

Police sensitization program

PS Malviya Nagar

05 November 2016

There is no domestic law or national policy for refugee protection in India. Refugee issues are dealt with on an ad hoc basis such as the Foreigners Act 1946, the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920, and the Passport Act, 1976 that governs their entry, stay and departure from the country. Owing to their legal status of being refugees/asylum seekers, the PoCs faces protection issues and hurdles in accessing legal procedures due to language barriers or local population's perspective including from the local authorities. In such situation, it becomes imperative to mitigate legal protection risk faced by PoCs through sensitizing police on applicable Indian laws pertaining to the protection of PoCs. The sensitization programme also aimed to minimize the gap of communication between Refugees and police and also to provide a sense of empowerment or comfort level to refugees for easy access to legal system.

In this backdrop, A police sensitization was jointly organised by UNHCR-SLIC-BOSCO at PS Malviya Nagar on 5/11/2016. UNHCR was represented by Viniti and Nilotpal, SLIC by Belover and Fazal and Fatima from BOSCO. The meeting was attended by 40 police personnel including the SHO and ATO of the PS.

UNHCR gave the overview of UNHCR operation across the globe and in India. The topics covered were :

1. Definition of a refugee
2. Difference between refugees , economic migrants and internally displaced persons
3. Principle of non-refoulement
4. Situation in India
5. UNHCR in India and area of operation
6. Partners of UNHCR
7. UNHCR documents/refugee ID card
8. Refugee population in India

SLIC emphasized on the activities and services provided by the organisation as under

1. Registration
2. File renewal
3. Naturalisation
4. Protection

Focus was also made on the legal services for refugees and asylum seekers. The legal services included assistance provided in police station and courts. Trainings on Refugee Protection and its principles including PoCs obligation to abide Indian laws. How PoCs should be treated differently from other foreigners and respect the principle of non-refoulement in case of arrest of a PoC. Highlight was made on the lack of domestic law on refugees and India being a non-signatory to 1951 UN convention on refugees, however, the availability of certain rights as stipulated in the Indian constitution which are applicable to non-citizens alike.

Further, BOSCO highlighted on its services pertaining to Education, Language and vocational training, Youth clubs and campaign, Community mobilization, Health and sanitation, Support for persons with special needs, SGBV prevention and response and Child protection.

The program saw a positive response from the SHO and police personnel and they assured cooperation in matter related to refugees and asylum seekers.