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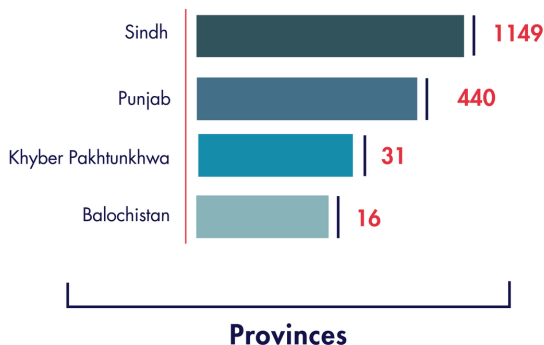
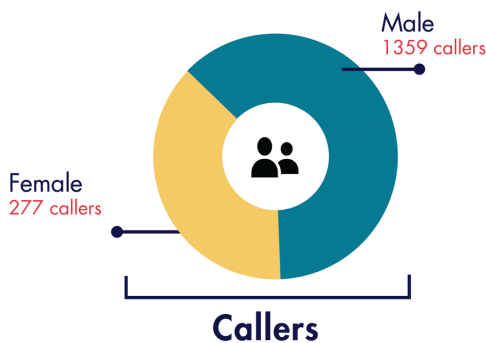


Highlights

Sindh Police appreciates the holistic Training Needs Assessment LAS conducted across 9 Police Training Academies

"Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (supported by the Law Department, Government of Sindh) has responded to 1,636 callers during this quarter"

1,636 citizens from across Pakistan have been provided with legal advice.



LAS files a Plea before the Sindh High Court for the plight of ignored senior citizens amidst the COVID-19 outbreak

LAS Conducts a Rapid Assessment of Essential Services for Victims and Survivors of SGBV

Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid, Executive Director (LAS) appointed as member of the Prime Minister's committee constituted to work for women prisoners

EDITORIAL

By Dr. Habiba Hassan
Board Member, LAS



Covid- 19: Rethinking Priorities

The scientists were predicting an influenza pandemic for almost two decades now, and some work on vaccine research had started. Yet the world was not fully prepared, and is now frantically fast tracking the process of making the vaccine. Today, even if an effective vaccine is produced, it will not be available for another year. Sadly many lives will be lost by then.

The pandemic started in China, where it was initially suppressed, only to announce it when it rose exponentially in December. The world was fully aware of it in January, and WHO announced the global pandemic then. Yet it seems that it was caught unexpectedly, despite the knowledge about the extreme infectivity of the virus, and the potential lethal outcome.

Most countries underplayed the threat from Covid-19 and took it casually – they dithered and wavered. They wasted precious time at the start, time that should have been taken for swift, bold steps. All air and road travelers coming from China should have been quarantined. The leaders created false binaries and confused their citizens, thereby diluting the impact of the lockdown and other measures. Those countries paid a terrible price for their faulty decision making. Some countries like South Korea, New Zealand and Mauritius stand out for the way their leadership processed the challenge, crafted a comprehensive strategy and executed it with clarity and conviction, thereby controlling the spread of Covid-19 before it could wreak havoc in terms of infections and fatalities. They were able to have earlier resumption of normal life and lower impact on their economies.

The January – June 2020 story tells us the following about Pakistan: One, we dithered. Two, we took corona lightly. Three, we wasted at least February and two weeks of March, in mishandling the 'zaires' from Iran, the Raiwind 'ijtimah', and in the flights coming from all over the world. Four, the federal government provided weak leadership. Five, we could not do the lockdown and testing that was needed at the time it was needed. Six, we politicized a public health issue.

Science is little understood or valued, hence its recommendations fall on deaf ears. It is impossible for Pakistan to ban congregational prayers, and follow the footsteps taken by other Muslim countries. And now after a brief hiatus, public spaces during Ramzan and Eid were teeming with unmasked, ungloved people who recklessly abandoned all to fate and chance. Food, footwear, clothing markets, jeweller's shops, and car show rooms were packed.

Even as Covid-19 spirals up, life is normalizing everywhere except where priorities are low – such as education. Although younger people are statistically at lower risk all schools, colleges and universities are closed until July 15.

This pandemic – a Biological World War, has exposed the vulnerability of societies. The super power with the mightiest military in the world, and the most sophisticated and advanced medical know how has been brought to its knees, with the highest morbidity and mortality. This is in part because it has possibly the highest gross unequal distribution of wealth, with lack of adequate social welfare system for the masses.

It is time for each one of us to reflect on the fault lines laid bare by this pandemic, in order to chart a way forward. Life must take priority over economics. Once the acute phase is over which is a matter of months, during which lives must be saved, the economic activity can slowly restart.

The importance of investing in the people is evident. The deficiencies in our fragile health system – poor health facilities and shortage of medical personnel has been exposed. We only need water and soap to get rid of this virus, but for the majority of the population living on two cans a day carried from far, is it practically possible? Provision of safe drinking water, and clean sanitation is a basic human right, which must be provided to all. Corona along with eighty percent of the infectious diseases in our country would be controlled. This time round we are facing a biological world war, which is here to stay for some time. This war needs investing in people directly – health, education and poverty alleviation, and not in maintaining a standing army. It is worth noting that after World War 2, no country has been invaded from outside. The two nations that disintegrated were Russia and Yugoslavia, and in both this came from within. Their mighty army installations were of no help in preventing it.

The world has changed dramatically, and it demands shift in priorities. It was disappointing to see an increase in the defense allocation in the Federal budget. The provincial budgets have shown an increase in allocation in the education and health sectors, which is a welcome step. However, preventive health measures – clean water, sanitation and primary health care facilities do not seem to be given much thought. These lay the basic foundations of a health system. The water crisis should be addressed on a war footing immediately. Repeatedly have we been hearing of replacing the decades old pipelines of cities, of covering the open canals to prevent evaporation, having drip irrigation, building check dams in arid zones etc, yet no progress is made in this direction. Covid has laid bare the good and bad, both in individuals, and also in the system, and it is time for us to reflect, and rethink our priorities.

Appreciation from the Sindh Police on the Training Needs Assessment Conducted by LAS

On 13th November, 2019, LAS and the Sindh Police signed a Memorandum of Understanding at the Central Police Office for the purpose of conducting a training needs assessment (TNA) of the Sindh Police with the support of the International Committee on the Red Cross. The aim was to support the Sindh Police in ensuring that the training of the police is efficient, needs-based, diligently monitored, managed and goal-oriented.



Meeting with DIG Training Mr. Nasir Aftab on 1st June, 2020 at the Central Police Office

responsibilities?" The overarching areas of analysis were training design, trainers and teaching methodology and training content. The priority areas and analytical framework was based on use of force, torture and detention, vulnerable communities and healthcare in danger. It has been recommended that the curriculum should be linked with learning standards, outcomes and competencies. This needs to be done through first developing the competencies



Meeting for the Presentation of TNA findings held on 4th June, 2020 at the Central Police Office

The team at LAS working on the TNA comprised of Ms. Maliha Zia Lari (Associate Director), Ms. Hira Saleem (Program Manager) and Ms. Andalib Aziz (Research Coordinator). The team collectively visited and interviewed 250 police officers including trainers and trainees from four police training institutions and police officers ranking from Constable to Additional Inspector Generals from three cities to gather primary data. The data was also gathered from dialogues conducted with stakeholders from Sukkur, Hyderabad and Karachi and included medico-legal officers, prosecutors, and civil society organization members. A literature review of international best practices, domestic and international law, and a review of curriculum and course books was also conducted. The main research question was, "What are the gaps and potential areas of improvement in the training of Sindh Police as it relates to their job

and job descriptions. After assessing these factors, the curriculum will need to be developed and reorganized in line with said competencies and job descriptions for both the theoretical and physical training. To better facilitate the new curriculum, a training plan and schedule will need to be devised. The training medium should be based on adult learning methodologies. There is a dire need to review the mechanism of selection and accountability of trainers. Ms Maliha visited DIG Nasir Aftab on the findings and recommendations of the report on 1st June 2020 at Central Police Office. He agreed with and supported the said findings. A follow up meeting was conducted on 4th June, 2020 at the Central Police Office in which the findings of the TNA were presented to principals of various police training academies. The findings were presented and were largely appreciated and approved.

Rapid Assessment of Justice Needs During Lock Down

Since 14th April, 2020, the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Centre, run in partnership with the Law Department (Government of Sindh), has been providing essential services in terms of guiding callers with legal advice but also providing much needed information relating to the Ehsas Program, Ration Assistance and general issues related with prevention and control of COVID-19. LAS has conducted weekly rapid assessments to understand the trends in justice issues from analysing queries raised during the COVID-19 crisis, particularly during the lockdown period in Sindh.

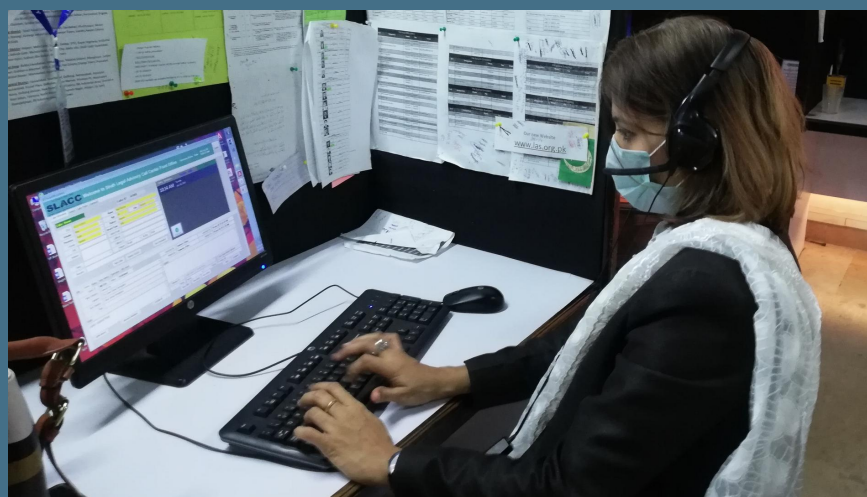
Between the three week period of 14th April, 2020 to 16th May, 2020, SLACC responded to a total of 1,636 calls (of which 1359 were from male callers and 277 were from female callers). The highest number of calls originated from Sindh (1149 calls), followed by Punjab (440 calls), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (31 calls) and Balochistan (14 calls). The calls were subdivided into four main: Civil Law (442 calls), Criminal Law (186 calls), Public Service (530 calls) and General Information (374 calls). The higher number of calls classified as Public Service was due to an increase in queries related to ration assistance, the Ehsas Programme and COVID-19 information calls that our legal advisors also provided assisted with.

In analysing the justice needs of callers, special emphasis was placed on female callers and issues which were exacerbated by COVID-19. Initially there were a greater number of calls related to the Ehsas Programme as well as with ration related assistance. Callers also reported facing termination/unpaid wages, problems with violations of lockdown SOPs, impending rent payments and



asked about the reopening of courts and workplaces. Additionally, callers had queries related to COVID-19 and sought tips to prevent catching the virus.

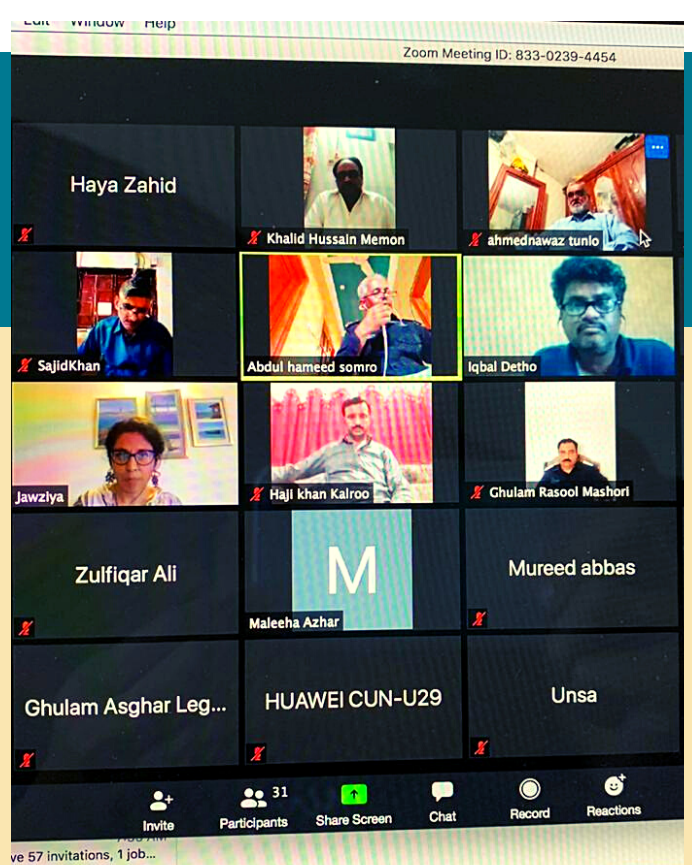
Every man-made or natural disaster impacts vulnerable women and children more as it exposes them to further risks. It was observed that as unemployment and wage cuts surged and more families were confined to their homes, the domestic burdens of women increased. Female callers reported distressful situations which included a majority of family law related issues. Female callers reported domestic violence (20 calls), conjugal rights issues (14 calls), maintenance issues (25 calls), custody and guardianship of minors issues (25 calls), polygamy (10 calls) and other family law related issues (53 calls). Access to courts, police and shelter homes also remained difficult for female callers who needed to approach authorities to resolve their issues.



Training for Prison Officials on the Juvenile Justice System Act, 2018

In May 2020, the Legal Aid Society conducted its first online training session with Sindh Prison officials on the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018 ("JJSA"). In the current climate where prisoner wellbeing and welfare is especially at stake, the plight of incarcerated juveniles has taken a front seat globally, as governments devise ways to limit the spread of Covid-19 amongst those most vulnerable. The goal of the session, therefore, was to create awareness and discussions around the JJSA, a progressive piece of legislation that offers juveniles protections previously missing.

The training was held over a period of two days and had 22 of participants from the Sindh Prison Department. Mr. Shehneel Gill and Ms. Nazo Pirzada, senior trainers at Aahung, led the first day's sessions on soft skills, which included creating an understanding of how children think and react, and responding accordingly in situations of stress and difficulty. During the session, the participants were frequently made to reflect on their own childhood experiences with adults and to engage with numerous scenarios as a way of understanding how to practically apply the knowledge generated during the session. Prison officials were exceptionally engaged during this session and expressed appreciation for the trainers' materials and discussion afterwards. On the second day of the training, senior trainer Mr. Iqbal Detho led the group through the complex legislative structure dealing with the rights of juveniles,



including international legal standards and instruments and the Sindh Prison Rules, which were gazetted earlier this year. There was a rich discussion held amongst participants around various terms and definitions in the JJSA, the rights of incarcerated juveniles, and age determination procedures at the level of the police and the courts. Participants were able to share their real life experiences with juveniles and gain much-needed clarity on the procedural hurdles in the criminal justice system as well as new provisions in the Prison Rules.

This JJSA training was the first of a series of trainings that LAS will conduct with various stakeholders. The next such training will be conducted with members of the police, as they are the first point of contact for juveniles with the criminal justice system. After individual trainings with each department, LAS hopes to conduct a final training that consolidates the various actors of the justice system who must work together to operationalize the JJSA and create a better environment for incarcerated juveniles.

Rapid Assessment of Current Status of Essential Services for Survivors and Victims of Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Offences (Sindh)

1 in 3 women across the world has experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a perpetrator in their lifetime, according to the World Health Organization. Violence against women tends to increase during emergencies, especially during an epidemic of this nature, because lockdown measures result in women being confined in the home for longer periods, and familial perpetrators of violence exercise further dominance and control over their victims. In addition, women have less contact with outside sources of support during a lockdown, and the stress of economic uncertainty and lack of access to basic needs can also exacerbate aggression and tension in the household. Reports from across the world show an increase in domestic violence calls to helplines, police and shelters during the pandemic. Pakistan confirmed its first COVID-19 case on 25th February, 2020 and ever since then the virus has spread rapidly across the country. Like many other countries around the world, the Sindh Government took an essential step to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through a provincial lockdown placed on 23rd March, 2020. The lockdown included closures and restrictions on non-essential services and businesses and various Government departments. Women Development Department, Human Rights Department and Social Welfare Department were amongst the 25 administrative departments which were closed until 10th May, 2020. In light of the above, LAS conducted a Rapid Assessment survey; carried out in 3 districts (Karachi, Hyderabad and Sukkur), highlighting the gaps in provision of essential services against the

context of increased incidents of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). The objective of the assessment was to map the availability of essential services during the COVID-19 period responding to SGBV cases; secondly, to analyze and understand the essential services providers' prevention strategies, responses and challenges during this time period; and lastly to analyze the different impacts that COVID-19 has on different institutions.

LAS conducted various telephonic interviews with representatives of 11 Government and Quasi-Government departments and public-private partnerships. Interviews were also conducted with non-government organizations and activists working in the field.

The details of the findings and recommendations can be found on our website: <https://www.las.org.pk/communication/research-papers-and-publications/>



Prime Minister Imran Khan constituted a committee on the plight of women prisoners

Prime Minister Imran Khan constituted a committee on 29th May, 2020 to study and investigate the plight of women prisoners across the country. The committee is headed by the Minister of Human Rights Ms. Shireen Mazari and includes inspector general of prisons of all the four provinces, and northern Gilgit-Baltistan region, and includes Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid. The purview of the committee includes: to review, and assess the incumbent prison rules, governance, legal aid, and international best practices are being adhered to with respect to women prisoners, especially their protection, rights, health, security, and well-being. The committee was tasked to submit its report on the matter within a period of four months.

Plea of Ignored Senior Citizens of SINDH Amidst the COVID-19 Outbreak

Sindh promulgated the Senior Citizens Welfare Act 2014 (Seniors Act), which envisioned various rights and benefits given to elderly citizens. In December 2019, LAS filed a Constitutional Petition together with Dar-ul-Sukun before the Sindh High Court for effective enforcement and implementation of the Seniors Act which includes the establishment of old age homes across Sindh, issuance of Azadi cards to senior citizens that allow them avail medical and other benefits, and the establishment of a Council for the Welfare of Senior Citizens to oversee all activities pursuant to the Act and to monitor compliance as needed.



A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar ordered the Government of Sindh to comply with the provisions of the Act. This included: allocating funds for establishing Senior Citizens Welfare Fund; constituting a Complaint Redressal Committee; establishing maintaining old age homes at accessible places

with at least one in each district, and notifying rules within 45 days in accordance with the Act. As the COVID-19 virus continues to spread rapidly across Pakistan, it overwhelms resource-stretched health and social protection systems and there is a risk of the needs of senior citizens, who are most vulnerable to the virus, being de-prioritised. Although all age groups are at risk of contracting the virus, it is the elderly that are at a significantly higher risk of mortality. According to INSDG, "Police Brief: The Impact COVID-19 on older persons", an estimated 66% of people aged 70 and over have at least one underlying condition which is placing the elderly persons at risk of severe impact from COVID-19." In light of the above, on 8th June, 2020, LAS along with the assistance of Barrister Jaffer Raza and Advocate

Yahya Iqbal, filed a Constitutional Petition for implementation of the Seniors Act specifically emphasizing enforcement of Section 5(f) which provided that senior citizens' shall be provided with free geriatric, medical and health services with free medicines as provided by the respective medical office from the government hospital and 25% concession is to be given by all private hospitals, medical centres and clinics to senior citizens. The main grounds of the petition are the implementation of the above stated provision by the Sindh Government, relevant departments and private hospitals. The previous order issued by the Sindh High Court on December 12, 2020, ordered to enforce and implement the Act 2014 which included Section 5(f).

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