KNOW HOW TO FILE RTI APPLICATION?

Respected Sir/Madam,

This is an initiative of Legal Aid Center Symbiosis Law School, Noida wherein para-legal volunteers of Legal Aid Center would assist people and help them to file their respective queries which they have from public authorities. The confidentiality of the queries would be secured. This service is free of cost.

"Everyone has a right to know"- let us use this right.

Contact:

Yash Kotak

(Para-Legal Volunteer)

(Legal Aid Center, Symbiosis Law School, Noida)

(+91-8527272859)

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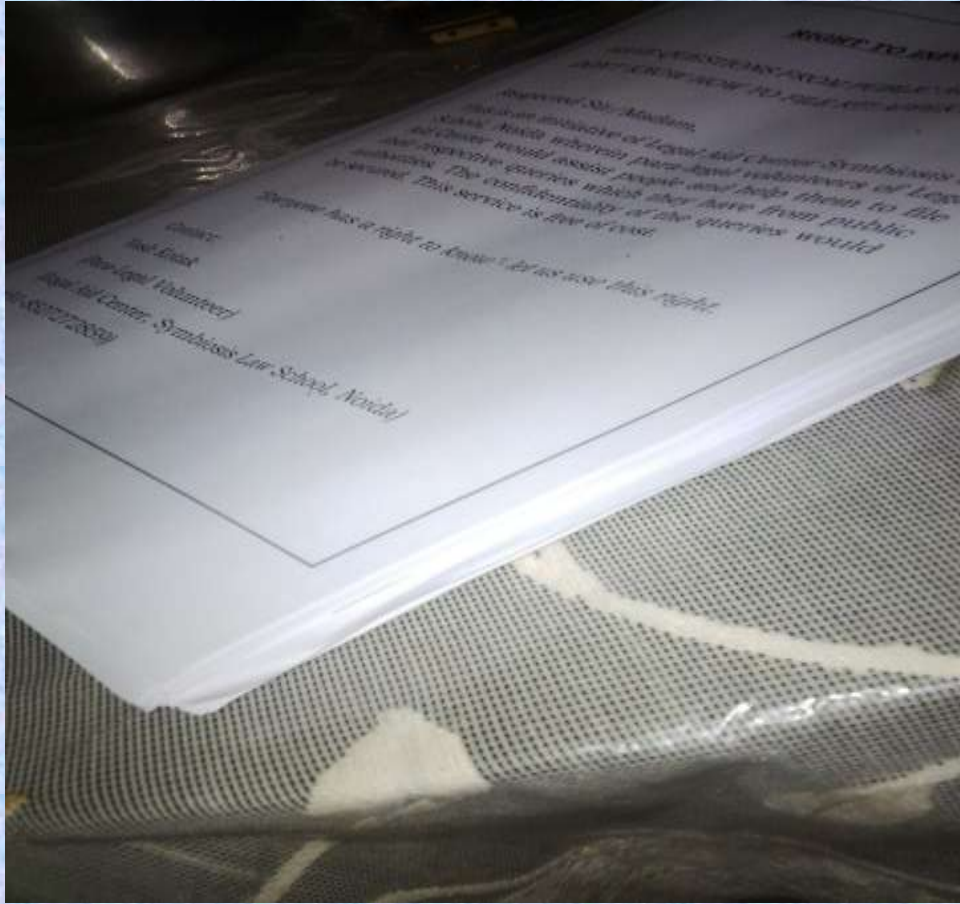
Contact:

Yash Kotak

(Para-Legal Volunteer)

(Legal Aid Center, Symbiosis Law School, Noida)

(+91-8527272859)



List of 'office bearers' of Legal Aid Centre, Symbiosis Law School, Noida

Sl. No.	Name	Profile	Contact No.
1	Dr. Madhuker S. (Asstt. Prof. of Law)	Head	9811083999
2	Mr. Yash Kotak (Batch 2013-18)	Name	9654140774
3	Ms. Maithili Moondra (Batch 2013-18)	Co-convener	9958187490
4	Ms. Srishti Girdhar (Batch 2013-18)	Para-legal Volunteer	9871017608
5	Ms. Srijata Majumdar (Batch 2013-18)	Para-legal Volunteer	9871855424
6	Ms. Nikhita Kansal (Batch 2014-19)	Para-legal Volunteer	9814843024
7	Ms. Sohini Chaudhary (Batch 2014-19)	Para-legal Volunteer	9088100513
8	Mr. Saurabh Vamsi (Batch 2014-19)	Para-legal Volunteer	7042254054
9	Ms. Anu Mittal	Para-legal Volunteer	7838824776
10	Mr. Kshitij Jharkharia	Para-legal Volunteer	9453867072

Email: lac@symlaw.edu.in