



Legal Services Committee (LSC)

2014-15

Annual Report



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....Page 3

Introduction.....Page 5

Objectives.....Page 6

Brief History.....Page 9

Present Line of Work.....Page 12

Future Projects.....Page 15

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is our duty to express gratitude to those who we are indebted to, for supporting us through this enriching journey and for making us who we are today, The Legal Services Committee.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the **High Court of Gujarat**, Ahmadabad, the **Gujarat State Legal Services Authorities (GSLSA)** and the **Legal Department, Government of Gujarat** for always having supported us in our endeavors and for having believed in us since our inception.

We are sincerely grateful to our former Vice Chancellor, **Prof. V.S. Mani**, under whose guidance this committee was established. The dynamic and vibrant attitude of our Director **Prof. (Dr.) Bimal N. Patel**, whose continued efforts have helped us to further the reach of our socio-legal activities beyond the four walls of the University is also highly appreciated. We are very grateful to all our colleagues who always believed in our efforts and helped us in accomplishing them.

We would also like to extend our heart-felt gratitude to our **Alumni members** who have continued to not only believe in the LSC but have also continuously worked very closely with us. These members also form a very important part of our Panel of Advocates and are a part of

each and every initiative undertaken by the Committee. We would like to thank them all for their encouragement, support and cooperation.

A special vote of thanks is also extended to the past student as well as faculty Conveners without whose help the LSC's journey would have been incomplete.

It is also imperative to express our gratitude to **Mr. Saurabh Anand**, Faculty Convener, **Ms. Asha Verma**, **Mr. Jagdish Chandra**, **Mr. Ambati Nageshwar Rao**, **Ms. Rachana Raval** and **Ms. Saira Gori** for having always supported our ideas and guiding us at every step.

Last but not the least, we thank all the faculty members, student members of LSC, advisory members and the entire GNLU student body for having dedicated their hard work and time for our cause and having supported us in executing our plans.

Legal Services Committee, GNLU

INTRODUCTION

Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) is a University established by the Government of Gujarat under the National Law University Act, 2003. The University is recognized by the Bar Council of India (BCI) and University Grants Commission (UGC). The institute's founding myth objectifies the ideals of the Rig Veda "***Aa No Bhadra, Kratavo Yantu Vishwatah***" which means "**Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions**". The GNLU fraternity aims at harmonizing the patterns of civilization, by inculcating the virtues of cultural and regional appreciation amongst the students.

The birth of the **Legal Services Committee** in the year 2007 is a direct result of this feeling. It was inaugurated by **Justice A R Dave**, the then Chairman of Gujarat State Legal Services Authority. The committee is a student initiative which has achieved great laurels over the past few years. The committee rides on the principles of empowering the society with legal awareness and legal aid. Thus, originates the committee's motto - "**Awareness, Assertion, Action**".

Recognizing the potential of law as an instrument of social change, the Legal Service Committee (LSC) operates the Legal Service Cell which functions as a '**community legal clinic**' and focuses on, inter alia, the deprivation of government benefits, eviction and issues of domestic violence. Activities like street plays, drama performances and community legal service programs which promote legal awareness in areas akin to environment, consumer rights, human rights, right to

information and labor laws are often organized by the LSC. The Legal Service Cell stands as an epitome of **effective social responsibility** demonstrated by young yet socially conscientious lawyers to-be. Keeping in view with its objectives, LSC aims to promote a litigation free environment and encourage it with alternate dispute resolution mechanism.

In addition to providing legal assistance, the LSC on the social front organizes a **blood donation camp** on the 17th of July, GNLU's foundation day. The students, faculty and administrative staff take part enthusiastically and further the objectives of the LSC.

OBJECTIVES

LSC functions at achieving certain objectives. The objectives are in tandem with the Aims & Objectives of the ***Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 (hereinafter referred to as 'the Act')***. The Act was implemented in order to constitute legal services authorities to provide **free and competent legal services** to the **weaker and vulnerable sections of the society to ensure that opportunities for securing justice** are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities, and to organize **Lok Adalats** to secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity.

Firstly, Section 4(k) of the Act imposes a duty on the Central Authority to collaborate with the Bar Council of India for setting up of programs

for clinical legal education and promote guidance and supervise the establishment and working of legal services clinics in universities, law colleges and other institutions. Section 8 and Section 11¹ respectively state that the State Authority and the District Authority should act in coordination with other agencies like non-governmental voluntary social service institutions, universities and other bodies engaged in the work of promoting the cause of legal services to the poor.

Thus, it is imperative for LSC to work hand in hand with the State/District Legal Services Committee for a more effective way of undertaking and acting on its pledge to help the society by creating legal awareness.

Keeping this in mind the objectives of LSC are as under:

- To educate and empower the less privileged, by conducting legal awareness programs on a wide range of issues.

¹Section 8-State Authority to act in coordination with other agencies, etc., and be subject to directions given by Central Authority- In the discharge of its functions the State Authority shall appropriately act in coordination with other governmental agencies, non-governmental voluntary social service institutions, universities and other bodies engaged in the work of promoting the cause of legal services to the poor and shall also be guided by such directions as the Central Authority may give to it in writing.

Section 11- District Authority to act in coordination with other agencies and be subject to directions given by the Central Authority, etc.- In the discharge of its functions under this act, the District Authority shall, wherever appropriate, act in coordination with other governmental and non-governmental institutions, universities and others engaged in the work of promoting the cause of legal services to the poor and shall also be guided by such directions as the Central Authority or the State Authority may give to it in writing.

- To provide the needy with free legal aid to protect and assert their rights.
- To identify the most vulnerable sections of society like women and children and work towards affording them legal protection.
- To use the legal expertise available at the disposal of the Legal Service committee to further the cause of social development.

BRIEF HISTORY

The Legal Services Committee was set up by the student initiative in the year 2007. And since its inception, it has always worked in consonance with its aims and objectives. The Committee has worked beyond the boundaries of the University.

The committee in its initial years had adopted a village, Chharanagar near Ahmadabad. The student members used to provide legal assistance to underprivileged sections of the society. They also used to conduct street plays on the different issues like police atrocities, domestic violence etc.

The LSC team has always strived to contribute to the academia along with the society. In furtherance of this objective, the LSC team successfully organized a **“National Conference on Contemporary Corporate Legal Issues”** in September, 2008. This was LSC’s first national event and it proved to be a milestone as it witnessed the launch of **“The GNLU Law Review”** by **Honorable Justice Radhakrishnan**, the then Chief Justice of the High Court of Gujarat. Many dignitaries and experts of the subject shared their views with an audience consisting of law students from across the country.

In the same year, LSC organized and conducted “**Vimarsh-2008**”- An **Inter College Panel Discussion on Contemporary Women Issues**, at GNLU, Gandhinagar. People from different paths of life such as Media, Law, NGO and Academia participated in the discussion. The LSC members were also involved in drafting the Amendment for ‘SC, ST Atrocities Prevention Act’ which was not only an enriching experience for the students but also benefitted the Gujarat Legislature.

As GNLU is a multicultural university, with students from various parts of India, problems with regard to arranging basic amenities at the time of shifting into hostels are faced by the students. Addressing the need for such arrangements, The Legal Services Committee established a “fresher’s convenience camp” within the hostel premises to help the first years. The camp involved setting up of stalls providing products and services ranging from mattresses and laptops to ATM cards and local SIM cards. This venture was found to be very useful for the first year students and the LSC was pleased to receive words of appreciation from many parents who had accompanied their sons and daughters for the orientation. The LSC continued organizing this camp till 2010.

In **July 2009**, based on the directions of the honorable Supreme Court to all Universities, an **anti-ragging body** was set up at the University for preventing and handling ragging related complaints. This committee was established on a short notice and the Legal Services Committee members became de-facto members of the Anti-Ragging Committee. The members ensured a friendly environment for the fresher’s and welcomed them at the University by ensuring that there would be no

instances of ragging in the hostel premises. LSC continued working for this cause for approximately a month till a permanent Anti-Ragging Committee was established at the University.

LSC was operating a Legal Aid Clinic at the Halls of Residence in Sector 24, Gandhinagar for all these years where anybody could approach the cell for any sort of legal aid, till we shifted to our new campus at Koba.

LSC ACTIVITIES IN 2013-14

- **The RTE Resource Center:**

The LSC, in collaboration with IIM-Ahmadabad had set up an RTE Resource Center each, at GNLU and IIM-A for the implementation of Section 12 of the Right to Education Act, 2005. Our team carried out internal surveys in schools across Gandhinagar District to assess education levels and implementation of the provisions of the Act. A report has been submitted to IIM-A based on these findings.

- **The 2nd National Conference on Access to Justice, West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences (WBNUJS), Kolkata 2013**

The LSC attended and successfully presented a model for Human Trafficking in Gujarat at the National Conference on “Access to Justice” held at WBNUJS. The presentation was based on an extensive research program on woman trafficking and even included a prevention model.

- **Free Legal Aid Clinics**

The LSC had carried out surveys in four nearby villages of Shahpur, Koba, Raisan and Kудasan to assess the basic levels of socio-economic status and legal literacy. Free Legal Aid Cells had been set-up in all four villages where student members, on a regular basis addressed grievances of people. There has been an overwhelming response from the villagers who turn up seeking legal remedies on contractual, land and domestic disputes.

- **Free Legal Awareness:**

The LSC has continued its trend of spreading of free legal awareness. The members of LSC participated in the National Service Scheme camp in Koba village. A series of such presentations has been scheduled this year as well.

- The following issues were addressed –
- Fundamental Rights under the Indian Constitution.
- FIR: Essentials and Procedures.
- Rape: Provisions and Remedies.
- Legal provisions relating to Domestic Violence in India
- Provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act

- **Manual Scavenging Bill, Gujarat:**

The LSC addressed the inhuman practice of manual scavenging through a conference following which the LSC drafted a Manual Scavenging Bill for the state of Gujarat in 2013.

- **RTIs filed for Commoners:**

The LSC filed RTIs regarding the practice of witchcraft in the nearby villages based on the information provided to it by letters from villagers.

- **Blood Donation Camp:**

In the previous academic year the annual Blood Donation Camp was held on 15th of September 2014, in collaboration with the Indian Red Cross Society.

- **Kashmir Relief Fund:**

The LSC, in a first of its kind initiative, organized on September 15, 2014, the Kashmir Relief Fund Campaign for the flood victims of Kashmir which saw an overwhelming response from students as well as staff.

- **Consumer Awareness:**

A special team has been constituted for the designing, printing and circulating the consumer protection brochures in and around the campus.

FUTURE AGENDAS FOR THE LSC IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS

2015-16

- **Blood Donation Camp 2015**: Continuing its tradition forward, the LSC organized a blood donation camp in the University on its foundation day July 17, 2015 in collaboration with the Indian Red Cross Society, Ahmedabad Chapter. The camp was graced by the Member Secretary I/C of the Gujarat State Legal Services Committee (GSLSA) Shri. R.G. Deodhara, the Director of the Gujarat National Law University Dr. Bimal N Patel and the Registrar Dr. Thomas Matthew. The camp was a grand success breaking all previous records and had a total registration of 230 students and 170 donations.
- **100 Hours of Compulsory Pro-Bono Legal Service**: The Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), in its Endeavour to stand out as a World Class University has made it compulsory from the current batch (Batch of 2015-2020) onwards to devote 100 hours of the 5-year Under-Graduate Degree to Pro-Bono Legal Services. This endeavor will be headed by the LSC and performance and

initiative of the students shall be formally evaluated. The committee, in furtherance of its objectives, shall be responsible for the overall conduct of this endeavor.

- **A National Conference on the Interlinking of the Legal Aid Cells of prominent universities of the country**: The LSC in order to increase access and social justice is planning to organize a National Conference to Interlink the Legal Aid Cells of various Universities across the Country. The Inter-linking conference shall aim to provide a common platform to all these bodies on issues of socio-legal relevance.

- **Work for the cause of Pakistani Hindus**: In a one of its kind initiative, the LSC on the instance of the Gujarat State Legal Services Authority (GSLSA) is planning to carry out a survey on the condition of life of Pakistani Hindus and more particularly, on attempting to acquire professional licenses to members of these communities who lost their licenses and practice due to the migration under law.

- **A Smartphone Application for basic citizen issues:** The LSC, to enhance ease of legal and procedural information to all, is planning on developing a Smartphone Application so as to provide information on legal procedures and instances which are a part and parcel of our day to day lives. These instances could be ranging in academic institutions, traffic violations, issuance of pan cards or voter identity cards and the like.

- **YouTube Channel:** In furtherance to the objective of free and easy access to information concerning civil life, the LSC plans to launch a YouTube Channel. The YouTube Channel shall post videos by experts and members of the legal fraternity and also members from the academic fraternity.

- **Consumer Courts Litigation:** The LSC plans to take up cases of the common man in consumer courts across Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar. To spearhead the cause, a team of the committee shall start its initial phase of the same by visiting the Grahak Nyaylaya in Gota, Ahmedabad. The same shall be done as a free legal aid service for aggrieved consumers.

- **LSC Newsletter:** The committee, in furtherance of its objectives plans to come out with its monthly newsletter on issues concerning the social and political aspects of the social setup. The newsletter shall comprise of judicial pronouncements, legal concerns, social concerns and activities of the committee within and outside the university.

For further details regarding future LSC activities or any other information,
please contact –

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Legal Services Committee

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“Awareness, Assertion, Action”