



Concept Note

Consultation on Role of Legal Aid Clinics of Academic Institutions in Securing Access to Justice for the Underprivileged

27th September, 2017

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Legal Services Clinic, Mumbai
Venue: Green Room, TISS New campus, Convention Center, Deonar,
Mumbai 400088

Time: 9.30 am to 1.30 pm

The Legal Services Clinic at TISS, Mumbai, established through the Center for Law & Society, School of Law, Rights and Constitutional Governance, was envisaged as an initiative to enable marginalized groups to access justice. This joint initiative of TISS, Maharashtra State Legal Services Authority (MSLSA), United National Development Programme and Government of India's Department of Justice has been working since August 2014. The initiative has benefitted the community that it has been serving and the students and faculty who have been engaged in its various aspects. Legal Aid Clinics at academic institutions are established with two primary objectives of community service and effective learning for the students.

The TISS clinic has been working with the following main objectives:

- To promote access to justice for the marginalized and vulnerable groups by providing free legal advice, legal counselling, mediation, legal awareness and legal literacy, assistance in filing RTI applications, accessing Government services, schemes and other legal services to the vulnerable sections of society, by the faculty, students and panel of lawyers and social workers of the clinic;
- To simplify and create awareness regarding laws, legal procedures, legal institutions and Government schemes, programs for vulnerable groups;
- To collaborate with and strengthen the State legal services authority to provide legal services to the vulnerable groups in the society; and
- To empower communities to access their rights.

Nearly four years of this initiative have generated considerable level of learning and educative instances. Several law schools and academic institutions run similar initiatives engaging students, faculty, community, civil society and government institutions. Several NGOs have been supporting these initiatives for effective community engagement.

SM Sehgal Foundation, based at Gurugram, Haryana, has been contributing in these aspects since 2008 and has developed good models of collaboration between civil society, law schools, and legal services authorities. TISS is proposing this consultation in partnership with SM Sehgal Foundation to take its initiative to a larger audience to consider. Thus, the proposed consultation on 27th September between 9.30am to 1 pm aims to:

- Strengthen existing models of legal aid clinics based at academic institutions and other initiatives by promoting mutual learning and knowledge sharing;
- Highlight success stories and disseminate best practices in the field of academic institutions and community legal aid; and
- Improve contextual understanding of practicing community legal aid initiatives through consolidation of different models in this field.

In addition to discussing the work of the TISS legal services clinic, similar initiatives by Jindal Global Law School, Gujarat National Law University, ILS Pune and New Law College of Bharathi Vidyapeeth, Pune, and SM Sehgal Foundation will also be shared and discussed for wider understanding and consideration.

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Sept 20, 2017