

## Increasing diversity by increasing access to legal education

India – IDIA Charitable Trust

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT

IDIA's overall goal is to empower marginalized communities through legal education, to sensitize them to law as a viable career option, and to support interested students in acquiring admission to leading law schools in India. IDIA also attempts to improve policies and regulations in the area of inclusive legal education and diversity within law schools and, consequently, within the legal profession.

### QUOTE:

*"IDIA seeks to empower students from underprivileged communities through legal education and to create community leaders from within these communities, as well as make legal education accessible to everyone, regardless of disabilities, and create a diversity-friendly legal ecosystem."*

—Dr. Shamnad Basheer, IDIA Charitable Trust

### FACTS & FIGURES

- 199 students were trained over the last five years.
- 67 scholars were admitted into law schools over the last five years.
- IDIA now has 400+ student volunteers divided among 16 regional chapters.

### PROBLEMS TARGETED

Until now, India's leading national law schools have been reserved for the elite and the privileged. According to a 2014 survey of the top five national law universities, only 5% of the newly admitted students came from families with an annual income below one Lakh of Indian Rupees (appx. US\$1,500). Moreover, all the top national law universities are required to reserve 3% of their spaces for students with disabilities. The process of integrating these students into these elite universities serves two purposes. First, when the students we train are successful in gaining admission into these universities, they are able to gain access to a premium legal education and thereby to powerful legal and political career paths. Second, increased diversity in the classrooms enriches the process of education itself.

## SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

The IDIA project aims to redress this serious imbalance and promote access to legal education in favour of the underprivileged. Given the connection between law and leadership, such education will also help generate community leaders, and in this way truly empower communities to help themselves. IDIA support includes: (i) SOLE training: IDIA student volunteers train selected underprivileged scholars on a regular basis for various exams in order to foster a “self-organized learning environment” (SOLE); (ii) Mentorship: IDIA scholars are allotted multiple mentors, including at least one senior student from a law school, one from the law profession, and one faculty member; (iii) Leadership, soft skills, and resilience: IDIA plans to impart strategically designed training programmes to enhance the soft skills (e.g., well-spoken English) and resilience of its scholars; and (iv) Diversity-friendly eco-system: Since its inception, IDIA’s policy wing has advocated for a more diversity-friendly eco-system, including challenging the discriminatory policies of law schools in courts of law.

## OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

IDIA has the following growth targets: (1) stabilizing operations in the 16 state chapters. (2) By 2020, establishing student chapters in all national law universities, and multiple student chapters in at least five states. (3) Securing institutional funding. (4) Hosting three public relations events each year. (5) Providing specialized leadership development and (6) focusing the efforts of our research and policy team on some of the structural issues.

Photo: Yes

Life story: Yes

## CONTACT

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