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Legal literacy camps



Purpose:

'Panchayat Shivar' is used here as a Hindi term for Interactive Legal Literacy Camp. Law trainers may use it to aid tribal self-rule in India or other forms of decentralisation. Trainers may also use this tool in other countries that are progressing towards decentralised governance.

Activities:

- Know your target group. For example are they village headmen, members of CBOs, local officials? Pitch your training accordingly.
- Make sure your trainer can deliver. What are their abilities, skills – as a trainer, legal practitioner, linguist?
- The trainer must know the law in depth and how it works at the field level.
- Start with people's existing knowledge of legal concepts. Create interest in words commonly used in law. The meaning of words such as judgement, order, rules, regulations, acts, policy, petition, suit and decree are often a good starting point.
- Build on existing knowledge. Relate law to everyday situations in a village setting. Choose a live legal conflict and break it into phases: what, when, how and the current context of the conflict.

- Create an atmosphere where there can be a free flow of information. Be adaptive and respond to feedback especially during breaks.
- You need to measure how well you are doing and who you are reaching. Collect information on numbers taking part, how involved they become, where they are from, how much it costs them to attend. This will help you prioritise need.
- Trainers usually get information on legal conflicts in an anecdotal form often with a political and social bias. To be objective, the bedrock of an effective legal strategy, the trainer must separate legal issues from social, political and moral opinions.
- Encourage others to speak, repeat an idea, explain to their neighbours, and explain other similar examples. This clarifies things for both trainer and trained.
- Always end with action-based next steps. Fix responsibilities, timelines, and forums for further clarifications and exchange.
- Conduct sessions over several months. Reinforce learning because law and legal concepts are not easy to understand

Keep in Mind

- ★ Hold camps in the villages where tribal (indigenous) people find themselves in familiar surroundings and so are more comfortable about taking part.
- ★ Use local examples to illustrate complex legal situations. Use simple language and simple expressions of legal concepts.
- ★ Use humour and local vernacular to help get across complex points.
- ★ Use easily identified objects and situations to help create a better atmosphere for free exchange of knowledge.
- ★ The trainer should behave like a student rather than master of the subject. This strategy, where people feel less pressurised, encourages open expression of ideas.
- ★ The time of the year and length of the camp are important. Avoid the harvesting season.
- ★ Include such techniques as role-playing, focus group discussions, pictorial representation of legal issues, triangulating incidents with legal implications, and informal sessions.
- ★ Strategies, language and content must differ with the type of audience. So a strategy for senior officials should be different from that for mid-level administrators or village people.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at: www.policy-powertools.org or contact: Sanjay Upadhyay eldf@vsnl.net; admin@eldfindia.com
You can obtain the simple and useful Hand Guide on Tribal Self Rule Law in India from:
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