

# NEWSLETTER



**LAS**  
**LEGAL AID SOCIETY**

RESHAPING SOLUTIONS FOR  
ACCESSING JUSTICE IN PAKISTAN

October -  
December 2022

21<sup>st</sup> Edition



## EDITORIAL SECTION: from the desk of Shahzar Illahi (Program Development Specialist, LAS)

### ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION - Need of the Hour

In Surah Al-Hujurat verse 10, the Almighty puts a noteworthy precondition for being blessed with His mercy. He says, and I quote, ***“The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy”***.

The last Prophet (may Peace and Blessings be upon him) once said ***“Shall I not tell you of something that is better than fasting, prayer and charity?”*** They said: Yes. He said: ***“Reconciling between two people”*** (Tirmizi). What was recommended 1400 years ago has become the need of the hour today.

Pakistan faces a grave threat to the effective dispensation of justice, with 2.2 million cases pending amongst 3,067 judges leading to an average life of approximately 6-10 years for civil disputes. The inevitable impact is not only a delay in justice, but insufficient time being given to overburdened judges to produce prudent judgments of high quality.

**Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) refers to the different constitutionally-recognized methods through which parties (individuals and entities) can resolve disputes without a trial; this is a flexible, cost-efficient & time-effective method whereby parties have more control over the process and outcome, along with mediation providing the opportunity to come up with unique, out-of-the-box solutions away from the court room.**

The Legal Aid Society has worked extensively with grassroots communities as well as the High Courts of Sindh, Islamabad, and Gilgit Baltistan to institutionalize ADR. As part of its demand-side interventions, LAS has conducted over 1,000 community sessions across Sindh, sensitizing over 20,000 community members on ADR as



an effective justice mechanism. On the supply end, LAS regularly engages in addressing capacity needs and providing technical support to judges and members of the legal fraternity. To date, LAS has trained and notified 250 Saqlis members across Sindh (under the Small Claims and Minor Offences Ordinance), 50 lawyers in Islamabad, and plans to train 50 senior community members as accredited commercial mediators across Gilgit Baltistan. In collaboration with the Sindh Judicial Academy, LAS trained 100 Senior Civil Judges, Civil Judges, and Judicial Magistrates on ADR, Mediation Law and Skills. Further, 36 Senior Civil Judges have been trained on the Islamabad ADR Act 2017, in partnership with the Federal Judicial Academy. Keeping sustainability in mind, a specially-curated 10-hour ADR course was taught across 5 law colleges in Sindh to ensure future members of the legal fraternity are exposed to ADR and its benefits early on.

After creating an enabling legislative environment for ADR in Pakistan and successfully enhancing the supply of ADR practitioners in Karachi and Islamabad, LAS has recently established a state-of-the-art ADR center called **Musaliha International Center for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (MICADR)** with 50 accredited mediators and 17 senior arbitrators to provide mediation and arbitration services

to individuals and entities alike. MICADR, now recognized by the Sindh High Court as an ADR center, is headquartered in Karachi with a strategic office in Islamabad. Its Advisory Panel of ADR practitioners includes well-known international mediators and arbitrators from the UK, UAE, Turkiye, and Kenya.

The institutionalization of Alternative Dispute Resolution across Pakistan, with courts referring cases to ADR centers and members of the legal fraternity actively involved in the process as Accredited Mediators, Arbitrators, and Mediation Advocates, is the only viable and cost-effective option to ensure the dispensation of expeditious and expedient justice in non-criminal matters. LAS has endeavored to make this option a workable reality. May we all be worthy of the Almighty's mercy.

## FLOOD RELIEF CAMPAIGN IN SINDH: Phase-II

The judiciary in Pakistan has been overloaded with cases. This ultimately leads to a delay in justice for the most vulnerable and downtrodden members of our society who need swift and effective justice the most. And despite facing such issues, we witnessed problems for which we were completely unprepared: Climate change.

Pakistan recently faced one of its most severe flooding in history, which brought not only mass destruction and displacement but sparked a severe humanitarian crisis. To cater to this emergency, we had earlier distributed a month's food supplies to more than 6,000 families. While we are still reeling from the after-effects of the catastrophe, LAS is providing blankets & warm clothes in the wake of the current winter spells as the second phase of our flood relief interventions.



People who lost their homes during the flash floods are still living in harsh conditions and even without roofs. We hope that this small effort may ease the suffering of the distressed flood victims.

We also wholeheartedly thank all our donors (especially the **Indus Relief 2022** & the **Bay View Academy**) who trusted us and whose contributions helped us to provide relief to those affected the most.



## LAS RESULTS REPORT: a compendium of the impact LAS generates

In the past years, we aimed to improve access to justice for marginalized and vulnerable populations, build the capacity of justice sector stakeholders, and produce evidence-driven research on stakeholders' topics of interest. In return, we have had overarching legislative and policy-level outcomes bringing about reforms that have set into motion changes of substance.

We are pleased to share our first edition of the LAS Results Report, which outlines the work LAS has been doing over the past two years. Click the QR code (in case of a soft copy) or scan to download the entire report.



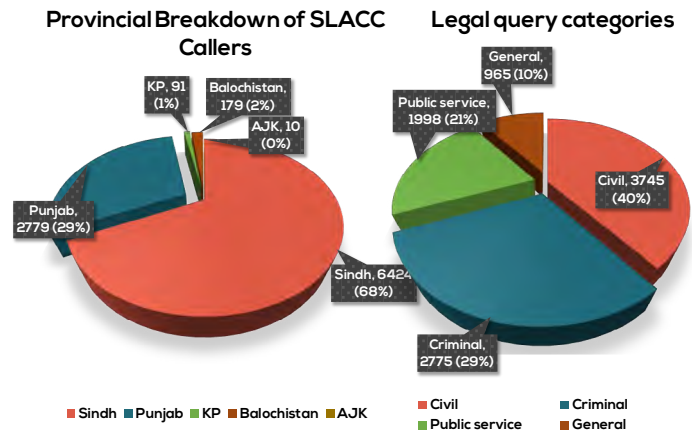


# EMPOWERING CITIZENS AT THE FOREFRONT OF CRISES through its Toll-free number: 0800-70806

The Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC) is a flagship project of the Legal Aid Society and the Government of Sindh. This is Pakistan's first and one-of-a-kind toll-free helpline, which to date has received over 396,234 calls via an Interactive Voice Recording (IVRT) system, with over 195,706 queries registered and resolved from over 450 cities across Pakistan.

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

During the reporting quarter, SLACC registered and catered to **9,483** legal queries from across Pakistan.



## PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

### People's Bus Service



Sindh Legal Advisory Call Centre (SLACC) launched a mass public campaign on Sindh Peoples Bus Service, in partnership with the Sindh Transport Department and the National Radio Telecommunication Corporation. With multiple routes, the bus service spans a wide area of Karachi, with around 52 of them having SLACC posters and branding.

The campaign spread awareness of legal rights and generated discussions around recognizing domestic

and sexual violence as a crime, encouraging victims to reach out to SLACC's helpline for support. The posters on the interior and exterior of the buses also spread awareness on women's rights to legal property, encouraging women to raise their voices if they're being deprived of their legal inheritance rights. The goal was to empower communities and provide vulnerable groups, especially women, information about their rights and access to justice.



## TRAININGS at SLACC

### INSPIRE PAKISTAN and GIZ PAKISTAN Session



**Inspire Pakistan** and **GIZ Pakistan** collaborated with SLACC to conduct a legal awareness session on November 22, 2022, to make women aware of their legal rights, in line with community development and empowerment goals. Most

women participating in the session were refugees and attended skill-based classes at Urban Cohesion Hub Karachi.

The session entailed a discussion on gender-based violence, domestic

violence, and laws related to divorce and inheritance. The conversation also discussed what constitutes a crime, the legal processes through which to file a complaint, and the benefits one can gain from speaking out against injustices.

### Field Visit to RANA LIAQUAT CRAFTSMEN'S COLONY (RLCC)

**A**dvocate Huma (On-call Lawyer, SLACC) conducted a legal awareness session at Rana Liaquat Craftsmen's Colony (RLCC) in Shah Faisal Town, Karachi, on October 25, 2022. Around 60 members of RLCC's staff attended the session, where they were informed about SLACC's helpline along with their legal rights related to property, marriage laws, and child custody. With

RLCC providing skill development and community support services to over 20,000 beneficiaries, the session was a valuable step toward both organizations' shared goals of community development, supporting each other, and reaching out to the vulnerable.

Furthermore, the session included a discussion on specific laws and acts that one can refer to, including

the Domestic Violence Act of 2013, the Muslim Family Law Ordinance of 1961, and sections of the PPC regarding women's property, forced marriage, and marital women's rights. This information and the session was highly appreciated by the participants, who inquired about their queries to gain a better understanding of the subject.





## STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN SINDH

**L**AS 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.

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR POLICE PILOTED IN TWO DISTRICTS through the Technical Working Group under the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee



**P**erformance Management Framework (PMF) is a framework to conduct quantitative and qualitative in-field monitoring and assessments of police officers, which comprises high-level and process-level indicators for the police department to gauge and monitor the performance of GBV Investigation Officers (IOs). This includes key performance indicators, a set of measurable and quantifiable values which can be used to measure the performance

of the Police over time and demonstrate how effectively the IOs are achieving critical objectives in the investigation of cases of SGBV.

Performance management is one of the priority areas identified by the Multi-Sectoral Coordination Committee (MSCC), indicated by forming a TWG II. With technical assistance from LAS, the TWG has finalized an implementation plan for PMF for the SSOIUs established

under the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021.

Efforts initiated by LAS through the TWG II have resulted in the PMF for SSOIUs being successfully piloted in Karachi South and Hyderabad. LAS is actively working towards effectively implementing the Police PMF throughout Sindh to develop an evaluation mechanism for Sindh Police to address gaps in the criminal justice system.

## MULTI-SECTORAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE Conference

**P**athfinder International held a 2-day conference of the MSCC with the attendance from the TWG members. The conference was moderated by **Advocate Maliha Zia Lari** (Associate Director, LAS). The second day of the training also witnessed participation

by Chief Secretary Sindh, where LAS was able to present major successes and the way forward of the MSCC & TWGs.

The Chief Secretary was pleased to see the progress made by the MSCC and thus a meeting will be called in January to discuss the way forward.

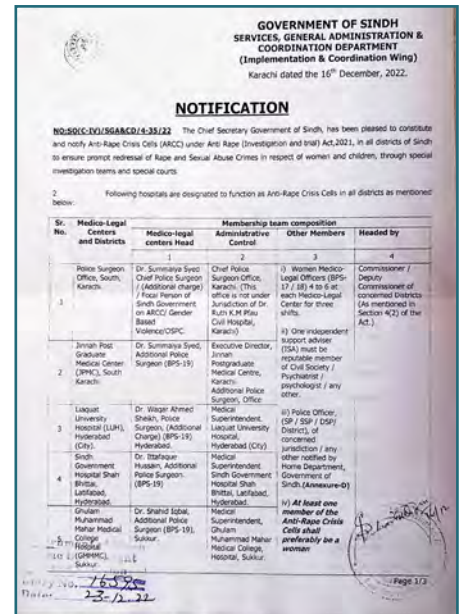




## Notification for the establishment of ANTI-RAPE CRISIS CELLS by the Chief Secretary

Through continuous efforts of LAS, Pathfinder International & UNFPA, along with the Health Department & Government of Sindh, the Office of Chief Secretary has notified 27 hospitals as Anti-Rape Crisis Cells making Sindh the first province to take this step. The ARCCs are mandated to provide one-window services, including registration of FIR, medico-legal examination, psychosocial support, and legal assistance to victims of SGBV.

The initiative is momentous as it has the potential to reduce delays in an SGBV investigation and expedite the delivery of justice for victims of SGBV.



## NETWORKING MEETING with Investigation Officers, Senior Police Officials, Prosecutors, & Members of TWGs to discuss PMF & SSOIUs

A networking meeting was held at Avari Hotel on December 26, 2022. The event participants discussed gaps in the criminal justice system from the perspective of Investigation Officers and the administrative issues which must be addressed for effective investigations.



The event was graced by the presence of **Mr. Adnan Arshad Aulakh** (Special Secretary, Home Department), **Mr. Abdul Hameed Khoso** (DIG Training), **Mr. Ishaq Hussain** (SSP Investigation, West), **Ms. Shahla Qureshi** (SP Investigation, Central), along with

several other notable members of the Sindh Police Department.

## Preparations to ESTABLISH ANTI-RAPE CRISIS CELLS

LAS met with **Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho** (Sindh Minister for Health & Population Welfare) on November 17, 2022. The meeting revealed plans for establishing Anti-Rape Crisis Cells (ARCCs) across Sindh.

Dr. Azra agreed to appoint additional medico-legal officers at the ARCC under the Office of the Police Surgeon, where LAS had deployed furniture and equipment. Additionally, the Minister also agreed to designate three teaching hospitals for ARCCs.





# EFFORTS TO REDUCE INSTANCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND EARLY CHILD MARRIAGES in Pakistan

## Establishment of WOMEN AND GIRLS FRIENDLY SAFE SPACES (WGFSS)

**P**andemics have taught us that incidents of domestic violence, human trafficking, and child marriages increase during emergencies. Women and marginalized groups are the ones who are most affected by natural disasters and displacements. These humanitarian emergencies negatively impact women’s living conditions and elevate their stress levels.



While it is appreciable to witness several organizations & NGOs providing rations and shelters to the displaced people, along with healthcare facilities, yet there was an ignored need for psychosocial support in relief camps.

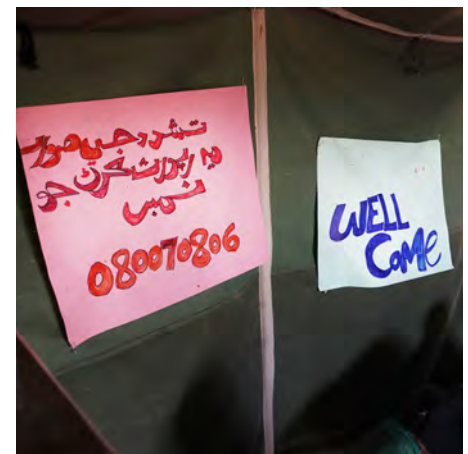
To cater to this need, the Legal Aid Society, in collaboration with UNFPA Pakistan & Sehat Kahani, established Women and Girls Friendly Safe Spaces (WGFSS). These spaces were established within the government-established

relief camps in Taluka Naseerabad (Kamber ShahdadKot) and Taluka Bakrani (Larkana), providing Psychosocial support to 488 women and girls displaced by recent flash floods.

The primary purpose of these safe spaces was to provide psychosocial support to the women and adolescent girls living in traumatic situations and to make them aware of their fundamental rights (pertaining to their safety and security), including the

importance of having proper legal documentation such as a B-Form, CNIC, and Nikkah-Nama.

These safe spaces remained operational for 19 days with a dedication from 2 LAS community mobilizers and 2 Safety incharges. They successfully provided awareness of GBV response services at the grassroots levels and in areas where women have less understanding of their legal & fundamental human rights.





## CONSULTATION MEETINGS

with Government officials, CNCP members, and stakeholders

LAS held consultation meetings with NGOs, Community Network for Child Protection (CNCP) Members, community paralegals, and district-level government to emphasize on the importance & development of referral pathways and redressal mechanisms against

Sexual & Gender-Based Violence cases, and to highlight the on-ground issues. These sessions took place during the month of November in Kamber ShahdadKot, Shaheed Benazir Abad, Karachi, Matiari and Larkana.



These consultation meetings were conducted to figure out how to sustain the referral pathways in their respective neighborhoods, especially during disasters like flood in the current scenario.

## LEGAL AWARENESS SESSIONS on Child Marriages:

Child Marriage is an evil that must be eliminated from the grassroots. To achieve this, LAS organized 91 Legal awareness and knowledge sessions on 'Child marriage and its referral mechanism' during the reporting quarter in five targeted districts of Sindh. A total of 3,169 people were engaged during these sessions.

The session witnessed active participation by females, who were empowered to stand against child marriages and report when needed.







## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM CAMPAIGN

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign that kicks off on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until December 10, Human Rights Day. To support this cause, LAS also administered this campaign via our on-field interventions and social media mainstreams to call for preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls.



### ESTABLISHING REFERRAL MECHANISMS at the grass root level

For the prevention of gender-based violence, domestic violence & child marriages; and to establish referral mechanisms for the victims of Gender-Based Violence, Domestic Violence & Child marriages, we organized legal awareness sessions with the Lady Health Workers (LHWs) in 5 districts of Sindh i.e., in Matiari, Kamber Shahdadkot, Larkana, Shaheed Benazirabad and Karachi.

These sessions sensitized 130 LHWs, which shall enable them to advocate at the grassroots level - in areas where women have less awareness of their legal & fundamental human rights.

One such session took place in Karachi on the first day of the **16 days of Activism campaign**. Catch the session's highlights by clicking (in case of soft copy) or scanning this QR code.



### LEGAL AWARENESS SESSION with Afghan Refugees

During the 16 days of activism, LAS conducted awareness sessions on gender-based violence at the Urban Cohesion Hub in collaboration with Inspire Pakistan and GIZ Pakistan on December 01, 2022.

The sessions were attended by male and female members of the

Afghan refugee community who talked about their experiences of facing violence in public and private life. The male members identified instances where female members of their families were denied the right to education or mobility. In contrast, female members shared violence against women they've witnessed around them.

### COMMUNITY SESSIONS in district offices



LAS teams in Larkana and Shaheed Benazirabad organized community awareness sessions with female flood affectees to condemn violence against women.

Via this forum, LAS' field advocates discussed the prevalence of violence in Pakistan due to the pandemic and post-flood displacement. The mechanisms through which women

are subjected to violence were identified: psychological, economic, physical, sexual, and emotional. The event proved to be an instrumental space for women as they came forward with their experiences of gender-based violence. On this the occasion, LAS' teams not only heard their voices but also equipped them with ways that women can employ to break the cycle of violence in their personal lives.



## DIGITAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN

In light of the activism campaign, LAS initiated a digital media movement condemning all sorts of gender-based violence (SGBV) incidences prevalent in our society through social media and email marketing.

In addition, information was given to the masses on how one can combat/report acts of violence, and how the Legal Aid Society can help in such situations through legal advice and support. This was implemented through various videos, posters, illustrations, and public service messages.



## Workshop on ONLINE HARASSMENT AND DIGITAL SAFETY

LAS, in collaboration with the Centre For Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) conducted a capacity-building workshop for the representatives of the Sindh Judicial Academy on October 31, 2022. The session aimed to build on the existing knowledge and abilities of the participants in addressing cases of cyber harassment and bullying of female journalists.



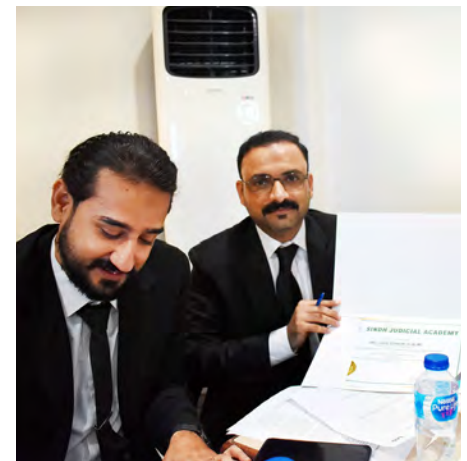
The workshop holistically addressed the existing laws under three main thematic areas:

1. Cyber Harassment: Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016
2. Criminal Assault: Prohibitions outlined by the Pakistan Penal Code
3. Harassment at the Workplace:

Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace (Amendment) Act, 2022.

On the day, **Advocate Basam Ali Dahri** (Litigation Specialist, LAS) addressed the audience to delineate the existing laws and mechanisms for protecting

women and journalists against harassment and cybercrime. The discussion also delved deeper into understanding the challenges of implementing these laws while procuring suggestions and potential policy recommendations to bring about efficiency in responding to the cases.





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

Property in Pakistan has too long been only considered relevant to men. It must now be reimagined by arming women with knowledge to fight for their property rights and an equal place in the family estate. This vicious cycle of financial inequality can only end through inclusive socio-economic frameworks that guarantee women's access to property.

### Conference on **CHILD MARRIAGE AND FINANCIAL RIGHTS** in Istanbul, Turkey



Representatives from LAS attended a conference on 'Child Marriage and Financial Rights in Islam' on October 28-31, 2022. The conference was organized by Musawah, Equality Now, and Havle with the aim of promoting justice and equality in the Muslim family.

The participants witnessed representation from Human Rights activists from South Asia, South East Asia, and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. The sessions at the conference focused on:

1. Conceptual frameworks on Child Marriage and Financial Rights
2. Quran, Sunnah, and Fiqh justifications against Child Marriage and in support of Financial Rights for women
3. Unpaid and Domestic Carework in Theory and Practice
4. Lived Realities for Child Brides and Women deprived of Financial Rights
5. Activism Strategies and Campaigns on Ground
6. Tools for Creative Action and Campaigns

At the conference, **Ms. Hunza Moin** (Program Manager, LAS) along side **Ms. Javeria Kamran** (Program Coordinator, LAS) presented LAS's research on marital property. Javeria's presentation focused on detailing the results of a year-long evaluation study pertaining to conscious raising and consensus building on women's marital property rights in Larkana, Shaheed Benazirabad and Karachi. Ms. Hunza presented LAS's advocacy efforts and its focus on creating case laws for marital property through strategic litigation.

## ADVOCACY MEETINGS for post-flood gendered reform

The recent flash floods devastated more than 30 million people across Pakistan. While the government-led reconstruction schemes are at their zenith, LAS held two advocacy meetings with the Sindh Provincial Assembly members.

**Ms. Uroosa Khatti** (Gender Specialist, LAS) met with **Ms. Shamim Mumtaz** (Member of the Sindh Provincial Assembly) on November 17, 2022, to advocate

equitable disbursement of post-disaster funds. Ms. Uroosa briefed Ms. Mumtaz regarding LAS' efforts to assuage women's matrimonial wealth and property-related afflictions. Another meeting on the topic was held with **Ms. Tanzila Umm-e-Habib** (Member of the Sindh Provincial Assembly). Both MNAs responded to LAS' efforts to uplift women's economic status and vouched to raise the issue in various governmental meetings and the parliament.





# EMPOWERING WOMEN TO UNDERSTAND & ACCESS JUSTICE MECHANISMS for their property rights

## GAJE CONFERENCE:

### Globalising LAS' Justice Education

Between December 11-15, 2022, Global Alliance for Justice Education (GAJE) was held with the theme of the conference was "Justice Education: Building Resilience and Strong Connections in Times of Global Challenges" and was held in Cape Town, South Africa, at the Stellenbosch University. **Mr. Shoaib** (LAS Field Officer, Larkana), discussed the unique pedagogical methods employed by LAS to carry out community interventions to educate rural and urban communities on women's property rights.

After the presentations, Shoaib and his co-presenters initiated an interactive session with the audience on various sustainability models prevalent in multiple countries. The GAJE conference enabled the international community to



mobilize in the discussion for global best practices for community interventions.

The exposure to Western Cape Town University's Law clinic further enhanced LAS' understanding



of sustainably practiced global education. The conference proved to be highly effective in LAS' future potential to design better community interventions in addition to mainstreaming its work at an international platform.

## ANNUAL ORIENTATION with collaborating partners

LAS conducted a two-day orientation at the Pakistan Society for Training and Development (PSTD) on November 28-29, 2022, in Karachi with its collaborating partners to interact with each other and strategize the goals for the upcoming program activities. The day brought together representatives from SOC films, Homenet, and LAS field teams from Karachi, Larkana, and Shaheed Benazirabad for an activity-based discussion on community interventions and relived experiences of women's struggle in our society pertaining to property acquisition.



The orientation was commenced by **Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid** (CEO, LAS), who shared LAS' contributions in strengthening public sector institutions and bridging their gap from the civil society. Ms. Hunza Moin (Program Manager, LAS) further elaborated on the role of property acquisition in alleviating women's status and circumstances for the better. The session also acknowledged the work LAS' field teams at the district level. On the day Ms. Qurut-ul-Ain (representative, SOC films) discussed their execution plan for

conducting mobile cinema sessions to create grass-root awareness regarding women's property rights.

The session also emphasized the pertinence of measurement and maintaining evidence to ensure progress tracking and meeting deadlines promptly. The orientation concluded with team activities, enabling engagement between the LAS teams and their collaborating partners.



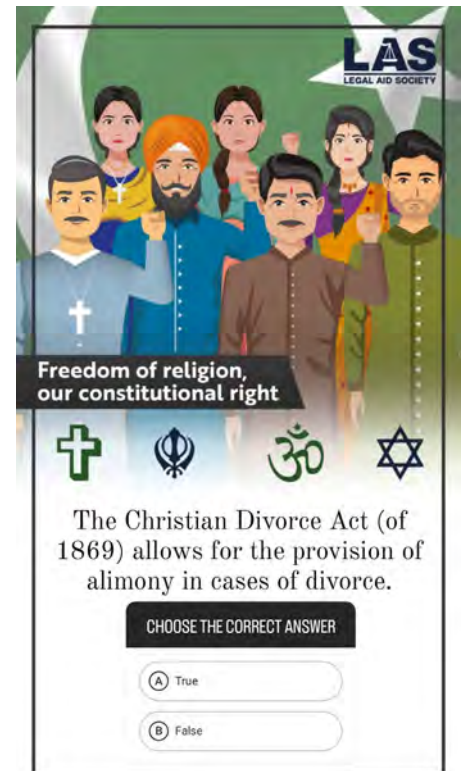
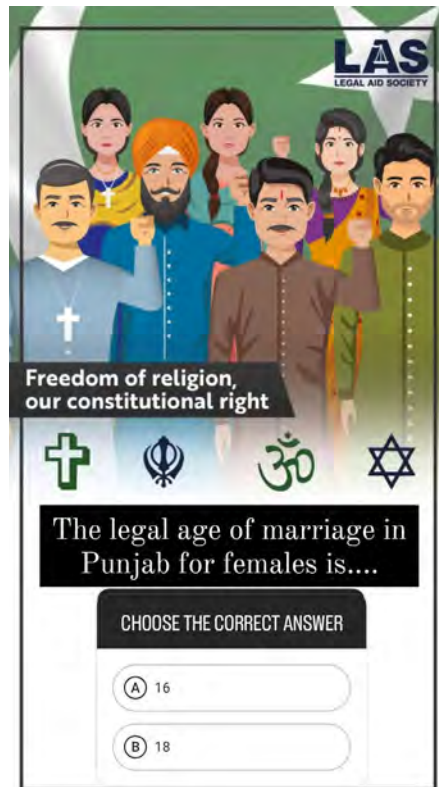
## ENSURING RIGHTS & ACCESS TO JUSTICE

### for Religious Minorities in Pakistan

#### Social Media Campaigns for **ADVOCACY & PROMOTION OF MINORITY RIGHTS**

One of the most significant findings from the Case File Analysis Report and the Knowledge Attitudes Practices Survey earlier conducted by LAS was that there is a lack of awareness and misinformation regarding the rights granted to religious minorities within Pakistan. Confusion seems to exist, even amongst lawyers, on basic information such as whether Christian women are entitled to maintenance after divorce.

In light of these findings, the LAS executed a Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) campaign on social media. Using interactive posts, the campaign disseminated basic information regarding the rights of religious minorities to the general public.



### Online Webinar through **TWITTER SPACE**

To launch the Knowledge Attitudes and Practices Report and the Case File Analysis Report, LAS conducted a webinar via Twitter Space. The webinar was moderated by **Advocate Maliha Zia Lari** (Associate Director, LAS), while the panelists included prominent lawyers, activists, and representatives from local civil society organizations such as **Peter Jacob** (Executive Director, Center for Social Justice), **Ross Mahtani** (Member of the Minority Rights Committee of Sindh Human Rights Commission), **Advocate Roop Mala Singh**, **Advocate, Zuhaib Shaikh**, **Mary James Gill** (Former MPA, Executive Director Center for Law and Justice), **Kashmala Tahir** (Graduate Student at the University of Texas, Austin), **Mashal Gilani** (Graduate Student at the Institute of Ismaili Studies) and **Advocate Sooba Bhatti**.

During the webinar, the discussion revolved around critical issues such as forced conversion, the current state of police investigations, outdated personal laws for minorities, the religion-poverty nexus, and the like. The panelists also stressed the need for legislation against forced conversion.

Through this webinar, LAS was able to bring to the forefront the issues that members of religious minority communities living in Pakistan face on a daily basis; despite the existence of their rights on paper, members of religious minorities have trouble accessing basic rights.



## POLICY DIALOGUES on Legal, Administrative, and Cultural Barriers to Justice



Policy Dialogues were held in Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur in December 2022. Various representatives from civil society organizations, activists, and local bureaucrats attended the dialogues.

These dialogues aimed to share the findings of the Case File Analysis Report and the Knowledge Attitudes and Practices Report, and to encourage a dialogue on how issues such as lack of legislation and implementation of existing legislation can be dealt with.

The participants included representatives from the Government and religious minority communities, who resonated the findings with their personal experiences.



## Collaboration with the NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

A coordination meeting was held at the LAS Head Office on November 14, 2022, between LAS team members and representatives of the National Commission on Justice and Peace including **Mr. Noman Peter** and **Ms. Susan Thomas**. Since NCJP's operations are centered around protecting the rights of Christians living in Pakistan, the purpose of the meeting for both teams was to exchange research pieces that they had undertaken recently and to discuss future avenues of collaboration.

Both parties also agree to jointly host a policy dialogue in Karachi to discuss the cultural, legal, and administrative barriers to justice for religious minorities living in Pakistan.

## HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE at SZABIST

Members of religious minorities have trouble accessing basic rights. For the same, a Human Rights conference was held at SZABIST in Karachi on October 18, 2022. **Ms. Rukhsana Parveen**

**Khokar** (Senior Program Manager) was invited on the day, who shared her experience with the participants and answered queries pertaining to the rights of religious minorities in Pakistan.





ON FIELD ACTIVITIES



Mapping of DISTRICT PEACE COMMITTEES

During November 2022, the LAS team mapped the District Peace Committees (DPCs) throughout Karachi, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Dadu, Sanghar, Sukkur, Larkana, and Khairpur. These district peace committees were created by the Government of Pakistan and are currently active in various districts of Sindh.

Once these DPCs are identified, LAS will aim to connect them with representatives of religious minority communities in order to improve access to justice.



Taking part in the HINDU FESTIVES

Diwali (the Hindu festival of light) is celebrated on October 22. A festival was organized on the occasion by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony to celebrate this event. On the day **Ms. Rukhsana Parveen Khokar** (Senior Program Manager) attended the event on behalf of LAS to show solidarity with the Hindu community living in Sindh.



Identification of PARALEGALS

Being a firm believer in sustainable development, the Legal Aid Society is in the process of identifying paralegals in Karachi, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad, Dadu, Sanghar, Sukkur, Larkana, and Khairpur regions.

Once identified, these paralegals will serve as representatives of their respective communities and will work as a liaison between their communities and the DPCs.





## 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 (LAS) as its implementing partner.



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, our dedicated team of advocates have vowed to undertake 200+ legal cases from eight districts of Sindh: Karachi, Hyderabad, Nawabshah (SBA), Larkana, Sanghar, Sukkur, Dadu, and Khairpur, to pursue justice for victims of human rights violations. To celebrate the program's success, an event titled **"Bridging Barriers & Ensuring Access to Justice"** was held at Hotel Movenpick on October 11, 2022. The event was attended by several dignitaries and members of the vigilance committee, key representatives from Government, Civil Society, and the Justice System Actors. During the program, a documentary was shown along with a presentation depicting the human impact the joint program has brought in the society.

**Since its commencement, LAS has filed 213 cases on behalf of victims of human rights abuses. These cases include domestic violence, sexual assault, child rights violation, and transgender violence. Out of the 213 cases filed, 146 have been disposed off.**



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

**0800 - 70806**





## DECONGESTING COURT DOCKETS: by institutionalizing ADR in Pakistan:



**ADR: A NATIONAL PRIORITY to diminish the backlog of pending cases**

LAS is pleased to announce that ADR has become a national priority as the Honourable Chief Justice Supreme Court of Pakistan has formed a task force headed by **Justice Ijaz Ul Asan** (Honourable Judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan). This ADR Committee

comprises Honorable Judges from all 5 High Courts of Pakistan. The Committee will jointly put in a coordinated and concerted effort to promote and implement ADR laws at a national level, ultimately reducing court pendency.



## IMPROVING THE DEMAND side of ADR

### Establishing sustainable ADR Mechanisms through training of Community Paralegals and formation of **COMMUNITY ADR NETWORKS (CANS)**

LAS recently trained a cadre of paralegals on November 5-6, 2022, in Hyderabad, which aimed to make paralegals understand the ADR framework, and build consensus-building skills.

The formation and activation of community LAS ADR networks are already operational in Sindh. So far, LAS has trained a cadre of 192 ADR paralegals (including 79 females, 109 males, and 04 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.





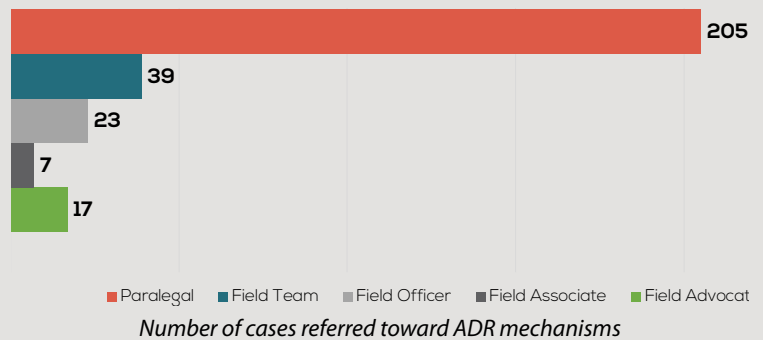
ADR is said to be the ultimate solution to enhance the cost and time-effective justice delivery to the most marginalized communities across Pakistan. It has emerged as a viable solution around the globe to resolve civil and commercial disputes, thus easing out the judiciaries to focus on criminal and other cases.



## DIVERSION OF CASES toward ADR Mechanisms

The lack of knowledge & access to justice is making the lives of the underprivileged more miserable and is shattering their trust. LAS has been continuously engaging with such communities to raise awareness of their rights, ADR, and available channels for speedy dispute resolution.

During the reporting quarter, 291 cases in 8 targeted districts were diverted toward ADR Mechanisms. The highest number of cases were reported by females 254 (86%). The majority of these cases were referred to Federal Ombudsperson 284, Provincial Ombudsman 4, private mediation 3, and court-annexed mediation 3.



Number of cases referred toward ADR mechanisms

Recently trained ADR paralegals are also empowering communities by equipping them with the knowledge of ADR & its channels, along with other dispute-resolution mechanisms. During the reporting quarter, 205 cases out of 295 cases were reported through our trained paralegals

## Connecting stakeholders through DLAFs

LAS is connecting district-level stakeholders from Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations by forming District Level ADR Forums (DLAFs). These forums aim to establish a sustainable mechanism whereby communities can effectively reach out to relevant ADR Providers for quick and effective resolution of their judicial needs.

LAS has established 5 District Level ADR Forums in Sukkur, Khairpur, Larkana, Hyderabad, and Karachi. These forums will facilitate the communities to create linkages and refer the

cases towards formal and semi-formal ADR mechanisms from unregulated & informal dispute resolution means.

Stakeholders from different departments and institutes are participating in this forum, including the Sindh High Court nominated Salis Members, Federal Ombudsman, Provincial Ombudsman, Paralegals, Baitul Mal, Social Welfare Department Sindh, Women Development Department Sindh, Rehabilitation Center For Physically Handicapped Children, Human Rights Department Sindh, Local Government of Sindh, High Court

Bar Association, Nari foundation, Sukkur Municipal Corporation, SAHIL Pakistan, PEHAL Pakistan, Sindh Police Department of Sindh, Labour Department of Sindh., HANDS Pakistan, Child Protection Unit, District Bar Association, and Deputy Commissioners (Hyderabad, Sukkur, Khairpur, and Larkana) are contributing towards the cause of ADR.

Contributing to the purpose, a total of 46 participants attended the DLAF in Khairpur, followed by 41 in Sukkur, 48 in Larkana, and 36 in Hyderabad.



# IMPROVING THE SUPPLY OF ADR across Pakistan

## LAS ADR STREET LAW CHANGE MAKERS PROGRAM getting attention around the globe

LAS presented its key findings on ADR Street Law Change Makers Program at the “11th Global Alliance for Justice Education (GAJE) World Wide Conference (11th GAJE WWC)” at the Stellenbosch University, South Africa from on December 15-18, 2022.

On this platform, **Mr. Abbas Ali** (Senior Program Manager) presented the key successes, key findings, and challenges of LAS ADR Street Law Change Makers Program, which had been earlier co-designed in collaboration with **Street Law Inc.** (a US not-for-profit organization working for street law for the last 40 years). Mr. Abbas informed that LAS is implementing ADR Street Law Change Makers Program in 5 law colleges for 100 students of Sindh, through which they will be connected to the LAS field teams for promoting ADR through Street Law.



This will be a unique, first-of-its-type program in Sindh. It will help prepare the future generation of lawyers to be less apprehensive of ADR and promote it as a viable option for dispute resolution. The session was attended by the faculty and students of different universities from different countries, who appreciated the efforts of LAS and showed interest in establishing partnerships related to Street Law and ADR in Pakistan.

## LAUNCHING ADR STREET LAW PROGRAM to sensitize law schools across Sindh

LAS aims to establish a sustainable mechanism for promoting ADR via a cadre of ADR Change Makers in Sindh. That will also sensitize future generations of lawyers to be less apprehensive of ADR and instead promote ADR as a viable option for dispensing justice.

LAS had earlier launched its ADR Street Law Change Makers Program in several law colleges of Sindh. LAS, in collaboration with these Law Colleges registered a cohort of 100 students (20 from each law college) for its ADR Street Law Change Makers Program. All law colleges successfully concluded

the two weeks (10 hours) ADR Street Law Program in their colleges in November 2022. The students were trained to 10 credit hours of interactive curriculum designed by Street Law Inc.

**Barrister Haya Eman Zahid** (CEO, LAS) hosted the certificate distribution ceremony. The Faculty and Students appreciated the program and termed it the most viable option for dispute resolution to provide justice to marginalized and vulnerable segments of society without delay.

**As ADR Champions, the top 30 performers from students and**



faculty will get a chance to attend LAS' experiential learning programs through exposure visits and on-job training such as internships and fieldwork.



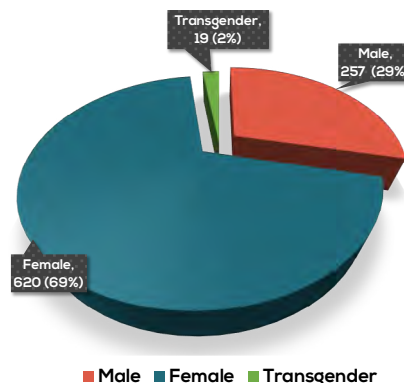
# ENGAGEMENT & ADVOCACY EFFORTS for the promotion of ADR

LAS 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 make people aware of ADR & mechanisms, LAS organized legal awareness for the communities with the support of LAS-trained paralegals in Sindh. By engaging Community ADR Network (CAN's) 33 legal awareness clinics were conducted in districts Hyderabad, Larkana, Karachi, Sukkur, Sanghar, SBA, and Khairpur. Demographics of participation is depicted via the pie chart.



## INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS: through SMS & Rickshaw Campaigns

Given that community members do not have information on the relevant administrative forums before which they can file their complaints against government agencies for maladministration, LAS initiated awareness campaigns across targeted districts of Sindh. These campaigns supplemented the need for communities to be aware of indigenous resources that can be utilized easily.

## PREDICTIVE ANALYSIS STUDY: Mapping legal needs of Communities in Sindh



LAS is conducting a baseline survey titled **"Predictive Analysis Study"** to gather data about legal issues, specifically civil and commercial disputes faced by marginalized and vulnerable communities in recent years, which could be diverted toward ADR mechanisms. A mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) approach will be used to conduct a predictive analysis study in targeted

districts Hyderabad, Karachi, Sanghar, SBA, Larkana, Dadu, Sukkur, and Khairpur.

With the gathered data on pending court cases, and blockages over the past 10 years, the predictive model will aim to estimate the number of cases that can be resolved through alternative means such as arbitration, conciliation, and court-annexed or private mediation.

During the reporting quarter, LAS efficiently executed the SMS campaign to increase public awareness regarding the use of ADR mechanisms, its approaches, and its successes across Pakistan. Approximately **one million** people were reached via an SMS campaign facilitated by Sindh Legal Advisory Call Centre (SLACC).



# JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

## Standing by a woman to fight for her legal share in family property

**M**s. Erum Fatima is a resident of district Malir Karachi, a mother, a widow, and an orphan. She was continuously harassed and ridiculed by her own brothers to have her share eliminated by the family (house) property.

The process of humiliation started after her father passed away, and her brothers forced her to marry a mentally challenged person as a tactic to remove her from the house. However, her husband passed away within a few days of marriage. Her brothers gradually began to harass her, as one of them also filed a suit against Erum for administration and partition. After filing the case, they threatened Erum to surrender her share in their favor and leave the house.

As another dirty tactic to cut her fair share in the family property, the house was wrongly under-valued at 3 million by the Mukhtiar Kar (Property Register) through a Nazir (Court supervisor) by her brothers, the market value of which was

approximately 10 million. Worried about these circumstances, she approached the Legal Aid Society to resolve her matter, and fought for her legal property right. Taking proactive measures, **Advocate Rashid Mahar** (Field Advocate, LAS) represented Ms. Erum Fatima, objected to the ongoing process via legal applications, and immediately filed for a public auction of the house.

Even during the auction process, Erum's brothers kept continuously harassing the public auctioneers to spread fear and anxiety. After a long yet fruitful contest for her rightful claim through LAS, the court order declared Erum's share in her favor as per law. Through the public auction, Erum's share was declared to be Rs.617,312. Ms. Erum received her share through a cheque from one of her brothers after a long struggle on December 13, 2022. Today after successfully navigating through the entire system, **Today Erum feels stronger, and is grateful to the Legal Aid Society for its assistance as she leads a happy life.**



**Advocate Rashid Mahar** (Field Advocate, LAS) with the client after getting her rightful property claim.



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## JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

### Helping a senior woman get her money back from a property dealer

**S**akina, a 67 years old widow, and a resident of Hyderabad, has been going through a property dispute with one of the well-known Building & Property associates.

last payment slip. After spending around PKR 400,000 on litigation during the 6-7 years she was still not sure about the result, and hence approached LAS for the settlement of her dispute.

Sakina had earlier purchased a plot in installments for 1,370,000 in 2016 to build a home for her children. However, the builder canceled her booking, claiming that the lady did not pay the last installment (amounting to 470,000).

With an accredited mediator, the LAS team met with both parties and successfully mediated amongst both parties. The builder agreed to pay a sum of PKR 1.8 million. While the LAS team facilitated both parties to reach a settlement agreement,

Taking action on this scenario, Sakina filed a civil case in court but was about to lose the case due to the unavailability of the

**Sakina was given justice, and is happy today to have her money back.**



Ms. Sakina after getting back her claimed amount

## JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

### Settling a family dispute

**M**s. Mahnoor, a newly married young woman, had been facing domestic abuse from her in-laws after one month of marriage when her husband went out of country for a job. Her in-laws kicked her out of their home and kept her dowry items and gifts items which were received during her marriage.

monthly pocket money for personal expenses. Moreover, the husband also agreed to get a separate house on rent.

Much aggrieved, Mahnoor approached LAS' team, who contacted her husband to discuss the matter. The mediators from LAS conducted a mediation session between both parties. Upon successful mediation, her husband not only promised to have her ownership back of the dowry items but also agreed to provide her with

**Mahnoor and her parents are happy with this course of action and appreciated the efforts on behalf of the LAS team.**





# JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

## Helping a deprived mother to receive maintenance for her children

**M**s. Sabeen Rasheed married her husband in 2003 with a Haq Mehar (Right of bride) amount of Rs. 3,000 (which still has not been paid). Sabeen has two children (aged 20 & 17) by wedlock.

Sabeen's husband has been physically and emotionally abusive towards her since the early days of her marriage. Sabeen had also been thrown out of the house several times on meager issues.

Having completely lost hope and making up her mind to stop receiving further abuse, Sabeen finally left behind an abusive relationship in September of 2019. Sabeen's older child resides with her, while the younger child resides with his father. Sabeen's husband, despite making Rs. 150,000 per month from his employment plus other side ventures that he has failed to pay any maintenance for Sabeen along with his own son. Her husband claimed that Sabeen is a disobedient wife and has made false allegations against her.

Sabeen, being financially deprived and unable to afford a lawyer, was represented by **Advocate Maryam Raza** (Field Advocate, LAS), who filed a suit for maintenance against her husband. Following a contentious trial that included direct and cross-examination from both sides, the court announced a judgment in favor of Sabeen with a maintenance amount of Rs. 10,000 per month for sixteen months (from the date of separation till her iddat period). The court also ordered Sabeen's husband to pay retroactive maintenance of Rs. 25,000 for 13 months for her older child from the date Sabeen left her husband's house to the date the child turned 18.

**Sabeen now has some financial resources to take care of her child in custody, as she is working to gain financial independence and is taking care of her son simultaneously.**




**Advocate Maryam Raza** (Field Advocate, LAS), with Ms. Sabeen while discussing her case in the court


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