

Session no-1 started with the topic Interface of Law and Policy in Legal Aid and Disaster Management in State of Kerala (Kerala Floods, 2018). The Key Speakers of the session were Prof. Krishnadas, Keele University, UK and Prof. K.C Sunny, VC, NUALS, Kochi.

NLUO, NUALS, and Keele University collaborated to initiate a research in socio-legal outreach methodologies to further the cause of “Access to Justice (A2J)” program in India.

Objective of the Session:

The objective of the conference was to provide support socially, psychologically, legally to the victims of disaster (manmade and natural). The aftermath of any disaster is a crucial time to provide relief, advice and support. The whole idea of the conference was to share ideas about access to justice by providing legal aid, mediation, legal counselling and a platform to provide an insight about how it can be done in a gated community. It included design to use practical examples to test the use of a range of knowledge sharing methods: after action review, storytelling, peer assistance and participation of participants.

Rationale of the Session:

This technical session explored ways and means to improve information exchange and projects’ outcome reach end users through well designed outreach and dissemination approaches. It addressed the capitalisation of experiences and methodology to adopt. For this, it reviewed various experiences to understand in which conditions the involvement of volunteers has been successful and how it was implemented.

First Session –

- Professor Krishnadas, Keele University, gave a brief about the genesis of the ‘Global Challenges Research Fund’ / UKIERI research initiative. He said that

reaching out to the marginalised vulnerable communities and providing them legal tools was the driving force behind this project .

- The evolution of the programme got a boost from the Kerala floods of August 2018. Considered to be one of the worst flood of the century, it almost paralyzed the State rendering millions homeless and marooned. The idea was to connect with people directly instead of looking at the past .
- Mr. Kanishka, Faculty In-charge legal aid talked about the proactive role played by legal aid clinic of NLUO. Mr Kanishk, the legal aid head of NLUO deliberated on how access to justice is a part of student curriculum and it was made compulsory for 3rd year students, it has been introduced in the LL.M courses as well. Due to shortage of fund, it is done as an academic work. They helped people sensitise about Krushaka Kalia Yojana of Odisha government of Sukua Kala village. Currently the institute has six legal aid clinics committed to legal advocacy, paralegal services and counselling .
- Prof (Dr) K.C. Sunny, VC of NUALS Kochi briefed about the legal aid committee of NUALS. He said that at operational level all the Legal Services Authorities need help of volunteers. Adding to it , he said that by developing courses for disaster management and sharing experiences we can equip ourselves to deal with post disaster scenarios.
- Presentation -1 : NEETHIDHARA PROJECT (presented by –Megha and Chandini, NUALS)
 - ❖ Megha said that the Neethidhara project is much more to disaster relief than providing food sharing experiences and anecdotes .
 - ❖ She said that Kerala is a city known for its rains. According to IMD information, during 2018 floods Kerala got 2346.6 mm of precipitation from 1 June 2018 to 19 August 2018 as opposed to a normal 1649.5 mm of precipitation. This precipitation was about 42% over the typical.

- ❖ Chandini discussed what the floods taught them and what they could learn from it . She said that what started as a one day programme led to the creation of rescue operation and online response teams of NUALS. The directions of DLSA, Kochi were adopted by NUALS in these operations. She highlighted the role played by their institute in providing infrastructure and resources to the affected people.
- ❖ She then discussed the survey data collected by them regarding the loss of property and documents of people who were affected with flood. According to her the only way to mitigate the havoc created by natural disasters is to arm ourselves with knowledge.
- ❖ .

Chandini and two of her friends, students of NUALS prepared a presentation to deliberate on the Neetidhara project that they worked upon closely. In the Kerala floods, 50% of the students were trapped in the campus. The campus was turned into a relief camp, college provided a relief fund. Immediately, desks were set up and students took turns to advise and help. In a matter of one day, the inflow of people increased after word of the mouth spread that law students have set up camps in the college vicinity. The number reached to 500+ people in a single day. They categorised the problems according to the loss, like loss of house, household articles, documentation, miscellaneous etc and accordingly desks were organised based on the categories. As the flood was unforeseen, it wreaked havoc in the state. 14 districts were in red alert, fishermen lost their lives who went into the sea. The students reached out to the municipalities, gram panchayats and even got in touch with NGO called KUDUMASHREE to help out people. All in all, the outcomes were mostly positive. The policies were made aware of, posters were displayed in public offices, social media was used as a platform to stay connected with the people, disaster management classes were introduced in schools. They have made an effort to still keep in touch with the victims of Kerala flood and build a community through WhatsApp and social medias. The work they have done is commendable and hence given us a framework to work with, if such disaster strikes. The students narrated personal experiences during the floods and were almost choked

with tears while sharing it with the other panellists. After that few students asked questions regarding their approach, their guidance and how did they pull through all this, if Kerala has para legal services authority. They answered all the questions with much diligence and stated the facts that they had recorded. After that Vice Chancellor Prof. Sunny opined to establish National Skill services in all colleges and gated community.

- Suggestions that came up at this session were –
 - ❖ Creating awareness about existing policies
 - ❖ Proper implementation of disaster management methods
 - ❖ Construction of houses using eco-friendly material .
 - ❖ Implementing Gadgil Committee recommendation on cultivation of single commercial crops on steep slopes .
- Controlling massive encroachment and deforestation in catchment areas of major rivers

Session II started with the presentation made by National Law University, Odisha students on Post-Disaster Socio Legal Intervention in state of Odisha. The students discussed about the calamities which frequently happen in Odisha. They spoke about the loss and damage suffered by the people in such calamities and the steps taken by the Government of Odisha to mitigate such loss and damages caused due to such calamities. Odisha being a coastal state is prone to cyclone and flood. They explained about the measure taken by Government of Odisha to tackle such calamities. Measures like shelter homes are being constructed in the flood and cyclone prone districts of Odisha, forming of ODRAF teams, storage of essential commodities which are to be provided to the victims of natural calamities and so on. They also talked in detail about the major cyclones that had occurred in Odisha in last 20 years. They explained the functions of OSDMA (Odisha State Disaster Management Authority) and OSLSA (Odisha State Legal Services Authority).

Sir Deepak Ranjan Sahoo, member of OSLSA who gave us an insight view of the OSLSA. How its functioning, who are its members, qualification of the members and many other

important aspects of OSLSA he discussed. He also talked about the role of para-legal volunteers in situations of natural calamities.

Session III was conducted by Odisha state disaster management authority

The main topic of discussions was as to how the disaster management authority in Odisha had come up with new ideas and technologies to combat cyclone. He explained us about the mobile based app called Satrak. Then a brief discussion took place about the Super Cyclone, 1999 and what were the loss that was suffered. Around 480km cost line were frequently effected by cyclone with 11 river system created frequent floods. This gave rise to the OSDMA in December, 1999. Around 50% villages were projected and 335 units where formed for quick response along with social media alert. Several multipurpose shelter homes where made which include sickroom, toilet ,drinking water etc. which were later converted into marriage mandaps, training halls, schools etc They had also introduced an early warning disseminating system which is connected to the satellite, DMR and alert towers in 122 out coast. This process helped in mass messaging.

The forum also had a discussion on the recently held cyclone Fani which involved GIS, US navy, RIMES and IMD for cyclone tracking. The largest evacuation took place during this cyclone. Around 15.5 lakhs and 25k tourists were evacuated including livestock. As per the analysis 1.6 crore population, 5 lakhs houses, 41 lakhs livestock were affected along with 64 casualties. However the power restorations, water supply provisions, pipe water supply, drinking water and sanitization of urban local bodies were taken care of.

Prof. Srikrishna talked about post disaster scenario, Keele University's outreach program. How KU reached out to the marginalised people to provide legal aid, devised a system. They wanted to implement the same in India. The tools come in the same form – when it comes to the women, children and people from different sections. Keele University supported to do pro bono work to improve the situation. Keele partnered with TISS to do socio-legal internship. NLUO joined 2 years back. With NUALS, NLUO, TISS joining hands with KEELE university, they have already dealt with 1200+

cases. Prof. Srikrishna had only words of appreciation for the work NUALS has done in Kerala floods. He advised to classify the loss, compile the data, divide students for each classification and carry out a survey to which the students agreed upon. With admiration for the work done and the discussions that ensued, the 1st 2nd and 3rd sessions were over with glimmering hope that stemmed from the heart.

After the presentation the forum was open for discussion with regard to cyclone and what measures were taken and could have been taken. After a heated discussion, the session came to an end with vote of thanks from our VC sir and Ms, Rujitha.