



Organizational Profile

2023-2024 Edition

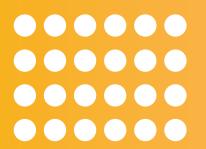
Connecting Vulnerable and Disempowered End-Users of Justice with Effective and Expedient services for the delivery of Justice

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Content Page

Leadership 6 4 **Overview and Outreach** Our Team **Our Work** 8 11 **Board of Directors** & Thematic Areas **Legal Empowerment Initiatives Legal Aid & Assistance** 12 16 Know the Law Use the Law **Improving the Criminal Justice** 19 26 **Publications and Partners System -** Shape the Law

Overview

ccess to justice forms the cornerstone of a healthy and progressive state. The Legal Aid Society (LAS) consolidates nearly a decade worth of demonstrated experience in bringing accessible, effective, and expeditious delivery of justice to individuals and communities that need it the most. LAS, a not-for-profit non-governmental organization active since 2013, has embarked on a mission to empower vulnerable individuals and communities to increase their knowledge of the justice system and their ability to access it. In order to achieve this LAS works with different actors in the justice system to improve their capacity to address citizens' grievances and resolve conflicts in a fair and just manner. Combining both these elements, its broader strategy is oriented through a three-fold approach:

01

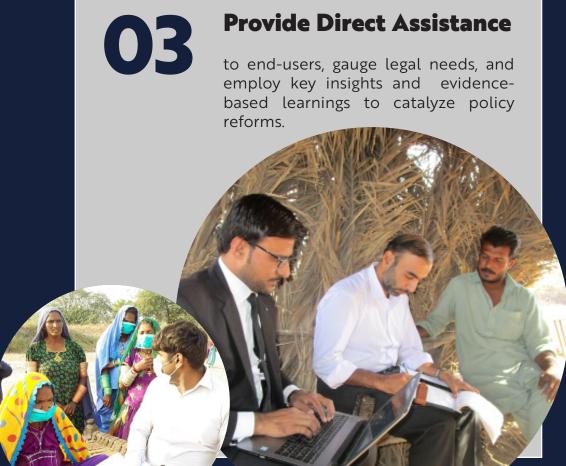
Increase Demand for Justice

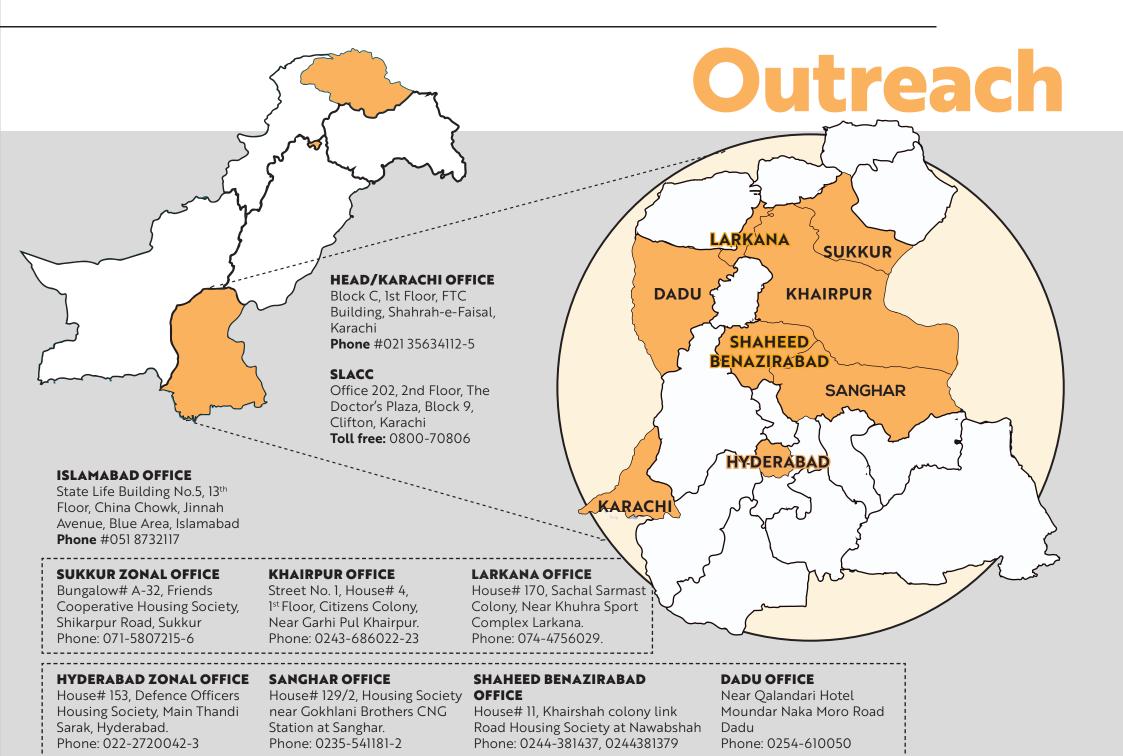
by mainstreaming awareness and knowledge of fundamental legal rights, procedures, protections, and remedies amongst common users

02

Improve the Supply of Justice

by providing support to and enhancing capabilities and skills of key actors in the justice system





The Leadership

ustice Nasir Aslam Zahid received his B.A Honors in Law in 1956 from the University of Cambridge, U.K. He was called to the Bar in 1956 from Middle Temple in London, U.K. He completed his M.A in 1960 from Cambridge University, U.K. He practiced law for over 20 years before the High Court and Supreme Court of Pakistan and was elevated as a judge of the Sindh High Court on 17th May, 1980.

He went on to become the Chief Justice of the Sindh High Court from 1992 to 1994 and was elevated to the Supreme Court in 1996. Justice Nasir Zahid also led the Commission of Inquiry for Women from September 1996 to August 1997 and during his tenure as a Judge of the Supreme Court, he was in charge of the court's computerization project. Later, he headed the Federal Judicial Academy at Islamabad during 1999 – 2000. He ceased to hold office in 2000 after refusing to take a fresh oath under the Provisional Constitutional Order (PCO), on January 26, 2000.

After retirement, in 2001, he established the Hamdard School of Law in Karachi which continues to provide a full-term three-year law degree program. In 2004, he was appointed as the Chairperson for the Committee for the Welfare of Prisoners by the Government of Sindh and has since then continued to scale and lead the institutionalization of the Legal Aid Office project, which is a public-private partnership which works for the welfare of prisoners in Sindh across 25 prisons. Justice Zahid laid the foundations of the Legal Aid Society with the main objective of expanding access to justice beyond prisons to serve marginalized and underprivileged communities to reduce challenges in accessing justice.

Our Team

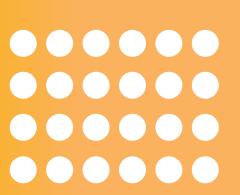
ur Team here at LAS comprises of a versatile mix of public policy practitioners, legal practitioners and experts, research and data specialists, communications specialists, etc. Geographically, the collective experience of our program and technical teams extends across all parts of Pakistan, including Balochistan, South Punjab and Gilgit Baltistan.





Meet our Directors

ur board members comprise a cognitively diversified group of change makers with experience in the fields of law, policy reform, healthcare, education, media and information technology.





Mr. Asadullah Jamil



Justice Arif Hussain Khilji



Ms. Rabiya Javeri Agha



Mr. Adnan Javed



Justice Muhammad Ather Saeed



Barrister Furkan Ali



Dr. Samia K. Babar



Dr. Habiba Hasan

Meet the CEO



Barrister Haya Emaan Zahid

A Global Focus











AS promotes and progresses the objectives of Sustainable Development Goals 5 (Gender Equality) and 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) of the U.N 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With existing social, cultural, and economic odds already unfavorable towards minorities, women, transgenders, and non-binary individuals in Pakistan, LAS actively ensures that through tailored interventions, the incidence and prevalence of gender-based disparity, violence, and discrimination are adequately tackled.

Similarly, LAS's core philosophy is that access to justice is the bedrock for a peaceful and inclusive society. It executes this by legally empowering vulnerable communities through awareness, advice, representation, and strengthening the justice system through advocacy, research, training, and capacity building.

Our Work & Thematic Areas

n a country where the average citizen cannot adequately access or understand the legal system, LAS's work is two-fold. We provide knowledge and awareness of the legal system to vulnerable communities, and we work with a range of actors in the justice sector to improve the delivery of just and fair outcomes. LAS's guiding philosophy is simple; 'Know the Law, Use the Law, Shape the Law.'



KNOW THE LAW & USE THE LAW

are focused on empowering vulnerable communities with key legal tools, equipping them with a holistic and actionable understanding of a wide range of legal protections and remedies. Our programs cater to vulnerable women in low-income communities, marginalized religious minority groups, under-trial prisoners, and juvenile prisoners. This involves not only educating and sharing knowledge but providing guidance and technical support to approach relevant justice access points, including courts and alternate methods of dispute resolution.



deals with active and extensive engagement with key actors in the justice delivery sector across a wide spectrum of themes based on cross-cutting partnerships. To this end, it regularly conducts a diverse set of consultations, training, and capacity-building workshops for judicial officers, prosecutors, police officials, prison staff, inmates, government officials, and other relevant interlocutors.



A. Legal Empowerment Initiatives

(KNOW THE LAW)

I. Sindh Legal Advisory Call

Center - in partnership with the Law Department, **Government of Sindh**

flagship project of LAS, the Legal Advisory Call Center (LACC) was established in September 2014 to provide free and immediate access to legal advisors for underprivileged and marginalized communities across Pakistan.

Based on the resounding success and substantive impact created by this initiative, the Sindh Government through the Sindh Law Department entered into Public-Private Partnership with LAS, rebranding LACC to the Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center (SLACC). SLACC is a round-the-clock (24/7) toll-free helpline manned by highly qualified High Court Lawyers

who address legal queries of all types under the direct supervision of retired Supreme Court judges.



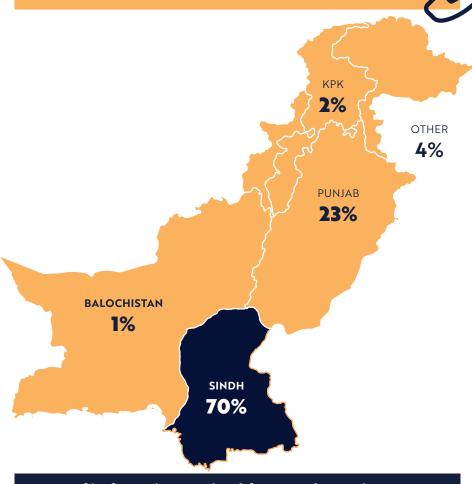
free of cost legal advice from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm - Monday to Saturday

349,511 queries registered since inception from **450 cities** across Pakistan

Catering to legal queries nationwide



SLACC can be accessed by anyone through a toll-free number 0300-70806 and has the capacity of attending 12 calls at a time.



% of queries received from each province (since inception)

II. Legal Awareness Clinics

he objective of legal awareness clinics is to equip communities across Sindh with legal literacy and to empower them to pursue legal redress and remedies with autonomy and confidence.

Legal awareness sessions are designed keeping in mind the legal needs of particular communities and are curated in a highly interactive and engaging manner. Emphasis is placed on ensuring the provision of knowledge matches the unique requirements of diversified communities. LAS has conducted legal awareness sessions on the following themes across Sindh:

A. LEGAL NEEDS AND RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES:

LAS has conducted 155 legal awareness sessions with members of different religious minority communities. Between 2014 and 2016, these sessions were conducted in Larkana, Ghotki, and Sukkur. LAS has completed a legal needs analysis of religious minorities, surveying more than 300+ members from religious minorities across eight different districts of Sindh.



B. ALTERNATE DISPUTE RESOLUTION:

LAS seeks to increase awareness about informal, quasi-formal methods of dispute resolution to decrease the burden on district courts and promote more expeditious and cost-effective avenues of justice. LAS works with Union Councils, Small Trade Associations, CBOs/CSOs, Labor Unions, and other organized bodies to disseminate actionable knowledge on Alternate Dispute Resolution and its procedural aspects. Communities that are privy to such forums and tools are increasingly able to resolve their cases without going to courts e.g. Office of the Ombudsman, Salis member from Community, etc.

C. EARLY CHILD AND FORCED MARRIAGES:

National news and media reports in the country frequently feature instances of child marriages, especially in different areas of Sindh. LAS has conducted in-depth and extensive awareness sessions in Nawabshah, Larkana, and Karachi to acquaint local community members with the physical, psychological and economic harms associated with child marriages. Similarly, this was paired with communicating the legal repercussions of encouraging and facilitating child marriages. To ensure the sustainability of these efforts, LAS established Community Networks comprising 75 prominent members from the government departments, communities and NGOs, that actively help mitigate the instances of child marriages in these districts.

in Pakistan

its

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LEGAL PROPERTY:

Despite the Constitution of Pakistan clearly stating property rights for women, cultural and societal practices routinely deprive women of their rightful legal share in marital and inheritance property. These sources are imperative to ensure their economic and social wellbeing. To fill this gap, LAS conducts extensive legal clinics and awareness sessions for low-income, vulnerable women across three districts of Sindh (Karachi, Nawabshah, and Larkana).

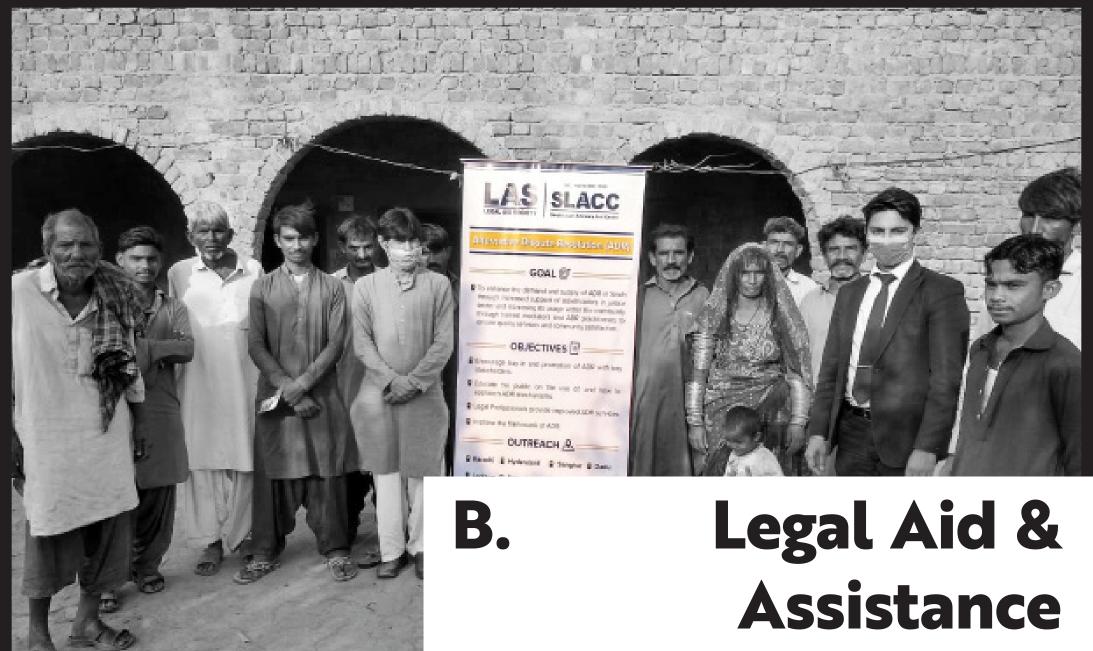
Directly, LAS is actively supporting state actors within the Criminal Justice System to improve its collective response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) by deploying e-interventions that reduce the attrition rate of women pursuing cases of SGBV. Our partnership with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan revolves around LAS taking gender-specific cases into litigation.

Prisons and Community-Based Paralegal Programs

hile prisoners are legally entitled to appeal their sentences, most lack basic knowledge about their rights and the complex procedures applicable to their cases. Additionally, a significant portion of the total prisoner population comprises the elderly, juveniles, and women who are under trial. In this regard, LAS, through partnership with the Committee for Welfare of Prisoners Legal Aid Office, pioneered Pakistan's first convict-led prison paralegal program for prison inmates in 2014 and has conducted paralegal training programs in 9 prisons across Sindh. Until 2018, LAS provided legal literacy and training to 723 Under Trial Prisoners (UTPs) and built training capacities in prisons for up to 50 convicts. These prison paralegals currently manage a paralegal service in four prisons across Sindh where incoming inmates are acquainted

LAS also trains paralegals from various communities across Sindh. Paralegals are identified through community mappings in which LAS determines which individuals possess the basic skills, understanding, and education to be further trained and equipped with legal knowledge. Community Paralegals are developed as resource persons in their communities, to provide community members with knowledge of legal rights and remedies, and some basic legal assistance. LAS has successfully trained 75 female community paralegals across Karachi, Larkana, and Nawabshah to advocate for Women's Right to Legal Property.





(USE THE LAW)

AS prides itself on training young lawyers and human rights defenders in the art of humanized and sensitised lawyering, so that they may be able to provide free legal assistance, aid, and representation to vulnerable communities.

I. DIRECT LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO **VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES**

n virtually all our community-centric initiatives, LAS builds on community mapping sessions to identify needy individuals who require free legal assistance to fight for their basic economic, social, and cultural rights. Currently, LAS is providing this service to religious minorities, women (with regards to legal property matters), victims of sexual and gender-based violence, and those members seeking legal resolution through Alternate Dispute Resolution methods.

out of which

700+

cases have been resolved.

REFERRAL NETWORKS

We have established strong referral networks with state-run institutions such as Dar-ul-Amaan (Women shelter homes), and the Sindh Child Protection Authority and its Child Protection Units. This ensures that when people in need of legal aid approach such institutions, LAS advocates are requested for immediate assistance. Our target clients tend to be socioeconomically disadvantaged women and children who are victims of violence, abuse, and/or neglect. To address these problems on a macro level, LAS has strived to build key strategic partnerships and gain support from bodies such as the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women (SCSW), Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), and Women Protection Cells in multiple districts across Sindh. Similarly, LAS has established legal empowerment help desks in police stations in Karachi as a pilot project to provide immediate legal advice, aid, and assistance to members of the general public.

900+

cases

that have been identified from within communities have been filed in court.

In addition, LAS has engaged the office of the Ombudsperson and different Union Councils to assist community members in filing complaints on excessive electricity or gas billing, problems related to National Identity Cards and NADRA, and correction in education certificates.



II. NETWORK OF PRO BONO LAWYERS AND LAW FIRMS

or situations where resource constraints or lack of technical expertise prevents LAS from taking on a case, we have established a network of pro bono allies within the legal fraternity to whom legal matters can be referred. Under this partnership, clients/potential beneficiaries are interviewed, assessed, their legal documents tracked and vetted and case summaries prepared.

These summaries are then shared with interested lawyers/law firms in our network. Our partners are responsive, personable, and thoroughly attentive to our client's needs. These nascent partnerships have already resulted in some momentous victories and heartening success stories.









I. POLICY ADVOCACY

AS realizes that raising awareness, empowering people, and providing legal assistance to marginalized segments of society are all important, albeit only a part of the solution. These efforts have to be supplemented with robust policy advocacy initiatives that are in turn fed by holistic research projects, to catalyze systemic change at an institutional and structural level. This forms part of the Shape the Law approach. In this regard, LAS has undertaken legislative drafting and lobbying activities in key areas, developed comprehensive policy frameworks, and conducted a training needs assessment of multiple justice sector actors. For instance, through extensive advocacy and lobbying efforts with the Home Department, the National Prison Reform Committee, and the National Commission on the Rights of Children, LAS helped Juvenile Justice Committees under Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) get notified.



II. POLICY BRIEFS

- ✓ Assessment of Gender-Based Violence Courts in Sindh
- ✓ Sexual Violence Reform Framework (2019)
- Guidelines for Gender-Based Violence Courts (under process)
- → Policy Briefs on the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA) 2018 prepared for the Police Department, Probation Department, and Prosecution Department.
- Policy Brief on Child Marriages



I. LEGISLATIVE DRAFTS

- ▼ The Sindh Prisons and Corrections Services Act, 2019 in collaboration with Prison and Home Department
- ▼ The Code of Civil Procedure (Sindh Amendment Bill 2018) in collaboration with Sindh Judicial Academy and Ms. Navin Merchant
- ✓ Sindh Prison Rules 2020
- Sindh Restriction of Dowry Act, 2017 (Bill)
- Amendment to the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013
- Amendment to The Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013
- Amendment to The Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2010
- Amendment to Acid Control and Crime Prevention Act 2010.

II. CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES AND RESEARCH PROJECTS

AS is actively involved in the capacity building of the judiciary, prosecutors, police officials, prison officials, ADR practitioners such as Salis Committee Members, and key players in key Social Welfare Departments at both the district and provincial levels.

We conduct trainings and workshops with Judicial Officers, Police Officials, Prison Officials, and Salis Members on topics ranging from community policing, gender and minority rights sensitization, effective case management, mediation, and ADR.

I. JUDICIARY

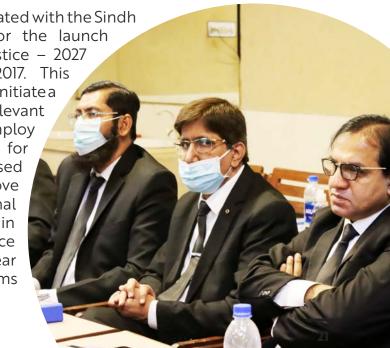
AS seeks to sensitize and learn from the experience of in-service judges and prepare pre-service judges for transitioning from the bar to the bench with the provision of practical skills-based training sessions. The trainings assist judges to familiarize themselves with substantive laws and procedures relating to sexual and gender-based violence, religious minorities, and juveniles and help them adjudicate in the larger social context.

In partnership with the Sindh Judiciary, LAS is actively improving the capacity of Gender-Based Violence Courts across Sindh to ensure that these specialized courts fulfill their purpose. LAS conducted a baseline assessment of the infrastructure, facilities, and special protection measures in these courts in July 2020 and an endline study in January-February 2021. This study has been conducted in association with the Sindh Commission on the Status of Women and seeks to identify the current gaps in the implementation of special procedures and protection measures in these 27 courts. Additionally, several LAS staffers serve as members on key provincial/national steering and implementation committees that actively support relevant government departments in improving their response to sexual and gender-based violence.

Moreover, in 2016, LAS in collaboration with Sindh Judicial Academy hosted a 2 day National round-table Conference on Judicial Education Reform. The objective of this conference was to develop

a practical and proactive approach towards judicial education. The round-table was attended by all the senior judges of the Sindh High Court, former Chief Justices of provincial High Courts, and a former Chief Justice of Pakistan, the leadership of the Federal Judicial Academy, the SJA, the Punjab Judicial Academy, the Baluchistan Judicial Academy, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy, and numerous civil society organizations. The conference resulted in a ten-point declaration from the Chief Justice of Pakistan elucidating the judicial education reform agenda for the judiciary.

LAS has also collaborated with the Sindh Judicial Academy for the launch of the Vision for Justice - 2027 Conference in May 2017. This conference aimed to initiate a dialogue between relevant stakeholders to employ empirical research for evidence-based approach to improve the civil and criminal iustice system Sindh. The conference resulted in a ten-year policy plan for reforms in the judicial sector.



II. POLICE

AS conducted an extensive Training Needs Assessment for Sindh police, following which training manuals are being designed to sensitize Police officials on issues related to gender and religious minorities. Training sessions are focused on basic terminologies and issues relating to gender and religious minorities, human rights, the role of the Police in such cases, and SOPs for Police Officers in cases of gender-based violence. The panel of trainers included legal academics and practitioners, human rights activists, and [the/a] Senior Police Training Officer. Similarly, LAS conducted another Training Needs Assessment for the Sindh Police in 2020 as part of a research project on urban policing and urban violence.

This project addresses issues that include areas of governance, researching better policing mechanisms, influencing the behavior of law enforcement officials, understanding how marginalized communities face violence and issues of access to basic services. As part of this, LAS conducted FGDs with more than 250 police officials, consultations with medico-legal officers, prosecutors, and CSO members. Subsequently, LAS published a report analysing the efficacy and responsiveness of the CPLC (Citizens Police Liaison Committee) Sindh - a model of co-production led exclusively by volunteers working since the 90s to improve the quality of policing in the province. Based on these successes, LAS submitted a comprehensive proposal for police curriculum reform, which was duly endorsed.



PROSECUTION

ince Prosecution is a critical component in the criminal system, it is imperative that prosecutors' skills are enhanced and they are equipped to deal with cases of vulnerable communities that LAS deals with to provide effective and strong representation to victims. In this regard, LAS recently conducted capacity-building sessions of prosecutors to sensitize them regarding sexual and gender-based violence cases, particularly those pertaining to rape and sodomy.

IV. PRISONS

AS works on the thematic area of Children in Conflict Law with a two-pronged focus on child welfare and juvenile justice. In this regard, in 2019, an empirical study was conducted to assist the authorities to understand the socioeconomic demographics of detained children in Karachi.

Similarly, LAS also plays an active role in promoting juvenile justice policy measures and their implementation. In this regard, LAS designed and conducted a 2-day training for multiple juvenile justice system stakeholders including prisons, police, and probation departments with pre and post-assessments to gauge knowledge and awareness. Additionally, it provided key-technical assistance for drafting JJSA Rules of Business.

V. ADR PRACTITIONERS AND SALIS MEMBERS

o reduce the burden of cases on lower (district and session) courts, LAS has advocated the employment of Alternate Dispute Resolution. In this regard, keeping the Small Crimes and Petty Ordinances Act in consideration, LAS lobbied extensively to nominate Salis members in Sindh. As a result of these efforts, Sindh High Court ultimately nominated 270 Salis Members from 24 districts of Sindh in 2015 under the Small Claims and Minor Offences Ordinance 2002. After the nomination of Salis members, LAS organized and arranged a series of trainings

from 2016 to 2018 on Mediation Skills in collaboration with the National

Centre of Dispute Resolution, Pakistan Mediators Association, and the Sindh Judicial Academy. To date, 116 Salis members have

attended the six-day training for mediation skills.

POLICY BRIEF

OCTOBER 2020

Recommendations for the Government of Sindh on Implementing the Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA), 2018

BACKGROUND

The Juvenile Justice System Act (JJSA), passed in May 2018, aims to bring the juvenile justice system in sync with Pakistan's international commitments, and emphasizes a rehabilitative framework for juveniles as opposed to a punitive one.

The Act envisages a criminal justice system in which juveniles have personal liberty and cuses on the importance of keeping ten out of detention. The Act creates custodial arrangements for the right to state-appointed k case processing times: It procedures for the

each sessions division with the authority to administer justice through alternatives to formal judicial proceedings. However, the Act suffers from serious gaps in implementation.

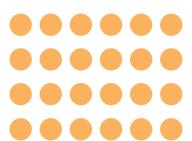
The Horne Department is the principal coordinating, planning, and policy making department of the criminal justice system under the Government of Sindh. It also has an important role to play in promoting institutional collaboration. To dishowever, the Sindh Government notified Rules of Business, with backbone of the implement.



III. LAW SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

n collaboration with a number of law schools and colleges in Sindh, LAS mentors law students through pro bono and low bono advocacy sessions. Between 2014 and 2018, LAS organized information sessions in 10 law schools for final-year law students.

LAS also held two joint sessions for law students on Clinical Methodology and a mentoring session on sensitization and enhancement of awareness on Alternate Dispute Resolution, women's rights, child protection laws, and minority rights for final year law students. In addition, LAS provides experiential learning programs for pre-college students, college students, and recent graduates to help them engage with a wide host of community-led projects.





View our website to view/download the publications:

https://www.las.org.pk/communication/research-papers-and-publications/

- Establishing ADR Mechanisms in Pakistan
- → Policy Paper on establishing ADR Mechanisms in Gilgit Baltistan (GB)
- Gap Analysis of Investigation & Prosecution of Rape & Sodomy Cases in Islamabad Capital Territory
- ✓ Covid-19 and Sexual and Gender Based Violence Reporting: A Study of Sindh Legal Advisory Call Center data
- ✔ Children in Conflict with Law A socioeconomic mapping of detained Children
- ▼ Effectiveness of Public-Private Policing: A Review of the CPLC in Sindh
- Understanding Sexual Harassment at the Pakistani Workplace
- ✓ Understanding Domestic Violence within the Legal framework of Pakistan
- Deconstructing Conjugal Rights in Pakistan
- ▼ The Justice Gap in Sindh: Evidence from the Legal Aid Call Centre

Our Publications

- ▼ The Victim & the Accused: An Analysis of the Legal Needs in the Criminal Justice System in Sindh
- Rapid Assessment on Current Status of Essential Services for Survivors & Victims of Gender-Based Violence & Sexual Offenders (Sindh)
- Alternative Despite Resolution Mechanisms: Access to Community & Public Administrative Bodies
- Policy Paper on Use of Alternative Despite Resolution in Sindh
- → Delays in the Delivery of Justice in Civil Cases
- ▼ The State of Legal Education in Pakistan, and the Case for Reform in Legal Education
- ✔ Prioritizing needs: An Evidence-Based study for Religious Minorities in Sukkur, Ghotki & Larkana.
- ✓ Rights? What Rights?
- ✓ Vulnerability and Society
- ✓ Delay in Trial









































































AS is honoured to have partnered with esteemed national and international organizations and has leveraged their support and expertise to deliver on its missions of enhancing the quality of justice outcomes and improving access to justice.





We exist because only 10% of people in Pakistan, when faced with a justiciable legal dispute, turn to Courts or tribunals*

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DIGITAL PRESENCE

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* according to a study carried out in 2019 and is accessible at: https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Justice-Policy-Series-Access-to-Justice.pdf