

MEDIA RELEASE

Manipur: Government Departments to Strategize for Transgender Inclusion in Services, Schemes and Entitlements

Imphal, August 11, 2016: Today, Manipur State Legal Services Authority (MASLSA), the apex body in the state that provides free legal aid services to marginalised populations, is organizing an inter-departmental workshop in association with All Manipur Nupi Manbi Association (AMANA), Empowering Trans Ability (ETA) and Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), to initiate dialogue among key departments and stakeholders to address issues of transgender inclusion.

Chaired by Hon'ble Justice Mr. Rakesh Ranjan Prasad, Chief Justice, High Court of Manipur and Patron-in-Chief, MASLSA, the workshop will have representatives from Departments of Social Welfare, Law, Education, Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution, Labour, Home, Health, Manipur State AIDS Control Society and members of transgender community (both trans women and trans men). **The meeting comes in the wake of the welcome announcement that the government has established Manipur Transgender Welfare Board as of August 1, 2016.**

A path-breaking ruling of the Supreme Court (National Legal Services Authority vs. Union of India, 2014) recognised the rights of transgender individuals to self-identity, freedom from discrimination and violence, and access to all rights and entitlements due to citizens of India. Despite this ruling, transgender communities are subjected to discrimination and denial of institutional services due to social stigma, punitive laws, and enforced norms around sexual behaviour, morality, binary gender and patriarchal constructs. Examples include poor healthcare access, inability to be recognized in their true (self-identified) gender; bullying and harassment at home, educational institutions and in the streets; high school dropout rates, and limited employment opportunities. These forms of exclusion collectively send communities into a downward spiral of increased poverty and debt, poor physical and mental health, and overall reduced quality of life.

Recognizing the need to remedy this situation, the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur established the much awaited transgender welfare board earlier this month, in line with the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's NALSA judgement. The welfare board is the first of its kind in the country to formally include both trans women (represented by AMANA) and trans men (represented by ETA) as members of the board.

Today's workshop will discuss a roadmap in addressing these issues and how various departments of Government of Manipur would come together in delivering transgender-inclusive and stigma-free social-legal-health-education services to transgender individuals.

Some key decisions to be discussed include:

- Recognition of self-identified gender as per the NALSA verdict as male, female or third gender, with ability to have this reflected in gazette notification and other official documents
- Implementation of five centrally sponsored schemes announced by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for transgender inclusion through pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, vocational training, pension to individuals above 40, and financial support to parents of transgender children as an incentive to retain children within biological families.

- Implementation of the Allahabad High Court (April 2015) mandating that that transgender people be eligible to avail status of Head of Household (HoH) status and seek access to food security.
- Recognition of transgender people as OBC, as per NALSA, unless they are already from a familial caste such as ST/SC in which case they could retain the latter

The transgender communities in Manipur look forward to these other measures for inclusive healthcare, education, employment, and freedom from violence and discrimination.

All Manipur Nupi Manbi Association, a registered state level network of LGBTI CBOs, works towards facilitating access to socio-legal and other services to gender and sexual minority communities, including transgender people.

Empowering Trans Ability (ETA), founded in 2014 and registered in 2016, is the first support group for trans men, lesbians and bisexual women in Manipur that works to provide psycho-social support to its members.

Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII), a registered charitable trust, works to advance access to health, justice and social welfare for marginalized populations.

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