





National Forensic Sciences University School Of Law Forensic Justice And Policy Studies PRO BONO CLUB



NEWSLETTER



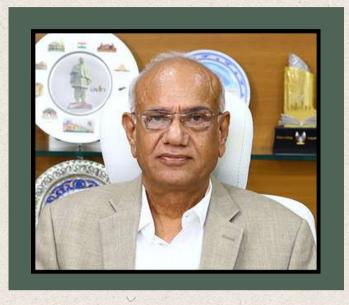
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NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCES UNIVERSITY



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Vice Chancellor's Message



In the relentless pursuit of fostering a culture of service and societal responsibility, our university stands as a beacon of inspiration due to our students and faculty's steadfast commitment and dedication. Their generous contributions of time and expertise to many pro bono and Legal Aid projects are a testament to their unwavering dedication. These initiatives profoundly and positively impact our local community and extend beyond its borders. In this edition of the Pro Bono and Legal Assistance Newsletter, we present a collection of powerful narratives highlighting how our students leverage their skills to tackle real-world issues. It also showcases faculty members lending their expertise to bolster community organizations and staff working tirelessly for societal betterment through various pro bono and Legal Aid initiatives. This newsletter serves as a platform to highlight the significant impact of our collective efforts and to inspire others to partake in similar acts of service. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to everyone involved in these initiatives. Your dedication to service truly encapsulates the spirit of our university, and I am immensely proud of the positive change we are collectively affecting.

Regards, Dr. J.M. Vyas Vice-Chancellor National Forensic Sciences University

Campus Director's Message

As we traverse the complexities of our global landscape, our unwavering dedication to service emerges as a shining light of optimism, serving as a constant reminder of the transformative change we can collectively bring about through our Pro bono and Legal Aid initiatives. These initiatives offer an unparalleled platform for individuals to utilize their skills and knowledge in practical scenarios, thereby making a significant contribution to societal welfare. Be it through legal aid, healthcare outreach, educational assistance, or any other form of community service, each initiative is a testament to the fervor and commitment of individuals who omprehend



the profound influence they can exert. As we delve into the pages of this Pro Bono and Legal Assistance Newsletter, I am overwhelmed with a sense of immense pride and gratitude for the remarkable spirit of service that permeates our campus. In this inaugural edition of the Pro Bono Newsletter, there are narratives that shed light on the myriad ways our Student and Faculty is effecting change. From pioneering projects aimed at addressing urgent community needs to the relentless efforts of individuals who volunteer their time and expertise, these stories serve as a source of inspiration, encouraging us to persist in cultivating a culture of service.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each one of you who has played a part in these pro bono initiatives. Your dedication not only enhances the lives of those you serve but also fortifies the very essence of our university community.

Warm regards, Prof. (Dr.) S.O. Junare, Campus Director, National Forensic Sciences University

From the Dean's Desk

DEAR READERS,

On behalf of the Pro-Bono Club and Legal Assistance Committee of the School of Law, Forensic Justice and Policy Studies, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, we warmly welcome the new edition of 'Samvidhi'. It is an honour to present this publication, as our institution is dedicated to socially and shaping responsive lawyers compassionate committed to community service, nation-building, and fostering a robust democratic value that ensures justice is accessible to all. Dear



Readers, as we navigate the intricacies of the legal landscape, our mission remains resolute: to offer accessible and high-quality legal services to those who are most in need. In this edition, our aim is to delve into the essence of pro-bono work and the transformative power of legal aid. We highlight the relentless efforts of our devoted students, who positively impact the lives of numerous individuals and communities. Additionally, we present insightful articles and case studies that underscore the profound effect of legal aid and its ongoing influence on our society.

Remember, every act of service, no matter how small, contributes to the larger goal of justice for all. Let's continue to uphold the principles of fairness, equality, and compassion in our work.

Prof. (Dr.) Purvi Pokhriyal Editor-in-Chief, Dean, School of Law, Forensic Justice and Policy Studies, NFSU, Gandhinagar Campus Director, NFSU, Delhi

Our Faculty Coordinators

I take immense pride in commending the remarkable dedication and relentless hard work of our students in 'extending legal aid services to the community. Their tireless efforts are not just a testament to their academic excellence but also a reflection of their unwavering commitment to the cause of justice. It has been a privilege to work alongside my students who, despite their academic commitments, devote time and effort to making legal support accessible. Their passion for justice and community welfare is inspiring, and I am confident that they will continue to uphold the values of service and integrity in their journey ahead. Their contributions not only transform lives but also set an example for future legal professionals. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to each one of them for their exceptional work and look forward to working with them to create an even greater impact in the years to come.



Dr. Ripal Gupta, Assistant Professor, SLFJPS, NFSU



Mr. Sukrit Garg, Assistant Professor, SLFJPS, NFSU

I wish to take this opportunity to commend all the students for their outstanding dedication and hard work. Their tireless efforts in extending legal aid services to the community is not only invaluable to those in need, but it also demonstrates their commitment to ensuring access to justice for all. The students have been working with a sense of selflessness, and compassion. Their passion for helping others highlights the positive impact that law students can make in society.

About

National Forensic Sciences University

National Forensic Sciences University, originally Gujarat Forensic Sciences University, was established by the Government of Gujarat in 2009 under the leadership of then Chief Minister Narendra Modi. At a juncture of spiking the number of crimes involving sophisticated technologies and much-evolved modus operandi, there was a need for scientists and technocrats. Its main goal is to create professionals in forensic sciences to address the rising number of technologically advanced crimes. Recognized as the world's first university dedicated solely to forensics, behavioural studies, cyber security, and digital forensics, it became an Institution of National Importance through the Government of India Act 2020. Since its inception, the university has excelled academically, offering in-demand courses and achieving numerous milestones each year. The university has been reaching numerous milestones every year with stellar academic and other related activities.

School Of Law Forensic Justice & Policy Studies

The School of Law, Forensic Justice, and Policy Studies was founded to provide professional education, specifically emphasizing the application of forensic practices across various legal and policy domains. Its goal is to become the primary educator in forensic justice for professionals involved in governance, especially in justice administration. The school caters to the diverse needs of the legal community through programs such as B.Sc.; LL.B. (Hons.), PG Diploma in Cyber Law, LL.B. (Hons.), LL. M. (Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Administration), and LL.M. (Cyber Law and Cyber Crime Investigation). These programs reflect our commitment to enhancing the field with intellectually stimulating and practically viable solutions.

About

Probono Club & Legal Assistance Cell

The Pro Bono Club and Legal Assistance Cell, School of Law Forensic Justice and Policy Studies, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, is a studentdriven initiative dedicated to providing legal support to socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalized communities facing challenges in accessing the justice system. Inspired by the principles of Article 39A of the Constitution of India, The Legal Services Authorities Act of 1987 and the DISHA scheme of the Department of Justice under the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Pro Bono Club and the Legal Assistance Cell operate on the belief that the law exists for the public good. We are dedicated to providing free legal assistance and services to marginalized and underprivileged communities, ensuring their access to justice and legal remedies.

We organize workshops, seminars, and awareness programs to educate the public about their legal rights, responsibilities, and the judicial process. Additionally, we aim to offer practical experience to law students by involving them in pro bono cases, legal aid camps, and research projects, thereby enhancing their legal skills and fostering social responsibility. We also support causes related to human rights, social justice, and the rule of law by engaging in public interest awareness programs and community advocacy initiatives. Furthermore, we plan to partner with NGOs and legal professionals to address pressing legal issues and implement impactful legal aid programs within the community.

GUJARATI CLASSES CONDUCTED BY PRO BONO

The Gujarati-speaking members of the PBC-LAC, over the course of two sessions, conducted brief introductory sessions in the Gujarati Language for the members of the Club to facilitate ease of understanding for their village visits and other such work for the club. The first session of the Gujarati language classes aimed at enhancing conversational skills in Gujarati. The session began with a brief introduction, followed by an interactive discussion where students shared the challenges they faced in learning and conversing in Gujarati. A YouTube video was played to aid language learning through real-life conversational examples, focusing on practical usage of Gujarati through conversation. A short test was also conducted to assess the progress of participants.





For the next session, students were tasked with preparing a personal introduction in Gujarati, useful when visiting a village, while the upcoming agenda would focus on learning legal vocabulary. In the second session, students presented their prepared Gujarati introductions. Volunteers then demonstrated a mock conversation in Gujarati, tailored to aid students during their Pro Bono Club visits. The session shifted then to introducing legal terminology in Gujarati, with volunteers explaining key legal words and their use cases, helping participants understand legal documents more effectively. The session concluded with students giving introductions mock in Gujarati, reinforcing their learning.

These sessions are designed to build both general and legal Gujarati proficiency, crucial for the club's activities and have proven to be an essential step in building both conversational and legal Gujarati proficiency, equipping students with practical language skills vital for their work in the Pro Bono Club and Legal Aid Committee. By blending theoretical learning with practical exercises, the program has successfully laid a foundation for effective communication during field visits, particularly in village settings. The ongoing focus on legal vocabulary further ensures that students are prepared to navigate and comprehend legal documents, enhancing their ability to serve the community meaningfully and positively.





School Visits Under Young Probono

The objective of our school visits is to educate school students about cybercrime, including current threats and the helpline for reporting incidents. It aims to reinforce their understanding of "good touch" and "bad touch," inform them about their rights and child helpline services, and encourage active participation through questions and discussions. By educating legal awareness, these sessions empower students with the essential knowledge required for their safety and well-being.



R.N. Patel Primary School

During our visit to Smt. R. N. Patel Primary School, Sector 23, we conducted a session on cybercrime, online safety, and legal aid. After introducing ourselves and our work, Jyoti led a discussion on cybercrime, engaging students by asking about their mobile phone usage. We highlighted risks, the importance of safeguarding personal information, and dangers of sharing photos or locations online. Various scams, including lottery frauds and banking frauds, were explained, and students were given the cybercrime helpline (1930). Mughda then discussed good and bad touch, emphasizing the child helpline (1098).

The session ended with an interactive Q&A, ensuring students retained key information. They successfully recalled important helpline numbers and took a pledge to stay vigilant. To add engagement, we introduced the NSS clap. The school principal appreciated our efforts and expressed willingness to contact us for legal aid. Jyoti shared her contact for future assistance, marking a successful and impactful session.

Teammates:

Ms. Jyoti Sukhla, Ms. Mugdha, Ms. Riya, Mr. Divyansh Godara, Mr. Amogh Goel, Mr. Eklavya Singh Deora, Mr. Harshit Agrawal.



Vavol village

During our visit to Vavol Primary School students were made aware of the risks of sharing personal information and the importance of social media safety. A student shared her father's experience with banking fraud, which led to a discussion on OTP scams and the cybercrime helpline (1930). Mugdha and Riya revisited the concepts of good touch and bad touch, highlighting personal safety and introducing the child helpline (1098). A



Q&A session helped reinforce key points, with students successfully recalling important details. The session concluded with a collective pledge to stay alert against cyber threats, followed by an NSS clap for engagement. 12

School Principal: Vavol Primary School Principal Teammates: Ms. Mugdha, Ms. Prakriti, Ms. Riya, Mr. Amogh, Mr. Vaibhav





Indroda Village



During our visit to the Government Primary School in Indroda, we had the students take a pledge to be vigilant about cybercrime and report any suspicious activities. Ankush took over the session by discussing the various legal restrictions and support systems in place for individuals seeking legal aid. He introduced the concept of pro bono legal services and clarified the common misconception that legal help is always expensive. Ankush explained how students and their families could access free legal aid services, emphasizing that there are legal frameworks in place to assist those in need. He also shared the NALSA helpline number (15100) to help students understand how to access free legal assistance. After the session, the school principal approached us and shared details about a case from a student's family. He mentioned that he would seek consent from the family and, once approved, would hand over the case to us for further assistance.

Overall, these sessions significantly increased students' awareness of cyber risks, online safety, and personal protection. They actively participated, shared real-life experiences, and demonstrated a clear understanding of key concepts. By taking a pledge, students committed to staying vigilant and reporting threats, ensuring long-term awareness. This interactive approach encouraged open discussions thereby making the session both informative and engaging.





INTERDISCIPLINARY COMPETITIONS ON SOCIAL JUSTICE IN FORENSIC SCIENCES

The Pro Bono Club and Legal Assistance Cell (PBC & LAC) at SLFJPS, NFSU, successfully organized an Interdisciplinary Competition centred on the theme of "Social Justice in Forensic Sciences" on September 18, 2024. This event aimed to engage students in exploring the intersection of social justice and forensic sciences while raising awareness about the Pro Bono Club's mission to support marginalized communities in accessing justice.

Objectives:

The primary objective of the competition was to familiarize students with the Pro Bono Club's mission and foster a deeper understanding of the importance of legal aid and public service. creative and well-researched Through presentations, participants were encouraged to address critical legal challenges and showcase their passion for justice. The initiative reflected the club's commitment to empowering society through legal literacy, alternative dispute resolution, and social awareness.

The event featured a diverse range of competitions, each designed to highlight specific aspects of social justice:

• **Blog Writing:** Participants explored the theme "Vulnerability of Acid Attack Survivors" in 800-1000 words. The submissions were judged on content, writing style, grammar, and the ability to convey opinions, promoting thoughtful analysis of a pressing social issue.

- Meme Making: Focused on "Social Injustice in Forensic Sciences," this category allowed students to creatively address complex topics through visual humor while maintaining confidentiality.
- **Photography:** With the theme "Economic Social Justice and Poverty," the competition encouraged participants to capture impactful visuals that portrayed the struggles of marginalized communities.
- Reel Making: Highlighting "Legal Myths vs Reality," participants created engaging short reels (90-180 seconds) that educated audiences about common misconceptions in the legal domain. Submissions were evaluated for creativity, content quality, and technical finesse.

All entries underwent meticulous evaluation based on predefined marking criteria tailored to each category. Top performers were rewarded with exciting prizes and certificates, recognizing their creativity, insight, and dedication to the cause of social justice.

The competition was a testament to the Pro Bono Club's ongoing efforts to integrate academic rigor with social responsibility. By involving students from the university in addressing real-world challenges, the event not only celebrated creativity and critical thinking but also reinforced the club's vision of a legally informed and conscious society.

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION CAMP FOR AADHAAR CARDS

The Pro Bono Club and Legal Assistance Cell of the National Forensic Sciences University, in collaboration with the officials of the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), organized a document verification camp for Aadhaar cardrelated services on 11th December 2024 at Vavol Primary School, Vavol. The initiative aimed to assist individuals with their Aadhaar card-related queries and document verification processes.

Objectives of the Camp:

1. To facilitate the verification of documents required for Aadhaar card issuance or updates.

2. To address queries related to Aadhaar card processes.

3. To create awareness about the required documentation for resolving Aadhaar-related issues.

4. To prepare for the upcoming Aadhaar issuance and update camp.





Camp Activities:

- Participants were registered with their names, mobile numbers, and specific Aadhaarrelated issues.
- UIDAI officials verified the participants' documents.
- Guidance was provided regarding the validity and sufficiency of submitted documents.

The camp witnessed a significant turnout of residents from Vavol. Participants actively engaged with UIDAI officials and volunteers to resolve their concerns. Queries ranged from biometric updates, mobile number linking, and correction of personal details to first-time Aadhaar applications. Outcome and Next Steps The camp successfully verified the documents of numerous participants. Based on the verification, PBC will organize another camp on 21st December 2024 at the same venue to facilitate Aadhar card issuance or updates for individuals whose documents were verified during this session or who show up with valid documents during the next session.

On 27th September 2024, the team of ProBono Club and Legal Assistance Cell of the School of Law, Forensic Justice and Policy Studies, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, Gujarat, held its one-of-a-kind Jan Sunwai (public hearing) in the Vavol Village of Gandhinagar. The Club collaborated with a well-known NGO in Gujarat, i.e., the SAHAY Foundation, to ensure effective outreach execution. The team made a prior visit to the village on 25th September 2024 to announce the Jan Sunvai in order to make people aware of the program. The team distributed pamphlets and interacted with the villagers by holding door-to-door visits to ensure the outreach was at par. On September 26, the team was ready with all the necessary permissions from the municipal corporation and primary school to organize the Jan Sunvai.

STREET PLAY:

The students from the ProBono Club displayed Jan Sunvai's vision - "Right to Choose", which displayed that people have the right to live and earn a lawful living, protected by the law, but are unaware of these essentials. Through their display, the ProBono Club students intended to inspire a dialogue among viewers about the significance of choice and autonomy in one's life. They sought to provoke thought on fear of societal norms, lack of information, and fear of the legal system, which often hinder people's ability to exercise their rights fully.

AWARENESS INITIATIVE:

The choice of location was a government primary school established under the rightto-education policy and the motto "Education for All, Progress for All" to give the audience a learning environment. Our team initiated an awareness campaign to educate the audience about various government schemes and how they could benefit from them. The response was overwhelmingly positive, as many people were unaware of these beneficial programs. The team began by explaining the Right to Education program and the Below Poverty Line (BPL) Scheme, detailing the process of registering for these initiatives. Additionally, the team provided information about schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY). Given that Vavol village falls under the jurisdiction of the Gandhinagar Municipal Corporation, many residents still live in makeshift houses. Therefore, the team guided them on how to enroll in the PMAY-U (Urban) schemes. The team dedicated their efforts to empowering street vendors through the Pradhan Mantri SVA Nidhi Scheme and the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. They provided valuable guidance on obtaining vending licenses and identified safe vending locations while also addressing grievances and offering legal assistance. Additionally, they enlightened the community about the City Service Property Card, ensuring that individuals could secure their property rights.

The team shed light on the MA Card, inspiring individuals to take charge of their health through the Mukhyamantri Amrutam health insurance scheme. This vital information sparked a wave of enthusiasm among the people, as they eagerly registered for these beneficial programs. During the event, the team provided information about important government schemes such as ration cards, PAN cards, MSME schemes, AADHAR cards, and ESHRAM portals. After learning about their benefits, many people expressed interest in registering for these schemes. Additionally, the team addressed the lack of awareness about menstrual hygiene among women and provided support and information on this important topic. Women actively participated in the event, sharing their concerns, and the team offered assistance with legal and other matters.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE:

The women's curiosity and enthusiasm were palpable as they eagerly participated in the Jan Sunwai, openly discussing their legal concerns and seeking assistance and were inquisitive about getting employment opportunities and vocational training. Advocate Zeal Shah, a distinguished figure in the legal community with her practice in the Gujarat High Court, graced the event with her presence. Her commitment to social justice through her NGO, Sahay Foundation, was evident as she offered immediate legal support for critical cases. The team is comprised of Pro Bono Associates, who have played a significant role. They have meticulously handled and acknowledged each legal issue. This includes educating women who are facing issues at their place of employment. As the Jan Sunwai unfolded, our team faced a spectrum of legal challenges, from licensing street vendors to enrollment in beneficial government schemes Addressing the more serious legal matters, such as fraud and cheating, has become crucial, especially as these issues have led to financial losses for some individuals. The dedication to providing legal counsel and taking on significant cases was unwavering throughout the event. This experience was an eye-opener regarding the legal ignorance prevalent among the community and a heartwarming revelation of their eagerness to learn and exercise their rights, a theme poignantly captured in the street play. A particularly moving aspect of the event was the women's openness to learning about sanitary health, demonstrated by their enthusiastic participation in the sanitary pad distribution drive. The event concluded on a high note with food distribution, leaving us with feedback that resonated deeply: the community's desire for more such awareness drives and their heartfelt appreciation for the newfound knowledge of various beneficial programs. This Jan Sunwai was not just an event but a beacon of hope and empowerment, illuminating the path toward a more informed and just society.











AADHAAR CARD CAMP

The Pro Bono Club and Legal Assistance Cell of the National Forensic Sciences University, in collaboration with the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), organised an Aadhaar card updation camp on 21st December 2024 at Vavol Primary School, Vavol. This camp marked the final phase of a three-step initiative to address Aadhaar-related issues in the local community, following the Jan Sunvai Camp and Document Verification Camp held earlier.

Objectives of the Camp

- To facilitate updates and corrections in UID cards for registered participants.
- To issue new Aadhaar cards for children below the age of 18 years.
- To provide end-to-end resolution of Aadhaar-related queries raised in previous camps.

Activities Conducted

- Participants' names, mobile numbers, and specific issues were recorded.
- UIDAI officials verified participants' documents and updated Aadhaar details as required.
- Necessary changes were made, such as mobile number linking, address updates, and biometric updates.
- New Aadhaar cards were issued to children under 18 years of age.
- Participants were guided on the significance of accurate Aadhaar data and the process for future updates if needed.



Key Outcomes

- A total of 35+ individuals were assisted during the camp.
- Aadhaar cards were updated successfully, resolving long-pending queries.
- New Aadhaar cards were issued to children to ensure they had this essential identification.

LEGAL PODCASTS

The podcast titled "The Legit Podcast "series, led by a committed team including Arushi Mishra, Divyangna Rajawat, Anirudh Mittal, Priyanshu Patel, Tanisha Chaudhary, Dinesh Mundra, and Utsavi Patel, under the mentorship of Dr Ripal Gupta focused on illuminating the essential connection between forensic science and legal aid. With three comprehensive episodes, the series examined the value of forensic insights in making justice more accessible, especially within the criminal justice system. While not publicly released, the podcast represents an in-depth learning and engagement opportunity for the team. The experts provided several real-world problems, and their experience showcased the value of legal aid in the legal field. The experts also suggested several ways to provide legal aid to the deprived section of society by effectively using these fields.

Episode 1: Understanding Forensic Science in Legal Aid

Host: Dinesh Mundra Guest: Dr. Purvi Pokhriyal

Focus: This foundational episode introduced forensic science and its pivotal role in the legal aid system. Dr. Pokhriyal offered insights into how forensic science supports the justice process, particularly for individuals unable to afford extensive legal representation. The episode also touched on basic forensic methodologies, evidentiary standards, and how scientific rigor in evidence collection and analysis aids in unbiased legal outcomes.

Episode 2: Legal Aid and Forensic Science in the Criminal Justice System

Host: Arushi Mishra Guest: Dr. Gaurav Jadhav

Focus: This episode explored the synergy between forensic science and legal aid in criminal cases, with Dr Jadhav addressing the systemic impact of forensic evidence in criminal proceedings. Highlighting real-world cases, Dr Jadhav explained how

forensic tools and expertise contribute to equitable treatment for underserved communities, reinforcing justice by providing factual, science-based evidence. The discussion emphasized the role of forensic analysis in cases where defendants might otherwise lack access to technical support, underscoring forensic science as a crucial equalizer in justice.

Episode 3: Digital Forensics and Legal Aid in Contemporary Cases

Host: Divyangna Rajawat Guest: Dr. Nilay Mistry

Focus: In this episode, Dr. Mistry delved into digital forensics, an increasingly vital field in the age of cybercrime. With rising digital evidence in criminal cases, Dr. Mistry discussed the specialized nature of digital forensics, explaining how it aids legal aid cases by providing critical evidence and supporting individuals requiring expertise in digital investigations. This discussion highlighted the technical processes and ethical considerations in digital forensics, underlining its growing importance in ensuring justice in technologically advanced cases.

Through this podcast series, the team gained valuable experience not only in content creation but also in skills essential for professional development in the legal and forensic fields. The insights and practical knowledge gained through this project underscored the importance of forensic science in achieving equitable legal support and demonstrated how educational initiatives like The Legit Podcast can bridge knowledge gaps and support accessible justice.

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LEGAL ASSISTANCE LAB

The team, comprising PBC-LAC associates, worked on several case laws and provided legal aid to the people. The team approached Mantavya Legal, a prominent Law Firm dealing with several domains of law in Ahmedabad.

The team assisted in drafting the legal documents, engaged in client counselling, and assisted the advocates in legal research and several other legal tasks. The team showcased their legal creativity while dealing with the issues and collaborated to support the clients needing free legal aid. The team handled the cases precisely and showcased empathy while engaging with the clients.

Mantavya Legal is a law firm that is making legal services accessible and affordable to all. It provides consultation for almost every purpose, be it legal, property, personal, HR or business-related disputes. The office has significant experience in litigation, mainly focusing on criminal, civil, and family disputes. The office was dedicated to disputes efficiently and offering long-term, practical, and commercially prudent solutions to resolve conflicts effectively.

Over the past four months, Mantavya Legal and students from the Pro Bono and Legal Aid Cell initiative have provided invaluable assistance in handling these cases. Their efforts have included thorough legal research, drafted applications and complaints, and offering support in various other legal tasks. They have also played a vital role in client counselling, ensuring each client receives compassionate guidance and informed advice throughout the process. This collaborative effort has exemplified their commitment to service and dedication to supporting needy clients.

CAMPUS OUTREACH EVENT NYAYMITRA

The Pro Bono Club and Legal Assistance Cell (PBC & LAC) of the School of Law, Forensic Justice, and Policy Studies, National Forensic Sciences University, Gandhinagar, organized an engaging in-campus outreach event, Nyaymitra, on September 18, 2024. This event was a significant initiative aimed at promoting social justice and legal aid within the student community, aligning with the club's mission to support marginalized groups through legal literacy and advocacy.

OBJECTIVE

- 1. To raise awareness about the Legal Aid Clinic (LAC) and ProBono Club of SLFJPS among the students of other schools of the university and highlight the significance and roles we play in the social community.
- 2. To clearly articulate the ideas, motives, and operational framework of the LAC and ProBono Club, ensuring a comprehensive understanding among the student attendees.
- 3. To establish a strong foundation for future university outreach programs by engaging with the students of other schools and fostering collaborative relationships.

The agenda showcased a blend of intellectual and cultural activities that captivated the audience.

The Guest of Honour, Advocate, Ms Zeal Shah, a prominent advocate for justice, was felicitated for her invaluable contributions to the legal field. Her address emphasized the need for collective efforts in achieving social equity. Ms. Zeal runs an NGO named Sahaay Foundation. Sahaay NGO founded in 2021 during the covid crisis, it started with a mission to provide essential medical relief to those in need. Over time, the organization extended its purpose beyond crisis response. Sahay now focuses on empowering under privileged children and communities.

Convener Sudhanshu and Co-Convener Utsavi delivered an insightful PowerPoint presentation, shedding light on the PBC & LAC's vision and achievements. This was followed by an interactive quiz conducted by Mr. Sukrit Garg, which tested participants' knowledge of legal concepts and social justice themes.

Esteemed faculty members, including Dr. Bishwa Kalyan Dash, Dr. Gaurav Jadhav, and Dr. Ripal Gupta, shared their thoughts on the significance of legal aid and justice initiatives, inspiring students to contribute to the cause.

The winners of the blog writing, meme-making, photography, and reel-making competitions were recognized for their exceptional creativity and commitment to the themes of social justice. The event concluded with a heartfelt Vote of Thanks delivered by Dr. Ripal Gupta, Assistant Professor and Nodal Officer of PBC & LAC, who expressed gratitude to all participants, faculty members, and attendees for making Nyaymitra a resounding success.

Through Nyaymitra, the Pro Bono Club and Legal Assistance Cell reaffirmed their dedication to empowering students with the knowledge and skills needed to champion social justice. The event left an indelible mark, inspiring participants to contribute meaningfully to society and uphold the ideals of justice and equity.

BLOGS

VULNERABILITIES OF ACID ATTACK SURVIVORS

By Paras Verma and Bhaavya Seth

We've all heard the story of a beast turning into beauty in fiction, but we've also heard the story of beauties being stereotyped as beasts in reality. And the reason is acid attacks. Although the achieved world has significant success incontrolling crimes against life, liberty and dignity, the progress in controlling the crimes amalgamated with sheer hatred, jealousy and anguish still needs to be controlled. We've all heard the stories of brave people who came out of this vicious circle, we even acknowledge the unheard stories, but have we ever paid attention to the course of their lives that changes with it? The idiom of 'putting yourself in their shoes' is hard to realize in the case of acid attack survivors. Their entire discourse of life changes in a matter of seconds.

This blog will enlighten the overall vulnerabilities of survivors of acid attacks, presenting the systematic failures that have kept them in a marginal position.

The Nature of Acid Attacks

What is acid attack in general is something we all know. It is the intentional throwing of corrosive acids, often sulfuric or nitric acids, onto the victim with the intent to disfigure the face or cause unbearable suffering. Is this definition suffice the trauma that the victims go through? Is this definition covers the story of Gabrielle White, a 22-year-old single mother living in Detroit, who was attacked on 26 August 2006 by a stranger.

The fact is that she was left with third and fourth-degree burns on her face, throat, and arms, leaving her blind and without one ear. She also miscarried her unborn child.According to a report, "While acid attacks are perpetrated against both men and women, the vast majority of victims -80%globally - are women, and the majority of perpetrators are male, which are both known and unknown". The Multifaceted Dimensions of Vulnerability Encountered by Survivors of Acid Attacks

1. Physical Vulnerability:

Acid attack immediately causes unimaginable physical pain since the acid penetrates skin, affects bone and tissue, often destroying one's vision, partially or completely disfiguring one's permanently impairing face. or even mobility.Survivors need often several reconstructive surgeries to be able to function as a normal human being again-to eat, speak,or breathe properly. The strength it takes to face permanent scarring, impairment of mobility, and long-term medical care is monumental. Even though such treatments might be available for those with this condition, surgical interventions orgrafts may be costly and otherwise not readily available due to the healthcare shortcomings in the region. Survivors are therefore at higher risk for chronic pain and complications based on this lack of care.

2. Psychological Vulnerability:

Beyond the physical marks, however, is

another dimension that often goes unnoticed, the massive long-term blows to self-esteem, mental health, and even the probability of rebuilding lives. Surviving an assault can lead to psychological effects like depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and social isolation in survivors. This can go to the extent where the victim can even commit suicide as in the case of Fakhra Younus, she was a Pakistani woman who was the victim of an acid attack, which severely injured her face. She underwent 39 surgeries during a 10year period. She died by suicide at age 33. This condition is further augmented by the stigma thatsuch disfigurement carries. The sufferers are shunned by society and branded "monsters" or "ugly," which further alienates them and makes it difficult for them to return to their social environments.

1. Social Vulnerability:

In numerous countries of the world, acid attack survivors suffer extreme social ostracism since the

look is often culturally used as an indicator of personal value and even identity. The victims of acid attacks are often ridiculed orblamed for the violence inflicted upon their bodies in societies that view beauty standards as rigid and where a person's status is decisively determined by their looks. This means that survivors suffer from anv form of discrimination in all phases of life, education and employment through social relations and even marrying.

Most of the survivors are social outcasts and excluded by their own communities. In most cases, those who survive acid attacks are not marriageable, and suitable mates reject them. In extreme situations, a survivor may even be shunned by herfamily, already a marginalized individual, and she is pushed further into the dark, with no support structures to take her back into society to reconstruct herself.

2. Legal Vulnerability:

Acid attacks fall under serious crimes in the rest of the world, but victims still face legal hurdles; basically, corruption, intimidation, and delay. In India, Section 326A IPC prescribes a maximum of ten years imprisonment for theoffenders, but this seems still too light a sentence in the face of a victim's lifetime blow. Survivors also have to carry on the burden of proof, and weak laws coupled with lackluster enforcement in many countries mean that acid is available in the market with ease, inadvertently having boosted further attacks. Such lack of accountability puts survivors at risk and creates violence.

Conclusion

Acid attack survivors suffer a deluge of challenges that span to physical, psychological, social, economic, and legal aspects. The society can help its acid attack survivors regain their dignity, rebuild their lives, and become forces of change through comprehensive medical care, psychological support and legal reform. Empowering these survivors isnothing short of justice and an exercise of collective humanity. Laxmi Agarwal is one of the few examples of it, who wasan Indian acid attack survivor, a campaigner for the rights of acid attack victims, and a TV host.

Laxmi is the founder and President of The Laxmi Foundation, an NGO dedicated to acid attack victims. In 2019, she was honored with the International Women Empowerment Award from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation and UNICEF for her campaign of Stop Acid Sale. In 2014, she received the International Women of Courage Award from Michelle Obama. This shows the dedication she put in to protect the acid attack survivors and help them in every way they needed.

This is one of the many examples that exist where the survivors had set up an example of coming out of such incidents which requires sheer determination and will. But the fact still remains the same that in spite of all this, there exists a world from where people still find it difficult to come out. The governments of the world, the societies and the NGOs working for the cause, should come together to make the world a better place for acid attack survivors, so that they too, could re-find the purpose of their lives.

FROM VICTIMS TO SURVIVORS AND TO TOMORROW'S FUTURE

"He changed my face, not my heart. He threw acid on my face, not my dreams" These words of Laxmi Agarwal, an acid attack survivor and campaigner for the rights of acid attack/vitriolage victims, throw our light and attention beyond our imagination to learn and understand the physical distress and unwellness being caused through a drop of chemical substance, through its unrestricted usage and cruel behaviour of human beings. Europe is believed to be the origin of acid attacks. Still, it was prominent and took shape in UK during the Industrial Revolution, and the book"Brighton Rock" published by the English writer Graham Green in 1938, depicts an incident of a lady walking with a small bottle of acid for protection is one among the finest incident in literature as the book characterized the concept of "acid attack" for the first time in world literature.

In the present era of science and AI, the depth of acid attacks has increased to an uncontrollable extent. As per the study reports of ActionAid, a UK-based charitable company, there are more than 1500 reported acid attacks globally withalmost a similar number of unreported cases as well. The National Crime Report Bureau (NCRB) reported 124 acid attacks in India in 2022 and 176 attacks in 2021 as well. A primary reason for increased acid attacks in nations like India is due to the fact that acid is inexpensive and readily available for consumption as well.

Moreover, in majority of cases, acid attacks are often unreported due to fear of vengeance.

The study by Acid Survivors Trust International found that around 80% of acid attack victims are women, and they are unable to raise their voices against their culprits/enemies due to their threat and perception of future attacks. This is the cover poster of a documentary film by Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy and Daniel Junge in 2012, which was inspired by the life of acid victim Fakhra Younus. The poster symbolically represents that the victim of an acid attack not only needs to hide her face but also needs to hide and forget their tragedy in order to become a "survivor"

As the blog title narrates, the survivors of every tragedy will always have a painful story to tell, as it is that darkstory that made them victims of an unprecedented menace. The challenging odyssey from being a 'victim' to a 'survivor'at a particular point in life is a journey which happens in a continuous transaction, and "vulnerability" is the major obstacle in that journey. An unhealthy mind and body, monetary losses, social stigmas, social fear, and anxiety about the future are among very few components of vulnerability. Its also a crucial aspect that note that even though the acid attack have happened against victim's body, its repercussions are vast and humongous in sense that it also affect the mind andmental well being of the victim and also causes fear and tensions on the family members of the victim as it will lead to months and even more years in certain cases for the victim and family to recover from their physical as well as mental trauma. The deeds of a single individual is needed for a person to become a 'victim' in acid attacks and moreover, that single attack also causes and attracts more people in becoming victims like

those people who are closely connected with the victim like family members, close friends, relatives etc.

At the same time, the transition from victim to survivor requires a combined and holistic approach of the medical team, police, govt, and lawyers. moreover, the combined support and participation of the entire society is needed to recover the victim and family. The various central level schemes like PMNRF (Prime Minister's National Relief Fund), CVCF (Central Victim Compensation Fund Scheme), other central schemes along with specific statelevel schemes provide free treatment to the acid attack victim and disburse compensation of more than 3 Lakhs to the survivors of vitriolage. Under the section 124 of newly implemented Bharathiya Nyaya Sanhita, the punishment for acid attack varies from 10 years to life in prison with fines and even attempts to such attack can also cause you 5-7 years behind bars.

The counselling and reformation services of social workers, psychologists, etc, along with certain other departments like women's cells, legal services authority, childline, etc., can heal the victims and can play a transformative role in the rejuvenation of victims in their journey to becoming survivors.

It is a clear fact that acids, which were the creation of science for human wellbeing, are currently being misused forhuman destruction as a weapon of revenge, thereby degrading humanity and create turbulence within humanity. The Supreme court of India in Laxmi minor vs. Union of India (2006) urged the govt to take proactive measures on regulation of the sale of acids.

It is still a hard reality that clear-cut legislation and strict procedures which may be in existence are not fully implemented and double-verified at the ground level. In this regard, a clear-cut instruction and vigilance should be created among medical shop staff, drug dealers, laboratories, etc, for their use and distribution of acids to regulate andcontrol the unnecessary sale of acids. More than 70 per cent of acid attacks are happening against children and women, and this fact requires awareness and the need to profess and concentrate more on human life and dignity among the publicin order to rebuild an inclusive and safe society for all.

"I am not a victim, I am a survivor"

These words of Laxmi Agarwal resound with thousands of vitriolage survivors of the world and it is this hope andbelief that makes their life comfortable and happier for them the break down the shackles of their tragic past and fly forward focusing on the future like a phoenix bird, to be the leader and voice of thousands of prisoners of hope.

BLISTERING INJUSTICE: THE ONGOING BATTLE OF ACID ATTACK SURVIVORS

By Anshika Pradhan

"The act of throwing acid at someone is not only an assault on the individual victim, but on the whole community, and we must join forces to end this form of violence." – Ban Ki-moon.

Introduction

Patriarchal dominance has been a constant motivation for men to do violence against women, be it sexual abuse, dowry, infanticide, and many other forms to continue. It is challenging to survive as a woman; yet another horrific crime is that of 'Acid Attack'. Vitriolage is another term that is used to describe acid attacks, which means an act of throwing vitriol (concentrated sulphuric acid) on the face or other body parts of a person to cause harm to the person out of jealousy or revenge. However, the victim can be any person, irrespective of religion, sex, caste, etc. Still, there are studies like "the 226th Report of the Law Commission of India and Reports of Justice Verma Committee" that state that the heinous crime of acid attack has a specific gender dimension in India. Wherein generally, women (young girls) become the target of this horrific crime. The results of an Acid attack are severe disfigurement of the head, face, or entire body, contractures, scar formation, restricted joint movement, destruction of clothing, permanent loss of sight, evidence of acid or other corrosive substances splashing or spilling on the body, and in extreme cases may also lead to the death of the victim. Immediate treatment or first aid for the victims of the attack holds

considerable importance. Unlike arbitrary or natural occurrences, Acid attacks are a social phenomenon that is deeply embedded in a patriarchal gender system, where control over women is reinforced, thereby justifying violence against them.

'Acid attacks are a form of terrorism meant to instil fear and intimidate women', says Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy. When we talk about victim typology by Benjamin Mendelson, the acid attack victims fall under 'Innocent Victims of Crime'. The victims not only suffer through physical harm but also psychological, functional and social harm.

Physical Impact: It takes only 3-5 seconds of contact for superficial burns; a little more time may cause the burning of the skin and melting of flesh, muscle and even bones; once the acid burns, its effects cannot be erased. The 226th Report of Law Commission has proposed to include acid attack as a specific offence in the criminal laws and enlisted the physical effects of an acid attack, which include loss of hairs, shrinking of skin and deformation on various parts of the body, deafness, blindness, nostrils may close due to destroyed cartilage, and can badly damage chest and in young girls even the development of breasts may be stopped.

Psychological Impact: The psychological trauma faced by the victims is grave, the psychological problems arise out of shock, and the constant feeling of syncope can be as draining as the physical effects of the acid burns. Most of the victims become less social, experience shame, feel guilty, and might even suffer isolation afterwards. A development of unwantedfears, phobias, depressive mood, anger and aggression are the immediate

impacts of the attack. They develop trust issueswith other genders. In the immediate aftermath, the survivor may report a variety of psychological responses like a lifetime diagnosis of anxiety, depression, eating disorders, PTSD, sleep disorders and suicidal attempts.

The Socio-Economic Impact: constant embarrassment and fear of repulsive looks from others makes the victims underconfident and hence scares them to face society. The survivors face loss of reputation and social status; the victim is always considered as a weak and vulnerable person and is not treated as before the occurrence of the crime. Studies have revealed that victims experience subsequent impairment in their social leisure activities They face disruption in intimate relationships and even marital dissatisfaction. Another consequence of victimisation is the inability to obtain and maintain gainful employment; for instance, if a victim wants to secure a job in the front office in the hospitality industry or in airlines, they will be least preferred based on their looks as compared to non-victim. A victim will report lower productivity, frequent tardiness. absenteeism. job turnover and unemployment.

Relevant Legal Framework

"The constitution of India provides the Right to Life under Article 21, the Right to Equality under Article 14, Duty of the state to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in whichjustice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life under Article 38 (1)". Section 326A of the Indian Penal Code, now section 124 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, causes grievous hurt by the use of acid, etc. Section 31 of the "Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act lays out the duties of the Child WelfareCommittee, which involves the duty of the committee to dispose of cases for care, protection, treatment, development andrehabilitation of children as well as basic needs and protection of human rights."

The courts have also made efforts to provide some relief to the survivors. For instance, "the High Court at Andhra Pradesh, 1997 (1) ALT 547, granted a compensation of five lakhs to a survivor of an acid attack, alongside ensuring speedy access to the awarded funds"-the apex court in the case of "Laxmi v. Union of India and Ors. (WP (CRIM) 129/2006) directed the states to frame their own rules as the compensation schemes of various states may vary and to ensure that victimreceive minimum compensation of Rupees 3 lacs." "Subsequently, In another case of Parivartan Kendra v. Union of India & Ors., reported in (2016) 3 SCC 571, the Supreme Court examined the physical, economic, social, and psychological consequences faced by victims of acid attacks."

Conclusion

The crime of Acid Attack is not just a crime, but it is an act of cowardness, an act to impose unnecessary dominance over one gender and an act against humanity. When we try to understand the plight of the victims, we get toknow that there are not only physical impacts of the attack but also psychological, functional and socio-economic impactsthat also make room for themselves. The aftermath of the attack may result in life-long trauma; the state is making effortsto prevent this crime by implementing stringent measures, introducing various schemes for compensation, and implementing new social-security measures; one such initiative is the NALSA (Legal Services RO Victims of Acid Attacks) Scheme, 2016 is launched by the NALSA to provide legal assistance to acid attacks victims and ensure that they are appropriately rehabilitated in the society. Despite these efforts of the state, crime is still prevalent in India and other South-Asian countries. We all need to work together to remove this obstacle from the society.

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Under DoJ's #NyayaBandhu constituted Pro Bono Club of the School of Law, Forensic Justice and Policy Studies, National Forensic Sciences University, #Guiarat & members of Legal Assistance Clinic participated in the recently held National Lok Adalat by NALSA. Students learned the mechanism of settling disputes through mediation by conciliators & their approach for pre-litigation settlement between parties & the overall functioning of Lok Adalats.





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On the eve of #GandhiJayanti2022, #ProBono Club of School of Law, Forensic Justice & Policy Studies, @NFSU_Official organised Legal & Social Awareness Drive, wherein, a session on DoJ's Pro Bono Legal Services Scheme & Tele-law was also conducted.

Dr. Navtika singh Nautiyal, nodal of ProBono Club, @NFSU_Official inaugurated ProBono Booth in the primary school of Indroda Village to facilitate easy grievance edressal. #ProBono Associates interacted individually with he residents and took stock of underlying problems





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Probono Club of SoL, Forensic Justice & Policy Studies, National Forensic Sciences University organised a Door to Door campaign to promote #TeleLaw & #NyayaBandhu programs of DoJ.

The campaign was done by the Pro Bono Club of NFSU at (udasan village & Indroda village.







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