



LAS

LEGAL AID SOCIETY

RESHAPING SOLUTIONS FOR
ACCESSING JUSTICE IN PAKISTAN

NEWSLETTER

July - September 2022

20th Edition

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

SALUTING THE FRONT LINE HEROES during the catastrophe



As of September 9, 2022, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) reported 1,396 fatalities from the catastrophic floodings since July 2022, with nearly a third of them being children. It is estimated that nearly 15% of the country's entire population has been affected. The Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment (MSRNA) conducted by provincial disaster management authorities directed its assessment efforts in 25 of the worst affected districts in the country, of which 13 are in Sindh. Displacement and relocation ratios were significantly higher here as over 40 percent of the affected population was away from their homes. The most pressing priority needs highlighted included: food

(89%), health care services (59%), shelter support and access to drinking water (47%).

The Legal Aid Society pivoted its district operations towards life-saving assistance for our fellow citizens through the initiation of a dry food campaign which provided a month's ration to over 6,000 families. These families were prioritized in terms of women household heads, number of dependent children, and the elderly. Our mapping efforts ensured the avoidance of duplication and prioritization of those who were unable to seek refuge in tent cities. As the second phase of our interventions, we will be providing blankets in the wake of the upcoming winter spells and will be working with offices of district commissioners to identify where support is needed for de-watering drives through the provision of water pumps to communities.

LAS will continue to build upon its existing strengths through its grass roots lawyers, field officers, and networks of community paralegals so as to ensure a focus on building communal resilience to prevent, prepare for and respond to such climate-induced disasters.

Whilst we are still reeling from the after effects of the catastrophe, the lessons learned need to be implemented immediately. The case has been made more pressing for developing cohorts of community-based environmentalists who can mold our communal practices into climate-smart actions and can ensure communities are better equipped to access social security mechanisms.



FLOOD RELIEF CAMPAIGN IN SINDH

During the flash floods, the Government of Pakistan estimated that around 33 million people in 81 different districts around the country had been affected by the rains, floods, and related calamities, while 23 of the districts affected were from the province of Sindh. Out of those affected, the NDMA estimates that 6.4 million people required immediate assistance.

The World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that 664,000 people have been displaced and are residing in relief camps, with an estimated 87% of them being from the province of Sindh, marking seven districts (Sukkur, Khairpur, Dadu, Larkana, Nawabshah, Khairpur, Sanghar) as most critically endangered.

Coincidentally, LAS having offices in these seven districts with our field teams having mapped economically vulnerable communities over the course of our past programs, was in touch with community focal persons and was ready to deploy relief measures in partnership with the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) operating on the ground and the local administration and government departments. In the wake of this climate-induced disaster, LAS began a Dry Ration donation drive. This was supported by a fundraising campaign on our digital media mainstreams, where we collected donations for the flood affected victims in the districts of interior Sindh.

LAS also collaborated with its National & International donors to support those vulnerable people who had been displaced from their homes in these difficult times. With the generous donation from our donors, we were able to help 5,580 flood-affected families since August 23, 2022, with a month's ration supply, which was procured at approximately PKR 5,607 per unit.

The primary criteria for our beneficiaries to be given ration were that they would be displaced from their homes and would not be the recipient of any previous government or NGO relief programs, whereas priority was given to female-led households. Other beneficiaries included:

- ▶ Pregnant females/widows,
- ▶ Those whose homes have been damaged,
- ▶ Those that no longer have any source of income, and
- ▶ Minority communities affected by the flooding.



Our teams reached the affected through makeshift boats, tractors, and trolleys in areas which were no longer accessible by roads. Moreover, To ensure a transparent distribution procedure of ration bags we:

- i. Ensured the security of our field officers, having received unparalleled help from the

Pakistan Rangers.

- ii. With the support of Rangers, our field officers traveled to deliver ration bags to the flood victims, who were earlier prioritized from the mapping list.
- iii. Ensured that the beneficiary's names matched their CNIC cards as marked from the mapping list.



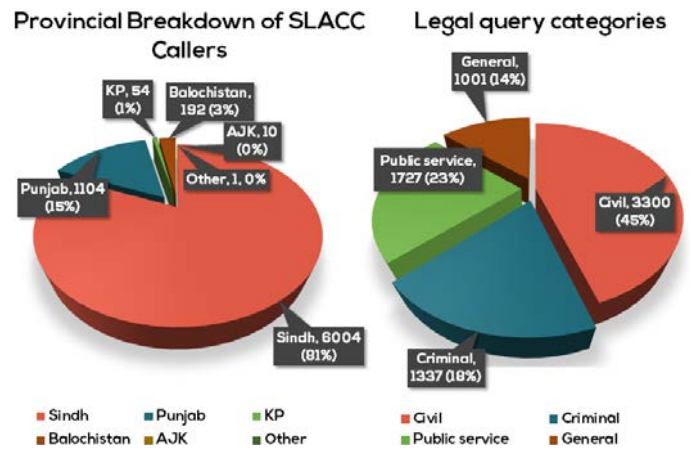
We wholeheartedly thank our donors who trusted us and whose contributions helped us to save the vulnerable from what could have been a possible situation of starvation.

EMPOWERING CITIZENS THROUGH THE SINDH LEGAL ADVISORY CALL CENTRE (Toll-free number: 0800-70806) - a public-private partnership between the Government of Sindh and the Legal Aid Society

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. It 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 Pakistan's first toll-free helpline operating 24/7, providing free legal advice from High Court-enrolled lawyers to vulnerable communities. To date, the call center has received over **365,000** calls via an Interactive Voice Recording (IVRT) system, with over **161,031** queries being registered and resolved from over 450 cities across Pakistan.

During the reporting quarter the SLACC registered & catered to **7,365 legal queries** from across Pakistan.



Unparalleled Legal Aid Services during the flash floods:

Throughout the devastating floods in Pakistan this year, SLACC actively provided legal advice and assistance to flood victims and displaced communities. Operating as a tele-legal service at the forefront of the crisis, SLACC lawyers informed flood victims of their legal rights, and remained an integral referral body that connected flood victims to various government and non-governmental organizations working for flood relief.



EXPOSURE VISITS at the SLACC

Visit by the Director General Public Relations of the Sindh Information Department to SLACC

Mr. Ghulam-us-Saqlain (Director General Public Relations, Information Department, GoS) paid a visit to the SLACC. He commended SLACC officials for their efforts in increasing legal awareness for vulnerable community members across the country and vouched his support for assisting SLACC in its mission.

During the visit, Mr. Saqlain discussed potential collaboration between SLACC and the Sindh Information Department for greater outreach and impact. Mr. Saqlain also helped us get two SLACC publicity boards installed outside his office, along with the office of the Secretary of Information, for greater visibility.



TRAININGS at the SLACC

Call Quality Assurance:



The on-call lawyers from the SLACC participated in a training held on September 01, 2022, at the Pakistan Society for Training & Development (PSTD). The training was embarked on by Mr. Kashif (Manager Customer services, Summit Bank). During this

training, our legal advisors were updated with the latest SOPs and best practices for call quality assurance in order to ensure that our beneficiaries receive legal advice in the most efficient and hospitable manner.



Women’s Right to Legal Property:

SLACC lawyers took part in a Women’s Right to Legal Property training session held on September 30, 2022. The training was provided by **Advocate Fahad Khilji** and focused on the primary issues that women face in securing their right to legal property. The training focused on recent case precedents and legal developments in property rights, and aimed to equip the lawyers to give the most

effective and easy-to-understand legal advice to our beneficiaries.

Additionally, our lawyers were trained with specific SOPs while following up with beneficiaries to recognize the legal roadblocks for women in securing their legal properties, and enhance the effectiveness of the advice provided.

Training on TAX LAWS

Another training on September 01, 2022, was organized by **Mr. Ammar Saeed** (Supreme court enrolled lawyer from Saidduddin and Co. law firm), who presented the basic tenets of Tax Law in Pakistan and taught the latest amendments in Tax Law in 2022.

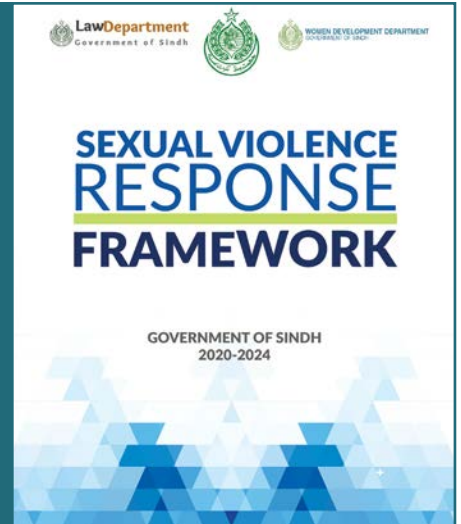
This training better equipped our lawyers to handle a variety of legal queries regarding tax laws, including matters regarding tax filing, possession, inheritance, and rent.



STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT’S RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SINDH

LAS continuously strives to improve access to justice for survivors and victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) by improving critical Criminal Justice System (CJS) actors’ capacity to respond to sexual violence cases, specifically within Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur.

LAS has worked with the Government of Sindh (GoS) to develop a comprehensive five-year plan titled the “Sexual Violence Response Framework” (SVRF) for the 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.



CREATION OF PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS for the Sindh Police and Prosecution Department

LAS has successfully created a Performance Management Framework (PMF) in collaboration with the Sindh Police, which consists of high-level and process-level indicators for the police department to gauge and monitor the performance of GBV Investigation Officers. Currently, the

concerned technical working group is in the process of implementing PMF for the GBV Investigation Officers (IOs) with assistance from the Sindh Police I.T. Department. Moreover, LAS is also creating a PMF for the Prosecution Department with the support of the Law and Prosecution Department.



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PROVIDING SECRETARIAL AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT to Two Technical Working Groups under the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee (MSCC)

In November 2021, the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee (MSCC) was formed under the Chairmanship of Chief Secretary Sindh for an improved & coordinated response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) incidents in the province and to serve as an implementation committee for SVRF. On June 17, 2022, five technical working groups (TWGs) were formed under the MSCC as follows:

TWG I	TWG II	TWG III	TWG IV	TWG V
Medico-Legal Reforms	Creation of a Performance Management Framework	Assessment of SGBV Processes	Establishment of ARCC/OSPC	Humanitarian and GBV
Chaired by				
Health Department	Home Department	Sindh Police Department - Investigation	Home Department	WDD, PDMA & UNFPA
Secretary				
Pathfinders International	Legal Aid Society	Legal Aid Society	Pathfinders International & UNFPA	UNFPA



Since the formation of the committee, LAS has facilitated five meetings of the TWGs to which it is secretary, i.e.

- ▶ TWG-II: Creation of a Performance Management Framework (PMF), and
- ▶ TWG III: Assessment of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) processes.

The Legal Aid Society provided technical assistance to the working groups, including facilitating data-centered discussions and decisions, and encouraging criminal justice actors to develop robust coordination mechanisms and precedence.



NOTIFICATION OF 3-YEAR TENURE for Special Sexual Offences Investigation Units

Special Sexual Offences Investigation Units (SSOIs) are a specialized cadre of Investigation Officers appointed to have jurisdiction to investigate cases of violence against women and girls (VAWG) under their designated police stations. The Sindh Police Department has notified 30 SSOIs across Sindh under Section 9 of the Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act 2021. These IOs received gender-sensitization training from LAS to understand the case management of SGBV and to provide a specialized, comprehensive response and investigation to such sensitive and complex crimes. SSOIs also prevent SGBV cases from prolonging more than the stipulated time of 4 months under the Anti-Rape Act 2021.



As one of the action items from the TWG II, LAS has successfully advocated for setting a tenure of minimum 3-years for SSOIs in Sindh through a notification dated August 08, 2022, by the AIGP Establishment. The GBV IOs posted under SSOIs will not be transferred before three years except under exceptional circumstances and in case of retirement. This step will reduce the delays in investigating GBV cases that happen due to frequent transfers.

SESSIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN at the Workplace:

Gender discrimination is a pre-dominated factor among all kinds of human rights violations, which requires immediate & systemic action. Gender discrimination concerns both men and women, and it involves the transformation of attitudes and practices in all societies.

To promote equal human rights, reduce inequalities, gender discrimination, and violence against women and marginalized groups, we took the initiative to sensitize our employees firsthand; and organized a two-day gender sensitization workshop for Managers and Coordinators on September 19 & 20, 2022.

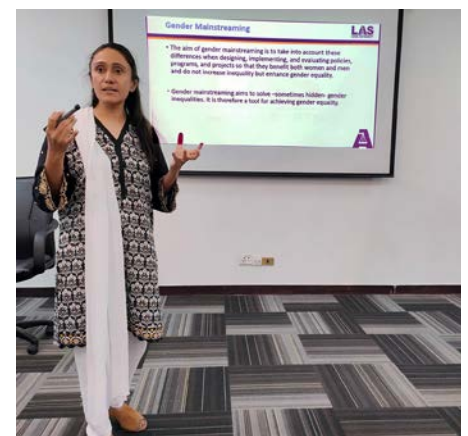
workshop, the participants learned the other genders' diverse perspectives. They developed a more detailed comprehension of the human experience, which will ultimately benefit the society while promoting respect & equal human rights, while reducing inequalities and gender discrimination. The objectives of the sessions were to:

information on how socially constructed gender norms affect the daily lives of women and men

2. Support participants with the knowledge and skills needed to mainstream gender into their respective program activities.
3. Create a safe space for participants to identify and address the harmful impact of gender norms on GBV.

During the gender sensitivity

1. Equip participants with



FEATURED ARTICLE: THE UNNOTICED PLIGHT OF SGBV during humanitarian emergencies

In past decades, Pakistan has faced numerous emergencies including natural disasters, pandemics, and displacements due to the war against terrorism. Despite the fact that women and marginalized groups are the ones most affected by these emergencies, one thing that has been observed is the lack of gender-responsive policies and actions. In such emergencies, more than 70% of women have reported experiencing gender-based violence.¹ Pakistan already stands to be the second worst country on the Global Gender Gap Index

can be difficult since they typically cannot leave their houses without a male partner or approval from the tribal elders. They also serve as the primary caregivers at home, which may impede their evacuation capacity. Women have been reported to be victims of fatal injuries 14 times more than men during such situations.² A number of women and girls face aggravated domestic violence, forced marriage, early marriages and exchange marriages due to males perceiving them as liabilities to be carried during displacements.

care, their lives remain in constant danger.

The lack of personal hygiene facilities for women in rescue camps also increases the danger of sexual violence for girls and women. The most significant threats to women's safety are found within the structures of these shelters in the form of improper or combined toilets and bath areas. As a result, there are more rapes and incidences of sexual harassment. Many women reports being harassed and raped in bushes while accessing the toilets far from camps. These incidents go unreported to save the reputation and the priority being the survival in these camps. Women who are single parents, widows, or separated from their husbands and male members of the family tend to be even more vulnerable. Their access to food and other aids gets limited due to the distribution points being dominated by men.

Even after emergencies, women often neglect their compensation needs during the restoration phase. Moreover, commonly the need assessments are also conducted by questioning the patriarchal heads of the families which puts the needs of women at risk. Gender-responsive legislative and institutional reforms are urgently needed to ensure women's protection during emergency crises. It is crucial that policymakers take gender-sensitive actions during such crises and consider women's role and needs while making relief efforts. Acknowledging the voices of women expressing their concerns should be prioritized to prevent them from facing additional traumas and ordeals while struggling to survive.

Arica Rehman

Research Associate, Legal Aid Society



Report, 2022. These humanitarian emergencies further negatively impact women's living conditions and elevate the risks of GBV, as they exacerbate the existing inequities and patriarchal holds. Lack of awareness and education, restricted access to resources, socioeconomic disadvantages, and cultural demands are major factors that render women susceptible to violence, especially for women who are disabled or belong to religious minorities.

When they are forced to evacuate their homes due to emergencies, women are more likely to face multiple forms of violence. In Pakistan's rural areas, where women's mobility is generally restricted, evacuation for women

Once evacuated to a rescue camp, there is a more significant concern for women's hygiene and sanitation requirements. In this state of displacement, women are unable to keep up with their menstrual needs. The challenge is particularly troubling for lactating and pregnant women. According to UNFPA, there are at least 650,000 pregnant women in flood-affected areas who are in urgent need of maternal health services. Additionally, because of the damage to the medical infrastructure and the lack of access to medical aid, girls' and women's access to health facilities has been hampered. Of these, 73,000 expect to give birth within the next month. Because they lack access to adequate maternal

1. ActionAid (2016). On the frontline: Catalyzing women's leadership in humanitarian action.
2. UNDP (2022). Women are hit hardest in disasters, so why are responses too often gender-blind?

EMPOWERING WOMEN TO UNDERSTAND AND ACCESS JUSTICE MECHANISMS FOR THEIR PROPERTY RIGHTS



TRAININGS WITH LAND REVENUE OFFICIALS on women's rights to property

To further build institutional capacity on women's right to legal property, LAS conducted three trainings with Mukhtiar-Kaars, Patwaris, and representatives of the revenue department in 2 districts of Karachi (South, and Keamari) and SBA orient them on Land Revenue Laws in Sindh.

Conducted at the offices of the Deputy Commissioner (DC), these trainings focused on raising awareness for mechanisms/legal pathways through which women and transgender could legally acquire property i.e., inheritance, gifts, and wills. Moreover, discussions were held on inheritance shares, procedural information on case registration, administrative hurdles, and legal processes. The training underscored the role of Patwaris and its significance in reducing institutional hurdles for women accessing their property rights.

In Pakistan, vulnerable groups such as women, especially those who belong to a religious or gender minority group, continue to be at risk of being unlawfully deprived of their legal property rights. LAS has been working considerably to empower these vulnerable groups socio-economically at a grassroots level by:

1. Strengthening their capacity to acquire and protect their legal property,
2. Mobilizing the stakeholders within the Sindh government and the legal fraternity



ROUNDTABLE CONFERENCE with Lawyers

To strengthen the justice system actors' capacities, the Legal Aid Society held a roundtable conference with lawyers on July 4, 2022, at Royal Taaj Hotel in Shaheed Benazirabad.

In our bid to mainstream conversations regarding women's right to inherited and marital property, the day aimed to enhance the understanding and application of property law through a gendered lens. The discussion was led by **Advocate Basam Dahri** (Litigation Specialist, LAS), **Hunza Moin Siddique** (Program Manager),

Babar Khan Chandio (Field Advocate), and **Muhammad Rashid Mahar** (Field Advocate).

The session witnessed active participation by 28 advocates as they delved into the intricacies of the law and women's legal entitlements in inherited property. Furthermore, Mr. Bassam Dahri shared Criminal Remedies for protecting women or their property rights, as he defined the Tenancy Rights of Women & Land Revenue Laws and conducted in-depth discussions on case laws with the participants.



CLOSING THE GAP BETWEEN LAW, POLICY, AND PRACTICE on Women’s Right to Property



Provincial Launches of the documentary film series: INSAAF KI TALAASH

LAS organized three meetings on “Closing the Gap between Law, Policy and Practice on Women’s Right to Property” across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh in coordination with the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR), SOC Films, and the

ombudspersons offices.

Three roundtable discussions were held with the following details, which revealed the challenges between law, policy, and implementation of women’s right to own, inherit and control their property.

#	City	Date	Venue
1	Peshawar	July 22, 2022	Provincial Ombudsperson’s office
2	Lahore	August 11, 2022	Peace and Justice Network
3	Karachi	September 13, 2022	Wafaqi Mostasib’s office



The sessions witnessed the launch of five-series documentaries earlier developed by SOC Films, LAS & NCHR. Among many points of discussion, the panel discussed issues such as lack of awareness



among women about their rights and bureaucratic red tape as the primary reasons for the judiciary’s failure

All documentaries have now been released and are available for viewing across LAS social media.



SCREENING OF ANIMATED FILM SERIES on Inheritance laws in Mobile Cinemas

LAS in collaboration with Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy (SOC) films, continued its outreach efforts through its mobile cinema tour in Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The mobile cinema screened 9 animated films (translated into 8 regional languages) on Women’s Inheritance and Residential Rights. In this quarter, we reached out to 769 community members who gave a great response engaging with the films, asking questions about their rights, and expressing the knowledge they gained from the sessions.

Each session usually showcases three films simultaneously, depending on the community dynamics. These sessions typically start with introducing the concept of inheritance and the importance of property rights for women. This is followed by a brief discussion focusing on addressing the audience’s property-related queries. It ends with an advertisement of the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Centre number, and the provision of a relevant handout (tailored in local regional languages) for their further guidance.

ENSURING RIGHTS & ACCESS TO JUSTICE for Religious Minorities in Pakistan

To protect the rights of the religious minorities in Pakistan, LAS has been working continuously to

- ▶ Identify barriers to justice faced by religious minorities,
- ▶ Legally empower religious minority communities through education,
- ▶ Provide legal aid and support, and
- ▶ Assess the justice system's effectiveness in responding to legal needs and protecting the legal rights of minority communities.



LEGAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS Clinics

The Religious Minority Communities (RMCs) in remote areas in Sindh lack the knowledge, information, and confidence to easily and effectively access formal and semi-formal justice systems.

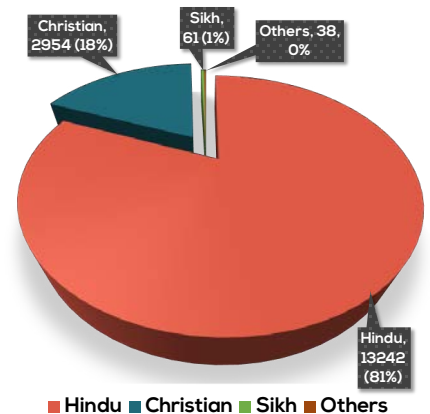
To inform the religious minority communities about their rights, entitlements, and formal and semi-formal administrative processes, LAS developed informational materials tailored to the needs of the people. 38,000 copies of Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials have been distributed so far, while 640 Legal (awareness) Clinics were setup in 8 districts (Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Sanghar, Khairpur, Shaheed Benazirabad, and Dadu) witnessing

active participation from **16,303** RMC members.

These clinics are focused on the capacity building of minorities to enable them to resist and prevent injustices from the evils of early child marriages, forced conversion & marriages, etc.

The chart reflects the participation during the legal aid clinics conducted as of September 30, 2022, along with a religion-wise breakdown.

Participants of Legal Aid Clinics: Breakdown by Community



KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE, AND PRACTICES SURVEY:

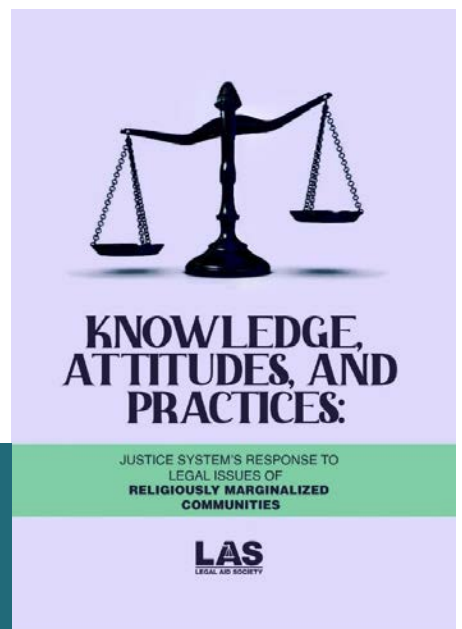
To gain a comprehensive understanding of the justice system's effectiveness in responding to legal needs and protecting the rights of religiously marginalized communities, the LAS team conducted a Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) survey with various justice sector actors. Four separate KAP tools were administered for the four categories of justice sector actors; civil, criminal, the office of the Ombudsperson, and administrative offices.

A mixed method approach was utilized for this study, using four primary methods: an extensive literature review, a close-

ended survey conducted with all participants followed by in-person discussions, and the researcher's observations.

The survey tool included questions based on case studies. The narrative was broken into different parts, each covering one distinct aspect of the law, covering matters pertaining to underage marriage, divorce, maintenance, and abuse throughout the narrative. The survey was conducted with 165 justice system actors.

Click (in case of a softcopy) or scan this QR code to download the report.



NATIONAL MINORITIES WEEK CELEBRATIONS



MINORITY DAY CELEBRATIONS at the Head Office

August 11 is celebrated as National Minorities' Day in Pakistan to acknowledge the invaluable contribution made by our minority communities to the development of Pakistan and to reaffirm our commitment as a nation to safeguard their rights. The minority groups in Pakistan have made considerable

contributions to the development of this country. Taking this forward, we celebrated Minorities' Day at our head office to acknowledge the invaluable contributions made by our minority community members to our organization and reaffirm our commitment as a nation to safeguard the rights of everyone.

ONE-DAY SEMINAR



The 'Rights of Minority Community in Pakistan,' seminar, was held at the Catch the Fire Church in Korangi, Karachi on August 11, 2022. The seminar witnessed dynamic representation from the Christian, Hindu, and Sikh communities, who participated and expressed their views.

On the day the seminar shed light

on various topics, ranging from the fundamental rights of religious minorities, the importance and process of obtaining a national identity card, and how to understand the process of getting justice from the courts. The attendees appreciated the knowledge passed to the participants and the efforts made by LAS on the day.



MINORITY DAY CLINIC:

LAS organized a legal awareness session on National Minority Day for the Christian community in Khuda ki Basti, Lyari, Karachi. The session aimed not only to educate the minority communities on their legal & fundamental human rights but also to empower them by connecting them with the correct forums to attain justice.

Click (in case of a softcopy) or scan this QR code to view the highlights from the day.



DECONGESTING COURT DOCKETS: by institutionalizing ADR in Pakistan:

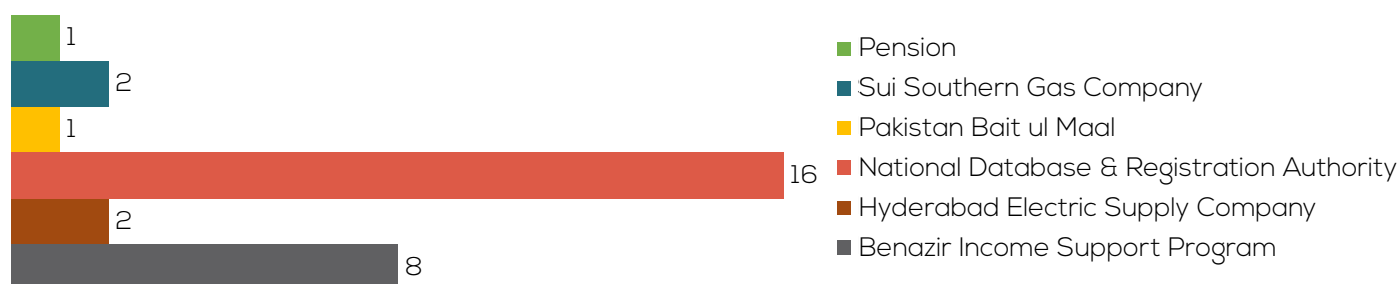
DIVERSION OF CASES towards ADR Mechanisms

It is imperative to empower vulnerable and marginalized communities so that they can find potential pathways to seek a cost-effective and speedy solution for dispute and conflict resolution. Due to a large backlog of cases in courts (reported around 2.2 million) in Pakistan, the Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism is a sign of relief, ensuring equitable justice to the disempowered and disenfranchised segments of our society.

During the reporting quarter, **30 cases** (17 men, 13 women) from our targeted districts were diverted toward ADR Mechanisms. The cases diverted towards ADR ranged from issues related to BISP, pension from the Municipal Corporation, NADRA, Pakistan Baitul Mal, and overbilling from Gas supply companies. All the cases were diverted to the Federal Ombudsman.



Types of Case diverstred to towards ADR Mechanism



CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT AND SENSITIZATION of the Islamabad Districts Courts judges on ADR

Among other big cities of Pakistan, Islamabad District courts face a significant backlog (of approximately 35,000 cases), which is the primary reason behind the delay in the dissemination of court proceedings, resulting in frustration among the litigants, and destroying the very essence of justice.



To cater the dire need in reducing the backlog of pending cases, LAS collaborated with the Federal Judicial Academy (FJA) and arranged "Capacity Building and Sensitization of Islamabad District Judiciary on ADR Mechanisms" for 39 Civil Judges of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) on July 21-23, 2022. The fundamental purpose of this

training was to render capacity-building training on the Islamabad ADR Act of 2017, techniques, and procedures of private and court-annexed mediation. This training will help judiciary members to be better equipped with meditation techniques, hence and decongest the burden of court cases by referring the disputes toward ADR.

During the closing ceremony **Mr. Hayat Ali Shah** (Director General FJA) fully endorsed the implementation of ADR; and cited the words of Barrister Christian Fox: **"Backlog is a risk to rule of law"**, as the present system is a clear depiction of 'justice delayed' which in essence is justice denied.

IMPROVING THE SUPPLY OF ADR across Pakistan

ACCREDITED MEDIATION TRAINING for 50 Lawyers in Islamabad for quicker delivery of justice to the citizens

Reducing the court pendency ultimately leads to cost and time-effective delivery of justice. One way of achieving this is by institutionalizing ADR in Pakistan. The stakeholders involved on the supply side, including judges and lawyers, will play an essential role in successfully implementing this concept in the coming years. One major step in this process is to well-verse the district court judges on ADR mechanisms and sensitize them with procedural knowledge regarding court-annexed mediation.

Following the same, LAS initiated the Internationally Accredited Mediation Training Program in collaboration with FJA and Islamabad High Court (IHC) for 50 lawyers based in Islamabad. The



selection committee comprising members of FJA, Judges of IHC had earlier nominated experienced lawyers to participate in this upcoming program. **The Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIARB)** - a London-based organization known

for delivering training on mediation and arbitration, delivered training for this batch which commenced from September 26-30, 2022, at the FJA.

This training aimed to share practical experiences and to transfer the skills and techniques required to manage mediation from initial instruction to the conclusion phase, including preparation, opening, exploring, negotiation, concluding stages, and setting up a Mediation practice. This training will help to achieve an increased number of cases resolved through arbitration and mediation within the legal fraternity in the long run.



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SEMINAR FOR INSTITUTIONALIZING ADR in Islamabad



To institutionalize ADR given the backlog cases pending before the courts of Pakistan, LAS in partnership with Legal Aid and Justice Authority (LAJA) arranged a Seminar on **“Institutionalizing Alternate Dispute Resolution in Islamabad”** on September 28, 2022, at the Ramada Hotel, Islamabad.

The day witnessed active participation by **Justice Arif Hussain Khilji** (Chief Legal Advisor, LAS), **Mr.**

Honorable Hayat Ali Shah (Director General, Federal Judicial Academy), **Dr. Raheem Awan** (Director General LAJA), and **Mr. Jahangir Jadoon** (Advocate General, LAJA) who emphasized the need for a justice system that would be efficacious and inexpensive, and will provide expeditious relief without any delays.

On this occasion, **Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada** (Honorable Federal Minister for Human Rights) appreciated the



efforts of LAJA, LAS, FJA, and IHC to institutionalize the ADR to provide speedy and expeditious justice to the people. He stated that Federal Ministry, along with its subordinating departments and authorities will provide full support to this initiative in Islamabad for the speedy and cost-effective provision of justice, and to decrease the backlog in the courts. He further stated that the ADR is the ultimate solution to reducing the backlog of pending cases in Islamabad courts.

SINDH STRATEGY MEETING & certificate distribution to accredited mediators

LAS was privileged to host **Mr. Ali Ahmed Baloch** (Secretary Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Prosecution), **Mr. Shahdab Sarki** (President Karachi Bar Association), **Mr. M. Bukhsh Dharejo** (MD Small Industries, Sindh), **Mr. Qutbudin Singoro** (Special Secretary, Sindh) and other relevant legal policy advocates to discuss the promotion and advocacy of ADR in Sindh on August 26, 2022. Led by **Justice Nasir Aslam Zahid** (Chairperson, LAS), **Honorable Justice Arif Khilji**, and **Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid** (CEO, LAS) the meeting focused on strategies to promote mandatory

mediation in Sindh.

The aforementioned discussed strategies focused on developing relevant advocacy instruments to incentivize judges to refer cases for mediation. The meeting was followed by a short ceremony featuring the distribution of certificates to mediators earlier trained by LAS.

A total of 22 Legal Aid Society members were declared accredited mediators and appreciated for their consistent commitment to the cause of mediation.



ADR STREET LAW PROGRAM TO PROMOTE ADR SKILLS AND SENSITIZATION in law schools across Sindh

LAS has been striving to institutionalize Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) in Pakistan for the past half a decade so that communities across Sindh are educated on the concept of ADR, its benefits, and its successes; ultimately leading to the use of ADR as a justice mechanism.

This program seeks to institutionalize initiatives that will enhance law students' legal knowledge, skills, and confidence when settling disputes. The Official Ceremony of this event was held in Islamabad from August 3-6, 2022, and was graced by the presence of **Ms. Mehnaz Akber Aziz** (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Law and Justice), **Dr. Rahim Awan** (Director General, Legal and Justice Authority, GoP), **Ms. Amy**



Wallace (Representative, Street Law Inc. USA) and **Mr. Usama Malik** (Director, Directorate of Legal Education, Pakistan Bar Council).

On the occasion, **Dr. Rahim Awan** (Director, LAJA, GoP) emphasized institutionalizing ADR in Pakistan to provide justice at the doorsteps of ordinary citizens and appreciated the efforts of LAS in this regard.

LAS had earlier engaged 14 law colleges across Sindh, via 13 sessions with various law colleges to sensitize law students on ADR. Based on the findings from these sessions, we initiated short Street Law Programs, which was co-designed and developed with **Street Law Inc.** (a U.S. based global, nonpartisan, non-profit organization with more than 40 years of experience developing classroom and community programs that educate young people about law and government).



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Development of SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY NETWORKS for ADR

LAS established a sustainable mechanism whereby communities will be able to effectively reach out to relevant ADR providers for quick and effective resolution of their legal needs. To achieve this goal, LAS has established a sustainable mechanism called Community Alternative Dispute Resolution Networks (CANs) across 8 districts of Sindh Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Dadu, Khairpur, Larkana, Shaheed Benazirabad, and Sanghar.

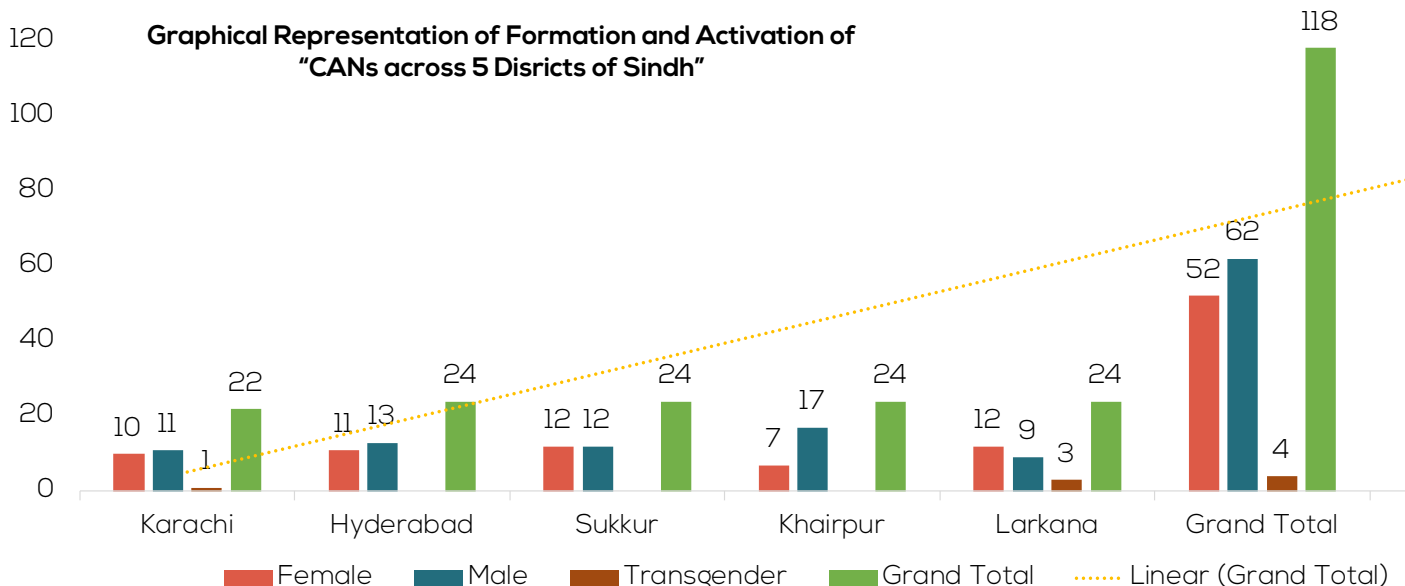
The CANs groups are composed of 3 ADR Paralegals (1 female and 2 male paralegals in each) dispersed across targeted districts. These CAN members are educated community members involved in social services and would work on a volunteer basis.



FORMATION OF 40 COMMUNITY ADR NETWORKS in 5 Districts of Sindh

The formation and activation of community ADR networks have been made operational in Sindh. So far, LAS has trained a cadre of 118 ADR paralegals (including 62 male, 52 female paralegals, and 4 transgender paralegals) experts on a specially designed ADR training curriculum.

These ADR paralegals are empowering communities by equipping them with knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms through ADR channels and are contributing to the goal of improving the justice system in Pakistan



ENGAGEMENT & ADVOCACY EFFORTS for the promotion of ADR

The Legal Aid Society has been continuously bringing awareness among the general public, legal fraternity, and government institutions on ADR using different approaches, including awareness sessions, conferences, and via campaigns through the print and electronic media.



ADR LEGAL AWARENESS CLINICS

To provide inexpensive and expeditious justice to the people at their doorstep and to enhance the supply of ADR, it was imperative to educate the people about its mechanism. For the same, LAS initiated legal awareness clinics for the communities with the support of LAS' trained paralegals in Sindh.

Having Community ADR Network (CAN's) engaged 06 clinics were conducted in districts Hyderabad and Karachi. In both districts, 12 trained paralegals helped the field teams to map and conduct ADR sessions which witnessed participation from 129 people (128 Female and 1 Male) during the sessions.



PROGRAM ON SINDH TV: Importance of ADR during the flash floods

On September 26, 2022, Advocate **Habib-Ur-Rehman Jiskani** (Litigation Manager, Committee for the Welfare of Prisoners) appeared on a Sindh T.V. morning show titled "Damadam Sindh" which was aired LIVE on national television. Conversations revolved around the concept of ADR, particular mechanisms for resolving disputes by means other than litigation, and

the need to further promote and institutionalize ADR during times of emergencies such as the floods, and its position as a cost and time-effective model.

Mr. Habib also revealed the work undertaken by LAS during its Flood-relief campaign and the process of distributing dry rations to 5,580+ needy families at the time of need.

INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS: through SMS & Rickshaw Campaigns

LAS initiated awareness campaigns across targeted districts of Sindh. These campaigns supplemented the need for the communities to be aware of indigenous resources that can be utilized at their ease.

During the reported quarter, LAS efficiently executed the SMS campaign to increase public awareness regarding the use of ADR mechanisms, its approaches, and its successes across Pakistan, reaching over **1.2 million** citizens through an SMS campaign facilitated by Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC).

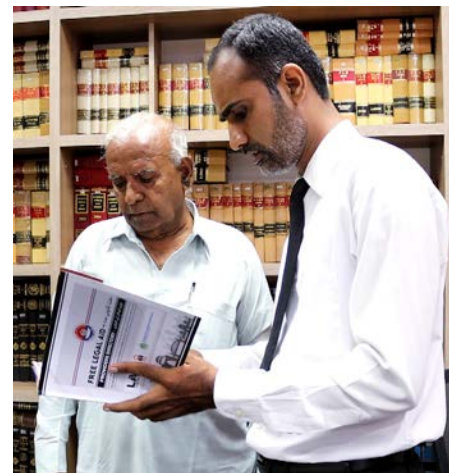
Legal Aid

Tanzay k mutabadil hal ma rehnumai k liya call karay 080070806 or mahir vukla k mushwaray say nida utayain. Yeh service Law Dept Govt of Sindh ki taraf say ha

COLLABORATION WITH THE HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT, GOS for provision of free Legal Assistance

Human Rights emerged as an integral priority of Pakistan’s federal and provincial governments in the backdrop of democratic transition and international obligations. For the same Human Rights Department, the Government of Sindh initiated a program titled “Legal Assistance and Awareness Program for Vulnerable Communities Across Sindh” in association with the Legal Aid Society as its implementing partners.

This initiative aims to provide direct free legal aid and assistance to victims of human rights violations, including counseling and representation in a wide range of civil and criminal cases. For the same, a dedicated team of advocates has already started undertaking legal cases from eight districts of Sindh: Karachi, Hyderabad, Nawabshah (SBA), Larkana, Sanghar, Sukkur, Dadu, and Khairpur, and has already undertaken 500+ cases spread across Sindh to pursue justice for victims of human rights violations.



The beneficiaries of our free legal aid services would be those unable to afford private legal representation and litigation-related expenses. Our beneficiaries include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Victims of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual assault, rape,

murder, etc.,

- ▶ Victims of child rights violations, including child abuse and child labor,
- ▶ Victims of minority-related violence,
- ▶ Violence against transgender people,
- ▶ Labour rights, etc.

JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

Helping a mother to get shelter & justice after being abused by her family in Shaheed Benazirabad

Ms. Keshwar, an elderly lady from the SBA (Shaheed Benazirabad) district, is a mother of three sons. She was residing with her sons, who tortured her using minor household issues as excuses. The two children also refused to undergo any of her expenditures, forcing her out of their family house one day. Ms. Keshwar went to the women police station in SBA to seek help. But unfortunately

due to significant delays on behalf of the women police station, she was not presented in front of the magistrate for further proceedings. Ms. Keshwar then reached out to the Women Complaint Centre (WCC) in light of the same. **Ms. Zaibunissa** (In-charge WCC, Nawabshah) referred this matter to Legal Aid Society for legal assistance, while **Advocate Majid Ali** (Section Head, LAS, SBA division) immediately responded to



Ms. Zaibunissa (Incharge Women Complaint Centre, SBA), with **Advocate Majid Ali** (Section Head, SBA)

her call and presented Keshwar in district court, SBA.

After acquiring the required documentation and completing legal formalities, the LAS advocate submitted an application to the Honorable Court, requesting shelter for Ms. Keshwar. The district court listened to the plea and directed the SBA police to send Ms. Keshwar to Dar-ul-Aman (shelter home) in SBA for residence until further orders were passed.

A week later, when the case went viral on social media, Ms. Kehswar's sons directly approached the court and apologized in front of the Honorable court and their mother for their behavior. With the willingness of Ms. Keshwar, the court allowed Ms. Keshwar to be returned to her home and reside with her sons with a Personal Recognizance (PR) bond stating a payment of Rs. 5,000 per month, with an assurance of no acts of further humiliation

insults to be passed towards her. If any of her sons disobeyed the court & PR bond conditions order, then they would get liable to pay Ms. Keshwar an amount of Rs 50,000.

Today Ms. Keshwar is once again residing with her sons peacefully. She is highly thankful to the Legal Aid Society for its free legal assistance, without which she would not have been able to secure her legal rights.

JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

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 the 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.

Gulshan Maymar, a Sikh girl, was abducted on May 4, 2022. At the time of her abduction, she was 13 years old and a resident of Hindu Goth, Karachi. Following this incident, the victim's heirs contacted LAS for their legal assistance. LAS lawyers lodged their FIR at the Aziz Bhatti Police Station and with the consent of the girls' heirs moved the applications to all concerned authorities for the recovery of the minor.

The police arrested a suspected person from the place of Gulshan-e-Iqbal, who informed them about

Rescuing a minor girl belonging to Sikh Community

the abductors. After which the police raided a location in Rahim Yar Khan, Punjab, and recovered the victim and the abductor. The abductor also claimed that they had gotten married with mutual consent. On June 9, 2022, the police brought the girl for the recording of statement U/S 164 of Cr.p.c. At the time of her statement Gulshan, was perplexed and afraid. At this moment, the LAS Field Advocate, along with the assistance of **Mr. Arun Parsad** (a relative of the girl), spoke to Gulshan and counseled her so that she would give her statement voluntarily without any fear or coercion. Gulshan issued her statement clearly that she wanted to go with her parents. After considering the statement, the Honorable Court directed the girl to go with her parents.

LAS played a pivotal play by providing legal assistance to the victim's family, filling their Vakalatnama, taking proactive steps to coordinate with law enforcement agencies and relevant stakeholders, and proceeding with the case until its conclusion.



JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**



The severe flooding in interior Sindh, especially in Dadu district, caused many people to lose their homes and livelihood with no access to food or shelter. To ensure that relief reaches those most in need, LAS mapped flood relief victims, along with certain areas that were prioritized during the relief efforts.

Following a robust mapping process, by the time the LAS team reached Johi to distribute ration bags, most of it was already under water. Most of the areas had to be reached through boats as it was inundated with over 10 feet of water. Security was also a serious concern in the distribution of ration as large crowds gathered outside the distribution point. This concern, however, was fortunately taken care of by the Rangers team in Dadu, providing security to the LAS team.

Saving human lives in Johi, Sindh



In such conditions, our teams reached the affected through makeshift boats, tractors, and trolleys. Given the situation, some of the ration bags were sent to a central point in Dadu for delivery. While distributing the ration we were also able to rescue some people who were being flown away by the floods. The LAS team carried the affected in the boats and took them to safer areas in Dadu. Despite all the hurdles, the LAS team successfully delivered 816 Ration Bags in Johi till date.

JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

Ms. Kiran, aged twenty-seven, married Mr. Ali Dino in Larkana on October 19, 2020. After living a comfortable life with her husband, until one day Ali Dino's behavior inexplicably changed. Not only did her husband started treating Kiran miserably on petty domestic matters, but he also abandoned her and kicked her out of the house when she was four months pregnant.

Ms. Kiran approached LAS regarding the matter and filed a lawsuit demanding Khulla and maintenance. The case was registered on May 11, 2022. In almost a month, the verdict was decreed in favor of Ms. Kiran wherein she was endowed with Rs. 4,000/ month for her child's maintenance.

Ms. Kiran was very grateful to LAS and was relieved after the recovery of the maintenance allowance.

Helping a young mother to attain maintenance



JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

Provision of support for the mother and her newly born baby during the floods

Recent unprecedented rains in Pakistan have caused widespread flooding and devastation, leaving millions, including women, children, and the elderly shelterless, living in poverty and misery.

To ensure transparency during our dry ration donation campaign, our teams have been surveying beneficiaries & mapping sites to prioritize the distribution to those most in need. During such a mapping process in the town of Jhol, in district Sanghar, team LAS made contact with the Jogi community (Nomads) who had been displaced due to the floods and were living along the roadsides of Sanghar in hazardous living conditions. During this mapping activity, LAS staff came across a lady in the last stages of her pregnancy but did not have adequate shelter, food, or proper medical supplies. The next day, team LAS returned for her support & provision of ration and other supplies, and found the lady missing. After inquiring about her health, it was

learned that she went on for the delivery of her child and that she would return the next day.

LAS team members revisited the site the next day with the lady present and holding her newborn baby. LAS staff ensured that the lady received a proper tent for her accommodation, ensuring shelter during the flooding process. In addition to the ration bags, LAS provided the lady Rs. 1,000 to support the purchase of clothes for her child, and an additional Rs. 2,000 for miscellaneous expenses in cash. With the grace of the Almighty, the lady is now living in a tent, with the assurance of accommodation for herself and her child, along with access to food, clothing, and medication during the flash flooding.

The lady is grateful to LAS for the support that it provided her during these difficult times. Moreover, to ensure her health and safety, the LAS team is continuously in touch with the lady.



The mother (beneficiary) with her newborn child



Advocate Housh Muhammad (Field Advocate, Sanghar), with the new mother and her child.

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JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

Helping attain justice after 11 years of struggle

Ms. Shaheen Akhter, a mother of three, was married to a policeman and was faced with frequent acts of violence from her husband. Shaheen was also struggling to maintain the household expenses as her husband did not financially support the family during the marriage. After losing hope, she filed a case against her husband for the dissolution of the marriage and for securing maintenance allowance for her children and herself. In 2012, the court gave a verdict in favor of Ms. Shaheen, and her request

for khulla was approved. At that time, she was also entitled to a maintenance allowance.

However, owing to her husband's influential position in the Sindh police, she could not ensure the court verdict's implementation. In 2020, she filed another case to implement the ruling. Yet this time, she did not have the financial means to pursue litigation. Therefore, she approached the Legal Aid Society for her legal support and representation. Her case was taken by Advocate Rashid

Hussain (Lawyer, LAS), who took proactive steps to ensure the verdict's conclusion passed eleven years ago.

As a result, Shaheen was able to secure one-third of her ex-husband's salary as a maintenance allowance for her kids and herself. This case was a massive success for Shaheen as she had been struggling to attain rights for herself and her children for the past eleven years.



communications@las.org.pk



+92 21 - 35634112-5



Block C, 1st Floor, Finance & Trade Center, Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi



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