



LAS
LEGAL AID SOCIETY

RESHAPING SOLUTIONS FOR
ACCESSING JUSTICE IN PAKISTAN

NEWSLETTER

April - June 2024

27th Edition



EDITORIAL SECTION: from the desk of Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid (Chief Executive Officer, LAS)

SINDH GOVERNMENT'S DIGITAL PUSH FOR JUSTICE



The recent launch of the Case Management Portal and Online Complaint Management System by the Sindh Human Rights Department is a welcome step towards improving access to justice in the province. This move towards digital solutions aligns with the Government's broader commitment to enhancing service delivery and brings it in line with the Legal Aid Society's own successful use of case management systems. In the last year we have provided legal representation to 148 citizens with the support and collaboration of the Human Rights Department. This past quarter has witnessed the expansion of our pro bono litigation portfolio by over 30%; boosting our representation figures to 500+ pending cases as on 30th June 2024. The majority of disposed cases were decided in favor of underprivileged clients being represented by LAS which is a testament to our team's commitment and expertise. Of note is our focus on strategic efforts, particularly in cases of domestic violence through which we are adopting a systemic approach to addressing gender-based violence. LAS is engaged in an ongoing fight for a woman's right to matrimonial property after a breakdown in her 20-year marriage which has the potential to become a landmark case, challenging deeply

entrenched societal norms and advocating for the recognition of women's contributions within marriage. Our lawyers are working towards ensuring that precedents are created which will recognize and value the unseen labor and sacrifices made by spouses and will be relying on constructive trust, and certain Sharia law principles that are currently being used by other Muslim majority countries.

The question remains whether the Government has a pulse on such legal aid efforts and access to data that can help fill in the larger void of an annual legal needs survey. Albert Einstein said that not everything that counts can be measured and not everything that can be measured counts. It is only in the last century or so that serious efforts were made to root public policy decisions on data and evidence rather than on anecdotes and wishes of those in power. Data is essential to good governance because it is supposed to be neutral and objective. In this context, politicians, policy makers and the bureaucracy consistently face a difficult task. They are caught between things being very difficult to measure and count and are being constantly tasked to take action on these. Pakistan's statistical void woes persist no matter who is in power. No government or political party has been immune to the hasty tendency of using whatever data is

readily available without questioning its authenticity.

The need for data has long been etched into the processes of the Government and protocols of the bureaucracy but it is time for us to work on transitioning from the 'any' data works towards 'good' data only. We need better figures not only for crime statistics but for recidivism rates, for those who actually jump bail and for repeat offenders. We need to base allocation of access to justice funds and grants in aid on such refined numbers.

Creating digitized case management systems and online portals logging in justice needs is a welcome step in this intention of the Government to improve its statistics in general and its larger understanding of the issues that need action. It will require more investment and human talent and with it continued political will to see the truth behind the real numbers.



GLOBAL SPOTLIGHT

TED CONFERENCE 2024

The TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) Conference is a global set of conferences, held annually since 1990, run by the private nonprofit organization TED Conferences, LLC, founded in 1984. TED hosts conferences to bring together groups of expert thinkers and doers across various fields to help share new ideas. This year marked 40 years of the TED journey, and its conference was held in Vancouver.



LAS is proud to share that its CEO – **Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid** was selected by a renowned global non-profit, Acumen, to attend the recent TED Conference held at the Vancouver Convention Center, Canada,

marking TED's 40-year journey. Barrister Haya joined prominent academics, philanthropists, environmentalists, scientists, artists, and activists in an insightful exchange of ideas that change everything! This year's round-up of

TED speakers included A.I. geniuses such as Thomas Dohmke (CEO, Github), Demis Hassabis (CEO, Google DeepMind), and Mustafa Suleyman (CEO, Microsoft AI).

INTERNATIONAL VISITOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Advocate Safia Lakho (Legal Oversight & Quality Assurance Officer, LAS) was selected by the U.S. State Department for the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), one of the world's most prestigious professional exchange programs aimed at cultivating lasting professional relationships across participants of various nations. The event was held in Washington D.C. in June 2024 wherein Advocate Safia proudly represented the Legal Aid Society and engaged with representatives from the U.S. State Department and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, along with international activists and advocates of human rights and labor laws.



Advocate Safia championed the message of peace during her meeting with the State Judge and Prosecutor of North Carolina. Continuing with meetings in San Francisco, California, and New Orleans, Safia presented the traditional Sindhi Ajrak to the diplomats. She also participated in

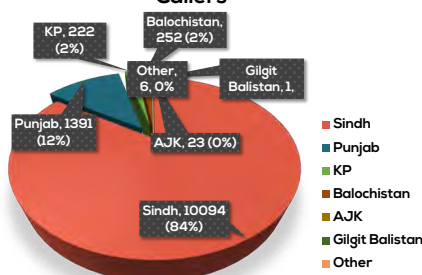
an insightful session with the Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office & the Crime Scene Investigation Unit in San Francisco where she highlighted various initiatives of LAS to avert gender-based discrimination and advancement of women's rights in Pakistan.

THE SINDH LEGAL ADVISORY CALL CENTRE (Toll-free number: 0800-70806) - exceeds its annual targets as it continues to empower citizens through comprehensive legal guidance

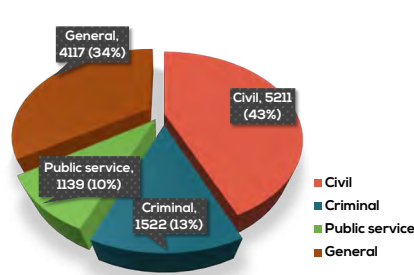
LAS is proud to share that, under the visionary leadership of Justice (R) Arif Hussain Khilji, the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC) has exceeded its annual target of addressing 33,000 legal queries for the year 2023-2024. SLACC is a flagship project of the Legal Aid Society (LAS) established under a public-private partnership with the Government of Sindh (GoS). This is Pakistan's first and one-of-a-kind toll-free helpline set up where High Court enrolled Agent Lawyers provide conclusive legal guidance to the citizens. Through its Interactive Voice Recording (IVR) system, SLACC has provided legal aid in response to a total of 463,824 calls on its toll-free number to date.



Provincial Breakdown of SLACC Callers



Legal query categories



During the reporting period SLACC has amassed an impressive record of **13,228 calls**, encompassing a diverse range of **11,989 queries** registered from more than 600 cities across Pakistan.

LAS PARTNERS UP WITH NOWPDP for differently-abled people's complaints' referral

LAS has recently signed an MoU with the Network for Organizations Working for People with Disabilities in Pakistan (NOWPDP) to establish a robust referral mechanism for complaints from people with disabilities (PWDs), ensuring their issues are addressed efficiently and effectively. The NOWPDP team visited the SLACC office on May 9, 2024. They were briefed on services offered by SLACC, followed by a discussion on the roadmap for collaboration between the two organizations.

By leveraging the strengths and synergies of both organizations,

the partnership between LAS and NOWPDP aims to promote inclusivity and empower PWDs. Through the legal advice provided at NOWPDP camps and joint awareness sessions in overlapping districts, this collaboration will improve access to justice for differently-abled individuals.

The signing ceremony was attended by **Sadia Dada** (Board Member, NOWPDP), **Fatima Jamil Khan** (General Manager- Programs, NOWPDP), **Justice Arif Hussain Khilji** (Chief Legal Advisor, SLACC), and **Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid** (CEO - LAS).



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

COVERAGE BY DHARTI TV



As part of our comprehensive public relations campaign to increase awareness for SLACC, LAS partnered up with Dharti TV, one of the largest Sindhi media groups in Sindh. Our media campaign was run throughout the month of May 2024, including prime-time television commercials (TVCs) and talk show discussions, leading to an increased number of calls received at SLACC's toll-free number 0800-70806.

Dharti TV hosted SLACC at the 'Morning with Dharti' show where the LAS team raised awareness about the call center established to provide legal aid to the masses. LAS was proudly represented by its call-center lawyers who received a well-deserved spotlight. In addition, SLACC was also featured in Dharti TV's show named 'Legal Opinion' twice in May 2024, with one of the episodes recorded at the SLACC site.



Promoting SLACC through RADIO

SLACC recently made a notable appearance on Hot FM105's show 'Mehran Rang', providing a valuable opportunity for LAS to project its work. **Ms. Rukhsana Parveen Khokhar** (Senior Project Manager, LAS) along with **Advocate Parveen Khurram** (On-call Lawyer, SLACC) participated in the show and shared insights on the diligent efforts of SLACC to provide legal assistance to the citizens. Additionally, Advocate Zahid Hussain (Community Lawyer, LAS) was featured on the Sindh Police FM 88.6 show 'Sojha Bojha.' During this broadcast, he emphasized SLACC's services for legal support to the masses. Our radio engagements have significantly enhanced SLACC's visibility and accessibility, ensuring that more people are aware of the legal resources available to them.

NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS



LAS launched a print advertising campaign in the widely read 'Daily Sobh' newspaper. Two ads were published on consecutive Sundays, reaching a broad audience as the newspaper boasts a circulation of over 9,000 homes across Sindh, effectively communicating our message to a large and diverse readership. This was aimed at increasing public awareness of SLACC's services and highlighting LAS's commitment to providing accessible legal assistance to the community.

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

0800 - 70806

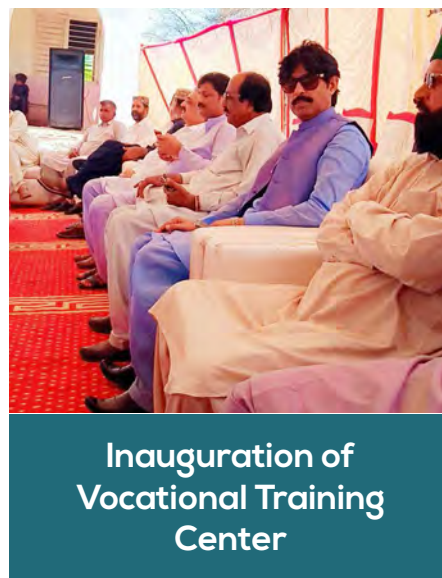


PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS SECURITY AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE in Pakistan

A JOURNEY OF LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND EMPOWERMENT



STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SUPPORT



On April 18, 2024, LAS conducted a stakeholder consultation session with leaders and representatives of the Hindu community to discuss proposed amendments to the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Laws in Sindh. The meeting was led by **Advocate Shabnaz Wali** (Research and Litigation Coordinator, LAS), and facilitated by **Advocate Ali Ahmad** (Litigation Associate, LAS). Prominent community members attended the session and provided valuable insights on the Hindu Marriage and Divorce Act.

LAS is committed to strengthening the legal landscape for religious minorities in Pakistan through contributions of stakeholders that reflect their needs and perspectives.

LAS participated in the inauguration of a Vocational Training Center at Village Mubarak Sheedi Sari in District Tando Muhammad Khan. This event was held on June 2, 2024, and organized by EFMS Trust. The training center aims to empower women by developing their skills and fostering small business development. By providing vocational training, the initiative seeks to enhance economic independence and improve the quality of life for women in rural areas. This is a crucial step toward creating opportunities for women, and LAS's participation underscores our dedication to supporting initiatives that drive sustainable development and support marginalized segments of society.

LAS, in collaboration with the Sindh Government Shah Bhittai Hospital Latifabad Hyderabad, celebrated International Labour Day with the hospital's sanitary workers on May 8, 2024. The event was led by **Zahid Ali Messo** (District Field Officer, LAS), who recognized the invaluable contributions of sanitary workers while advocating for their rights and well-being.

The celebration included the distribution of appreciation certificates and flower bouquets, honoring the hard work of over 80 participants. The event was graced by notable figures from various human rights organizations and civil society, further emphasizing the importance of acknowledging and supporting the essential services provided by sanitary workers.

PIONEERING SENSITIZATION WORKSHOPS for Judges

On April 1-2, 2024, the SJA (Sindh Judicial Academy) held a momentous Capacity Building Training focusing on the laws concerning RMCs (Religiously Marginalized Communities). The training aimed to enhance the expertise of the judiciary in handling cases involving these communities, ensuring fair and just legal proceedings.



Nineteen Civil Judges and Judicial Magistrates participated in this intensive training session. They were guided by a distinguished panel of trainers, including **Mr. Iqbal Ahmed Detho** (Chairperson, SHRC), **Mr. Shahid Shafique** (Senior Faculty Member, SJA); and **Mr. Mukesh Kumar** (Advocate, High Court) who provided valuable insights and practical knowledge to the attendees.



Key Training Topics Covered included the Significance of International Treaties, Adopting International Treaties into Domestic Law, Constitutional Safeguards for Religious Independence and Freedom, Elements of Punishments, and Offenses in Cr. P.C. and PPC, Sensitivities Attached to Blasphemy-Related Mob Attacks, Personal Laws of Non-Muslims, and the like.

This comprehensive training session was a significant step towards empowering the judiciary to better understand and apply laws that protect the rights and freedoms of religiously marginalized communities.



ADVOCATING FOR RMCs on TV

To bolster our advocacy efforts, **Mr. Hasnain Akhtar** (Delivery Associate, LAS), appeared on a live morning show on Dharti Entertainment TV channel on May 23, 2024. Using this platform Hasnain highlight the interventions made by LAS for protecting and promoting the constitutional rights of RMCs in Sindh, and shared his insightful and valuable experiences from conducting community awareness sessions across various districts in Sindh. He specifically emphasized the protection of property rights for non-Muslims, a critical issue affecting many communities in the region.

The significance of the Paralegal Network established by LAS was



also portrayed. This paralegal network remains pivotal in strengthening community grievance redressal and referral mechanisms

for legal assistance, ensuring that non-Muslims receive the support and protection they deserve.

PROTECTING AND PROMOTING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM in Pakistan

CAPACITY BUILDING ENDEAVORS

During the reporting quarter the Legal Aid Society (LAS) conducted the ToTs (Training of Trainers) and Baseline Survey Training to empower trainers to train paralegals with essential skills in digital literacy, financial literacy, personal laws, and fundamental rights.

These initiatives are based on LAS' multi-disciplinary approach & are aimed at raising awareness and support communities in Sindh (Dadu, Hyderabad, Sanghar) and South Punjab (Khanewal, Multan, Muzaffargarh).



Training of Trainers by ECI



LAS conducted a three-day training session for its paralegals, led by **Mr. Iftikhar Ali Memon** (Manager Projects and Business Development, Empowerment thru Creative Integration) and **Ms. Bakhtawar** (Co-Trainer) on April 23-26, 2024. The training aimed to enhance skills and knowledge in digital and financial literacy, learning principles, and effective communication.

The participants were also briefed on budgeting, loans, investments, and using social media platforms through hands-on activities. Specific sessions were also held to cover personal and fundamental rights laws for RMCs, with detailed discussions on marriage laws for Hindus and Christians in Pakistan. The training concluded with mock sessions and certificate distribution, recognizing the completion of the program.



Baseline Survey Training

The Baseline Survey Training took place on April 26-27, 2024, at Hotel Mehran in Karachi, led by **Ms. Fatima Bilal** (Manager, Research Delivery Unit, LAS), which witnessed participation by 20 field officers from Sindh and Punjab. The training equipped participants with the skills to use baseline data collection and monitoring tools.

The training equipped the participants with protocols for conducting baseline surveys, randomization processes, and informed consent. Participants were also introduced to the baseline tool and educated on using Survey CTO. They were also engaged in mock sessions to practice data collection, received feedback, and discussed potential challenges and mitigation techniques.

ToTs for Digital Literacy & Financial Management



LAS conducted ToT (Training of Trainers) on June 7-9, 2024. Led by **Advocate Angbeen Mirza** (Certified Paralegal Trainer), the training focused on personal laws, fundamental rights, digital literacy, and financial management. The participants will act as master trainers, who were equipped with the skills needed to train paralegals effectively.

The goal of this activity is to ultimately enhance socio-economic integration and legal awareness among RMCs. By strengthening the capacity of trainers and paralegals, LAS aims to create a well-versed team capable of raising awareness, conducting effective data collection, and empowering marginalized communities through improved education and legal support.

Bridging the Gap between Law, Policy, and Practice on WOMEN'S RIGHT TO PROPERTY

LAS remains dedicated to empowering women by raising awareness of their legal and

matrimonial property rights. Using a sustainable, community-driven, and woman-focused

approach, LAS addresses the legal needs of marginalized and underserved groups.

LEGAL EDUCATION AND AWARENESS Clinics



During the reporting quarter, LAS conducted 67 community awareness sessions on women's property rights across Karachi, Larkana, and Shaheed Benazirabad, engaging **1,085 participants**.

These sessions fostered community empowerment and grassroots advocacy for women's property rights. Through enhancing legal education, LAS aspires to create lasting change and advance the cause of gender equity and justice for all.



CONFERENCE SYNOPSIS: Women's Right to Matrimonial Property in Pakistan

In a pioneering initiative aimed at advancing the understanding and enforcement of women's property rights within Pakistan's legal framework, LAS in collaboration with Musawah and the Women in Law – Pakistan initiative, successfully organized a three-day training and conference titled **"Women's Right to Matrimonial Property (WRMP) in Pakistan: Theory and Practice"** on May 28-30, 2024, at Avari Hotel, Karachi.

30 lawyers received comprehensive training through practical workshops, case studies, and interactive sessions during the first two days





of the event, where the participants delved into the theoretical and practical aspects, exploring global and domestic legal frameworks. The sessions emphasized understanding Islamic legal methodologies and precedents, especially in relation to domestic and care work. This hands-on training empowered participants to build a critical mass of matrimonial property cases in court, influence changes in legal practice, and support community-level advocacy campaigns.

Advocate Rashid Mahar (Alumni from last year's training) also returned to share his experiences and explained how he has successfully utilized these learnings in litigation and community advocacy in Karachi. Such stories

of overcoming challenges and achieving successes reaffirm and reinforce our commitment to empowering legal professionals through comprehensive training.

The third day transitioned into a broader conference and had a significant turnout, with about 110 attendees with policymakers, civil society members, lawyers, law students, and esteemed guests including the likes of **Advocate Maliha Zia Lari** (Associate Director, LAS), **Ms. Nida Usman** (Founder, Women in Law Initiative Pakistan).

The day also foresaw a panel discussion featuring **Ms. Rabia Javeri Agha** (Chairperson, NCHR), **Ms. Fauzia Viqar** (Federal Ombudsperson for Protection

Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace - FOSPAH), **Mr. Iqbal Detho** (Chairperson, SHRC), **Ms. Rukhsana Naz** (KP Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace), **Ms. Nabila Khan** (Punjab Ombudsperson for Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace), **Ms. Amina Qadir** (Founder She-her), **Ms. Anis Haroon** (Member Sindh, NCHR), **Mr. Kashif Kakar** (Vice Chairperson, Balochistan Human Rights Commission of Pakistan), who discussed the efficacy of the Ombudsperson's office in adjudicating property cases and reducing the backlog of cases from civil and family courts. They also illuminated the challenges faced in implementing such special laws at a federal level and in each province.

Dr. Nafisa Shah, (Member of the National Assembly of Pakistan) graced the occasion as the Chief Guest, and delivered a speech on the importance of women's economic empowerment. She enlightened:

"Giving women access to marital property is one of the best ways to empower them materially, both within marriage and in general. It fosters financial independence and reinforces their rights and equality."



The conference underscored the pivotal role of women's right to matrimonial property in ensuring gender equality and justice within the Pakistani legal system, as the attendees affirmed their commitment to working collaboratively towards refining the mechanisms of WRMP, fostering greater accessibility, fairness, and efficiency in the country's legal system, and applying their learnings to practice. The conference concluded with a mutual consensus on institutionalizing women's right to matrimonial property nationwide.



You can catch the highlights of the workshop by scanning this QR code





UNDEF Supervising the 90th Community Awareness Session on Nikahnama

LAS is proud to announce a significant milestone in our journey towards gender equality and women's empowerment, as it recently conducted its 90th community awareness session on women's rights in the Nikahnama, which was supervised by a distinguished representative from the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF). This visit not only highlighted the success and impact of our initiative but also underscored the global support and recognition our efforts have garnered.

Ms. Mikiko Sawanishi (Deputy Executive Head - United Nations Democracy Fund) visited LAS head office and met with our esteemed Nikah Registrars and Para-legals to discuss the challenges faced by each party. Following this engagement, Ms. Mikiko also traveled to Orangi Town with the Program Team to visit Al-Imran Memorial School to observe our 90th Community Awareness Session.

The United Nations Democracy Fund supports projects that strengthen the voice of civil society, promote human rights, and encourage the participation of all groups in democratic processes.

IMPROVING THE UNDERSTANDING OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS under Muslim Family Laws

Ensuring women's rights in marriage is a crucial aspect of fostering equitable societies. The Nikahnama is a crucial contract that needs to be filled accurately to describe the terms and conditions of a Muslim marriage, ensuring women's rights in marriage to foster equitable societies.



COMMUNITY AWARENESS SESSIONS on Women's Rights and Privileges in the Nikahnama

The Nikkahnama is a pivotal document in a Muslim marriage, detailing the rights and responsibilities of both spouses. However, many women are often unaware of the specific clauses and stipulations in the Nikkahnama that can be included to protect their interests.

To bridge the knowledge gap, and to empower women within our communities, LAS conducts Community Awareness Sessions on Muslim Family Laws in Karachi,

Larkana & Shaheed Benazirabad. During the reporting quarter, LAS engaged **1,337 women** across various localities through **44** of these sessions, providing women with the knowledge and tools necessary to advocate for their rights and ensure their well-being within marriage.

Our community awareness sessions offer detailed insights into the legal and religious aspects of the Nikkahnama, emphasizing the importance of informed consent and mutual agreement.



STRATEGIC LITIGATION TRAINING OF LAWYERS on Muslim Family Laws

Strategic litigation creates significant changes in legal cases by aiming to set important legal precedents, influence policies, and bring justice to marginalized groups. By challenging unfair practices, ensuring legal protections, and upholding women's rights under the law, strategic litigation serves as a powerful tool for advancing women's rights.



In our continuous effort to safeguard women's rights under the law, LAS held a Strategic Litigation Training for lawyers on May 08, 2024, focusing on Muslim Family Laws. This training aimed to enhance lawyers' understanding of strategic litigation and its application

in protecting and advancing women's rights.

This training equipped advocates with the tools and knowledge to pursue impactful cases. By understanding strategic litigation, lawyers can effectively challenge

cases that violate women's rights, work towards setting legal precedents that favor gender equality, and ensure that women's rights are protected and advanced under Muslim Family Laws.

LAWYERS TRAINING with the Karachi Bar Association

Muslim Family Law encompasses a range of legal issues including marriage, divorce, maintenance, guardianship, and inheritance. Understanding these laws is vital for ensuring justice and equality within families. However, many individuals lack comprehensive knowledge about their rights and obligations under these laws.



In a proactive step toward advancing women's rights and protections, LAS recently collaborated with the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) to conduct a lecture on April 27, 2024 on Muslim Family Laws.

The event featured prominent

individuals such as **Justice Arif H. Khilji** (Chief Legal Advisor, LAS), **Mr. Ikhtiar Channa** (General Secretary, Karachi Bar Association), and chairpersons of multiple committees. This lecture aimed to fill the gap by providing clear and detailed insights into the various aspects of Muslim Family Laws.

Our partnership with the Karachi Bar Association brings a high level of legal expertise and authority to this initiative. This collaboration ensures that the information disseminated is accurate, comprehensive, and reflective of current legal standards.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE in Pakistan

Health Department, GoS launches the **ANTI-RAPE CRISIS CELL (ARCC)** at Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Center in Karachi

Rape is a crisis that impacts health, legal, and social dimensions. Survivors often face significant challenges in accessing timely justice

when necessary services are not nearby and lack efficient coordination. However, Section 4 of the Anti-Rape (Investigation & Trial) Act 2021 addresses

this issue by mandating the establishment of Anti-Rape Crisis Cells, ensuring better support and coordination for survivors.



The Health Department, Government of Sindh in collaboration with UK Aid, UNFPA (United Nations Populations Fund), Government of Canada, Awaaz Do, and Legal Aid Society (LAS), successfully inaugurated the ARCC at JPMC (Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Center) in Karachi, on April 30, 2024. Through this collaborative effort, the ARCC is all set to provide police services, medical services, and independent

support advisors (for legal aid and psychological support) under one roof for a rape survivor with the hope of making the first step of the long road to justice slightly easier.

The event was graced by the presence of **Dr. Shahid Rasool** (Executive Director, Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre), **Dr. Luay Shabani** (Country Director, UNFPA), **Mr. Rehan Iqbal Baloch** (Health Secretary, Government

of Sindh), **Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho** (Minister of Health & Population Welfare, Government of Sindh), along with several senior government officials and members of the civil society. **Dr. Azra Pechuho** thanked all collaborators whose efforts enabled the launch of this model facility and ensured continued support from the government to curb the issue of violence against women and children.



Dr. Luay Shabaneh on the occasion mentioned that UNFPA has dedicated many of its efforts to the prevention of rape. Being the first facility of this kind in Karachi is a significant achievement in providing relief and justice to the victims. This was possible only because key stakeholders worked together tirelessly.

We would like to thank everyone involved from the inception of this idea to its formalization. The launch of a model facility such as this signifies the government's commitment to improve access to justice for survivors of sexual violence under the Anti-Rape (Trial and Investigation) Act

2021 through a coordinated and targeted response mechanism. We hope that this is a catalyst for other districts and provinces to follow suit in our national pursuit to end gender-based violence in the country.

CAPACITY BUILDING ENDEAVORS

TRAINING OF POLICE MASTER TRAINERS to increase capacity for investigative techniques and preparation for trial



To better capacitate investigative police officers in handling cases related to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), LAS conducted a four-day training session for 19 Sindh police officers at the Police Training School in Larkana. In collaboration with UN Women Pakistan and Sindh Police, the officers were trained not only on specialized investigation techniques for SGBV cases but were also taught methods to disseminate the learned skills to other Special Sexual Offence Investigation Unit (SSOIU) officers as part of our sustainable strategy to increase the institutional capacity of Police.

The nominated officers from Sindh Police hailed from divisions including



Hyderabad, Jam Nawaz Ali, Shahdadpur, Khairpur, and Larkana. As the initial days of the training sessions focused on understanding gender and cases associated with it, the days following it constituted mock sessions conducted by the officers themselves. This resulted

in detailed and nuanced learning for the master trainers under the guidance and supervision of **Dr. Asha Bedar** (Clinical Psychologist) and **Dr. Summaiya Tariq** (Chief Police Surgeon, JPMC Karachi).

CONSULTATION SESSION FOR WOMEN LAWYERS AND PROSECUTORS on constitutional and legal rights of women



In a significant stride towards women's empowerment and strengthening the response of key Criminal Justice Sector (CJS) Actors to gender-based violence (GBV), LAS, in collaboration with UN Women Pakistan, conducted a series of consultation sessions with female lawyers and prosecutors in Karachi and Sukkur.

These sessions were conducted in

April and May 2024 and collectively engaged nearly 200 participants from across the region. Aimed at deepening their understanding of the application of the key legislative frameworks concerning women's rights, the primary focus of these consultation sessions was to enhance participants' grasp of the frameworks designed to protect and empower women. These frameworks include the Anti-Rape

(Investigation and Trial) Act 2021, the Sindh Domestic Violence Act 2013, the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act 2013, amendments to the Criminal Law, and laws addressing sexual harassment. Moreover, the sessions provided a platform for future collaboration among CJS actors in handling cases of violence against women (VAW).

LAUNCH OF GBV GUIDELINES IN GILGIT BALTISTAN for healthcare workers for identification and support of SGBV cases

Healthcare workers are often the first point of contact for any SGBV (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) survivor. Identification of such cases at the earliest is important for the well-being of the survivor and the nature of the case from this first point of contact. The Guidelines for health care providers present protocols for handling such cases and adopt a survivor-compassionate approach. This ranges from preserving the dignity and privacy of the survivor, engaging in a compassion-based interaction, providing valuable aid, and documenting an in-depth medical assessment of the survivor.



LAS in collaboration with UNFPA and Gilgit-Baltistan's Health Department formally launched these guidelines for healthcare workers for identification and support of sexual and gender-based violence cases. Before this, more than 25 healthcare workers were trained on these Guidelines. During the launch, a panel discussion involving experienced healthcare

actors from Gilgit-Baltistan was administered. The panel discussion, moderated by **Ms. Durkhanay Ijaz** (Senior Program Manager for Gender, LAS) highlighted the importance of considering the social context and the necessity for protocol-based methods of interaction with survivors. The Guidelines aim to address this critical need.

Providing valuable insights into the complex systems involved with SGBV, the event was given invaluable substance through the observations shared by **Mr. Muhammad Iqbal** (Director Health, Gilgit) and **Dr. Summaiya Tariq** (Chief Police Surgeon, JPMC Karachi) who made major contributions in the creation of these Guidelines.

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND TRANSFORMING UNEQUAL GENDER ROLES through the Engagement of Men and Boys: HE-FOR-SHE CAMPAIGN

Gender equality is a vision that can be translated into a practiced reality only when men and boys take full responsibility, working alongside women and girls, to redress the gendered power dynamics that hinder gender equality.

Transforming unequal power dynamics between men and women involves challenging notions of masculinity and traditional perceptions of manhood. This involves actively questioning the existing power structures in their actions or their words at the personal, interpersonal, and societal levels and taking responsibility for change. To facilitate this transformation, LAS conducted a HeForShe awareness session at

ABD Law College, Sukkur, where 23 law students were trained as HeForShe advocates.

The training focused on transforming gender roles in society in a way that contributes to several positive outcomes, such as the prevention of Gender-Based Violence, achievement of gender-balanced leadership, equal pay for women, and women's economic empowerment.



RESTORING FAITH IN JUSTICE: by institutionalizing ADR in Pakistan

LAS aims to strengthen community trust and reliance on the justice system by offering alternative avenues for dispute resolution that prioritize fairness, impartiality, and respect for all parties involved.

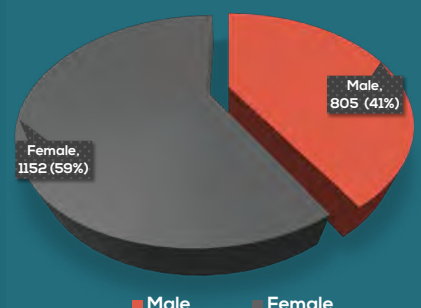


LEGAL AWARENESS CLINICS on ADR

Connecting with the LAS ADR interventions 192 skilled LAS paralegals joined forces with the Community ADR Network (CAN) to deliver **76** impactful legal clinics across eight districts in Sindh. These clinics, which benefited over **1,957 individuals** including men, women, and transgender people, went beyond mere awareness-raising. These paralegals equipped participants with essential knowledge of ADR principles and mechanisms, empowering them to handle disputes more effectively and navigate the legal system with greater confidence.

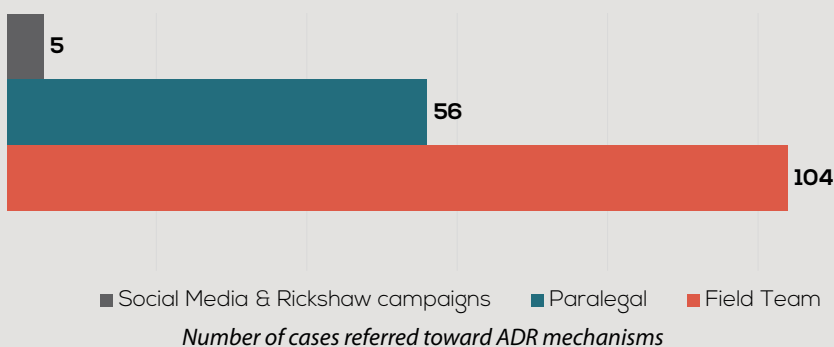
The dedication and tireless efforts of these paralegals have not only heightened legal awareness but also strengthened the justice system, fostering greater understanding and contributing to a more just and equitable society in Sindh.

Participants of Legal Awareness Clinics: Breakdown by Gender



DIVERSION OF CASES toward ADR Mechanisms

During the reporting quarter, LAS successfully directed 165 cases in eight designated districts toward ADR methods. Among these, females reported the highest number at 131 cases (79.4%), while males accounted for 34 cases (20.6%). Most of these cases were classified as Federal Ombudsman cases, totaling 154 instances, followed by 7 cases in private mediation, provincial ombudsman with 3 cases, and 1 case in court-annexed mediation. Out of these 165 cases, 5% (5) cases have already been resolved successfully, and 4.08% (4) cases were disposed of, further establishing ADR as an effective and efficient mode of dispute resolution.



The LAS field teams have played a crucial role in enabling 165 beneficiaries to register their complaints with the offices of the Provincial and Federal Ombudsman and resolve their disputes through accredited mediators in an amicable manner. The diverse and comprehensive efforts of LAS, coupled with the commitment of field officers, advocates, paralegals, and various women and development departments, have played a pivotal role in achieving these results, thus ensuring that justice is more accessible for all segments of society.

IMPROVING THE DEMAND SIDE of ADR in Pakistan

ENHANCING CAPACITIES OF COMMUNITY ADR NETWORKS (CANs) to facilitate effective ADR demand



Paralegals from the Community ADR Networks (CANs) are actively raising public awareness about ADR processes and are assisting the community in filing grievances with the Provincial and Federal Ombudsman offices. The CANs play a crucial role in identifying cases suitable for mediation and referring them to Musaliha International Center for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution

(MICADR)'s Mediators and Sindh High Court Notified Salis Members.

To further enhance these initiatives, LAS organized a one-day training workshop for paralegals and witnessed participation from 223 individuals, including 41 Salis members, 144 paralegals, 16 ADR Change Makers, and 22 District Level ADR Forum (DLAF) stakeholders. The training was

skillfully delivered by **Mr. Abbas Ali** (Sr. Program Manager, LAS) that aimed to create and strengthen referral pathways. It focused on ensuring effective linkages between all mentioned stakeholders to facilitate the diversion of cases to both formal and semi-formal Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms.

Participation at PIDW

The Pakistan International Dispute Resolution Week is a prestigious event organized to promote and enhance the understanding and practice of ADR in Pakistan. It aims to bring together legal professionals, arbitrators, mediators, and other stakeholders from both national and international backgrounds to discuss and explore effective dispute-resolution mechanisms outside traditional court systems.

LAS proudly participated at PIDW, as **Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid** (CEO, LAS) was featured as a speaker in the panel discussion titled **"Mediation is the New Black"** – a thought-provoking exploration into the transformative power of mediation in resolving disputes. As a prominent figure in alternative dispute resolution and a leading figure in Pakistan's legal landscape, Barrister Haya's insights were enlightening and inspiring. With over 15 years of experience championing access to justice and empowering individuals, her contributions to the field are invaluable.



Moreover, LAS's delegation joined the PIDW Conference, where experts from the legal fraternity discussed the crucial role of ADR in attracting foreign investment, building trust, and creating a sustainable ecosystem throughout Pakistan.



UNRELENTING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE SUPPLY SYSTEM of ADR in ICT & Gilgit Baltistan

Learning from the best Mediation practices across Pakistan: MEDIATION STUDY VISIT OF SINDH AND ISLAMABAD HIGH COURT JUDGES

In a significant initiative to strengthen the mediation ecosystem in Pakistan, LAS organized a study visit for six honorable judges from high courts to Gilgit-Baltistan. The purpose of the visit was to familiarize these esteemed judges with the successful mediation efforts led by LAS in the region and to examine the existing community-based mediation and conciliation models that have been effectively serving the community since 1986, leading to a notable reduction in court pendency.

The delegation included **Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb** (Honorable Judge, High Court of Islamabad), **Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri** (Honorable Judge, High Court of Islamabad), **Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan** (Member, Supreme Court ADR Task Force), **Justice Arbab Tahir** (Representative, Islamabad High Court), **Justice Adnan Chaudhry** (Member, Supreme Court ADR Task Force) and **Justice Yousuf Ali Sayeed** (Representative, Sindh High Court), along with Justice Mushir Alam (former Chief Justice, SHC) and **Justice Arif Hussain Khilji** (Chief Legal Advisor, LAS), as they visited the GB Chief Court and the Regional Conciliation and Arbitration Center in District Hunza. The judges were graciously received by the Chief Judge and Registrar of the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court and were engaged in meaningful interactions with mediators trained by LAS on June 5, 2024.



The delegation was also presented with the Gilgit Baltistan Model Mediation Bill 2023 (earlier drafted by LAS) and Musaliha International Centre for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (MICADR's) Institutional Arbitration Rules. During the consultation session with the high court and district judiciary, **Rana Muhammad Shamim** (Honorable

Chief Judge, Supreme Appellate Court GB) praised the LAS' efforts to institutionalize ADR in GB. He further commended LAS for training 55 mediators, conducting sensitization workshops with the district judiciary, and drafting the Gilgit Baltistan Model Mediation Bill 2023.



SENSITIZATION WORKSHOP ON MEDIATION for District Judiciary of Gilgit Baltistan



Continuing our efforts to Institutionalize ADR in GB (Gilgit Baltistan), LAS collaborated with the GB Chief Court to train the second batch of district judiciary and district attorneys in a two-day workshop on June 2-3, 2024 in Skardu, GB. The prime objective of this sensitization workshop was to familiarize the judiciary with mediation, setting it as an appropriate, formal, and

effective solution for case pendency in GB, discussing successful mediation initiatives globally and in Pakistan, and the GB Model Mediation Bill 2023. The successful approval of this bill will significantly reduce court backlog and set an important pattern for other provinces to follow. The training was skillfully conducted by **Mr. Shahzar Illahi** (Program Delivery Specialist, LAS) and **Mr. Fahad Mashood**.

During the workshop, **Mr. Ali Baig** (Honorable Chief Judge GB) commended LAS' efforts in formalizing ADR in Gilgit Baltistan, and expressed his wholehearted support in building a robust mediation ecosystem, aiming to set a benchmark for other provinces across Pakistan.

Mediation Advocacy and Skills TRAINING PROGRAM (MAST)



Promoting the art of mediation advocacy, LAS & MICADR, in collaboration with the FJA (Federal Judicial Academy), launched their inaugural Mediation Advocacy and Skills Training Program on May 20-21, 2024. On the occasion **Mr. Shahzar Illahi** (Program Delivery Specialist, LAS) acquainted participants with mediation concepts and skills, emphasizing the mediation process and effective advocacy.

The training aimed to empower participants to guide parties towards mediation for suitable cases and represent them as mediation advocates to achieve favorable outcomes. Throughout the two-day program, **Mr. Shahzar Illahi** also highlighted recent advancements in Islamabad's mediation ecosystem and upcoming opportunities, including training for mediators and mediation advocates, to expedite the resolution of civil, family, and commercial disputes through ADR.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

CHIEF JUDGE GB'S VISIT to LAS



LAS had the honor of hosting **Justice Ali Baig** (Honorable Chief Justice, GB), and **Mr. Ghulam Abbas Chopra** (Registrar, GB) at the LAS head office in Karachi. They were briefed on the extensive efforts and contributions of LAS

within the ADR landscape in Sindh and how a similar approach could be adopted for GB to institutionalize ADR in the region. Justice Ali Baig was briefed on the various thematic areas that LAS is working on, along with the state-of-the-art facilities

of our flagship project: the Musaliha International Center for Arbitration and Dispute Resolution (MICADR). Additionally, Gilgit-targeted programmatic interventions and regional expansion plans were also discussed.

Meeting with SPECIAL ADVISOR FEDERAL OMBUDSMAN

Mr. Syed Anwaar Haider (Special Advisor to the Federal Ombudsman) visited the LAS head office to discuss the enhancement of case referral mechanisms for more effective dispute resolution throughout Pakistan. Consequently, the meeting focused on enhancing coordination for outreach and raising awareness among potential beneficiaries, aiming to further institutionalize ADR across Pakistan.

It is noteworthy that a significant 78.5% (2,104 cases) of all our referrals to ADR mechanisms were directed to the office of the Ombudsman, underscoring the importance of this collaboration.



JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

Ending a long struggle to attain CNIC, enabling access to education

Samina Gul, a 39-year-old, from Sanghar, faced a prolonged and distressing struggle to obtain her CNIC card from the NADRA office. Despite numerous visits, she was continuously sent back due to issues with her documentation. This problem persisted since she turned

18 and got married without a CNIC. Efforts by her husband to resolve the matter were also unsuccessful. The repeated rejections and lack of resolution left Samina Gul in a state of deep distress. Her difficulties in obtaining CNIC spanned over 4-5 years, involving numerous visits to the NADRA office. The local union

council officer earlier remarked that her CNIC could not be issued due to technical reasons, which further increased her frustrations.

The travel between cities was challenging for her, while the lack of CNIC led to repercussions on her family as her daughter Fiza missed

a year of school and could not sit for her 8th-grade exams.

In utter distress, Samina Gul approached the LAS team in Sanghar through one of our legal awareness clinics on March 27, 2024. During the session, Samina shared her plight. Taking immediate notice, the LAS team assisted her in filing an online complaint with the Federal Ombudsman on April 1, 2024. The Federal Ombudsman also responded promptly, summoning Samina Gul for a hearing at the District Union Council in Sanghar. Following the hearing, the Federal Ombudsman ordered the removal of the stipulations of unnecessary documentation



Samina Gul & her family after receiving her CNIC with Advocate in Sanghar

requirements imposed by the NADRA department. Following this Samina received her CNIC, resolving the issue on May 31, 2024. This

resolution not only brought relief to Samina but also allowed her daughter to resume her education without further delays.

Beneficiary's Quote:

"I extend my heartfelt thanks to the LAS Sanghar team for their guidance and unwavering support. They showed me the way to resolve my problem in just a few weeks. I am immensely grateful to the LAS-Sanghar team and the Chairperson of the Legal Aid Society. Without their support, I could not have obtained my rights."

District
SANGHAR

DISTRICT IN HIGHLIGHT

JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

Protecting a Widow from Harassment

Rabia, a widow and mother of two daughters, faced relentless harassment following the death of her husband on January 22, 2023. A private opponent, subjected her to continuous public harassment and incessant phone calls, forcing her for marriage. Upon her refusal, his demeanor turned aggressive, escalating to threats of murder and false accusations. Desperate for safety and legal protection, Rabia sought help from her community elders and the police, but they failed to take effective action.

On May 24, 2024, Rabia who was referred by a court reader, approached LAS's **Advocate Babar**

Khan (Community Lawyer, LAS), who swiftly took action by filing a Criminal Miscellaneous application on her behalf. A crucial report from the DSP Complaint Cell Nawabshah was then submitted. Following this, the private opponent filed his Vakalatnama. The court, after reviewing the evidence, passed an order in open court mandating legal protection for Rabia and her family. On May 28, 2024, the Criminal Miscellaneous application was resolved in Rabia's favor, ensuring her safety and peace of mind.

Rabia's case highlights the indispensable role of LAS in providing free legal services to

those in dire need. By supporting Rabia, LAS ensured she received the necessary protection and justice, showcasing our unwavering commitment to assisting the vulnerable and upholding the law.



JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

From suffering to peace: A Legal Journey to Justice

Samreen was married on December 20, 2020. Initially, her husband's behavior was respectful, providing her with hope for a harmonious future. However, as time went on, his husband's behavior changed, as he began to mistreat Samreen, using abusive language and failing to provide any financial maintenance. The situation worsened when her father-in-law also started physically abusing her. Requests to contact her parents were met with further maltreatment, leading to her husband driving her out of their house.

With no income and coming from a poor family, Samreen turned to LAS for assistance. Referred by the Women's Crisis Center SBA, she met with **Advocate Babar Khan** (Community Lawyer, LAS), who advised her to file a suit for the recovery of maintenance, the

return of dowry articles, and the dissolution of her marriage on the grounds of cruelty.

Samreen's case was registered on February 19, 2024, on a pro-bono basis. The defendant, her husband, responded with a written statement. Following the negotiations, he made an affidavit agreeing to several critical terms, including paying a sum of PKR 7,000 per month for Samreen and an additional PKR 7,000 for their minor child, providing a separate accommodation for her, allowing her regular contact with her parents, and to cease all maltreatment.

The court granted a compromised decree incorporating these terms, which was publicly announced and confirmed in an open court proceeding. The suit was officially closed and disposed of on May



22, 2024. LAS's intervention in Samreen's life is a powerful reminder of how access to legal support can transform lives, ensuring that justice is served even for the most vulnerable members of society.

JUSTICE SUCCESS **STORIES**

Triumph in attaining maintenance rights: A testament to resilience

In the realm of legal battles, Zakia's story is one of resilience and triumph. Married in 2019, she faced verbal abuse and neglect, leading her to seek justice with the help of one of the LAS community lawyers on September 19, 2023.

Being strong Zakia found the courage to address her mistreatment with LAS' community lawyer, who filed suits for her maintenance, return of dowry articles, and dissolution of her marriage due to cruelty. The community lawyer guided her through the legal process. Zakia's case concluded on April 26, 2024, with a landmark judgment in her favor, dissolving her marriage and awarding her rightful dowry articles.

Zakia's success story highlights the transformative impact of LAS' community lawyers. Her journey serves as an inspiring reminder of the power of empathy, support, and advocacy in navigating legal challenges and achieving justice.



Advocate Babar with Zakia at the court before the hearing

JUSTICE SUCCESS STORIES

Navigating family turbulence through successful mediation between a married couple

Farzana Ali and Farman Sher from district Sukkur were navigating a challenging phase in their five-year marriage. With four children and another on the way, the pressures of family life were compounded by the negative behavior of Farman's family, which deeply troubled Farzana. Seeking some respite, she took their children to her parents' home. The strained relationship between Farzana and Farman, exacerbated by the poor treatment from Farman's family, created a hostile and unhappy environment. This prompted Farzana to leave their home temporarily, further straining their relationship.

Both Farzana and Farman felt lost and in need of guidance to navigate their marital issues and ensure a better future for their children. For this purpose, Farzana and Farman approached LAS where mediator Afreen Kanwal introduced them to the concept of mediation, which looked appealing to the beneficiaries as they saw hope for resolving



The couple in dispute during a peaceful mediation at the LAS Sukkur regional office

their conflicts peacefully. Through the mediation sessions, they began to communicate more effectively, gradually understanding and empathizing with each other's feelings. After several hours of discussion, they reached an agreement to treat each other with more respect and care, recognizing the importance of their relationship for the sake of their family.

The mediation process facilitated by LAS proved to be a turning point for the couple's relationship. The couple is committed to working on improving their married life together, and are now grateful for the support they received from LAS which ultimately helped their lives & relationship to get into further turmoil.

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

0800 - 70806



communications@las.org.pk



+92 21 - 35634112-5



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



www.las.org.pk



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



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



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



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