



# Gujarat National Law University

## Gandhinagar, Gujarat, India

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### GNLU PRESS NOTE

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#### **GNLU Centre for Law and Society and National Commission for Women Organises a Joint Legal Awareness Programme for Women**

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Greetings from GNLU!

Recognising the lack of legal awareness among women belonging to the poorer strata of the society and the absence of a proper channel to impart legal knowledge to them, the GNLU Centre for Law and Society (GCLS), in collaboration with the National Commission for Women (NCW), organised a Legal Awareness Programme for women on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, 2016 at Gujarat National Law University, Gandhinagar. The programme sought to create awareness among women about their constitutional entitlements, legal rights and remedies and facilitate access to justice to them by informing them about various means of redressal.

The programme was flagged off by Smt. Leelaben Ankolia, Chairperson of the Gujarat State Commission for Women, in the presence of Dr. Thomas Mathew, Registrar, GNLU, Dr. Ranita Nagar, Dean of Research Department and Head of Department of Social Sciences, GNLU and Mr. Saurabh Anand, Director of GCLS. Smt. Ankolia updated the audience on the sterling work undertaken by the NCW and the Gujarat State Commission for Women. She informed the participants about the Women Helpline 181 and gave an overview about various means through which women could seek redressal, such as Nari Adalats, online complaints before the Commission, etc.



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Over the span of 2 days, the programme witnessed participation from 80 women belonging to nearby villages in Gandhinagar district. Advocates, social activists, academicians and government and police officials joined the programme as resource persons and conducted interactive sessions for women on numerous topics, such as 'Women, Family Law and Customs', 'Women and the Constitution', 'Women and Criminal Law' and 'Access to Justice'.

Ms. Neeta Hardikar, Founder of Anandi, eloquently spoke of the fundamental rights that women enjoy, such as the right to life, food security, education, social security, constitutional remedies and justice. During the course of her session, she also emphasised on the significance of laws banning infanticide and selective foeticide, the mid-day meals scheme, pension schemes, etc. She summed up by urging women to approach the Commissions for Women, Special Mahila Police Stations, etc. for grievance redressal, without harbouring any inhibitions.

Dr. Dinesh Kapadia, Director of the Gender Resource Centre, addressed the audience on how the Constitution of India safeguards women's rights by providing for positive discrimination for women and highlighted that 50% of the seats in the Panchayati polls and 33% of police jobs have been reserved for women in Gujarat. He also explained various provisions of the Indian Penal Code and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act in layman's language. He concluded by stating that, 'just how a bird cannot fly with one wing, a society cannot grow without growth of women.'

Dr. Ameet Yajnik, Advocate, Gujarat High Court, engaged the audience in an interactive session during which she explained the significance of legal literacy and legal awareness programmes. She appropriately classified the problems that women face into domestic (dowry, domestic violence, divorce, child custody disputes, property disputes, etc.) and non-domestic (rape, voyeurism, acid attacks, kidnapping, stalking, etc.) issues and explained that while women must necessarily approach the police for the latter, they may approach alternative fora such as legal aid clinics, shelter homes, mediation centres, the Commissions for Women, etc. for the former set of disputes. She also touched upon labour laws and laws that benefit senior women.

Dr. Nidhi Buch, Assistant Professor of Law, GNLU addressed the gathering of women on dowry prohibition laws and laws against domestic violence and emphasised on how the evils of dowry



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and domestic violence are a reality not only in rural areas, but also in urban areas. She gave the participants an overview of these laws, focussing on the rationale behind enacting these laws, the functioning of these laws and important provisions.

Mr. Anil Pratham, IGP (CID Crime and Women Cell) provided the participants an insight into how the police system functions to assist women. It was an interactive session where Mr. Pratham invited questions from the audience and addressed their concerns about the functioning of the law and the police. He also informed the participants about how they ought to approach police authorities and various other government officials for grievance redressal.

Touching upon the subject on women and employment, Ms. Shalini from the Self Employed Women's Association briefed the participants on how the unorganised working sector could be transformed into an organised working sector. She briefly explained various models which could further this objective. She also screened two documentaries, which showed how the SEWA model has been effectively implemented in rural areas to benefit women in the working sector.

The organisers of the programme also disseminated information through the use of other documentaries and audio-visual materials. The two-day programme concluded with a brief vote of thanks and acknowledgements proposed by Mr. Saurabh Anand.

For any further information, you may contact Mr. Saurabh Anand, Director GCLS, (+918128650808 or [sanand@gnlu.ac.in](mailto:sanand@gnlu.ac.in))