

# LAS

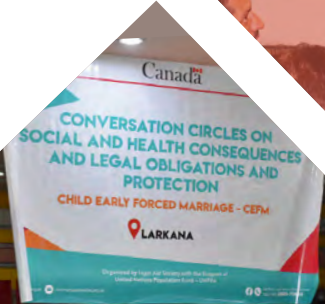
## LEGAL AID SOCIETY

INCREASING LEGAL  
EMPOWERMENT IN PAKISTAN

### Headlines this quarter:

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**NEWSLETTER**  
APRIL - JUNE 2021



16<sup>th</sup> Edition

## EDITORIAL SECTION: from the desk of Justice (R) Arif Hussain Khilji (Chief Legal Advisor, SLACC)



The Legal Aid Society (LAS), a not-for-profit organization registered on 19th November 2013, under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 has been operating under the chairpersonship of Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid (Former Judge Supreme Court of Pakistan and Former Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court. It has worked towards connecting vulnerable and disempowered end-users of justice with effective and expedient services for the delivery of justice. LAS's interventions have been aimed at increasing access to justice for poor and marginalized communities, particularly women, across the province of Sindh as well as at the Federal level.

Over the years, people in Pakistan have been employing ADR through different traditional and customary practices of informal dispute resolution, such as Jirgas and Panchayats (committees of elders of the community). These traditional methods have historically been criticized for their illegal and inhumane punishments often due to a lack of quality control mechanisms such as ethical

rules to ensure neutrality. Currently, several state annexed forms of ADR in Pakistan exist such as: Arbitration Act, 1940, a pre-partition law still applicable in Pakistan that is primarily in use for the resolution of disputes in corporate or commercial ventures. This has not infiltrated down to the community for resolving private and personal civil disputes. Moreover, there are enabling provisions in the Code of Civil Procedure including section 89-A of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (CPC), for resolving disputes through Court-Annexed Mediation in Pakistan including conciliation, mediation, and arbitration or

LAS is grateful to its stakeholders for their continued support and hopes to build a sustainable system to increase access to justice for the citizens of Pakistan, specifically the marginalized and vulnerable communities in Pakistan. It is an extensive and difficult journey but we are glad to be moving forward with every passing day.

any other appropriate mode. In 2019, this was amended as the Code of Civil Procedure (Sindh Amendment) Act, 2019. Another significant law is the Small Claims and Minor Offences Ordinance 2002, providing exclusive district level forums established by provincial governments in consultation with the High Courts for resolution of minor civil claims. This law incorporates ADR mechanisms within the framework of the formal court system also enabling the formation of Salis Committees. There have also been Dispute Resolution Committees (DRC) established by Sindh Police in 2019 in each police station of the province aimed at enhancing community mobilization through

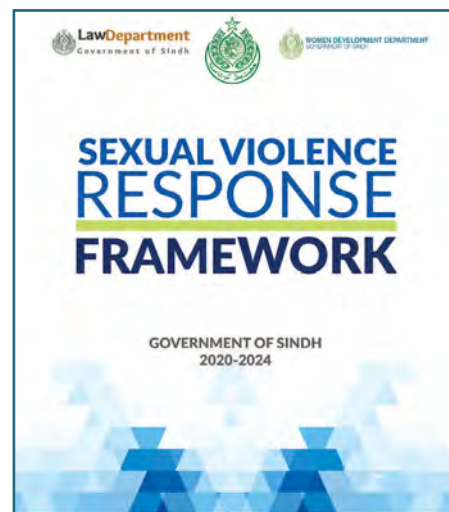
the prompt settlement of petty/minor disputes. At this moment, due to limited evidence, the efficacy of this intervention cannot be determined. Moreover, ad hoc measures have also taken place by civil society, the legal profession, etc. which have aimed to provide ADR, particularly at the community level.

Despite the aforementioned legislative provisions, there has been no significant success to institutionalize ADR to resolve justice problems. In such times LAS equips communities across Sindh with legal literacy and empowers them to pursue legal redress and remedies with autonomy and confidence. Legal awareness sessions are designed keeping in mind the legal needs of particular communities and are curated in a highly interactive and engaging manner. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the provision of knowledge matches the unique requirements of diversified communities. LAS has engaged over 29,561 community members on themes of basic fundamental rights, Alternate Dispute Resolution, gender-based issues, justiciable needs & rights of religious minorities, juvenile justice, and civic responsibilities.



## SINDH TAKES THE LEAD AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE! Specialized Cadre of Investigation Officers for GBV notified as per SVRF 2020-24:

LAS has worked with the Government of Sindh to develop a five-year strategic plan titled the "Sexual Violence Response Framework" (SVRF), for effective implementation of laws and policies related to sexual violence. The SVRF is a compendium of recommended actions identified by various stakeholders, including civil society, lawyers, police, and other relevant government departments and institutions.



The Framework is available on the Sindh Law Department's website: ([Click here to view the framework](#)) and was adopted by the Sindh Government as a commitment to improving the state's response in such cases.

One of the action items of the SVRF was the **appointment and training of a specialized cadre of Investigation Officers for cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence across Sindh**. LAS has relentlessly advocated with stakeholders for the creation of such a specialized unit based on best practices from other

countries and is pleased to see the recent notification of 288 Specialised Investigation Officers by the IG Police for all districts of Sindh on June 7, 2021, to deal with and investigate Gender-Based Violence Cases.

Some of the primary objectives of this specialized GBV unit are:

- ▶ To provide a specialized, comprehensive response and investigation from police who understands these complex crimes
- ▶ To have experienced and qualified IOs trained to respond to and investigate

such crimes

- ▶ To prioritize the needs of the victim and ensure the investigation is a victim-led and victim-centric process
- ▶ To provide access to support, information, justice, and services appropriate to the need of the victim.
- ▶ To ensure treatment of the victim in a sensitized and compassionate manner ensuring they are given timely information of other support agencies and services where available.



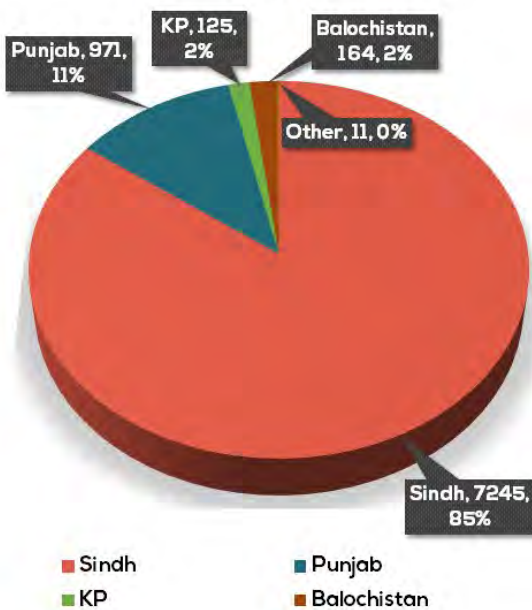
LAS believes that there is an imperative need for extensive training of the above specialist investigation officers and has commenced working with the Training Department of the Sindh police for this. The training would not only sensitize all officers for sexual violence cases, but it would also focus on expanding competencies for improved investigation. These Investigation Officers will be trained by LAS in the coming quarter.

# SINDH LEGAL AID CALL CENTRE: Legal Empowerment at the Fingertips of Citizens (0800-70806)

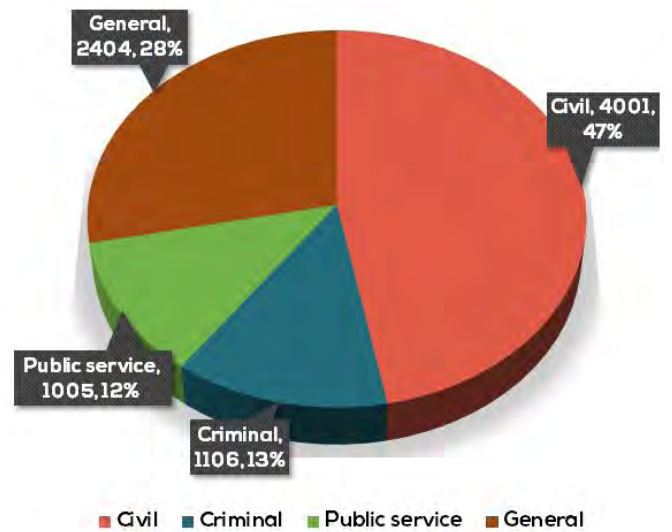
The Sindh Legal Advisory Call Centre (SLACC) is being run as a Public-Private Partnership between the Legal Aid Society and the Law Department, Government of Sindh. The service received 8,516 calls this quarter (April – June 2021) through its Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) system. These queries were received from 267 cities, towns, and villages across Pakistan, and were attended by qualified and experienced high court

enrolled lawyers, operating under the guidance of senior High Court and Supreme Court Judges. All callers were provided with free-of-cost legal advice to empower them to make more effective decisions with regard to their justice issues. Callers who wanted their legal emergencies to be resolved by LAS were then routed to relevant programs being implemented by the organization in order to be provided legal assistance at the earliest.

**Provincial Breakdown of SLACC Callers**



**Legal query categories**



## MOU WITH RIZQ

LAS signed an MoU with Rizq, a social enterprise with a mission to eradicate hunger from Pakistan, to promote SLACC's free legal aid service through its food banking network. Rizq will place flyers, boards & other SLACC branding items at its food banks across Pakistan and will also promote SLACC's toll-free helpline number through its social media platforms whilst LAS will refer legal queries on food insecurity to one of the nearest available Rizq's foodbanks.

This collaboration will be highly beneficial for the citizens of Pakistan where both organizations will look to empower the underprivileged segments in terms of hunger alleviation and justice delivery: two of the largest social issues that have affected Pakistan for a long time.



## ENGAGEMENT WITH The office of Chief Secretary, Sindh



SLACC's senior management, led by **Justice (R) Arif Hussain Khilji**, met with the Chief Secretary of Sindh, **Mr. Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah** on April 15, 2021, and briefed him on the current achievements of SLACC, along with the targets set for the upcoming year. The Chief Secretary lauded SLACC's services and achievements, particularly its contribution as

an essential service provider during COVID-19. Upon learning the SLACC receives legal queries and complaints from across Sindh pertaining to the Government of Sindh and its various departments, the Chief Secretary instructed his team as well as SLACC's management to connect SLACC's system directly with the Chief Secretary's Complaint Cell to expedite the resolution of such complains. SLACC will be setting up a live dashboard at the office of Chief Secretary, Sindh by August 2021 to ensure direct delivery of information with regards to the service delivery components of Sindh's government departments.

## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR LAWYERS at the SLACC

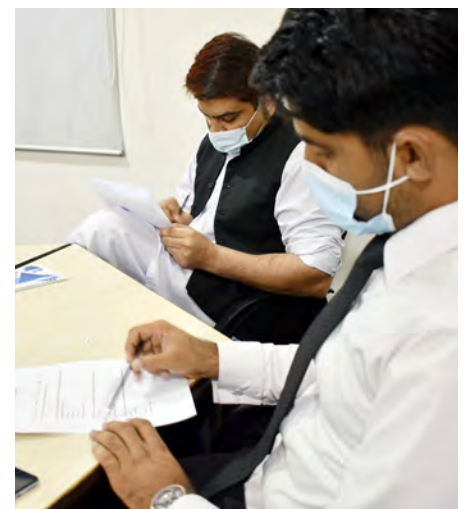
SLACC organized a one-day training for capacity enhancement of its lawyers on June 12, 2021, at the Pakistan Society for Training & Development (PSTD) in Karachi. The training aimed at equipping our on-call lawyers with recent updates on rules & regulations on Revenue and Service Laws. The training sessions were graced by the presence of two prominent legal personalities; Justice (R) Amir Hani Muslim (Former Judge of the Supreme Court of

Pakistan) and Justice (R) Syed Ali Aslam Jaffery ( former judge of the High Court of Sindh) who shared their experiences and presented real-life scenarios for discussion. Areas covered during the training were:

1. Services Laws including illegal termination, dismissal, and misconduct under, along with deceased quota and significant rules under the Sindh Services Tribunal 1973. And
2. Property Rights including

Fundamental Rights, the provisions and conditions of the Land Acquisition Act 1894, along with the processes laid down in the Sindh Revenue Act 1967.

This training not only led to substantial learning and development for the participants but has also enabled them to continue empowering the citizens of Pakistan by providing free, accurate, and updated legal advice through SLACC.



# SLACC OUTREACH

For more people to benefit from the SLACC’s Free Legal Advisory services, several outreach activities were planned and successfully executed across Sindh. The outreach activities included digital activities, SMS, and social media campaigns, along with traditional marketing through the placement of publicity boards at various public places, rickshaw campaigns, newspaper advertisements, and dissemination of IEC material in different communities.



SLACC spread awareness amongst through a provincial Rickshaw campaign running in 8 districts of Sindh with 1,000 Rickshaws displaying SLACC branding.



The Law Department, Government of Sindh also placed advertisements of the SLACC in different national newspapers including Dawn (English), Jung (Urdu), Kawish (Sindhi), and Ibrat (Sindhi).

## PUBLICITY BOARDS

237 publicity boards were placed in police stations, hospitals, railway stations, government buildings, NADRA Offices, and public places during the reporting quarter to enhance the visibility of the toll-free number.



# JUSTICE SUCCESS STORY

**Legal Aid Society (LAS) aims to identify the barriers to justice faced by religious minorities in Pakistan, and strives to legally empower religious minority communities through education and provision of legal aid, and support and to assess the effectiveness of the justice system in responding to legal needs and protecting the legal rights of minority communities.**

The white color in the national flag of Pakistan & the white stripe on the hoist-end represents its various religious minorities. It also represents peace and development.

The true reflection of this color was observed when Mr. Naroo Mal, a member of the Hindu community in Shaheed Benazirabad, received financial assistance of PKR 10,000 from Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) through the support of LAS.

Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) is an autonomous body that contributes towards poverty alleviation by the provision of assistance to the destitute, widow, orphan, & other needy people with defined eligibility criteria. The PBM provides support & assistance through the provision of financial support, wheelchairs, hearing aids, and artificial limbs, etc. The beneficiaries seeking support in this regard are mostly are health, education, or financial deprived. To apply for assistance from PBM the beneficiaries usually submit their applications along with all required documents at the PBM District Office. Mr. Naroo Mal on the other hand is a physically different (challenged) person and belongs to a financially under-privileged family. His case perfectly fitted the criteria for financial aid at PBM. However, despite having his application submitted with complete documentation, he was earlier struggling to avail of this assistance from the PBM.

Over the passage of several months, Mr. Naroo Mal's case had been stretched only due to the fact that he did not had a formal certificate that could prove him to be physically disabled on paper. Moreover, his application was also affected by bureaucracy as Mr. Naroo was made belittled & disparaged from department to department and person-to-person to attain his right, despite being physically different. Watching this injustice being

## LEGAL AID SOCIETY WINS A CASE FOR A MEMBER OF HINDU COMMUNITY IN SBA; releases his dues from Pakistan Bait-ul-Maal

done, Danish Ali (Field Advocate, LAS) & Moazzam Ali (Field Officer, LAS) immediately took up this case and had it resolved in a matter of 20 days through ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) Mechanism.

At first, the LAS team helped Mr. Naroo to get a NADRA's Disabled Card and then filed his application before the Office of Ombudsman for financial assistance from PBM. LAS team successfully presented his case and received one-time financial assistance of PKR 10,000 on behalf of Mr. Naroo.

*"Being a minority I was not expecting to get financial and legal assistance through any government department in such a smooth way, but Legal Aid Society did a great job in helping me, which they did by having a strong coordination with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal"*

~ Words of Mr. Naroo Mal after successfully receiving the aid money from PBM.

This is also a unique case where a religious minority member had received assistance from Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal through ADR Mechanism. This case will set a precedent for hundreds of deserving members of religious minorities in Pakistan.





## MAPPING OF NIKKAHKHWANS

Nikkahkhwans hold an important role in both solemnization and prevention of Nikahs in cases of Child Marriages. For the same purpose, the LAS team mapped out 57 nikkah-khawns for organizing advocacy workshops in the next quarter with a view to improve the reporting mechanisms that can be set up with them.

An open discussion with the Community Networks and Child Protection Units was held to develop a strategy for holding future sessions with Nikahkhwans and Administrative gatekeepers were held separately in Shaheed Benazirabad & Larkana on June 16 & 18, 2021, respectively. The participants were made to prepare a community engagement plan, & to further draft their recommendations in this regard.

## LEVERAGING SOUNDWAVES: Radio shows to prevent Child Marriages

LAS in collaboration with its partner Aahung hosted multiple radio shows with topic experts **Mr. Shehneel Gill** and **Ms. Nazo Pirzada** on FM 105 & FM 107. These radio shows were broadcasted under the theme 'Kam Umri ki Shaadiyan' (Underage marriages) & covered the following topics:

1. Larkiyon Boujh nahi hoti (Girls are not a burden)
2. Larkiyon ki Taleem (Girls' education)
3. Sifni barabari (Gender equality)
4. Zindagi k faislay aur zimadariyan (Decision making and responsibilities in life)

## Engaging with Community Stakeholders for Advocacy against Child Marriages

Early (child) marriage is one of the most extreme forms of violence against women, as it puts women and girls at particular risk of sexual, physical, and psychological violence throughout their lives. An active and mutual role of all stakeholders i.e. community members, government officials, and civil society is required to wipe out the menace of child early and forced marriage.

In this context, LAS organized Conversation Circles on Social and Health Consequences, along with Legal Obligations and Protection related to Child Marriages. These Conversation Circles were conducted in Shaheed Benazirabad and Larkana on June 15, 2021, & June

17, 2021, respectively to engage with Community Networks formed by LAS as district-level bodies as a part of its efforts to eliminate child marriages.

During these Conversation Circles, the participants were sensitized on the role of prominent personalities such as Nikahkhwans, Ulemas, and religious scholars, Waderas (Tribal Lords) with regards to making them aware of legal obligations, health, and social consequences of child marriages. In addition, several topics such as consent of the minor girls, lack of awareness, Poverty, culture, and the utilization of safe houses were discussed to prevent this heinous crime against children, especially against minor girls.







Following the same, an Advocacy and lobbying meeting with **Mr. Khan Muhammad Zardari** (Regional Director, Provisional Ombudsman, Shaheed Benazirabad) also took place, where child-related issues and registered cases in the ombudsman office were highlighted in detail. In addition to the comprehensive discussions, several strategies for the way forward were also molded to overcome this problem.

## CAPACITY-BUILDING WORKSHOPS for Legal Experts on Child Marriages

LAS organized 2 sessions with Community Network & Child Protection (CNCP) units of district Shaheed Benazirabad, Larkana, and Karachi, Civil Society Organizations, and legal experts on **“Social and Health Consequences of Child Marriage and Legal Protections and Responses.”** These sessions aimed to enhance existing knowledge and capacities to improve advocacy efforts for the elimination of child marriages.

These sessions were held hybrid (combination of in-person & virtually for those who could join physically) on June 11, 2021. During these sessions, LAS was graced by the company of **Ms. Nuzhat Shirin** (Chairperson, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women) and **Mr. Iqbal Detho** (Legal Expert) at the LAS office in Karachi. The session was attended by 25 participants from the 3 mentioned districts and were engaged in fruitful discussions & recommendations to eliminate the menace of child marriages in Pakistan.



## FINALIZATION OF THE LEGAL REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF CHILD MARRIAGES:

To finalize the recommendations made on the legal reforms pertaining to the Health and Social consequences of Child Marriages, LAS organized sessions with CSOs and Legal Experts in Shaheed Benazirabad and Larkana on June 16 & 18 respectively. During these sessions, the participants thoroughly discussed the legal aspects, constraints, and opportunities and came up with several valuable recommendations to prevent and eliminate child marriages from the society, which varied from restraining existing social customs, Establishment of marriage councils & task force committees at local/district level, Engagement of recording keep agencies such as NADRA, to taking strict legal action against all those involved directly or indirectly in child marriages.



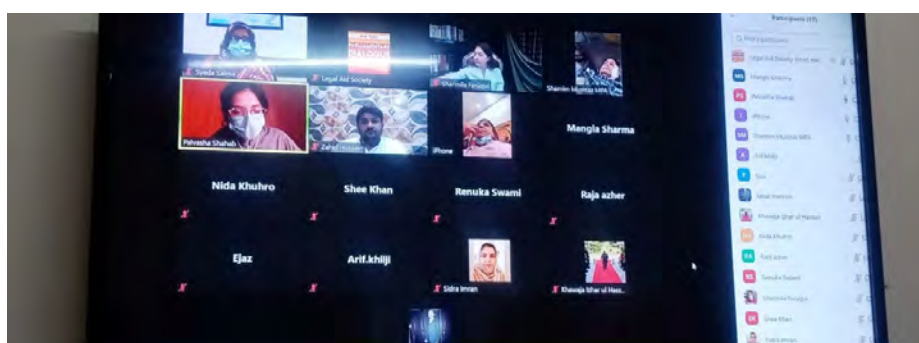
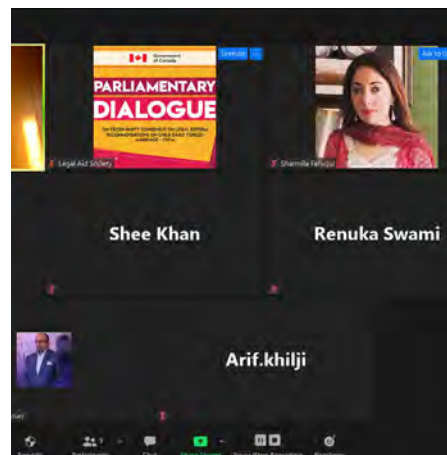
## SENSITIZING LAW MAKERS: A Parliamentary Dialogue on mitigating Child Marriages

LAS, in collaboration with UNFPA, facilitated a virtual dialogue with Sindh Parliamentarians on April 12, 2021. The objective of the session was to discuss and create a cross-party consensus for recommendations for legal reform on Child & Early forced marriages.

The session witnessed participation from key stakeholders such as **Ms. Bayramgul Garabayeva** (Head of UNFPA Sindh) along with members of the Sindh Provincial Assembly: **Ms. Sharmila Farooqui, Ms. Mangla Sharma, Ms. Sidra Imran, Mr. Khwaja Izhar ul Hassan, and Ms. Ghazala Sial**, along with many other parliamentarians who actively

participated in the discussion. The session facilitated the discussions on 3 themes:

1. Roadblocks to reporting of child marriage cases,
2. Lack of Child Protection infrastructure, and
3. Possible legal reform and the potential of centralized gender and child protection responses - such as one-stop relief centers.



## “YOU ARE FREE TO GO TO YOUR TEMPLES!” ~ Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah

LAS’s lawyers are providing free legal aid and assistance to various members of religious minority communities in securing their rights. Over the last five months, our field advocates have identified and filed 120 cases. Belonging to different religious minority communities including Sikhs, Hindus, Christians, etc. **Judicial proceedings have been initiated for 36 of these cases whilst 20 cases have been resolved successfully through either Courts or the Office of the Ombudsperson.**

LAS’s interventions and work with religious minorities are driven by its mission to ensure that the fundamental rights of all citizens across Pakistan, regardless of their religion, are guaranteed, protected, and enforced.



## IMPROVING CAPACITIES for community empowerment:



LAS organized a 3-day training for its field officers and field advocates at the Pakistan Society of Training and Development from May 24-26, 2021. The purpose of the training was to orient the field staff of 8 districts with the various Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials which they will later incorporate into their field activities to help religious minority communities, by educating them with their legal rights and remedies.

The IEC materials cover a range of topics including the fundamental rights of religious minorities, the importance and process of obtaining a national identity card, and the various situations in which the offices of the Federal and Provincial Ombudsperson can be contacted for quick justice.



## JOINING HANDS to spread the word of Justice:

LAS recently collaborated with the 'Adal Aur Sehat Project' for a series of special podcasts. The Adal Aur Sehat Project aims to foster an intellectually stimulating environment by shedding light on the two most important elements in society - law

and health. They intend on acquainting the public at large with laws and center discussion around much-needed reform along with the mental and physical well-being of people. As part of the collaboration, three episodes on the audio podcasts were aired, which

were observed as not only being highly engaging but also popular amongst its audiences. The episodes discussed the justice system's effectiveness in responding to the legal needs, protection of legal rights, and how the system could be improved via legal routes including litigation, ADR, and other administrative channels to which the religious minorities can resort to.

The collaboration also aimed to highlight the legal roadblocks

that exist for members of the religious minority communities, as expressed by the minority communities themselves, and to discuss legal and policy reforms that will help to improve their access to justice in the times to come.

The three podcasts had varying discussion topics as follows:

1. Identification of Justiciable Issues;
2. Legally Empowering and Assisting Religious Minorities;
3. Improving the Delivery of Justice and Policy Reform.

Speak to a qualified & high-court registered lawyer - TOLL FREE number:

**0800 - 70806**



## ENHANCING THE COMPETENCIES of Criminal Justice Providers

Police play the primary role in establishing law & order and in the delivery of justice. The Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of Sindh Police conducted by LAS in 2019-2020 identified several areas that were essential for

the capacity building of the police, two of the most critical of which were communication skills and knowledge and sensitization regarding human rights. Therefore, LAS, through the Sindh Police Training Department, organized two (2) trainings of the trainers of Sindh Police to enhance their competencies in these two thematic areas.



### HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING

LAS organized a two-day Human Rights training for trainers of Sindh Police from May 31 to June 1, 2021, where participants were taught fundamental human rights, international human rights practices, and learnings, and practical recommendations and practices to ensure that human rights are always guaranteed in Sindh Police's interaction with the general public. The session was highly interactive as the participants were engaged via several group activities like role-plays, interrogation & cross-questioning, audio-visual assisted case studies, and the like.

The training was graced with the presence of **Muhammad Tariq Mughal** SPS, Deputy Superintendent of Police, posted as Vice-Principal of the School of Finance and IT, at Central Police Office Karachi.

### POLICE COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

A five-day Communications training was held from May 24 to 28, 2021 where senior trainers from the Sindh Police were engaged in several group activities aimed at enhancing key competencies such as instructional design techniques, facilitation roles and responsibilities, cross-questioning, and the like.

The training witnessed the presence of noticeable personalities **Mr. Naeem Ahmed Shaikh** PSP, Deputy Inspector General of Sindh Police as a chief guest,

along with PSP, Senior Superintendent of Police posted as Principal of Shahid Hayat Police Training College, at Saeedabad, Karachi. Click or scan (in case of a hardcopy) the QR code below to see some highlights from the day.

We hope that these exercises would not only help the law enforcement professionals to be better equipped with verbal & non-verbal communications skills but will also assist them in passing this torch of knowledge to many more of their officers which they will train in the forthcoming times.



## ENVIRONMENT BEYOND BORDERS: International Biological Diversity Day Lecture Series at NAPSIPAG

May 22, is marked as the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase the understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues across the world. The spread of frequent disasters including biological virus attacks such as the Covid19 is a wake-up call for humanity to halt the exploitation of nature and start concerted efforts towards the conservation of land, water bodies, and forests. To celebrate this day LAS was honored to have its chairman, **Justice (R) Nasir Aslam Zahid**, invited by the NAPSIPAG Centre for Disaster Research, India to present the keynote lecture.



At this forum, Justice Nasir shared his experiences and how justice is a beautiful concept that is not limited to human beings only, but the width of which expands to include the environment as well. He further recommended that judicial support can prove to be instrumental in protecting biodiversity by taking legal action against activities that destroy forests, rivers, water bodies, oceans, and air, thereby acting as a line of defense for the environment.

The air quality in Lahore and Delhi remains in the 'very unhealthy' range. In 2020, Lahore ranked as the most polluted city in the world according to air pollution data released by the US Air Quality Index. From nature-based solutions to climate, health issues, food and water security, and sustainable livelihoods, biodiversity is the foundation upon which we can build a better, more sustainable future.

Solutions need to resonate beyond the conservation community; we need to shift financial and policy incentives so that all stakeholders, including farmers and landowners, communities, and cities, can act collectively and reap real benefits that efforts to protect our environment will yield. Justice Zahid mentioned that laws on protecting forests, marine life, and other forms of flora and fauna remain largely unimplemented as

top-level policymakers remain unsensitized and there is a dearth of true biodiversity experts working in the relevant departments and ministries.

The starting point is the need for multidisciplinary trainings and capacity-building schemes to be put in place to ensure Judges are made aware of the crisis at hand. Agenda 21, developed during the 1992 Rio Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil established an international mandate to build enforcement capacity as an essential element of environmental management and sustainable development.

The deficiency in knowledge, relevant skills, and information in regard to environmental law is one of the principal causes that contribute to the lack of effective implementation, development of critical judicial precedents, and enforcement of environmental law.



**22 MAY 2020**  
**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR**  
**BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**  
**Our solutions are in nature**

Strengthening environmental compliance and enforcement requires the unwavering commitment of individuals and institutions and courage. Of the many actors in the environmental compliance chain, the judiciary has a fundamental contribution to make in securing the quality of our lives in the future.

# DECONGESTING COURT DOCKETS: by institutionalizing Alternate Dispute Resolution:

## DIVERSION OF CASES TOWARDS ADR MECHANISMS



### Cases diverted

(81 male, 58 female) were diverted towards ADR Mechanisms to provide speedy and cost-effective justice to citizens this quarter.

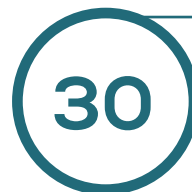
### Successfully resolved

(10 male, 05 female) cases have been resolved through Federal and Provincial Ombudsman and Court Annexed and private mediation

This initiative will help in promoting the ADR mechanism and reducing the burden on courts. Multiple issues have been resolved through the ADR mechanism including overdetection in electricity and gas billing, new gas and electricity connection, legal identification document, etc.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) instruments are universally accepted time and cost-effective support mechanisms in any justice system. There is a dire need for greater ADR in Pakistan since the justice system is overwhelmed with numerous delays resulting in a lack of access to justice for all, particularly due to the situation of the pandemic, leaving many (including many groups deprived of justice - women & children) vulnerable.

## AWARENESS CLINICS UPDATE



### Awareness clinics held

in 8 districts of Sindh, attended by 887 community members (590 male, 927 female)

The targetted communities were also made aware of the fact that ADR is a more efficient & quicker mechanism that enables the people to resolve their cases via public administration departments, court-annexed, and private mediation. The increasing participation of the community in ADR awareness clinics reflects that the ADR technique is not only getting accepted but also gaining momentum in Sindh among marginalized communities to access justice at their doorstep.

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## NEW SALIS MEMBERS ENGAGED in Sindh to whom it continues to refer cases

LAS has started to implement a re-engagement strategy with the High Court of Sindh nominated Salis to facilitate citizens in accessing justice at their doorsteps. During the reporting period, LAS engaged with 14 new Salis members. Salis members are helping citizens with Court Annexed and Private Mediation. Moreover, their efforts will help in enlarging the scope of ADR in Sindh.



## CAPACITATING JUSTICE SYSTEM ACTORS: Sensitizing Judges on Alternate Dispute Resolution:

The Judicial system in Pakistan is relatively slow-moving and the judiciary is overloaded with cases that take a significant time before being disposed of. This ultimately leads to a delay in justice for the most vulnerable and downtrodden members of our society who need swift and effective justice the most. In such times, Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) instruments are universally accepted, mechanisms that ensure quick and cost-effective judicial outcomes.



For the same purpose, LAS organized 4 one-day trainings on ADR/Mediation Mechanism for Senior Civil Judges, Civil Judges & Judicial Magistrates at the Sindh Judicial Academy on May 17, 24, 25, and 26, 2021. Through these trainings, LAS trained 92 Senior Civil Judges, Civil Judges, and Judicial Magistrates from all over Sindh. The training session laid out the dispute resolution landscape in light of Section 89 – A of the Code of Civil Procedure (Sindh Amendment) Act, 2019 (Act No V of 1980).

**Ms. Navin Merchant** (Advocate, Supreme Court of Pakistan) and some of the Internationally Recognized ADR Trainers: **Mr. Shahid Shafiq** (Faculty Member, Sindh Judicial Academy), and **Barrister Nausheen Ahmed** took the sessions and extensively discussed the need for Alternate Dispute Resolution in society, along with the tools that judges could employ to use court-annexed mediation as an effective tool.

These trainings facilitated participants to understand the ADR legislative framework in Sindh and understand referral pathways in the form of lists of trained mediators and centres. Moreover, the post-assessment findings from the training depict a 31% increase in the knowledge of participants, along with the need for further trainings

– in order to keep the key stakeholders in the justice sector engaged.

Honorable Judge of the High Court Sindh and Director General Sindh Judicial Academy, **Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar** acknowledged and appreciated the initiatives of LAS and said that the need of the hour is to consider Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanisms for an amicable settlement of the disputes. Therefore, training and sensitization of the Judges will help them to learn and recognize the plaint at the time of presentation to refer it towards Mediation. He further said that the ADR mechanism will help in avoiding prolong delays and high costs and the best alternatives to litigation that creates congenial relations between the litigants even after resolution.



## CELEBRATING PRO BONO PARTNERSHIPS

Stemming from pro bono Publico, 'for the public good', pro-bono work involves lawyers or students who help people in need, which may vary from helping victims of domestic abuse to working towards implementing pro-women laws in Sindh. Mr. Yahya Iqbal (Senior Associate at Siddiqui & Raza) has been practicing law for the past six years and has been working with LAS on the public interest litigation program: Community Justice Program.



Most recently Yahya is appearing before the Sindh High Court pursuing a class action for the elderly and enforcement and implementation of Sindh's Senior Citizens Welfare Act.

LAS has conducted an exclusive interview with Mr. Iqbal on his pro-bono legal work and what he has gained from his experience as a pro bono lawyer.

LAS pays tribute to Mr. Iqbal for his commitment efforts in the field of justice provision, & hope that he continues to work together with LAS for common good.

### Q. WHAT DRIVES YOU TO DO PRO-BONO WORK?

A. The amount of satisfaction that one gains by representing a person who had lost hope in the entire system of Pakistan, and acquiring orders in their favor is just priceless.

### Q. WHAT EXPERIENCE HAVE YOU GAINED THROUGH YOUR PRO BONO WORK THAT HAS IMPACTED YOU PERSONALLY?

A. Pro bono work has had a profound impact on me both personally and professionally. Working on pro bono cases does indeed help one in countless ways. Likewise, Pro bono matters have aided me in understanding various principles and developments in the diverse field of law. My scope of understanding has multiplied quite considerably after representing and appearing in pro bono matters and cases.

### Q. CAN WORKING PRO BONO AND WORKING FOR A BUSY LAW FIRM BE BALANCED?

A. It is a fact that working in a law firm and being assigned multiple cases can be tiring and can take a toll on anyone. However,

if a person has the will to do something, it can be managed. The balance can always be struck between things that one would want to pursue actively.

### Q. DO YOU FEEL WORKING ON PRO BONO MATTERS HELPS WITH YOUR CAREER DEVELOPMENT? IN WHAT WAY?

A. Working on pro-bono matters not only increases one's exposure to the various legal fields but helps in understanding the complex and technical nature of relevant laws on any particular subject, and helps in polishing one's soft skills - which are of the essence in legal practice, with the added benefit of the feeling of self-fulfillment. I feel that working on Pro-bono matters increases one's value in the eyes of the legal fraternity. Whereby one can interact with numerous other lawyers and work in collaboration with various organizations and institutions, gaining experience in other areas of law as well, which eventually helps in my day-to-day cases as the term 'law' is vast yet interlinked with each other. All this would not have been possible without handling pro-bono matters.



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