



LAS

LEGAL AID SOCIETY

RESHAPING SOLUTIONS FOR
ACCESSING JUSTICE IN PAKISTAN

NEWSLETTER

January - March 2022

18th Edition

مفت قانونی مشورہ صرف ایک کال کے فاصلے پر

0800-70806

اسل رڈزری | من و بجے سے 5 بجے تک کال سروس

WOMEN'S RIGHTS
PROPER



EDITORIAL SECTION: from the desk of Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid (CEO, LAS)



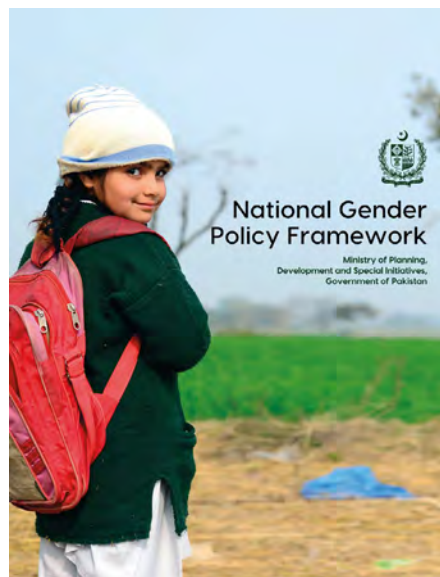
According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union's global ranking, Pakistan ranks at the 100th spot out of 190 countries in terms of its representation of women. Gender audits of women's political representation in Parliaments across South Asia similarly echo a dismal state of affairs; ranking Pakistan with 20.2% in comparison to other SAARC nations such as Nepal with 32.7% and Bangladesh with 20.6% representation in public offices.

According to a plethora of shadow and alternate reports submitted to the UN; the gender ratios of the recent past for cabinet membership have remained bleak: 6:36 for the federal cabinet, 2:18 for Sindh, 2:34 for Punjab whilst there were no female leaders in the assemblies of either KPK or Balochistan. Without equality in representation, the voices and viewpoints of women can never be reflected in the work of the Parliaments. Despite the newly sworn-in federal cabinet comprising only 5 female ministers out of its total strength of 37- it is a welcome shift and respite from its precursors- a largely male-dominated cabinet. Unlike the concoction of the previous cabinet, this time around we can see important portfolios of foreign policy and climate change being awarded to women. However, only time will tell how earnest the Government is in making better decisions to achieve gender equality

in the realms of policy and spending decisions.

The mainstreaming of gender issues should be a forefront-objective for all those working in Parliament. To achieve this, voluntary and mandatory quotas must be enforced, knowledge must be transferred, gender-responsive budgeting must be reported on and multi-party caucuses must be activated. Above all, the assemblage of the current female ministers should be given the same access to resources and opportunities as is made available to their male counterparts.

Political accountability for women begins with increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, but it cannot stop there. What is required are gender-sensitive governance reforms that will make elected officials more effective at all levels.



The Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives (MoPD&SI) recently launched the National Gender Policy Framework with the goal of creating a gender-equal ecosystem that would protect the rights of women, and

offer equal access to resources and opportunities. The policy objectives include establishing gender-transformative governance structures, creating enabling environments at all levels for women and girls to learn, promoting access to work opportunities through conducive workplaces, integrating gender-sensitive policies in the health sector, ending GBV, and creating avenues to advance female leadership, particularly in program design and policy decisions.

In order to truly advance on these ambitions, every ministry must appoint a gender focal person for coordination and reporting back on gender initiatives with routine stock take sessions being chaired by the MoPD&SI. The parent ministry will need to continuously stimulate administrative units to mainstream gender equality into their own roadmaps and strategies to ensure gender development across the country through multi-sectoral streams. It is also imperative to accelerate female voter registration before the next general elections to ensure greater female political participation. Out-of-the-box initiatives such as awareness campaigns at NADRA offices and in partnership with private sector organisations should be used with built-in incentivization schemes to further mainstream gender.



NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL Women's Day festivities

Women in Pakistan play a vital, yet thankless part in bringing stability to our society. To pay tribute, and to make a minor effort in acknowledging their roles, we at the Legal Aid Society ensure that their rights are protected.

Empowering women in collaboration with SCSW

To acknowledge the roles that women play in our society we participated in the National Women's Day event hosted by the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women on February 12, 2022, at the Frere Hall, Karachi, where LAS was given the opportunity to demonstrate some of the efforts that it has been making to increase access to justice for women in Pakistan.



The LAS team arranged an information center on the day of the event and shared information/awareness through the provision of different IEC materials and advice on various matters in-person with our Program Managers & on-call lawyers, which attracted a significant number of visitors.

LAS was honored to be a part of this splendid event and shall contribute to contribute towards increasing access to justice for women in Pakistan.

WELCOMING CAMP for Aurat March

LAS team organized a welcoming camp for the passing Aurat (Women) March by the Civil Lines area in Hyderabad on March 8, 2022. The welcome camp showcased LAS's support for civil society-led feminist and socio-political demonstrations.

The welcoming camp included a stall where IECs were being distributed to disseminate legal knowledge among the march participants on women's inheritance, maintenance, and matrimonial property rights. The march witnessed participation from women from all walks of life who shared their challenges and achievements; and at the same time attained Legal Advice on various matters in-person with team members: a perfect example of Legally Empowering the community on the spot. Participants from the Aurat March paid their gratitude to LAS for the efforts that it has been making to increase access to justice for women in Pakistan.



SESSIONS FOR THE PROTECTION of Women at the Workplace

Harassment of Women at the workplace is an issue that requires immediate & systemic action. We at LAS have always strived for creating safe spaces for women at work.

Therefore, the Human Resource Department at LAS, in collaboration with Ahung, took the initiative to

sensitize employees firsthand; and organized 3 training sessions on 'Protection against harassment of women at the workplace' during the reporting quarter for its staff members. These trainings were conducted online as well as in-person and were attended by 189 of its staff members and were very well received.



ACKNOWLEDGING THE EFFORTS OF WORKING WOMEN in Pakistan

On International Women's Day LAS joined hands with Careem, a pioneer in mass transport & internet platform from the Middle East - to celebrate the success of their women captains, journalists, and other staff with a conversation on their legal property rights.

During the session, the participants were informed of women's

rights concerning inheritance, maintenance, matrimonial property, and clauses in the Nikkah Nama. The session aimed to legally empower the women bread-earners working at Careem, which would enable them to secure their property and have them informed on how to maneuver the judicial system for acquiring justice in case their fundamental property rights are violated.

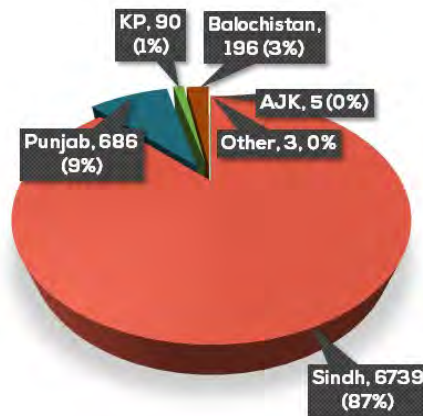


EMPOWERING CITIZENS AT THEIR CONVENIENCE: through its Toll-free number 0800-70806

The Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC) is a flagship project of LAS that runs as a Public-Private Partnership with the Law Department, Government of Sindh, and is dedicated to fulfilling GoS's commitment to Goal 16 of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on the "provision of access to justice for all."

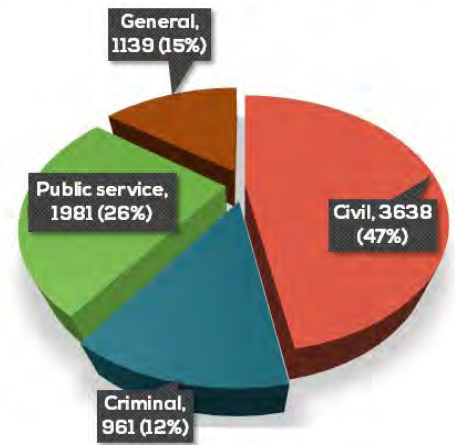
SLACC is a one-of-a-kind toll-free helpline (0800-70806) that operates 24/7 and provides free-of-cost legal advice through its High Court enrolled lawyers on all matters related to justiciable rights. To date, the call center has received over 348,579 calls via an Interactive Voice Recording (IVRT) system, with over 161,031 queries being registered and resolved from over 450 cities across Pakistan.

Provincial Breakdown of SLACC Callers



■ Sindh ■ Punjab ■ KP
■ Balochistan ■ AJK ■ Other

Legal query categories



■ Civil ■ Criminal
■ Public service ■ General

SLACC OUTREACH

SLACC kicks off Rickshaw Campaign to raise awareness

The SLACC embarks upon unique outreach campaigns from time to time so that more people could benefit from its free-of-cost call center services. Following the same, a public awareness campaign was launched with 1,000 rickshaws with SLACC posters across 6 districts of Sindh including Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpur Khas, and Shaheed Benazirabad. This campaign has boosted the number of incoming calls at SLACC, indicating a positive upward trend in spreading legal awareness amongst the general population.



SLACC launches a documentary to showcase its services

The Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center in collaboration with the Law Department, Government of Sindh launched a documentary on January 31, 2022, on several social media platforms. The documentary showcases our achievements in recent times, and how the service has been touching the lives of its beneficiaries who have been receiving legal advice and subsequent legal support from SLACC. The documentary also portrays the confidence level of the beneficiaries while acquiring legal services from SLACC.



To view the documentary scan (or click - in case of softcopy) this QR code.



SLACC Lawyers' FIELD VISITS to RIZQ for Community Outreach:

LAS partnered with Rizq Foundation - to jointly address Goal 16 of the UN SDGs to provide access to justice to all. In continuation of this collaboration, SLACC continues to engage with underprivileged communities through visits to the Rizq's ration distribution centers to promote its services and establish their trust in those who are in pursuit of free legal advice.

These sessions are led by our High Court enrolled lawyers who provide hands-on legal advice to the community via the Rizq's

network. During the reporting period, our lawyers conducted weekly community awareness sessions and heard the legal queries & grievances of the people of Lyari. These sessions benefited 352 beneficiaries in February 2022 alone. The beneficiaries included young men and women, middle-aged people, senior citizens, widows, and divorced women. Due to these sessions with Rizq, 240 beneficiaries re-connected via our toll-free number and sought legal advice on a variety of matters on criminal, civil, public service, and general legal matters.



EXPOSURE VISITS at the SLACC

Partnering with TAF FOUNDATION



TAF Foundation is an NGO that provides vocational training to vulnerable communities, in particular women. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by SLACC & TAF Foundation on February 25, 2022, to promote legal awareness across vulnerable communities.

Today SLACC provides legal awareness and empowerment sessions at TAFF schools in collaboration with LAS teams, while TAFF refers cases from its existing trainees and alumni to our relevant lawyers for the provision of legal assistance (after assessing client needs and position) – a perfect example of two organizations partnering together to benefit the disenfranchised community.

WOMEN & CHILD PROTECTION CELLS

An eleven-member delegation of the Women & Child Protection Cells (WCPC) of the Sindh Police visited SLACC on March 18, 2022. The delegation was led by Inspector Lubna Tiwana (In-charge WCPC Karachi Region), and her team of officers heading district WCPCs in Karachi. The purpose of this visit was to enhance cooperation between WCPCs in Karachi and SLACC to refer legal matters, specifically SGBV cases, to

the call center for the provision of legal advice.

The WCPC delegation was briefed on how SLACC provides free-of-cost legal advice to underprivileged communities throughout the country, especially in the province of Sindh. The delegation highly appreciated the services provided by the Legal Aid Society and SLACC in particular, to increase legal empowerment in Pakistan.



TRAINING ON INTEGRATION of the Sindh Performance Management System (SPMS) with SLACC

As per the directives of the Chief Secretary Sindh, SLACC and the Sindh Performance Management System were integrated to ensure that complaints on the Sindh Government's administrative departments received at SLACC by citizens across Sindh could be forwarded to relevant departments through the SPMS.

Following the integration, a training session was organized for the Lawyers of SLACC to understand the working mechanism of this newly integrated system. The event

was graced by the presence of **Mr. Riaz Hussain Soomro** (Secretary I&C Chief Secretary's Office), **Mr. Saleem Ahmed Siddiqui** (Additional Secretary (I&C)), **Dr. Nisar Ahmed Leghari** (Deputy Secretary I&C) from the SGA & CD department, **Mr. Tahir Memon** (Technical Focal Person), and **Mr. Zobair** from the CS Complaint Cell.

The integration aims at providing a direct referral mechanism that will enable SLACC callers' assistance on Government and public affairs issues - by connecting them with the concerned departments.



DEPLOYMENT OF SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES in Gender-Based Violence Courts across Sindh and ICT

LAS continues to strengthen the state's response to cases of sexual violence in Sindh and ICT

Pakistan's criminal justice system is plagued with a myriad of institutional issues. These issues impair the system's ability to handle, absorb, and deal with the colossal number of cases that enter it. The Gender Crime Cell in Islamabad reported 104,416 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases between 2016 and 2020 across Pakistan. This was met with a conviction rate of 2.5%. These statistics present themselves with a tacit recognition of the majority of cases going unreported.

In this regard, LAS partnered and collaborated with key institutions such as the Police and Judiciary to strengthen the State's response to Gender-Based Violence, particularly in cases of rape and sodomy. During the reporting period LAS undertook various initiatives that cements LAS's mission to amplify the voices of the marginalized as well as strengthen the State's response towards GBV, some of which are depicted as follows:

SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION of SPM with Judiciary in Sindh

Continuing its efforts of evidence-based policy and legal reform, LAS has expanded its Special Protection Measures (SPM) intervention to Hyderabad & Karachi West via the creation of a Waiting Room for women and children at Hyderabad City Court, and Karachi West (district) City Court. These interventions include a combination of direct implementation of SPMs in Gender-Based Violence (GBV) courts, sensitivity training of GBV judges, and continued monitoring and evaluation of the reform process.

LAS has successfully handed over the waiting room to GBV Court based in Hyderabad in January for the protection of the victim during court trials. The aim of the waiting room is as a special protection measure that will be used to facilitate and aid victims and survivors of gender-based violence, as it will provide the victims with a dignified space to wait during cases. The room consists of a TV, AC, comfortable

sofas, and a cabinet that will eventually have books and toys. The inauguration ceremony was by **Mr. Saleem Jasser** (present High Court Judge), the session judges, and members of the Bar Association.

Similarly, LAS successfully created a Waiting Room in District West, City Court, Karachi in March 2022 which once again portrays the successful advocacy endeavors undertaken by LAS.



LAS
LEGAL AID SOCIETY

GAP ANALYSIS OF INVESTIGATION AND PROSECUTION OF RAPE AND SODOMY CASES IN ISLAMABAD CAPITAL TERRITORY

A Mixed-Methods Gap Analysis of Rape and Sodomy Acquittals in the Islamabad Capital Territory of Pakistan between 2017 and 2020

Finalization of GAP ANALYSIS REPORT OF RAPE AND SODOMY CASES in ICT

LAS's Delivery Associates spearheaded by **Advocate Maliha Zia Lari** (Associate Director, LAS) compiled a mixed-methods report which seeks to answer the question 'What are the investigative and procedural gaps resulting in protracted trials in rape and sodomy cases in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)?'

The report is unprecedented in terms of data on rape and sodomy in Islamabad and offers a detailed qualitative and quantitative analysis of investigative and procedural gaps in rape and sodomy cases in ICT. Given the scarcity of statistics and research on this issue, the report is historical in its findings.

ENHANCING THE CAPACITY of Magistrates and Civil Judges

LAS in collaboration with the Federal Judicial Academy conducted a historic capacity building workshop on rape and sodomy cases from February 28 to March 02, 2022. The participants consisted mostly of judicial magistrates from across 4 provinces of Pakistan. LAS's team of seasoned experts and trainers sensitized magistrates toward cases of GBV. This training was crucial, especially in light of recent amendments that have been introduced in Pakistan related to rape and sodomy.



Furthermore, LAS continuing its partnership with District East Court, Karachi; successfully conducted a capacity-building workshop on cases of rape and sodomy with magistrates of Karachi District East, on March 7-9, 2022 in light of the recently amended law. LAS has played an instrumental role in advocating for special protection mechanisms to be incorporated in the court of District East related to cases of gender-based violence. LAS pledges to continue to aspire and march ahead with its goal of strengthening criminal justice institutions, especially in light of the recently amended law introduced for cases of gender-based violence in Pakistan.

Submission of **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK** to Judiciary

It is important to note that various trainings and efforts have been made to sensitize police, prosecutors, and judges during the last decade, including several trainings by LAS. The changes brought by these trainings can be multiplied by the development of a performance management framework for criminal justice stakeholders dealing with GBV-related cases. This framework can harbor a culture of responsiveness and inculcate behaviors

and values that are necessary for the dispensation of justice in GBV cases.

In this regard, LAS has developed a Performance Management Framework that includes a set of quantitative and qualitative KPIs. These indicators can be used to assess the performance of one court, a district, or an entire province. The framework was submitted to MIT II, High Court of Sindh, Karachi.



FEDERAL CONFERENCE ON LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPACT of Anti-Rape Law Reform



Sexual violence is a widespread issue across Pakistan, which has high frequency yet low conviction rates, as access to justice remains difficult due to social and cultural barriers, institutional challenges and biases, and most importantly, weak legislation. To counter this, two critical Special Laws were passed in 2021 i.e., Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021 and the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 2021, spearheaded by the Federal Ministry of Law and Justice, which have made significant changes in the legal framework relating to rape.

These two laws have widened the definition of rape, making it gender-neutral and expanding the scope to recognize other acts apart from just penile penetration. They have also created substantial changes in the process and procedures of investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of rape cases, intending to make these more victim/survivor-centric.

In the scope of the same, the Federal Ministry of Law and Justice, in collaboration with LAS held a Conference on Legal Framework

of Anti-Rape Laws & Impact of Law Reform on February 22, 2022, at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad. The conference was graced by the presence of Barrister Maleeka Bokhari (member of the National Assembly of Pakistan) and brought together Criminal Justice System (CJS) experts, including members of the Anti-Rape Committee formed under the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021, Civil Society members, and key political stakeholders.

The conference helped to provide key players in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) with a clear and holistic understanding of the law, how it will be implemented, understand the expected roles of CJS actors, identify potential on-ground challenges, and recommendations on how to overcome them.



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

0800 - 70806



ASSISTING THE MSCC under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary, Sindh

The first Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee (MSCC) meeting was conducted under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary, Sindh on March 30, 2022. This meeting included major secretaries and representatives from the Law department, Home, Health, WDD, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, and the Sindh Human Rights Commission. The agenda called for the creation of Technical Working Groups to provide an integrated response to SGBV, in lieu of the government's commitment to the Sexual Violence Reform Framework (SVRF).



On this occasion LAS, UNFPA Pakistan, and Pathfinder International presented a four-point plan, as LAS will provide technical assistance to the MSCC on the following priority areas:

1. Medico-Legal Reforms including capacity building of MLOs/WMLOs
2. Creation of a Performance Management Framework to measure successful government initiatives to tackle SGBV
3. Assessment of SGBV Processes to suggest improvements in medico-legal examination and trial times; and
4. Operationalization of Anti Rape Crisis Cells/One Stop Centre to provide a state-of-the-art facility to survivors of SGBV.

Building Roadmaps to IMPROVE STATE'S RESPONSE TO SGBV in Sindh

Victims and survivors of SGBV often find themselves looking for immediate protection and shelter. Hence, **WCPCs, CPUs, and Dar-ul-Amans (Shelter homes) become their first destination when they are under threat.**

For this purpose, LAS set out to scope critical stakeholders in Sukkur and Hyderabad. For the same, we paid visits that revolved around establishing legal aid and referral mechanisms for protection. An overview of SVRF was provided to each of the following stakeholders who have extended their support toward LAS' efforts:

1. **Ms. Ruksana Mangi** (In-charge Women & Child Protection Cell, Sukkur)
2. **Ms. Marvi Awan** (In-charge Women & Child Protection Cell Hyderabad), and
3. **Mr. Pir Muhammad Shah** (DIG Hyderabad).



Research to enhance VICTIM PROTECTION MEASURES in Sindh

Women and Child Protection Cells (WCPCs) are the first responders to the complaints of violence against women and children. It is where complainants are listened to, victims are counseled about their issues, and guided to file a First Information Report (FIR) where needed. WCPCs aim to create a safe environment for women and children who seek help regarding any injustice that they might be facing.

LAS is working for enhancing the victim protection measures in Sindh. The first step in doing so is to identify best practices along with administrative, procedural, and knowledge gaps that might lie within each WCPC. The aim is to assess the impact that WCPCs have created while developing a list of recommendations with a victim-centric approach in mind. For the same purpose, LAS team members have been visiting WCPCs across Sindh to administer surveys and questionnaires.



ASSISTING DISTRICT PROSECUTORS with Technical and Research Support in Sindh

LAS is working with the Office of the Prosecutor General as part of our capacity-building efforts for CJS actors. On March 3, 2022, LAS organized a coordination meeting with selected District Prosecutors to discuss the changing landscape of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Pakistan. During the coordination meeting, the new rape laws in Pakistan were discussed with a focus on the revised definition of rape under the Criminal Law (Amendment) 2021.

During the meeting, the Prosecutors discussed lessons learned from the courtroom and what accounts for rape under the new law. They also used this platform to discuss SGBV cases and the challenges that they face.

SCOPING MEETING with SCPA for Referral Mechanism

Out-of-home children are most vulnerable to sexual violence. They need psychological, social, economic, and emotional support along with emergency rescues. The Sindh Child Protection Authority (SCPA) works for the benefit of such children by providing them free of cost shelter and education through Child

Protection Units (CPUs) - identified as first responders in the SVRF as a victim protection measure.

LAS had a scoping meeting with Director General SCPA on March 2, 2022, to create a referral mechanism with SCPA for free legal aid support to at-risk children.



EMPOWERING WOMEN: to understand & access justice mechanisms - for their property rights

In Pakistan, vulnerable groups such as women, especially those who belong to a religious or a gender minority group, continue to be at risk of being unlawfully deprived of their legal property rights. Since 2020, LAS has been working to socio-economically empower these vulnerable groups at a grassroots level by strengthening their capacity to legally acquire and protect their legal property and to mobilize stakeholders within the Sindh government and the legal fraternity - to lessen institutional hurdles for women while accessing their property rights.

PARALEGAL REFRESHER AND REFLECTION TRAINING



Building on our efforts to promote and safeguard women's rights and interests within communities across Sindh, LAS conducted a two-day training on February 25-26, 2022 in Islamabad for its district paralegals hailing from Karachi, Larkana, and Shaheed Benazirabad (SBA). This training was held to further strengthen the paralegals with support materials and new knowledge - which will help them to empower their communities back home.

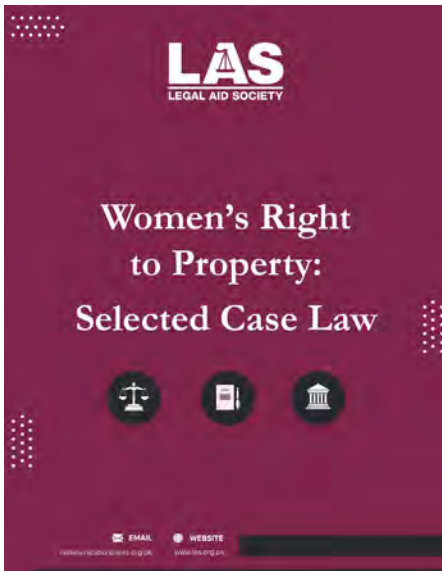
The reflection involved revisiting some of the most pertinent property issues faced by women (especially those who belong to a religious or

a gender minority), inheritance, dowry, maintenance, the Nikkah-Nama and the rights enshrined in it, matrimonial property, along with various other topics through various group discussions and activities. Exercises such as these gleaned enthusiastic responses.

Through the efforts of the paralegals, we were able to make 6,337 women legally aware of their property rights, and have filed 80 independent court cases, to help women fight for their property rights. We are glad to share that our paralegals have been instrumental in spreading legal awareness & empowerment at grassroots levels.



WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LEGAL PROPERTY: Selected Case Law



LAS recently compiled and published a relevant case law book titled 'Women's Right to Property: Selected Case Law', which includes case laws on bridal gifts, dower, return of dowry articles, matrimonial property, maintenance, and inheritance across Sunni, Shia, and Christian faiths. This book is now in the process of being disseminated across the legal fraternity for the reference of legal practitioners working on promoting and safeguarding women's property rights. Not only does it include cases from courts all over Pakistan, but neatly compiles them under four major sub-headings;

1. After marriage: Khula, Divorce, Maintenance, and Marital property;
2. Inheritance across different faiths,
3. Exclusion of Heirs From Inheritance Cases
4. Gifts Resulting in Exclusion of Legal Affairs

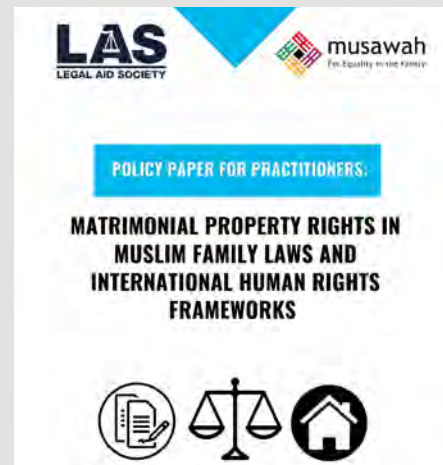
With this resource at their disposal, practitioners can better advocate for their clients with more accessible references.

Policy Papers for Practitioners

Earlier this year, LAS launched two policy papers for practitioners to pave the way for legislative reform on matrimonial property rights for Muslim women. These were:

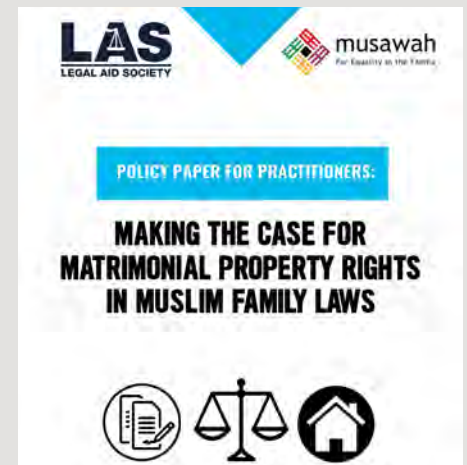
1. Making the Case for Matrimonial Property Rights in Muslim Family Laws and International Human Rights Frameworks; and
2. Matrimonial Property Rights in Muslim Family Laws and International Human Rights Framework

These papers were shared amongst participants of our International Conference on Women's Right to Matrimonial Property in collaboration with Musawah and provide a closer look at how matrimonial property regimes are understood, and where non-financial contributions of spouses



are placed within these regimes, with a focus on the rights of women at the time of divorce.

The papers also examine property laws that are discriminatory against women alongside the lack of matrimonial property regimes, and what this means



for women's financial and social security. For practitioners, this paper underscores arguments within Islamic jurisprudence as well as in socio-economic spheres that are in favor of equitable division of matrimonial property.



Partnership with NCHR

LAS hosted **Ms. Rabiya Javeri** (Chairperson, National Commission for Human Rights) on March 21, 2022, to discuss a mutual partnership to set up a referral mechanism for legal assistance.

Under this agreement, the NCHR will refer cases requiring legal support to the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Centre (SLACC). The meeting also

discussed the inclusion of gender-sensitive modules in training courses offered to bureaucrats of BPS-19 and above. LAS believes that a mandatory course on gender will sensitize bureaucracy to the different security needs of gender minorities, help train them to employ a victim-centric approach, and facilitate the creation of a gender-inclusive culture.

ENSURING RIGHTS & ACCESS TO JUSTICE

for Religious Minorities in Pakistan

LEGAL AID Cases:

The Legal Aid Society, in its endeavor to give back to the community, had earlier pledged to take on 200 cases from religious minority communities in which they shall provide free legal aid and advice.

However, during the last seventeen months, our field advocates have identified and taken on 234 legal cases. Of those, 24 cases have been resolved successfully, while 47 of those cases are currently awaiting a decision before the Courts or an Ombudsperson. These cases had different nature of issues, varying



from Land disputes & administrative matters, and the like. problems to personal problems such as Harassment, divorce, Salary

LEGAL EDUCATION & AWARENESS Clinics

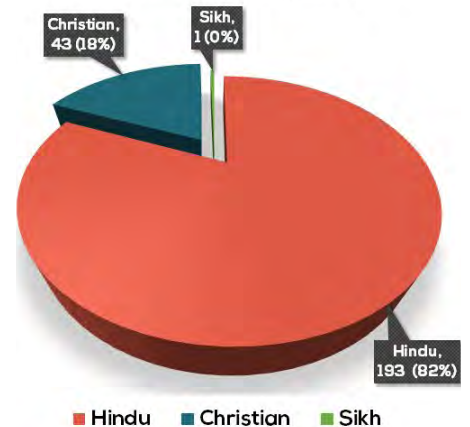
Members of religious minorities from remote areas of Sindh lack the necessary knowledge, information, and confidence to effectively access formal and semi-formal justice systems. Hence to inform the religious minority communities about their rights, entitlements, and formal and semi-formal administrative processes, LAS developed awareness materials tailored to the needs of the people.

35,000 copies of IEC materials

were distributed at various Legal Aid Awareness Clinics throughout Sindh. From July 2021 to February 2022, LAS successfully conducted 367 awareness clinics, witnessing the participation of 9,301 religious community members from 8 districts of Sindh.

The following charts reflect community-wise breakdown of the audience at the legal clinics conducted across Sindh as of February 28, 2022.

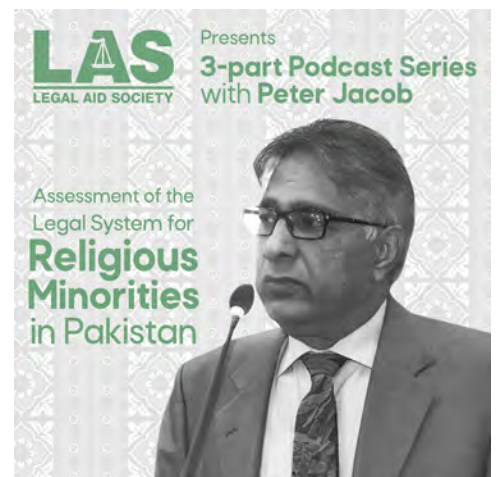
Participants of Legal Aid Clinics: Breakdown by Community



PODCAST SERIES with Peter Jacob

LAS program team arranged “A 3-part Podcast Series” with Peter Jacob (Advisor for LAS Religious Minority Program and writer for minority rights) on the following topics:

During the month of	Podcast Topic
January 2022	Single National Curriculum and Content for Religious Minority Communities
February 2022	Role of RM Community Women and Promoting inclusion
March 2022	RM Community Demographic change in light of Census 2017 final results



JOINING FORCES for the provision of justice & raising harmony in the society



PEACE AND EDUCATION FOUNDATION (PEF):

During February and March 2022, LAS collaborated with the Peace and Education Foundation (PEF) on multiple forums to discuss minority rights and inter-faith harmony. These discussions were attended by students hailing from different madrasas, religious community leaders, NGOs, and civil society members.

On March 10, 2022, we partnered with PEF on policy dialogue, titled "Exploring Diverse Perspective on Inter-Religious Dialogue", where LAS presented the major findings from its Legal Needs Assessment

(LNA) survey. The presentation was followed by a fruitful panel discussion on the role of civil society in ensuring interfaith harmony and the way forward.

The second phase of the collaboration centered on the role of NGOs where **Ms. Rukhsana Parveen Khokhar** (Senior Program Manager, LAS) actively participated in a panel discussion and highlighted the work that LAS has been conducting on inter-faith harmony, the current situations on minority matters, along with future strategies.



SANJH FOUNDATION:

In March 2022, LAS collaborated with Sanjh Foundation and participated in a Peace conference held in Karachi. The event witnessed participation from various religious leaders/sects, university students, teachers, and community members from all walks of life, who shared their indulging experiences and triumphs for peacebuilding in

Pakistan. On the day LAS shared the previously formulated Learning Needs Assessment (LNA) findings with the participants.

Ms. Rukhsana Parveen Khokhar (Senior Program Manager, LAS), was awarded a token for her contributions to her Peace Building efforts in Pakistan.

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

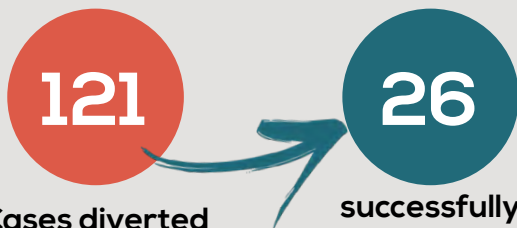
0800 - 70806



DECONGESTING COURT DOCKETS: by institutionalizing Alternate Dispute Resolution:



DIVERSION OF CASES towards ADR Mechanisms



Cases diverted
(68 men, 53 women)
from our targeted districts were diverted towards ADR Mechanisms

successfully resolved
during the reporting quarter through different ADR Mechanisms.

103 cases were related to Federal Ombudsman, 12 Cases at Provincial Ombudsman, 03 Court Annexed Mediation, and 02 Cases for Private Mediation.

The issues diverted towards ADR were diverse; they ranged from CNIC/legal identity-based issues, issues of services which include utility (gas, electricity, and water), inadequate provision of education, and matters related to Federal (Bait-ul-mal) and Provincial authorities (Benazir Income Support Program).

From an access to justice paradigm, it is imperative to empower vulnerable and marginalized communities so that they are aware of their rights and can find potential pathways by which they can seek a cost-effective and speedy solution to unresolved conflicts. Due to a large backlog of cases in courts (reported around 2.2 million) in Pakistan, Alternate Dispute Resolution provides relief as a facilitative mechanism to ensure the provision of equitable justice to the disempowered and disenfranchised citizens.

These mechanisms include both formal (court-annexed and private mediation, arbitration, negotiation, conciliation) and semi-formal (Office of Federal and Provincial ombudsmen) mechanisms through which the citizens can seek quick and cost-effective remedies to resolve inter-community conflicts or issues that include negligence and maladministration of federal and provincial agencies.



ENGAGEMENTS & TRAININGS

on ADR

ADR REFRESHER TRAINING for Civil Judges & Judicial Magistrates



ADR has the potential to provide a relief mechanism to the courts by resolving appropriate civil cases when will divert cases away from court dockets. Therefore it is imperative to sensitize judges on ADR Mechanisms to increase referrals to mediation, and to establish a strong cross-referral mechanism. For this purpose LAS through its ADR

project developed a customized training manual to train 100 judges on ADR.

Furthermore, LAS conducted a refresher training for Judges at Sindh Judicial Academy in Karachi. The session was graced by the participation of 13 Senior Civil Judges and Judicial Magistrates.

CERTIFIED MEDIATION TRAINING



We at LAS strive to develop the capacity of the current justice system actors – which will ultimately lead to increased access to the effective and efficient delivery of justice via ADR mechanisms across Pakistan.

For the same, a five-day Certified Mediation Training was conducted at the Pakistan Society for Training & Development (PSTD) in Karachi and was attended by 33 LAS staff members along with 3 Members from the Sindh High court Bar Association. The training provided not only equipped the participants with theoretical knowledge but a practical understanding of the basic tenets of mediation.

REFRESHER TRAINING for Salis Members



LAS organized a two-day refresher session for high court nominated and accredited Salis members, in which 21 Salis members from (Thatta 03, Sajawal 03, Badin 06, and Karachi 09) participated actively.

After the refresher training, there was an average of a 20% knowledge increase observed after the refresher training. These Salis members will be further engaged in Mediation of different disputes across Sindh.

ADVOCACY & AWARENESS: Sensitizing Communities and Stakeholders across Sindh on ADR

Sessions with LAW COLLEGES

LAS has been involved in advocacy and awareness along with forging linkages with relevant stakeholders across academia, judiciary, lawyers, students, and community leaders to build their understanding and capacities regarding Alternate Dispute Resolution.

To build a cadre of future lawyers and practitioners of ADR who are sensitized, have a holistic understanding, and can bring change in the landscape of ADR in Pakistan, LAS is making continuous efforts to engage law students across several districts of Sindh. Our field teams have conducted information sessions with law



students at the following institutes of higher education:

- ▶ Indus Law College, Hyderabad
- ▶ Metha Ram Law School at University of Sindh.
- ▶ SZAB Law School at Shah Abdul Latif University, Khairpur.
- ▶ School of Law at University of Karachi
- ▶ Faculty of Law at Humdard University, Karachi
- ▶ Shan-e-Asi Law College, Sangarh

Around 215 final-year law students (130 men and 85 women) actively participated in these sessions.

Engaging COMMUNITY LEADERS

To empower communities and to build strong networks of ADR within the communities, it is important to empower the leaders, who might then take on the responsibility for dispersing information regarding the ADR mechanisms, guiding their people on how to resolve their disputes amicably through private and court-annexed mediation without putting a strain on the relationship between families and other members of the community.

LAS organized ADR awareness sessions for the community leaders in the districts of Karachi and Shaheed Benazirabad, which were attended by 57 community (38 Men and 19 women) leaders.



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

0800 - 70806



Empowering Communities through LEGAL AWARENESS CLINICS



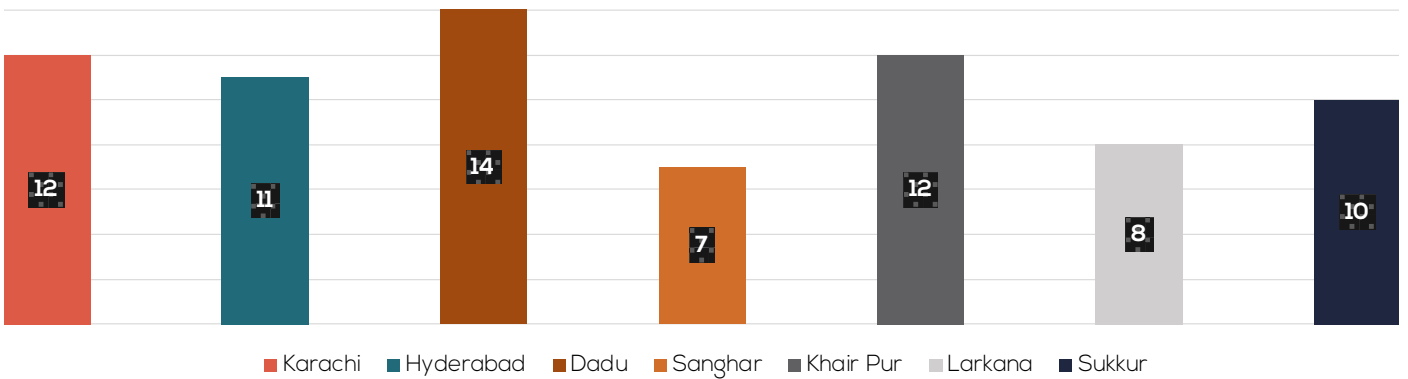
One of the main thematic areas that LAS actively works in is creating a sustained demand for Alternative Dispute Resolution methods in Sindh to reduce pendency in courts and offer citizens a low-cost, effective justice alternative.

LAS does this through Legal Awareness clinics for marginalized

groups, especially those who don't have access to Justice. Our field team conducted 74 legal clinics in 8 districts of Sindh including Karachi, Hyderabad, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazir Abad, Dadu, Larkana, Khairpur, and Sukkur – which was attended by 2021 community members (776 men, 1240 women, and 05 transgender community).



District Wise Progress of Legal Aid Clinics



JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

JUSTICE PREVAILS! LAS Advocates achieve convictions in 2 SGBV Cases

Given the rate of convictions in SGBV cases is 3% in Pakistan, LAS advocates securing convictions in two cases out of twenty-eight comes as a major triumph.

in one of the cases was convicted under S.376 PPC and sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment and a fine of PKR 50,000/- in a judgment by the Additional District and Session Judge (GBV Court) for committing the rape of an 8-year-old survivor.

In another case for the rape of a 20-year-old girl, the convict was fined PKR 200,000/- and was sentenced to 25 years in prison, including 7 years imprisonment for criminal intimidation.

On January 22, 2022, the accused

LAS helps in avoiding a hazardous accident from a gas pipeline leakage

Mr. Ahmed Hussain a resident of Ghazi Town, Phase-I, Malir, Karachi contacted LAS to file his grievance against Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC). He had earlier complained that a gas pipeline runs through his house, which has also been leaking for a long time, hence jeopardizing the structure of his house. He had earlier made several complaints to the SSGC authorities & requested the repairs of the leaked gas pipeline, yet the authorities did not take any adequate action.

The LAS team took this case and filed a complaint regarding the maladministration of the SSGC authority to the Office of Federal Ombudsman on January 17, 2022. Taking notice of this case, the Office of Federal Ombudsman deemed this incident a result of maladministration and ordered the



SSGC to fix the leaking gas pipeline to minimize the risk of damage on February 9, 2022. Following this, the concerned authorities sent its repair team to the complainant, and the problem was ultimately

fixed. Hence saving residents of the neighborhood from the gas line which could have been hazardous.



communications@las.org.pk



+92 21-9266011-4



Suite 212, 2nd Floor, The Doctor's Plaza, Block 9, Clifton, Karachi



www.las.org.pk



[/LegalAidSocietyPakistan](https://www.facebook.com/LegalAidSocietyPakistan)



[legalaidsociety_Pakistan](https://www.instagram.com/legalaidsociety_Pakistan)



[las_Pakistan](https://twitter.com/las_Pakistan)



[youtube.com/LegalAid](https://www.youtube.com/LegalAid)